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DIGITAL ENVIRONMENT AS A SPACE FOR BRAND MANAGEMENT OF A MODERN UNIVERSITY IN THE CONDITIONS OF TRANSFORMATIONS

The article examines the digital environment as a key space for brand management of a modern university in the conditions of profound socio-economic, technological and institutional transformations. It is substantiated that the digitalization of higher education, the globalization of the educational services market and increased competition between higher education institutions necessitate a rethinking of traditional approaches to the formation and management of a university brand. It is proven that the university brand in the digital age is formed not only through educational programs and scientific achievements, but also through digital communications, online reputation, network interaction with stakeholders and integration into the global information space. The digital environment is considered as an integrated management space that combines strategic vision, organizational culture, digital tools and feedback mechanisms. It is concluded that effective management of the university brand in the digital environment is a prerequisite for increasing its competitiveness, reputational capital and successful integration into the international educational space.

Keywords: university brand, digital environment, brand management, digital transformation, higher education institutions, educational marketing.

Tabl. 1. Fig. 1. Lit. 9.

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ЦИФРОВЕ СЕРЕДОВИЩЕ ЯК ПРОСТІР УПРАВЛІННЯ БРЕНДОМ СУЧАСНОГО УНІВЕРСИТЕТУ В УМОВАХ ТРАНСФОРМАЦІЙ

У статті досліджено цифрове середовище як ключовий простір управління брендом сучасного університету в умовах глибоких соціально-економічних, технологічних та інституційних трансформацій. Обґрунтовано, що цифровізація вищої освіти, глобалізація ринку освітніх послуг і посилення конкуренції між закладами вищої освіти зумовлюють необхідність переосмислення традиційних підходів до формування та управління університетським брендом. Доведено, що бренд університету в цифрову епоху формується не лише через освітні програми та наукові досягнення, а й через цифрові комунікації, онлайн-репутацію, мережеву взаємодію зі стейкхолдерами та інтеграцію в глобальний інформаційний простір. Цифрове середовище розглянуто як інтегрований управлінський простір, що поєднує стратегічне бачення, організаційну культуру, цифрові інструменти та механізми зворотного зв'язку. Зроблено висновок, що ефективне управління брендом університету в цифровому середовищі є передумовою підвищення його конкурентоспроможності, репутаційного капіталу та успішної інтеграції у міжнародний освітній простір.

Ключові слова: бренд університету, цифрове середовище, управління брендом, цифрова трансформація, заклади вищої освіти, освітній маркетинг.

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Problem statement. The modern higher education system operates in conditions of profound transformations caused by the development of digital technologies, the globalization of the educational space and the change in the role of universities in socio-economic development. Higher education institutions are increasingly acting not only as centers for training specialists and generating scientific knowledge, but also as active participants in the global market of educational and scientific services. Under such conditions, the importance of intangible assets of universities is increasing, among which the brand occupies a special place. The university brand becomes an important factor in its attractiveness for applicants, students, scientific and pedagogical workers, international partners and investors. It builds trust in the quality of education, determines the reputation of the institution in the national and international environment, and also affects the positioning of the university in global rankings. At the same time, digital transformation significantly changes the mechanisms of brand formation and management, transferring them to the plane of online communications, digital platforms and network interactions. Traditional approaches to university brand management, which were based on hierarchical models of communication and control of information flows, are increasingly proving to be insufficient. The digital environment is characterized by openness, high dynamism and the involvement of a wide range of stakeholders, each of whom can influence the perception of the university brand. This necessitates the scientific rethinking of the digital environment not only as a tool for promotion, but as a full-fledged space for managing the brand of a modern university. The relevance of the study is due to the fact that in the conditions of digital transformation, a qualitative change in the logic of brand management of higher education institutions is taking place. Increased competition in the global market of educational services, the development of distance and blended learning, the spread of international educational platforms and ratings lead to an increase in the role of digital communication channels in shaping the reputation of the university. Under such conditions, the university brand is formed not only by the efforts of the administration or marketing departments, but also in the process of constant digital interaction with various groups of stakeholders.

At the same time, in the practice of higher education management, a fragmented approach to brand management is often observed, when digital tools are used in isolation, without integration into the overall development strategy of the university. This leads to a blurring of brand identity, incoherence of communications and a decrease in the effectiveness of management decisions. The problem becomes particularly acute in the context of the transformation of the role of universities as innovative and social centers capable of influencing regional and national development.

Insufficient theoretical and methodological development of university brand management issues in the digital environment complicates the formation of holistic brand management models adapted to modern transformations. The lack of a comprehensive vision of the digital environment as a management space limits the ability of universities to effectively position themselves, form a sustainable reputation and integrate into the global educational space. In this regard, there is a need for scientific research into the digital environment as a space for brand management of a modern university.

