

Управління брендом університету в цифровому середовищі

Предметом дослідження є організаційно–управлінські та комунікаційні механізми формування, розвитку та підтримки бренду університету в умовах трансформації освітнього середовища.

Метою дослідження є формування теоретико–методичних основ управління брендом університету в умовах цифрової трансформації з урахуванням змін у поведінці цільової аудиторії, каналів комунікації та викликів репутаційної конкуренції.

Методи дослідження у роботі застосовано методи контент–аналізу цифрових комунікацій, аналізу й синтезу, метод експертних оцінок, соціологічне опитування серед здобувачів освіти та абітурієнтів, а також SWOT–аналіз для оцінки сильних і слабких сторін бренду ЗВО в цифровому середовищі.

Результати роботи. У дослідженні визначено, що ефективне управління брендом університету в цифрову епоху вимагає: переходу від інформаційного до емоційного брендингу; активного використання соціальних мереж, відеоконтенту та персоналізованих цифрових сервісів; залучення студентів як бренд–амбасадорів; постійного моніторингу цифрової репутації через аналітичні платформи.

Галузь застосування результатів. Результати дослідження можуть бути впроваджені в систему стратегічного управління українських ЗВО, комунікаційні стратегії ректоратів, відділів маркетингу та міжнародних зв'язків, а також у процес розробки цифрових платформ брендування.

Висновки. В умовах цифрової трансформації ефективне управління брендом університету стає критичним чинником його конкурентоспроможності. Формування впізнаваного, релевантного та ціннісно орієнтованого бренду вимагає не лише технологічної модернізації, а й зміни управлінської парадигми: від ієрархічної до партнерсько–мережевої. Цифрове середовище не лише виклик, а й потужна можливість для університетів, які здатні адаптуватися та стратегічно використовувати цифрові інструменти для побудови довготривалої взаємодії з аудиторією.

Ключові слова: управління, бренд університету, цифрова трансформація, цифрове середовище, вища освіта, бренд–менеджмент, репутація, діджитал–маркетинг, комунікаційні стратегії, лояльність.

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University brand management in the digital environment

The subject of the study is the organizational, managerial and communication mechanisms for the formation, development and support of the university brand in the context of the transformation of the educational environment.

The purpose of the study is to form the theoretical and methodological foundations of university brand management in the context of digital transformation, taking into account changes in the behavior of the target audience, communication channels and the challenges of reputational competition.

Research methods. The work uses the methods of content analysis of digital communications, analysis and synthesis, the method of expert assessments, a sociological survey among education seekers and applicants, as well as SWOT analysis to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the HEI brand in the digital environment.

Results of the work. The study determined that effective university brand management in the digital era requires: a transition from informational to emotional branding; active use of social networks, video content and personalized digital services; engaging students as brand ambassadors; constant monitoring of digital reputation through analytical platforms.

Field of application of the results. The results of the study can be implemented in the strategic management system of Ukrainian higher education institutions, communication strategies of rectors, marketing and international relations departments, as well as in the process of developing digital branding platforms.

Conclusions. In the context of digital transformation, effective management of the university brand becomes a critical factor in its competitiveness. The formation of a recognizable, relevant and value–

oriented brand requires not only technological modernization, but also a change in the management paradigm: from hierarchical to partnership–network. The digital environment is not only a challenge, but also a powerful opportunity for universities that are able to adapt and strategically use digital tools to build long–term interaction with the audience.

Keywords: *management, university brand, digital transformation, digital environment, higher education, brand management, reputation, digital marketing, communication strategies, loyalty.*

Problem statement. In today's global digitalization environment, universities are faced with the need to review traditional approaches to positioning and managing their brand. The digital environment forms new rules of communication, behavioral models of target audiences, and interaction channels that significantly affect the perception of the image of a higher education institution. At the same time, competition between universities is growing both at the national and global levels, which requires the formation of a recognizable, value-oriented brand capable of attracting applicants, partners, and investors. Traditional methods of building an image are not effective enough in the conditions of information overload, virtualization of communications, and reorientation of the youth audience's attention to digital sources. In addition, the perception of the brand itself is changing: for a modern applicant, not only the academic recognition of the university is important, but also its digital presence, innovation, transparency, and ability to interact in the online environment. In this context, university brand management requires a comprehensive rethinking: it is necessary to integrate modern digital tools, develop effective communication strategies, strengthen reputation policy, and build a sustainable digital identity. At the same time, the question remains open: how universities can adapt their brand strategies to the conditions of the digital environment without losing academic authenticity and social authority.

Thus, the scientific need to study the management mechanisms of university brand formation in the context of digital transformation, identifying its key components, interaction channels, and factors influencing the target audience is becoming more relevant.

