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**THE EFFICACY OF UNIVERSITY BRAND MANAGEMENT: A
PIVOTAL DETERMINANT IN THE ENHANCEMENT OF
EDUCATION QUALITY**

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Abstract

This article explores the relevance of effective brand management implementation in enhancing the quality of university education. It highlights the significance of establishing and nurturing a robust university brand, which serves as a magnet for attracting talented students, accomplished faculty and diverse investments. The author analyses the advantages that can be derived from adept brand management including the augmentation of social mobility, competitiveness and the cultivation of intellectual potential. The research concludes that proficient brand management constitutes a fundamental catalyst in elevating the standard of university education and fostering the development of a nation's human capital. Furthermore, the article provides practical recommendations for universities aspiring to establish or enhance their brand presence while ensuring the delivery of high-quality education.

Key words: *Quality Higher Education, human capital, effective management, reputation management, university brand management, student mobility, world class university*

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought about changes in education worldwide. One of the most significant changes has been the introduction of distance learning and online exams. This has led to an increase in the popularity of higher education. In recent years, there has been an increase in competition between educational institutions as they strive to attract potential students. In light of these changes, improving the competitiveness of educational institutions is becoming an important task. Higher education institutions that offer high-quality education can succeed in this challenging market. By providing

innovative and relevant courses, they can stand out from the competition and attract more students. This will lead to a better quality of education and a higher level of success for both institutions and students. The quality of educational services has become a guarantee of attraction and trust from consumers. Improving the quality of education is a particularly urgent task at the moment [1]. To achieve qualitative improvements both at the national level and at the regional level, it is necessary to have high-quality higher education that produces professional personnel [2].

For the last years, significant efforts have been made in Uzbekistan to develop higher education, including the establishment of new educational institutions, the introduction of modern programmes and specialties, as well as the expansion of opportunities for extramural, distance and evening learning. However, there are still challenges that impede the improvement of educational quality in higher education institutions and their active participation in wide-ranging reforms in the social and economic spheres [3].

Researches conducted by foreign universities have shown that the use of marketing strategies in the management of educational institutions can significantly improve the quality and competitiveness of their educational programmes [4]. In our country, marketing technologies have already been used in certain industries. However, in the context of the formation and development of market relations, there is a need to introduce marketing tools in all sectors, including education.

A brand is an important component of marketing [5], it forms certain characteristics of a product or service in the subconscious of people, associating them with a certain trade mark or organisation. Consumers usually prefer to buy goods or services from brands they trust and that are popular in society [6]. Research shows that people reflect more confidence in companies that are actively working to develop their brand. For example, a survey conducted by Salsify [7] showed that 46% of consumers in the United States are willing to pay more for products/services from a brand they trust.

Modern education is becoming more competitive and dynamic. Universities use branding to create a certain image that orients people to the competitive advantages and unique features of this educational institution [8]. Universities around the world strive to attract and retain the best students and teachers, as well as attract investment and create strong intellectual potential. In this context, effective brand management becomes a key factor in improving the quality of university education.

Brand management is a strategic approach to managing a brand, which includes the creation, development and maintenance of a unique brand identity and image [9]. Brand management is an integral part of a university's development strategy, helping a university to stand out from the competition by creating a favourable ecosystem for the development of human capital in the country. The education ecosystem is the interaction of various elements of the educational process, which provides support and development of education, creates conditions for obtaining knowledge and skills, and also contributes to the growth and development of each participant in the system [10].

In this article, the author will explore the role of effective brand management in improving and enhancing the quality of university education. The benefits that a strong brand image can bring will also be examined. Based on research and practical experience, insights and recommendations will be provided for universities that strive to develop their brand and ensure high quality education.

Methods

In the current paper, the author explores the relationship and impact of effective brand management on the quality of education through the analysis of brand management at universities. The object of the study is the activities of both local and international universities. Scientific methods have been applied for this purpose, including general analysis and a comparative approach. The analysis of marketing activities and brand promotion strategies of various public, private, local and foreign universities was conducted through personal interviews with their managers and marketing specialists, as well as an analysis of official strategies and online resources of universities.

The article is based on a secondary study, which examined existing data, online resources, periodicals, books and magazines. The aim was to study the issue of brand management and its effective application in higher education in the context of increasing competition in the educational services market, intensified by the pandemic, as well as the desire for flexibility in the post-pandemic era to achieve long-term success.

Ethical standards were adhered to during the study, ensuring the confidentiality of information and obtaining the consent of each study participant.

Based on the conducted research, conclusions were drawn about the importance of effective brand management to improve the quality of education at universities, as well as recommendations for improving brand management processes in educational institutions.

