Image and reputation formation conceptualization of higher education institution

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Abstract

Paper analyses situation of the higher education image and reputation in Lithuania. It examines various aspects of image and reputation of the concept of disclosure of the key factors influencing the higher education institution’s image and reputation. It distinguishes means forming the image and reputation of today’s higher education.

Keywords: image, reputation, image and reputation of higher education, forming means

1 Introduction

With the increasing competition in the country and the pressure from the international space, the image and, in particular, reputation of higher education institutions becomes crucial for their successful functioning or even survival. It often happens that, if the image and reputation of an organization is not formed purposefully, they form spontaneously in the unconscious mind of the consumers and are usually different from the expectations of the organization. In response to the changing situation, the national higher education institutions are using the marketing communication more and more aggressively, trying to reach the most important stakeholders - students, teachers, researchers, partners and public authorities [1].

Positive image and reputation of an education institution are not random; they are created, achieved and also managed. Efficient management of image and reputation can change the undesirable or reinforce the positive attitude of consumers: in this manner, the organization becomes more visible, more attractive and more desirable. The understanding of the importance of the image and reputation formation is slightly less developed in the field of higher education than in business in Lithuania. Therefore, those institutions that are not concerned with their image may lose a significant share of their interested persons, because image and reputation formation becomes random and reducing its exclusivity [2].

Thus, the problematization is expressed in the following questions: what factors determine the image and reputation of higher education institutions? What measures are recommended for the formation of image and reputation of higher education institutions?

The object of the research: Higher education institution image and reputation formation process.

The aim of the research: to develop a conceptual model of higher education institution image and reputation formation based on the identified factors of higher education institution image and reputation formation.

The tasks of the research:
1. To analyze the concepts of image and reputation and to provide the characteristics of higher education institution image and reputation.
2. To identify the factors having an impact on the image and reputation of higher education institutions.
3. To provide possible measures recommended for the formation of the image and reputation of higher education institution.

The methods of the research: a systematic comparative analysis of scientific literature, content analysis.

2 Research results: the concept of image and reputation

In summary it can be stated that the corporate image forms instantly, when an interested person contacts the company; meanwhile, reputation is a result of images created over a certain period of time. Therefore, corporate reputation may be defined as the whole of values that groups of interested persons assign to an organization through authentic perception and interpretation of a communicated corporate image. Corporate image and reputation is a strategic asset and a source of a competitive advantage of a company. Positive corporate image and reputation are important factors showing and giving the exclusivity of a company among other organizations, informing the society about the reliability and trustworthiness of an organization, adding corporate value, helping to attract material and non-material resources, when an organization is dealing with crisis, holding public initiatives, striving for recognition in the society. Corporate image and reputation create favourable environment for the development of an organization; thus, a purposeful and targeted forming of corporate image and reputation is necessary. Image and reputation formation models have a special significance: they reveal a process that is quite complicated and sometimes hard to identify, which leads to inadequate solution of image and reputation management issues. The development of image and reputation formation model and complementing its content with information about organization is a clear identification of a corporate image and corporate reputation to the target groups of the society [3, 4].
3 Research results: The peculiarities of image and reputation of higher education and its institutions

Higher education institution is a more complex organization than any other education institution. Higher education institutions are more attached to the traditions. Their prestige is directly related to the continuation of the traditions. Nowadays it is not enough merely to publish scientific achievements or to guarantee high quality of studies. The activities of higher education institution may not be limited to student preparation for labour market; it is also necessary to analyze the needs of the society and its specific groups, to look for ways to meet those needs and to train the students. The image of a higher education institution is important when looking for funding and partnership with other higher education institutions. In order to be able to implement such needs, a higher education institution must look for ways how to achieve this, how to attract the society, to win positive attitude of the audiences, so as to develop a good image and reputation [5].

In summary it can be said that higher education has become a mass phenomenon in Lithuania, thus, higher education is losing its image and reputation in the society. In fierce competition between the higher education institutions, it is important to ensure as positive an image and reputation in the society, as possible, because the financial situation, the number of students and partnership relations with other institutions will depend on this.

4 Research results: The factors forming the image and reputation of higher education institutions

The following groups of factors forming the image and reputation of higher education institutions may be listed among the min ones: personal-demographic (geographical position of school, demographic development, personal references, etc.), environmental (rating, general education policy, type of institution, social peculiarities, technological progress or public policy, economical development, etc.) and organizational factors (complexity of entrance examinations, size of libraries, exterior and interior of the institutions, study programmes, sports teams, internal atmosphere, etc.). Organization may not have any influence on the first two groups of factors or control them; it can only observe them and try to adapt to them in a timely manner [6].

5 Research results: A conceptual model of higher education institution image and reputation formation

The model consists of three stages and steps:

I stage is the forming the individuality of a college. Three steps are necessary during this stage: 1) to create philosophy of a college; 2) to formulate the values; and 3) to define the mission of the college.

II stage is the substantiation of the strategy of a college. The stage consists of three steps: 1) to define the vision of a college; 2) to update the study programmes; and 3) to develop the provided education services.

III stage is focused on the strengthening of the identity of a college. This stage is implemented in three steps: 1) to provide proper conditions for the professional development of the lecturers; 2) to identify the symbols, traditions and ceremonies of a college; and 3) to prepare communication systems.

The main factors forming the image and reputation of a college are included in the model: comments about college in a public space, the quality of the provided services, competent lecturers, innovative study programmes, credibility and notoriety of college.

In summary, it can be stated that college image and reputation formation model provided by the authors is universal and can be used in many similar higher education institutions. However, each organization should assess and identify the main stages of a model and its component parts according to its needs, as each one of them can define their individuality and identity by different factors forming their organizational culture.

References


FIGURE 1 Higher education institution (college) image and reputation formation model

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