



BUILDING SCIENTIFIC INSTITUTION'S BRAND WITH ONLINE INSTRUMENTS



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Barbara Mróz-Gorgoń, Ph.D.

Wrocław University of Economics, Poland
e-mail: barbara.mroz-gorgon@ue.wroc.pl

Aleksandra Całka, M.Sc.

Wrocław University of Economics, Poland
e-mail: aleksandra.calka@ue.wroc.pl

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Summary

The brand image is fundamental for the scientific institution. In the high- competitive market the brand may have a significant impact on students decisions but also the decisions made by other stakeholders. The usage of online tools in creating brands and the brand awareness is standard nowadays and is present in many business strategies. The aim of the article is to present the problem on the example of scientific institutions. Based on literature review and empirical study the authors described the usage of most popular online tools in creating the scientific institutions' brands.

Keywords: brand online, online tools, brand image, university brand, scientific institution

Introduction

The brand of a scientific institution may be decisive as to its competitive advantage on the market. The brand creation problem and its impact on client behaviours is a frequently discussed and investigated topic by researchers from all over the world.

The number of students in Poland has changed over the course of 30 years. There was a surge in the number of students in the 1990s, where there were almost 2 million of them. The number of persons in higher education has been falling from that time. According to projections, this number is set to continue dropping to 1.3 million in 2023. (Ministry of Science and Higher Education, 2013).

The article sets out to analyse the ways in which online instruments are used in the branding of scientific research centres based on the example of 6 scientific institutions from 3 different countries. Two schools from Poland, two from the Czech Republic and two from Latvia were analysed in the study. Two research questions were posed:

- How do universities employ online instruments in the brand creation process?
- Are there any differences between schools in terms of their use of online instruments in branding and if so, what are they?

In order to find the answers to these questions, a literature analysis was conducted which was accompanied by own research in the form of a comparative analysis of the instruments used by the studied scientific institutes.

Brand Creation

An analysis of the instruments used in brand creation should start from considering the essence of a brand and its identity. The identity of the brand is comprised of its specific set of features and attributes of the broadcaster through the prism of which it wants to be perceived by the surroundings, and which form a specific background or context for the marketing communication process. The identity is comprised of the following: philosophy, history, culture, strategy, management style, reputation, and the behaviours of employee and other representatives of the enterprise (Szwacka-Mokrzycka, 2010, pp. 281-

282). The defining of a brand's own identity is vital for the creation of a competitive advantage on the market (Altkorn, 2002, p. 7).

According to D. Dolak, the identity of a brand is comprised of its brand recognition and brand recall (Dolak, 2008). However, for Chen and Green, consumer contact with the brand is not based on marketing and on the product but on the relationship between them (Chen & Green, 2009, p. 22).

There are many tools supporting the brand creation process. In an age of the rapidly spreading Internet use, the most popular instruments are: websites, social networking sites and mobile applications. D. Kaznowski (Królewski, 2013) define social media as "a manner of communicating that can be used on any scale and contains both the message content and possible points of reference." In the view of A. Kaplan and M. Haenlein, it is a "group of internet applications that are based on ideological and technological assumptions of Web 2.0."

Branding is an on-going process that adapts to new conditions present in the environment. The turbulent environment has induced entrepreneurs to gain more insightful knowledge of their clients, to analyse their behaviour and needs as well as provide the market with a brand with which they would want to have the described earlier relationship. This applies to many markets and sectors. The authors analysed the instruments used in creating the brands of scientific institutions.

Results of own research

The authors conducted a comparative analysis of higher education institutions in three European cities: Poland, the Czech Republic and Latvia. Both private and public schools were included in the sample. The private universities included: Koźmiński University in Warsaw (ALK), VSO University of Business in Prague (VSO), and RISEBA in Riga (RISEBA). The following were analysed from among public universities: The Wrocław University of Economy (UE), VŠB — The Technical University of Ostrava in Ostrava (VŠB), and EKA — The University College of Economics and Culture (EKA). All the analysed higher educational institutions offer degree courses in economics. The authors checked the instruments used by the mentioned schools, in particular the following: possession of a website, use of social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Vimeo, Google+, YouTube, VK, Instagram, GoldenLine, Flickr, and draugiem.tv), and the possession of a mobile application and use of other instruments.

A website is the most popular instrument used by brands to communicate with clients and shape their image. Based on Table 1, all the analysed brands of higher education institutions have their own websites.