Results

Over the past 5 years, the educational market of Uzbekistan has undergone significant changes, and systematic and extensive work is being carried out to reform the educational sector. The number of universities in the country increased from 72 in 2017 [11] to 210 in 2023, including 115 state universities, 65 non-state universities and 30 foreign universities [12]. The non-governmental sector of higher education is actively developing.

On the one hand, the increase in the number of higher education institutions can be considered as a positive phenomenon that promotes healthy competition and the development of the educational industry. This can lead to an improvement in the quality of education and the provision of better conditions for students. However, evaluating educational success based solely on quantitative growth may not be sufficient and may not always accurately reflect the true state of affairs in higher education. While the current increase in the number of universities in the country may indicate marketization of the education sector, it does not necessarily imply an improvement in education quality or compliance with international standards. It is crucial to have a clear understanding of the development of higher education. Universities should become a source of human capital and produce highly qualified specialists that will be in high demand in the present and in the future. Each institution must find its own unique niche and focus its efforts on meeting the needs of its potential students and other stakeholders. It is essential to offer relevant programmes and strive to build a positive reputation through a holistic approach [13].

Uzbekistan is experiencing a significant increase in the number of students wishing to study abroad. Universities need to create their own brand to demonstrate compliance with international standards in order to attract talented students. The Government of Uzbekistan pays special attention to the development of higher education, allocating additional resources and implementing various initiatives. Universities can use this support to strengthen their brand and improve the quality of educational services. 60% of Uzbekistan's population is under the age of 30 [14], consisting of young people who are open to new knowledge and opportunities. Universities can position themselves as centres of innovation and progress, which will attract ambitious students. A strong university brand helps to attract the best students and teachers, as highly qualified candidates strive to enter universities with a good reputation and recognition. A strong university brand can also attract

investments and sponsorship programmes. Investors and sponsors often prefer to cooperate with reputable universities that have a stable and attractive brand [15]. This can help a university to receive financial support, develop innovative programmes and joint research, as well as attract highly qualified specialists and experts. Effective brand management in education provides a number of advantages for universities. First and foremost, a strong brand image helps a university to overcome social barriers and enhance the social mobility of its students. As a result, students from diverse backgrounds have the opportunity to pursue a high-quality education and improve their chances of achieving success in their chosen field [16].

Secondly, brand management contributes to the competitiveness of university. Creating a strong brand allows a university to stand out from the competition and attract more students and teachers. This creates a favourable environment for the exchange of knowledge and experience, which contributes to improving the quality of education [17].

Thirdly, a strong brand image attracts highly qualified teachers and researchers, which contributes to the development of the intellectual potential of university. The involvement of such specialists improves the quality of education and scientific achievements of university, which in turn attracts even more talented students and teachers. The high quality of education and scientific achievements are the result of such development.

For effective brand management at university, it is important to identify uniqueness and values, develop high-quality content and communication, as well as cooperate with graduates and employers. Brand management helps a university to create a unique identification image that distinguishes it from other educational institutions. By defining the unique qualities and values that a university stands for, it becomes easier to attract the right audience who share the same vision and goals. This helps a university to build a strong and loyal community of supporters who are passionate about what the institution stands for. Defining the uniqueness and values of university is an important step in building a strong brand. Brand uniqueness may be related to academic achievements, specialisations, research, social influence, or other factors [18]. Universities must determine what makes them different from other institutions and what values they adhere to. Brand management helps universities strengthen their reputation and position themselves as leaders in the field of education.

The development of high-quality content and communication also plays a key role in effective brand management. A university should create high-quality content that reflects the achievements and advantages of university. This can be in the form of publications, scientific research, graduate successes, and other forms of content that showcase a university's strengths. In addition, it is necessary to develop an effective communication strategy in order to reach its target audience. This may include the use of social media, blogging, webinars, and events which are all effective ways to engage with alumni, current students and potential ones. By communicating regularly and effectively, universities can build a stronger brand and attract more students and stakeholders [19].

Another important aspect of effective brand management is collaboration with graduates and employers. Universities can establish partnerships with graduates and employers to highlight the success of their students and their connection with the real world [20]. This will help strengthen a university's reputation and increase its attractiveness to future students. Collaboration may involve organising internships, joint projects and events, as well as actively involving graduates in advertising campaigns and marketing materials [21].

To conclude, it should be said that brand management in the context of higher education is a set of measures aimed at creating, managing and promoting a university brand. It includes developing a unique positioning, strengthening reputation, increasing awareness, building and fostering a loyal community.

Discussion

It is important that university education meets international standards for several reasons: firstly, it facilitates the mobility of students and specialists, simplifying the recognition of qualifications and the transition between universities and countries; secondly, international standards set high requirements for the quality of education, contributing to an increase in the level of training of specialists and academic results; further, students studying at universities that comply with international standards have a competitive advantage in the global labour market; in addition, compliance with the standards contributes to the development of international cooperation, the exchange of experience and the attraction of foreign students and investments, contributing to the development of the prestige of universities and their financial stability.