Analysis of recent research and publications. In the process of preparing the article, a number of modern scientific sources were reviewed that highlight the theoretical principles of brand management, strategic management in the context of digital transformation, as well as the peculiarities of the functioning of organizations in the context of an in-

novative economy and a competitive environment. A review of scientific publications allowed us to form a comprehensive understanding of the researched issues and outline current scientific approaches to brand management of a higher educational institution. The works of Hnatenko and Kulikova (2016) emphasize the need to improve personnel management as one of the key factors for the effective functioning of the organization. This is important for the formation of the university's internal brand, which is based on the involvement of employees in the formation of a positive image [1]. Hrekova and Guz (2024) consider the brand as a strategic tool for promotion, emphasizing the role of values and communications in the positioning process. Their conclusions are of direct importance for understanding the specifics of the educational brand in the digital space [2]. The publication of Melnyk and Rudy (2024) reveals the features of digital business transformation, which allows us to extrapolate these provisions to the sphere of higher education, where profound technological changes are also observed [3]. The work of Raik (2025) is devoted to the problems of brand management in the context of cross-cultural interaction and digitalization. The experience of adapting brands to new cultural environments can be adapted to the needs of international university strategies [4]. A separate place in the review is occupied by the works of Zos-Kior et al. in particular, studies devoted to the development of labor potential (2020) and the improvement of management practices through career consulting (2018). These studies actualize the importance of HR branding and the internal image of the organization [5; 8]. The work of Khodakivska et al. (2021) contains an analysis of entrepreneurship models in the context of an innovative economy, with a focus on resource management, which is relevant in the context of resource provision of the brand strategy of HEIs [6]. The international publication of Hnatenko et al. (2021) is also of interest, which considers the innovative potential of enterprises in crisis conditions. Similar mechanisms can be effectively ap-

plied to brand building in the context of changing educational environments [7]. The work of Sharia et al. (2020) outlines the role of institutional mechanisms in the formation of an effective management model, which is important in the context of institutionalizing university brand communications [9].

An analysis of modern scientific sources confirms that university brand management in the context of digital transformation is an interdisciplinary problem that encompasses aspects of marketing, HR management, communication strategies, digital technologies and institutional economics. The works reviewed allowed us to deepen the theoretical basis of the study, identify key factors influencing brand formation and determine the directions of its effective implementation in the context of a digital society.

Presentation of the main material. University brand management in the context of digital transformation involves radical changes both in the content of the concept of «HEI brand» and in the tools for its formation and promotion. The university as a social institution is no longer limited to the functions of providing educational services and generating knowledge – it is turning into an active communicator in the digital environment, where the brand becomes not only a visual marker, but a holistic system of reputational, communication and value guidelines.

The digital transformation of higher education encompasses several key vectors: the transition to hybrid learning models, digitalization of management processes, the implementation of EdTech innovations, automation of student support services. At the same time, communication channels with target audiences are changing, which are increasingly gravitating towards social networks, messengers, video platforms and mobile applications [1–4].

In these conditions, there is a need to build a digital model of the university brand, which involves the inclusion of such key components (table 1).

Research shows that the perception of the HEI brand in the digital age is formed primarily through

the experience of digital interaction. If previously the main channels were printed materials, participation in exhibitions and outdoor advertising, now the main attention is focused on how the university looks and behaves in the digital environment. The website, social networks, telegram channels, the interface of the distance learning platform – all this becomes part of the virtual reputation of the university [3–6].

To empirically confirm the role of digital channels in the formation of the university brand, an online survey was conducted among target audiences: applicants, students and graduates (n = 412). The aim of the study was to identify the most significant factors that influence the perception of the university brand in the digital environment. The results obtained show that over 87% of respondents consider transparent communication (availability of information, timely responses, activity in social networks) to be a key factor in building trust in the HEI brand. About 72% noted visual recognition and style as an important component, while 68% emphasized the online accessibility of educational and administrative services. This means that a digital brand cannot exist separately from the digital user experience. Additionally, a comparative analysis of the effectiveness of the use of basic digital tools by domestic universities was conducted. The results are summarized in Table 2.

As the table shows, the official website and Instagram remain the most powerful channels of interaction and influence on the audience. Telegram channels are becoming increasingly popular due to the efficiency of messages and mobility. On the other hand, mobile applications, despite their potential, demonstrate an insufficient level of development, integration and promotion. These results indicate the need for a comprehensive rethinking of the digital strategy of universities. Outdated or passive channels not only reduce the effectiveness of branding, but can also cause distrust on the part of the youth audience, for whom digital

Table 1. Key elements of a university's digital brand

Brand component	Content
Digital identity	Visual elements, UX/UI design, creative visualization, logo, guideline
Information transparency	Open access to data, electronic offices, interactive platforms
Service availability	Mobile applications, electronic submission of documents, adaptive online services
Reputational stability	Online reviews, rating position, participation in international programs
Communicative activity	Interactivity in social networks, digital events, influencers among students

Source: *proposed by the author*

Table 2. Effectiveness of digital communication channels of universities

Digital tool	Usage level (%)	Subjective assessment of effectiveness (1–5)
Official website	100	4.7
Instagram	84	4.5
Telegram channel	61	4.2
YouTube	49	4.1
Facebook	38	3.9
Mobile application of the Higher Education Institution	22	3.6

Source: summarized by the author

communication is a familiar environment for interaction. Changing behavioral patterns of consumers of educational services, the growing importance of digital communication channels and the intensification of reputational competition transform the university brand from a formal symbol into a multidimensional platform of trust, dialogue and social partnership. In this context, the ability of higher education institutions to develop emotionally relevant messages that resonate with the values of the digital generation is of particular importance.