Table 1. Use of websites by analysed brands

Brand	Website address	Does it have a website?
Wroclaw University of Economics	http://www.ue.wroc.pl/	YES
VŠB — Technical University of Ostrava	http://www.vsb.cz/cs/	YES
EKA — The University College of Economics and Culture	http://www.eka.edu.lv/content.php?parent=91&lng=eng	YES
Koźmiński University in Warsaw	http://www.kozminski.edu.pl/pl/	YES
RISEBA	http://www.riseba.lv/en/	YES
VSO University of Business in Prague	http://www.vso.cz/en/	YES

Source: Own study.

The website of the Wrocław University of Economics contains information on the University itself, its structure, units, the offer of first, second and third cycle studies, as well as courses in English, MBA courses, the Children's University of Economics, and the University of the Third Age. Users can also find out about cooperation with businesses and the international environment, scientific conferences, and the "Kuźnia Kadr" staff training projects or the Erasmus + programme that are run. Each group of students also has access to select data relevant to the given group. These groups include: university candidates, students, doctoral students, graduates, employees, and businesses. The main page also contains links to social media: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, GoldenLine, LinkedIn, and Google+. The lower part of the page contains news, current affairs and upcoming events. The dominant colours on the website are: yellow, black and red.

The VŠB — Technical University of Ostrava website provides information concerning the University, its faculties, departments and

international collaboration, as well as international student programmes and a student exchange offer. A separate tab contains news and current affairs. There is also information about the school's collaboration with businesses, the research conducted at the school and the organised conferences. There also is a separate section for graduates.

Scientific institutions are also showing increased interest in the use of social media. Table 2 presents a list of social networking sites used by the studied schools in their communication with stakeholders.

Table 2. Use of social networking sites by the studied brands

	UE	VŠB	EKA	ALK	RISEBA	VSO
FB	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Twitter	YES		YES	YES	v	
LinkedIn	YES	YES	YES	YES		
Vimeo				YES		
Google+	YES			YES		
YouTube		YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
VK				YES		
Instagram	YES		YES			
GoldenLine	YES					
Flickr			YES			
Draugiem		YES				

Source: Own study.

Based on the results entailed in Table 2, the most frequently used social networking site by the university brands is Facebook. The least prevalent were sites like Draugiem.tv¹ — a social networking site in Lithuania, which is commonly used as a means of communication that is replacing e-mails, Flickr² — a site for uploading and posting digital photographs, GoldenLine³ — a social networking portal aimed at developing business and professional, VK⁴ — a Russian social networking site corresponding to Facebook, and Vimeo — a site for posting videos. Another aspect worth noting is that private schools use more social networking portals (15 — private schools, 13 — public schools).

Despite Facebook being the most popular among the studied scientific institutions, the extent to which this instrument is used and the communities built around the brand vary from school to school. Table 3 shows the number of followers of given brands on the website.

Table 3. Number of followers of studied brands on FB on 15.11.2015

Brand	No. of followers
Wrocław University of Economics	19 765
VŠB — Technical University of Ostrava	7 232
EKA — The University College of Economics and Culture	945
Koźmiński University in Warsaw	13 831
RISEBA	4 408
VSO University of Business in Prague	4 849

Source: Own study.

Schools usually post information concerning the recruitment process, student events, projects performed jointly with businesses as well as other facts of potential interest to students (e.g. exam sessions, parties, etc.) on Facebook. Competitions are also not uncommon. Photos and posts directed at other clients apart from students (e.g. invitations to conferences or debates, etc.) are much less frequent.

Apart from the Wrocław University of Economics, all the studied brands also use the YouTube site in creating their image. The VŠB — Technical University of Ostrava has been posting films on its channel for over 4 years now. These include films presenting the university, coverage of cultural events and conferences, interviews with students, lecturers and special guests. The EKA — The University College of Economics and Culture has been posting films for 6 years, while the Koźmiński University in Warsaw has been doing so for somewhat less — for 5 years. The films are similar in nature although some also provide coverage of anniversaries, lectures of specially invited guests and student profiles.

Another eagerly used instrument is Twitter. This application is for microblogging, which comprises of posting content of up to 140 characters. Table 4 shows the number of followers and the number of tweets of specific brands.

Table 4. Number of followers and number of tweets on brand profiles on Twitter

Brand	No. of followers	No. of tweets
Wrocław University of Economics	757	308
VŠB — Technical University of Ostrava	—	—
EKA — The University College of Economics and Culture	819	1 568
Koźmiński University in Warsaw	665	1 405
RISEBA	1 869	7 107
VSO University of Business in Prague	—	—

Source: Own study.

On the basis of the information provided in Table 4, the most active brands on Twitter is RISEBA. It not only posts text content but also films and photographs. The posted content concerns upcoming events and events in progress, interesting lectures, sports competitions and links to other content (e.g. posted by graduates).

