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**MANAGEMENT APPROACHES TO UNIVERSITY BRAND  
DEVELOPMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF DIGITAL CHANGE**

*The article explores management approaches to university brand development in the context of digital change, covering the transformation of the educational environment, communication practices and mechanisms of interaction of higher education institutions with key stakeholders. It is substantiated that digital transformation changes the traditional understanding of the university brand, transforming it from a tool of reputational positioning into a comprehensive management resource of strategic development. It is shown that the university brand is formed in the digital environment as a result of the coordinated action of strategic, institutional and communication decisions aimed at ensuring the quality of education, innovation and openness of the educational space. It is proven that university brand management in the context of digital change requires the integration of digital technologies into the strategic management system, the development of internal branding, strengthening the role of human capital and the formation of the digital identity of a higher education institution. It has been established that the effectiveness of a university brand is determined not only by its academic reputation, but also by the institution's ability to adapt to the dynamics of a digital society, to ensure transparent communication, and to build trust with internal and external audiences. The article focuses on the adaptive nature of university brand management in the context of digital change, which necessitates a flexible response to the transformation of the education market, international competition, and changing expectations of consumers of educational services. It is substantiated that the development of a university brand in a digital environment creates the prerequisites for increasing its competitiveness, strengthening institutional sustainability, and forming long-term strategic advantages in the national and global educational space.*

**Keywords:** university brand, brand management, digital change, digital transformation, higher education institutions, strategic management, competitiveness.

**Fig. 2. Lit. 9.**

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**Світлана В. Бєбко, Ганна С. Поповиченко, Роман В. Демченко**  
**УПРАВЛІНСЬКІ ПІДХОДИ ДО РОЗВИТКУ БРЕНДУ**  
**УНІВЕРСИТЕТУ В УМОВАХ ЦИФРОВИХ ЗМІН**

*У статті досліджено управлінські підходи до розвитку бренду університету в умовах цифрових змін, що охоплюють трансформацію освітнього середовища, комунікаційних практик та механізмів взаємодії закладів вищої освіти з ключовими стейкхолдерами. Обґрунтовано, що цифрова трансформація змінює традиційне розуміння бренду університету, перетворюючи його з інструменту репутаційного позиціонування на комплексний управлінський ресурс стратегічного розвитку. Показано, що бренд університету формується в цифровому середовищі як результат узгодженої дії стратегічних, інституційних і комунікаційних рішень, спрямованих на забезпечення якості освіти, інноваційності та відкритості освітнього простору. Доведено, що управління брендом університету в умовах цифрових змін потребує інтеграції цифрових технологій у систему стратегічного управління, розвитку внутрішнього брендингу,*

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*посилення ролі людського капіталу та формування цифрової ідентичності закладу вищої освіти. Встановлено, що ефективність бренду університету визначається не лише академічною репутацією, а й здатністю інституції адаптуватися до динаміки цифрового суспільства, забезпечувати прозору комунікацію та формувати довіру з боку внутрішніх і зовнішніх аудиторій. Акцентовано увагу на адаптивному характері управління брендом університету в умовах цифрових змін, що зумовлює необхідність гнучкого реагування на трансформації освітнього ринку, міжнародну конкуренцію та зміну очікувань споживачів освітніх послуг. Обґрунтовано, що розвиток бренду університету в цифровому середовищі створює передумови для підвищення його конкурентоспроможності, зміцнення інституційної стійкості та формування довгострокових стратегічних переваг у національному та глобальному освітньому просторі.*

*Ключові слова:* бренд університету, управління брендом, цифрові зміни, цифрова трансформація, заклади вищої освіти, стратегічне управління, конкурентоспроможність.

**Problem statement.** Modern higher education institutions operate in conditions of profound digital changes, covering all areas of their activity – from the educational process and scientific research to management, communications and positioning in a competitive educational environment. Digital transformation entails a change in the models of interaction of universities with students, applicants, the scientific community, employers and international partners, which significantly increases the importance of the university brand as a strategic intangible asset. In these conditions, the brand ceases to perform exclusively an image function and acquires the features of a comprehensive management tool capable of influencing the sustainability, competitiveness and long-term development of a higher education institution.

The relevance of the problem of university brand management is increasing due to increased competition in the global and national markets of educational services, the expansion of digital educational platforms, the internationalization of education and the growth of student and faculty mobility. In the digital environment, universities compete not only for the quality of educational programs, but also for the attention, trust, and loyalty of target audiences, which are formed through digital communication channels, online reputation, and public presence on the network. Under such conditions, traditional approaches to brand formation, focused mainly on external attributes and marketing communications, are insufficient. Digital changes are transforming the very nature of the university brand, as it is increasingly formed in the virtual space through the integration of digital services, educational technologies, scientific openness, and social activity. At the same time, the lack of systematic brand management in the digital environment leads to fragmented communications, a gap between declared values and the real experience of stakeholders, a decrease in trust in the university, and a loss of competitive positions. This problem is especially acute in the context of transformations of the education system, when universities are forced to simultaneously ensure the quality of education, digital adaptation, and international attractiveness.