Analysis of publications. In scientific research, the issue of the brand of higher education institutions is considered mainly within the framework of educational mar-

keting, strategic management and reputation management. Most authors emphasize that the university brand is formed through a combination of the quality of educational programs, scientific activity, organizational culture and social responsibility. At the same time, modern works increasingly emphasize the role of digitalization as a factor in the transformation of educational communications and competitive strategies of universities [1-4]. At the same time, an analysis of scientific publications shows that the digital environment is mostly considered as a set of separate tools for brand promotion, in particular official websites, social networks, online advertising and ratings [5-9]. This approach does not allow to fully reveal the managerial potential of the digital environment, since it leaves out the issue of integrating digital communications into the system of strategic brand management of the university. The role of internal stakeholders in brand formation in the digital environment, mechanisms for coordinating digital communications, and tools for assessing the effectiveness of brand management in the context of digital transformations also remain understudied. This confirms the existence of a scientific gap and the relevance of further research in this area.

Presentation of the main results. The digital transformation of the higher education system is leading to profound changes in the way universities function, their interaction with the external environment, and the formation of reputational and symbolic capital. In the conditions of the knowledge economy, the university is increasingly emerging not only as an educational and scientific institution, but as a complex socio-economic organization integrated into global information, communication, and innovation networks. Under such circumstances, the university brand is transforming from an auxiliary marketing tool into a strategic management resource that ensures trust, recognition, and long-term competitiveness of a higher education institution. In the traditional model of university development, the brand was formed mainly through academic reputation, historical heritage, quality of educational programs, and scientific achievements. These factors remain important in modern conditions, but the digital environment significantly changes the mechanisms of their perception and transmission. Information openness, the speed of content distribution and multi-channel communications lead to the fact that the university brand is formed in a constant mode of interaction with a wide range of stakeholders, including applicants, students, graduates, employers, international partners, state institutions and society in general. In this context, the digital environment ceases to be just a channel of information and acquires the features of a full-fledged brand management space. The university's digital environment should be considered as an integrated set of online platforms, information systems, digital services and communication practices, within which the formation, transmission and adjustment of brand identity takes place. It combines the official digital resources of the university with informal communicative spaces, where public opinion and reputational perceptions of the institution are formed. Under such conditions, brand management acquires a network character and requires the university not only to control messages, but also to have the ability to engage in constant dialogue, adapt and strategically align digital communications with overall development goals [1-4].

A feature of university brand management in the digital environment is the combination of strategic and operational dimensions. On the one hand, the brand should

reflect the mission, values, and long-term vision of the university's development, and on the other, be flexible and sensitive to changes in the external environment, technological trends, and expectations of target audiences. It is the digital environment that creates the conditions for such flexibility, providing real-time feedback and the ability to quickly adjust communication strategies. Brand management of a modern university in the context of digital transformation is based on a combination of organizational, communication, and technological factors. Digital tools allow integrating the educational, scientific, international, and social activities of the university into a single symbolic field, within which the brand acts as a generalized reflection of the quality and uniqueness of the institution [3-7]. At the same time, the effectiveness of such management depends on the consistency of digital initiatives between the university's structural units and their compliance with the overall brand strategy.

To summarize the transformation of approaches to university brand management in the context of digitalization, it is advisable to compare the traditional and digitally oriented brand management models, which are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Transformation of approaches to university brand management in the digital environment, suggested by the author

Comparison criterion	Traditional brand management model	Brand management in a digital environment
Logic of brand formation	Hierarchical, centralized	Networked, interactive
Main communication channels	Official publications, offline events	Digital platforms, online communications
Role of stakeholders	Passive consumers of information	Active participants in brand formation
Speed of image adjustment	Low	High, real-time
Character of reputation	Relatively stable	Dynamic, responsive to feedback

The above comparison shows that the digital environment fundamentally changes the very logic of university brand management, transforming it into an open system in which reputation processes are dynamic and multi-vector in nature. Under such conditions, the ability of the university to integrate digital communications into strategic management becomes of key importance, ensuring the integrity of the brand image and its correspondence to the real results of its activities. An important theoretical aspect is the understanding of the university brand as an intangible asset that accumulates trust, symbolic capital and social recognition. In the digital environment, this asset is constantly in the process of reproduction and transformation, since each interaction with the university's digital resources affects the perception of the brand. That is why brand management in the digital era goes beyond marketing functions and becomes a component of the overall university development management system.

In this context, it is advisable to consider the digital environment not as an external factor, but as an internal management space within which management decisions, organizational culture and strategic priorities of the university are formed. This approach allows us to move from the fragmented use of digital tools to systemic brand

management focused on long-term development and international competitiveness. Further understanding of the digital environment as a space for managing the university brand requires addressing the managerial dimension of digital transformations. In the digital age, the university brand is formed not only through communication messages, but also through managerial practices that determine the quality of digital services, the openness of management, and the level of integration of educational and scientific processes into the digital space. The digital environment becomes an environment for daily interaction of the university with its target audiences, and therefore a space for constant confirmation or, conversely, subversion of declared brand values [6-9].

University brand management in the digital environment is closely related to the processes of institutional trust. The conditions of digital transparency determine that the reputation of the university is formed on the basis not only of official information, but also of the experience of users' interaction with digital educational platforms, administrative services, electronic communications and public digital images of teachers and students. Thus, the university brand emerges as the result of consistency between strategic statements and the real quality of digital governance.