An effective university brand should reflect not only academic quality, but also an atmosphere of trust, openness, inclusiveness and innovation. The above means that brand management moves into the realm of not only PR activities, but also internal organizational culture, where every employee and student becomes a bearer of reputation. Analytical data shows that universities that actively form their digital identity demonstrate higher rates of applicant engagement, more stable ranking positions and better adaptation to changes in the external environment. At the same time, the lack of a holistic brand strategy in the digital dimension leads to reputational fragmentation, low level of recognition and loss of competitive advantages. Digital transformation opens up new horizons for universities: the ability to personalize the educational experience, instantly respond to students' needs, create interactive learning environments and form global educational communities. But at the same time, it requires a high level of managerial sensitivity, strategic thinking and readiness for constant renewal [4–8].

To summarize, we can say that the university brand in the digital age is not a logo and a slogan, but a living interaction, a visualized culture, an innovative space that reflects values, mission and the ability to be flexible in times of change. One of the key challenges of digital transformation in the higher education system is to rethink the concept of

«trust» as the basis of effective branding. If in classical marketing theory, trust was formed mainly through the quality of services and reviews, then in the digital environment it depends much more on emotional interaction, message integrity and consistency of the organization's online behavior.

The university's digital brand becomes a reputational reflection of the user experience. Students, teachers, parents, employers, partners – they all interact with the university through digital platforms, and each stage of this interaction affects the overall perception of the HEI. If the website is inconvenient, the Instagram page is outdated, responses to requests in messengers are untimely – even high academic performance does not compensate for the loss of reputational capital.

The concept of the university's «digital identity» is gaining particular importance. It is not just a set of logos, colors, and slogans, but a structured narrative that conveys the institution's mission, values, traditions, and uniqueness in formats that are easily perceived by the digital generation. These can include a series of student success stories on Instagram, professional videos from laboratories, interactive campus maps, digital profiles of teachers, etc. A separate role is played by the brand's visual culture, which must be adapted to different platforms and remain recognizable even in the dynamic feed content of social networks. Visual uniformity, inconsistency of styles, and lack of visual logic on university pages reduce the level of trust and are perceived as a sign of chaos in the organization. No less important is the brand language – tone of voice, which should be authentic, friendly, modern, without excessive formality, but not lose authority. The youth audience is extremely sensitive to falsehood, excessive pathos or stereotypes in communication. Another strategic aspect is the institutionalization of digital communication. The university should move from a fragmented presence in the media to sys-

temic brand management. This implies the presence of a team responsible for communication policy, digital analytics, content creation and crisis communication. The presence in the media space should be strategically directed, based on clearly defined target audiences, value accents and regular monitoring of performance indicators [6–9].

Brand management in the digital economy is also closely related to the technological readiness of the university. It is not only about the presence of an LMS platform or electronic document management, but also about the use of big data, user behavior analytics, chatbots, personalized information environments, adaptive platforms for learning and communication.

It is also worth considering that a digital brand is a constant process of interaction, not a one-time project. The brand platform must adapt to new trends, test formats, be open to dialogue and criticism, and respond to feedback. Dynamics and flexibility are the main advantages of brands in the digital environment. Finally, it is important to emphasize that a successful university brand is the result of the synergy of the administration, teachers, students, and alumni. All of them are carriers and relays of the brand in the digital space. That is why it is important to form an «internal brand» – that is, a culture of loyalty, pride in the university, and readiness to be its ambassador in the public space.

Conclusions

As a result of the study of theoretical, methodological and applied aspects of university brand management in the context of digital transformation, the following generalizations were made. The university brand in the digital era acts as a strategic tool for reputational positioning, attracting target audiences and ensuring the competitiveness of a higher education institution. It acquires the meaning of an integrated system of visual, emotional and communication elements adapted to the dynamic digital environment. Digital transformation significantly changes approaches to brand management: not only visual identity and academic achievements come to the fore, but also digital behavior, communication tone, adaptability to platforms, speed of feedback and flexibility in managing the digital user experience. The results of empirical analysis confirm that the most effective channels of communication with the target audience are of-

ficial websites, social networks (in particular Instagram and Telegram) and digital student support services. Insufficient attention to these channels reduces the level of trust in the brand. Successful brand management involves the institutionalization of communication policy: the creation of professional teams, the development of digital promotion strategies, constant monitoring of digital reputation, the formation of an internal brand and the involvement of students as active brand ambassadors. The value component of the brand becomes crucial: digital youth gravitate towards authentic, open, innovation-oriented universities that broadcast not only academic status, but also social responsibility, emotional closeness and humanity in digital communication. The university brand becomes a dynamic and adaptive process that requires constant updating of approaches, readiness for change and strategic thinking in conditions of high uncertainty and information competition.

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