The insufficient development of management approaches to the development of the university brand in the context of digital changes determines the need for a scientific understanding of this process as a component of the strategic management of a higher education institution. There is an objective need to rethink the role of the university brand, taking into account the impact of digital transformation on organiza-

tional culture, human capital management, communication strategies and mechanisms for reputation formation. In this context, the problem of forming an integrated model of university brand management, capable of ensuring the consistency of strategic goals, digital tools and value orientations of development, is becoming more relevant. Thus, the study of management approaches to the development of the university brand in the context of digital changes is an urgent scientific and practical task, which is of great importance for increasing the competitiveness of higher education institutions, strengthening their institutional sustainability and forming long-term advantages in the digital educational space.

**Analysis of publications.** The issue of university brand management has gradually emerged at the intersection of strategic management theory, educational services marketing, institutional economics, and digital transformation research. In scientific works, the university brand is traditionally considered as a tool for building a reputation, increasing the attractiveness of educational programs, and attracting applicants, but in the current conditions of digital change, this approach is undergoing a significant rethinking. A significant part of the research is devoted to revealing the essence of the brand of a higher education institution as an intangible asset that accumulates educational quality, scientific potential, social responsibility, and cultural identity of the university. The authors emphasize that the university brand is formed not only through marketing communications, but also through internal management processes, organizational culture, and personnel behavior. In this context, the brand is considered as a reflection of the values and strategic priorities of a higher education institution [1-5].

At the same time, in works devoted to the digital transformation of education, the emphasis is placed on changing learning formats, the development of online education, the use of digital platforms and data analytics. Researchers emphasize that the digital environment creates new channels of communication between the university and stakeholders, changes the expectations of consumers of educational services and increases the role of online reputation. However, in many works, digitalization is considered mainly as a technological process, without sufficient connection with issues of strategic brand management. A separate scientific direction is focused on the analysis of the competitiveness of universities in the global educational space. In these studies, the university brand is interpreted as a factor of international attractiveness, which affects positions in world rankings, academic mobility and the attraction of foreign students. At the same time, in such works, brand management is often reduced to external positioning, while the internal management mechanisms of brand formation in the digital environment remain insufficiently disclosed [4-9]. In modern research, there is a tendency to consider the university brand as a dynamic system that evolves under the influence of digital changes, social transformations and institutional reforms. The authors emphasize the need to integrate branding strategies with digital strategies for the development of higher education institutions, as well as the importance of involving staff and students in the brand formation process. However, these approaches are mostly conceptual in nature and are not always accompanied by clear management models.

An analysis of scientific publications shows that the issue of management approaches to the development of the university brand in the context of digital

changes remains fragmented. Existing research either focuses on the marketing aspects of branding or analyzes the digital transformation of education without taking into account its impact on the brand as a strategic resource. Insufficient attention is paid to the systemic combination of management, digital and institutional factors in the development of the university brand. Thus, the existing scientific literature forms a theoretical basis for the study of the university brand, but does not provide a comprehensive vision of managerial approaches to its development in the context of digital changes. This necessitates further research aimed at substantiating integrated models of university brand management that take into account the impact of the digital environment, the transformation of educational processes, and the strategic goals of the development of higher education institutions.

**Presentation of the main results.** The development of a university brand in the context of digital changes should be considered as a complex management process that takes place within the framework of the transformation of the entire higher education system. The digital environment significantly changes not only the channels of communication of the university with stakeholders, but also the very logic of brand formation as an intangible strategic resource. If in the traditional model the university brand was formed gradually through academic reputation, historical heritage and stability of educational practices, then in the digital era it acquires a dynamic character and requires constant management support. Digital changes lead to a shift in emphasis in university brand management from exclusively external positioning to internal consistency of management decisions, educational processes and digital communication. The brand ceases to be just a marketing tool and is transformed into a reflection of the university's ability to adapt to changes, integrate digital technologies into teaching and research activities, and form an innovative educational environment. In this context, university brand management should be considered as an element of strategic management of the development of a higher education institution [3-6].

In the context of digital change, the university operates in a multi-channel information space, where reputation is formed not only through official messages, but also through digital traces of educational activities, academic platforms, social networks, online interaction with students and graduates. This necessitates a transition from fragmented management decisions to systemic management approaches focused on long-term brand development. Brand management in such conditions involves aligning the university's strategic goals with digital tools for their implementation and with the expectations of key stakeholder groups. A feature of the current stage is that the university brand is formed simultaneously in physical and digital environments, which mutually reinforce or, conversely, neutralize each other. Management decisions regarding the digitalization of educational programs, the development of distance learning, and the use of educational platforms directly affect the perception of the university brand as innovative or conservative. Thus, university brand management in the context of digital change takes on the character of an integrated process that combines educational, scientific, communication and managerial components [1-4].

