

Institutional Brand Reputation Management within the Higher Education Institutes

Rasha Samir¹, Yosra Sobeih²

¹ Assistant Professor in Public Relations at Gulf University and International Media Institute (Elshorouq Academy), Bahrain, dr.rasha.samir@gulfuniversity.edu.bh

² Assistant Professor, Mass Communication Department, Taibeh University, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
yosrasobeih@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT: The purpose of this paper was to reviewed a number of issues such as the concept of branding in the context of higher education, brand reputation management, and the role of the Communication Department in building the institutional reputation of the Ministry of Education. The data points to positive results for higher institutions which desire to invest and maintain strong brand identity and image given that these facets influence competition. For branding and advertising to effectively promote the image of institutions, a strategically planned branding programme is recommended to attract more constituents.

KEYWORDS: higher education institutions, brand reputation management

Introduction

Although internationalisation is not new at all to universities and higher education policies, the forces and tensions understood by the umbrella concept of globalization constitute a dramatically different environment for higher education institutions (HEIs) and policy makers to operate in.

Higher education institutions use marketing campaign to reach out to a huge number of stakeholders and the stakeholders here are the students that the university is trying to convince them to be a part of the university. Brand management affect all marketing activities of the university, and effect on consumers' decision.

Brands are used to differentiate them from competitors by showing the unique value of university services in order to increase their market share.

Brand reputation management

Reputation and brand (both) rely on strategic communications to shape people's (stakeholders') perceptions, and both share a similar goal: ensure that the appropriate audience considers the organisation and its offerings in the best possible light. Damage to one can easily weaken the other. Both are crucial-but in different way (Ettenson 2008).

Iwu-Egwuonwu (2011) has identified a set of elements for the organization's reputation:

1- Quality of employee performance: The basis of reputation lies in the quality of workers and the quality of their work behaviors, which affects reputation.

2 - Financial performance: When an organization builds itself to become financially strong and has a record of long-term profitability and clear growth prospects, its reputation grows.

3 - Quality of products and services: Organizations add value to their reputation by providing verifiable, high-quality products and services. In fact, the high quality products and services provided by organizations may be the start of the journey to gain a good reputation.

4 - Customer Orientation: The organization that generously cares for its clients, as this care translates into values added to build a castle of reputation for itself. Therefore, it is the better off organizations that provide a strong commitment to their clients.

5 - Social Responsibility: It is a reward for organizations to recognize social responsibilities and support the public interest in society. These things do not go unpaid.

6 - Ethical behavior: When an organization behaves ethically, it is admired and respected and accepted as a model of trust. This adds a lot of good image to her.

Fombrun and Van Rielm (2004, 53) believe that organizations that do a good job toward their reputation emphasize the following factors:

- Visibility and excellence: No matter how good the organization is, there is no real reputation without the emergence and spread of its name. Most analyzes confirm that knowledge of the organization or familiarity between the public and the organization affects positively its reputation, and we note this in that reputable organizations are the most visible organizations through the media, so by communicating with all stakeholders and the public, it increases the view of the organization as real and credible.
- The distinction of organizations can be achieved through the way they organize and perform their activities that distinction can be relative in that it distinguishes the organization that it enjoys relatively from other organizations and during a specific time period. It can also be that the distinction is a continuous distinction of the organization so that the distinction of the organization in a longer period of time during which none of the competitors can imitate.
- Transparency: that organizations are open and clear in their field of work, as organizations develop their reputation and are strengthened when they are transparent in the conduct of their affairs on the contrary.

Concepts of branding in Higher Education

Many HE institutions are increasingly managed in a similar manner to corporate brands (Whelan & Wohlfeil 2006; Kotler & Kotler 1998). Corporate branding requires a greater degree of sophistication in branding practices than product branding in terms of organisational structure and culture that support the meaning of the brand (Hatch & Schultz 2003).

By communicating with the markets targeted by universities, brands are used to differentiate them from competitors by showing the unique value of university services in order to increase their market share. An effective hallmark can have an immediate and emotional impact on a customer.

