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University brand as a modern way of winning competitive advantage

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Abstract

The Government of the Russian Federation has set a task to increase the competitiveness of the leading Russian universities among the top world research and educational centers. Brand is a key factor which contributes to the increased competitiveness of the higher educational establishment. The article considers the main components of the university brand, the stages of its creation and development, the factors of its successful differentiation. The university brand value consists in the fact that if once created, and then rebranded, it benefits the university, building its competitive advantage and making profit by maintaining the loyalty of the target audience. The article also suggests the options for the project of university branding.

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Keywords: brand; branding; rebranding; typology of brands; the steps for creating brands; components of the University brand; brand strategy; brand policy; competitiveness.

1. Introduction

Currently, the system of Higher Professional Education in Russia is undergoing quality changes. Openness of borders, participation in the Bologna process, the financial and economic crisis, sharpening of the demographic situation, changes of economic conditions of universities' activities contributed to the formation of a competitive environment in the educational services market.

In the contexts of modern ambitious tasks of Russian universities to enter the "Top-100" [1], branding is an unconditional and important measure to increase their brand awareness and positioning in Russia and in the world.

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In the early 70-ies of XX century designer Paul Rand worked alone under the brand of IBM, but today branding is a complex, multilevel project requiring team work of professionals with global experience in all areas: from goal-setting, planning and studying the market situation to the development of corporate identity and brand promotion both in Russian and world markets.

The brand is:

- a promise of desired benefit-giving properties and a quality level to consumers;
- a guarantee of quality of customers' satisfaction;
- a tool of quick and confident consumer choice and purchasing decision making;
- the most important factor of firm's competitive advantages and incomes, a base for a higher price assign.

The brand is one of the most important integrated factors contributing to the university competitiveness growth.

2. Indicators of university reputation

The first indicator of success of a higher education institution's brand is evaluation of the university rankings. Today, these ratings are interesting for employers, the state, and universities.

The next indicator of the university reputation is its presence and position in other rankings of higher education institutions and full-time course enrolment competition.

Distribution of weight of the reputation indicators and brand of higher educational institutions in rankings is shown in Table 1.

No.	Rank	Weight of reputation indicators (in percentage)
1.	QS World University Ranking	50.00
2.	Times Higher Education World University Ranking	34.50
3.	Academic Ranking of World Universities	30.00
4.	Interfax National Rating Agency	28.66

The table is based on data of reference [2].

3. Stages for university brand creation and implementation

The university brand development is based on key success factors of the educational institution. The process of university brand creation and realization consists of the following six stages:

- Stage I: Brand idea generation
- Stage II: Brand positioning
- Stage III: Comparative analysis of existing brands
- Stage IV: Brand strategy determination
- Stage V: Marketing testing
- Stage VI: Implementation of brand policy

Let us consider these stages.

1. Brand idea generation - finding and development of the idea that should be brought to minds of consumers of educational services. Not only the unique properties of the educational institution and its services can be used when designing corporate identity, but also a range of issues related to consumers. The announcement of competition "idea of the University brand" represents a certain interest. It is necessary to make a video film about the university.

2. Brand positioning - determination of the educational institution position in the market in relation to competitors.

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