A feature of the current stage of transformation is that the digital environment integrates the internal and external contours of brand management. Internal management decisions regarding the digitalization of the educational process, the development of electronic document management, digital support for scientific research and academic mobility are directly reflected in the external brand image of the university. In the absence of systematic management, these processes can form a fragmented or contradictory image, which reduces the trust and recognition of the higher education institution at the national and international levels. The digital environment also changes the pace and nature of university brand management. If in traditional conditions the brand was formed gradually and relatively stably, then in the digital space it acquires a dynamic nature and requires continuous management support. Each event, communication or management decision can have an instant reputational effect, which increases the responsibility of the university management for the consistency of the digital strategy with brand positioning. An important aspect of brand management in the digital environment is the formation of a single management vision of the role of the brand in the development of the university. In the absence of such a vision, digital initiatives remain fragmented, and the brand remains declarative. Instead, system management involves integrating digital transformation into the overall university development strategy, where the brand acts as an indicator of the quality of management, innovation, and openness of the educational and scientific system. In this context, it is appropriate to summarize the key management mechanisms for the formation of a university brand in the digital environment, which is reflected in Fig. 1.

The above mechanisms demonstrate that university brand management in the digital environment is a multidimensional process that encompasses strategic, organizational, and institutional aspects of activity. The effectiveness of such management is determined not by the number of digital tools, but by the level of their consistency with the university's mission and values. The digital environment also creates the prerequisites for the formation of a new model of university competitiveness, in which

the brand acts as an integral indicator of the quality of educational, scientific, and management processes. Universities that are able to transform the digital environment into a space for systematic brand management gain advantages in attracting applicants, developing international partnerships, and building a sustainable academic reputation.

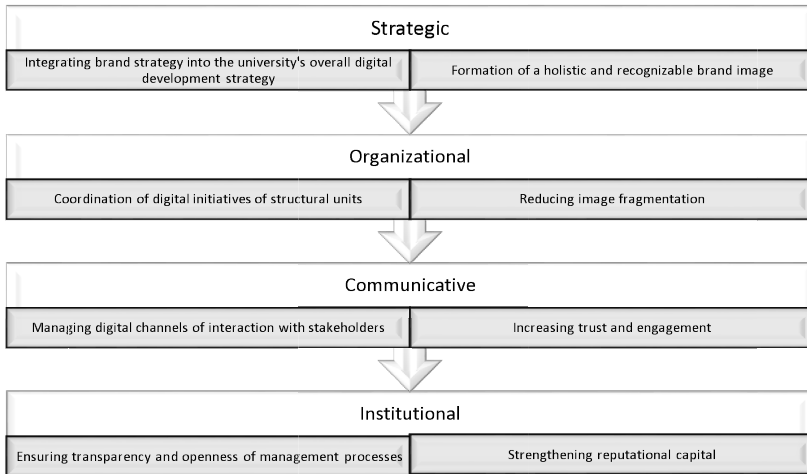


Fig. 1. Component dimensions, contents of the management mechanism and its impact on the university brand in the digital environment in the digital environment, suggested by the author

Summarizing the above, it can be argued that the digital environment in the context of modern transformations ceases to be an auxiliary element of university brand management and acquires the status of a key management space. It is in it that the combination of strategic decisions, organizational practices and communication processes takes place, which determine the socio-economic role of the university and its position in the national and global educational space. This approach creates a theoretical basis for further research into applied models of university brand management in the context of digital transformation and increased competition in the educational services market.

Conclusions. As a result of the theoretical study, it is substantiated that the digital environment in the context of modern transformations acts not only as a communication tool, but as a full-fledged space for university brand management, within which its values, reputation and competitive advantages are formed, transmitted and tested in practice. It is proven that the brand of a modern university acquires a systemic character and depends on the consistency of strategic management decisions, the quality of digital services and the level of institutional trust on the part of key stakeholders. It has been established that digital transformation changes the very logic of university brand management, transferring it from the plane of image communications to the plane of management of educational, scientific and administrative

processes. Under such conditions, the brand ceases to be exclusively the result of information policy and increasingly reflects the real state of the university's digital maturity, management efficiency and the institution's ability to adapt to dynamic changes in the educational environment.

It is substantiated that the integration of the university brand into the digital environment ensures a combination of internal and external management contours. Internal management decisions regarding the digitalization of the educational process, the development of electronic infrastructure, the support of scientific activities and the management of human capital directly affect the perception of the university in the digital space. The discrepancy between the declared brand values and the real quality of digital management practices leads to the loss of reputational capital and a decrease in trust from students, partners and society. It has been proven that effective management of the university brand in the digital environment is possible only if a holistic management approach is formed, within which the digital strategy of the university's development is consistent with its mission, strategic goals and long-term positioning. This approach allows you to transform digital tools from auxiliary means of communication into mechanisms for creating sustainable competitive advantages in the national and global educational space. It has been found that the digital environment enhances the dynamism of the university brand, which necessitates the need for continuous management monitoring, adaptation and adjustment of the brand strategy. The brand in the digital reality is formed in real time, responding to management decisions, public communications and the quality of interaction with target audiences. This increases the role of managerial responsibility and strategic coherence in the university's brand management system.

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