Instagram is only used by scientific institutions in Poland. They post photos of university buildings and campuses, events organised at the school, invitations to events⁵, motivational quotes⁶, as well as video clips. The nature of this material is significantly less formal and the content is directed mainly at students.

Schools are also searching for instruments that would help make their brand distinguishable from among the competition, e.g. the University of Economics runs an e-shop called Profit⁷, where the students can buy gadgets with the University logo, as well as any literature required in learning. EKA also has its own blog called "Student Life"⁸, the Koźmiński University in Warsaw offers its users support in the form of a Virtual Assistant⁹ as well as purchases at the "Koźmiński Boutique"¹⁰, or content in the Students Blog¹¹. The Koźmiński Boutique is the place where branded Akademia products can be purchased. RISEBA has "Students Life", and VSO conducts the Blog¹².

The online instruments harnessed by the schools also include mobile applications. The Koźmiński University offers a mobile app to its staff and students which contains current affairs, events and job posts. Moreover, students can also manage the course of their studies via an app which uses their timetable or electronic course record book¹³.

The authors also analysed colour codes used in branding by the online instruments. Table 5 presents a list of colours used by relevant schools.

Table 5. Colour coding used by the studied scientific institutions

EU	VŠB	EKA	ALK	VSO	RISEBA
- red - yellow - black	- orange - green	-			

Wroclaw University of Economics	
VŠB – Technical University of Ostrava	
EKA - The University College of Economics and Culture	
Koźmiński University in Warsaw	
RISEBA	
VSO University of Business in Prague	

Table 5 Colour coding used by the studied scientific institutions

Source: Own study.

The information contained in Table 5 reveals evident similarities in the colour codes of private and public schools. Private higher education institution used blue colours more often. The colours are more subdued, monochromatic and cool. Public scientific institutions, however, use a wider spectrum of colours. The colours are also warmer. Shades of yellow, orange and red appear.

Podsumowanie

A higher education institution is a place with which people bond for many years. In the context of LLL (lifelong learning), children have the first contact with schools. Then, the children decide which school they want to attend, the university where they will spend the next 5 years of their life, the place where they will broaden their horizons, skills and knowledge at third-cycle studies, post-graduate courses or MBAs. The presence of seniors participating in third-cycle studies is also becoming more prevalent. This is why creating a brand that clients will identify with may be the decisive factors in terms of gaining a competitive advantage.

The analyses performed by the authors have helped to identify the differences in the deployment of online instruments in branding. The extent that certain instruments (such as social networking sites) have been used shows that scientific institutions employ diverse strategies to create their brands. Differences between public and private schools are also visible.

The study was qualitative in nature and requires further exploration; however, research outcomes have confirmed the pertinence of the undertaken issue as well as its importance in the context of scientific institution brand image building.

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- ⁶ <https://www.instagram.com/kozminskiuniversity/> z dnia 15.11.2015
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- ⁹ <http://www.kozminski.edu.pl/pl/> z dnia 15.11.2015
- ¹⁰ <http://kozminski.shoplo.com/#modal> z dnia 15.11.2015
- ¹¹ <http://www.studentsinwarsaw.com/> z dnia 15.11.2015
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Barbara Mróz-Gorgoń, PhD., University of Economics in Wrocław, Poland — an academic passionate about branding, fashion and design marketing. She specializes in brand image. Since 2012 — an Assistant Professor in the Department of Fundamentals of Marketing at the Institute of Marketing at the University of Economics in Wrocław. She published many articles and her research areas are: management and marketing, including- brand strategies, branding, and new trends and challenges in strategies of marketing and management. Editor of Wrocław University of Economics Scientific Journals. She graduated from Wrocław University of Economics and the University of Wrocław, where she completed postgraduate studies in Journalism and PR. Lector of Summer School Poland (Wrocław University of Economics). She is also a Supervisor of Students' Marketing and Management Association — proMOTION — which operates under Department of Marketing Fundamentals, Faculty of Economic Sciences, Wrocław University of Economics (since 2013). She participated in many international conferences and trips Erasmus, in countries such as m.in.: United Kingdom, Czech Republic, Portugal, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania and Thailand.

Aleksandra Całka, M.Sc., University of Economics in Wrocław, Poland — The courses: e-commerce, e-business, branding, foundations of marketing, management training and others. Conducted trainings for middle and high-ranking management personnel in the field of online marketing communications, ecommerce as well as branding creation in the Internet. She is a market researcher and business practitioner, for 5 years has been running her own business. Passionate about new technologies and their usage in the creation of the brand.