A high-quality and up-to-date education system, as well as the development of a strong scientific base, are essential for a country to be competitive and achieve innovative progress on the global stage. One of the key elements in the

formation of human capital is a high-quality university education that meets international standards.

Universities play a key role in the formation of human capital by providing students with higher education, developing their skills and knowledge, as well as contributing to intellectual and professional growth. The quality of education offered by universities directly affects the level of human capital in the country. In order for universities to contribute to the further development of the country, they need to provide education that meets international standards, actively engage in research, cooperate with business, develop entrepreneurship and bear social responsibility. It is essential for universities to strive for continuous improvement and be flexible and adaptable in order to effectively respond to changes in society and scientific progress. The creation and maintenance of university brands, as well as their effective management, significantly improve the development of the country's human capital through attracting and retaining talented people, strengthening business ties, developing entrepreneurship and innovation, as well as strengthening international cooperation and involving graduates. Research results and practical experience indicate that effective brand management is a key factor in improving the quality of university education. Universities that proactively develop and manage their brand have a number of significant advantages over competitors.

A strong brand of a university is *able to attract more applicants*, especially those who are highly gifted and motivated. Also, the involvement of *highly qualified teachers* becomes possible thanks to a strong brand that creates a favourable environment for the development and exchange of knowledge. Having a good reputation and fame, a university becomes attractive to those who seek to receive a high-quality education. This allows you to attract *the best students*, which in turn enhances the level of education and academic reputation of university.

Competition for the best applicants and teachers encourages a university to continuously improve its educational programmes. A university's strong brand requires it to *constantly develop and innovate* in order to match its reputation, which contributes to improving the quality of education and developing new programmes that meet modern labour market requirements.

The opportunity to *strengthen partnerships* is also an advantage of effective brand management of university. The strong brand of university increases its attractiveness to potential partners such as employers, research centres and other universities. This can lead to the creation of cooperation, the exchange of

experience and resources, as well as the development of joint programmes and research. Such partnerships can be mutually beneficial and contribute to improving the educational process and attracting new opportunities for students and teachers.

Moreover, a strong university brand can also attract investments and sponsorship programmes. Investors and sponsors prefer to cooperate with universities that have a stable and attractive brand. This opens up additional opportunities for universities in the development of infrastructure, research programmes and the exchange of international students.

Effective brand management helps a university to create a unique identification image that distinguishes it from other educational institutions. Brand image can include aspects such as academic culture, innovation, global influence and social responsibility. Most importantly, a strong university brand can become its competitive advantage in the educational services market. In an increasingly competitive environment, it is important to have distinctive features and appeal to students and other stakeholders. Effective brand management allows a university to stand out among many others and attract attention for its unique value offered.

However, in order to achieve effective brand management, it is necessary to develop a strategy that will meet the goals and values of the university. Developing a brand management strategy is a complex process that requires careful analysis and planning. A university needs to identify its target audience, its unique advantages and desired positioning. After developing a strategy, it is necessary to implement it effectively using the right communication channels. It is important to regularly measure the effectiveness of brand management in order to assess its impact on key university indicators such as the number of applicants, quality of education, popularity and reputation of university. In addition, it is important to take into account the needs and expectations of the target audience - students, teachers, employers and society as a whole. Only through constant analysis and brand development can a university maintain its competitiveness and improve the quality of education.

Conclusions

Based on the discussion above, it can be concluded that effective brand management is one of the key factors in improving the quality of university education. Universities that actively develop and manage their brand gain

significant advantages in attracting the best students, faculty, investments and sponsorship programmes.

However, achieving effective brand management requires developing a strategy that is consistent with the goals and values of the university, as well as taking into account the needs and expectations of the target audience. This requires constant analysis and brand development so that a university can maintain its competitiveness and improve the quality of education.

The key components of an effective university brand management are:

1. A clear mission and vision: a university must have a clearly formulated mission that reflects its values, goals and objectives.
2. Strong identity: a university's brand should be based on its unique advantages and distinctive features.
3. Quality education: a university should offer high-quality educational programmes that are up to modern standards.
4. Effective communication: a university should actively promote its brand through various channels, including a website, social media, marketing materials and public relations events.
5. Stakeholder engagement: a university should actively involve stakeholders, including students, faculty, staff, alumni and partners, in the branding process.

Effective brand management is a complex and ongoing process that requires constant attention and effort. The implementation of the strategies mentioned above will help a university to create a strong brand, attract the right audience, enhance its reputation, as well as improve the quality of its education, ultimately strengthening its position in the educational market.

Brand management is an integral part of a university's strategic development plan. In order to ensure high quality education and remain competitive in the modern educational market, universities must attach great importance to the development and effective management of their brand.

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