Branding is an idea, while branding is a "recognized image." It has identified three frameworks for the brand strategy that provides an integrative approach.

Visual: the slogan and logo are the elements we use to represent the university.

The value. Reaching users at an intellectual level through meaningful advertising effects that demonstrate the value of the services they provide.

Passion. Create specific feelings, impressions, and desires of users towards the university.

So branding is a concept that can be viewed from several angles, which group together across three dimensions:

- The brand as a system
- The brand as a means of communication
- The brand is a means of distinction and discrimination

Branding is built from some or all of the following elements: slogan, logo, colors, sound, graphics and shapes, movement or animation, words used to describe the service ... etc. The stories associated with the university and ads all consolidate and demonstrate the template that the universities decide to use.

Slogan is a key component of this brand. It should reflect the university's message and be easy to remember, as well as the university's value to its users. Slogan is a set of words used to express the purpose of the university as it is a summary of the goal of the university. The wrong choice of the university logo and slogan leaves a huge negative impact on consumers' awareness of its goals. Therefore, careful and careful selection of the university slogan must be made. Use the following questions to help to evaluate university's slogan:

- Is it easy to remember?
- Does it reflect the university's message?
- Can it create a positive emotional feeling?
- Does it reflect the personality of the university?
- Does it differentiate the university among other universities?

It is important for the logo to be effective so that customers can recognize it immediately and it is important to keep the slogan simple and at the same time attractive and striking.

Functions of branding:

- For the institution:
 - o Distinguishing the institution
 - o Market segmentation
 - o Proof of ownership
 - o Product placement relative to competing products or services
 - o Addressing attempts to imitate products
- For the consumer:
 - o Know the institution
 - o A means of communication between individuals
 - o A guarantee of product or service quality
 - o Proof of the image
 - o Represents a certain lifestyle
 - o Reduces purchasing risks

The role of media and communication in building reputation for higher education institutions

The success of governmental and private institutions does not depend on their accomplishments, if they are not able to highlight these achievements to the target groups of their audience and dealers with them through the presentation of the services provided, development and follow-up programs, and the consolidation of links with various means of communication, and thus constitute a link of communication and active communication, and an interaction tool inside and outside the organization.

The Media and Communication Department is one of the vital departments working in cooperation with other departments in building the reputation of the organization, and is assigned to it vital roles related to highlighting the bright image of the institution and the services it provides to its community, which in turn reflects positively on improving its institutional reputation.

The most frequently used reform strategy is to reduce the media and communication department from the size of the problem, and to reduce it in the event of crises facing the Ministry, which supports the building and consolidation of the institutional identity of the Ministry of Education.

Where higher education institutions can communicate with their audiences to adopt a good reputation through offering services provided, development and follow-up programs, and strengthening links with various means of communication, and thus constitute a communication link and active communication, and a tool of interaction within and outside the institution.

Considering that the media and communication are vital departments that work in cooperation with other departments in building the reputation of the organization, and are assigned to them vital roles related to highlighting the bright image of the institution and the services it provides to its society, which in turn reflects positively on improving its institutional reputation.

Conclusion

Overall, branding and reputation is the important issue for all universities. Knowledge does not exist in a vacuum and one's work only has value in relation to other people. One's work and findings will be significant only to the extent that they are the same as, or as different from, other people's work and findings (Jankowicz 2000, 128). Importantly, the review of works from a variety of perspectives indicates that work on brand reputation management has not been widely looked at. It appears there is limited work highlighting the relationship between brand reputation management and brand value on one hand and the development of brand reputation management strategy on the other hand. Okano *et al.* (1999), Michell *et al.* (2001) and Davies and Chun (2002) attempted to address the relationship between these constructs but they appear to have done so without any sound empirical evidence explicating the relationship between these constructs. Also, institutions should make more use of the media and social media that would achieve greater communication with the external public, and intensify the beneficiaries' awareness of the activities and services provided.

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