From the perspective of a managerial approach, it is advisable to consider the development of a university brand as a consistent transformation of managerial func-

tions in a digital environment. Brand planning in the context of digital change involves the formation of a clear identity of the university, taking into account its mission, values and strategic development priorities. The organizational aspect of brand management is associated with the creation of internal mechanisms for coordinating digital communications, educational innovations and scientific activity. The motivational component consists in involving staff and students in the formation of a positive image of the university in the digital environment, while the control function ensures monitoring the effectiveness of branding decisions.

Fig. 1 summarizes the managerial aspects of the development of a university brand in the context of digital change, which allows us to systematize the impact of the digital environment on managerial processes (Fig. 1).



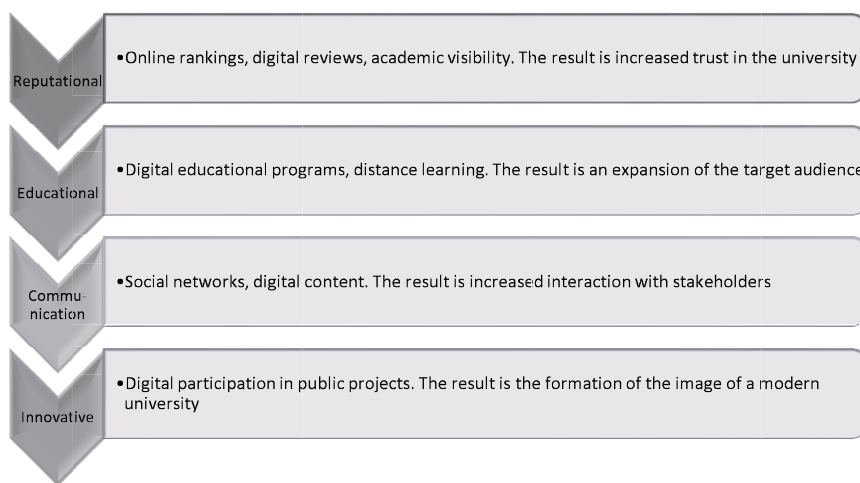
**Fig. 1. Management aspects of university brand development in the context of digital change, own development**

Further deepening of management approaches to university brand development is associated with the need to take into account institutional and social changes that accompany the digital transformation of education. The university is increasingly viewed not only as an educational institution, but as an active participant in the digital knowledge economy that forms human capital and influences regional development. Under such conditions, the university brand acquires the function of a social marker of the quality of education and scientific capacity. The digital environment also changes the nature of competition between universities. If earlier competition was mainly local or national in nature, today universities compete in the global digital space. Brand management in this context requires taking into account international standards, academic rankings and the university's digital presence on global educational platforms. This strengthens the importance of a systemic management approach to brand development focused on long-term competitiveness [5-9].

In Fig. 2 presents a generalized description of the impact of digital changes on the key components of the university brand, which allows us to reveal the mechanisms of managerial influence in modern conditions.

Thus, managing the development of a university brand in the context of digital change is a multidimensional process that requires the integration of strategic, organizational and communication management decisions. The digital environment not only expands the possibilities of branding, but also increases the requirements for the

consistency of management approaches, which determines the need to form a holistic model of university brand management in modern conditions. Further development of management approaches to the university brand in the digital environment should be considered through the prism of the transformation of the management logic of a higher education institution. Digital changes lead to a transition from a hierarchical management model to a more flexible, network model, within which the brand is formed as a result of the interaction of various internal and external actors. The university brand in such conditions ceases to be a centrally managed object and acquires the features of a dynamic system that is constantly reproduced through digital practices of educational, scientific and communication activities [6-9].



**Fig. 2. The impact of digital changes on the components of the university brand: a brand component – manifestation in the digital environment, own development**

In the context of digital change, the importance of institutional consistency in university brand management increases. Any digital initiative – from the introduction of online courses to the use of educational data analytics – directly affects the perception of the university in the information space. This means that management decisions in the field of digitalization cannot be considered in isolation from the brand strategy. On the contrary, they should be integrated into a single university development management system, where the brand performs the function of an integrator of strategic changes. The digital environment forms new requirements for the authenticity of the university brand. In the modern information space, consumers of educational services are increasingly critical of the discrepancy between the declared values of the university and the real digital practices of its activities. This actualizes the management approach focused on the internal consistency of the brand, when educational programs, scientific research, communication with students and management decisions are coordinated with each other and form a holistic brand image. Thus, the university brand becomes an indicator of the quality of digital change management.

An important characteristic of the current stage is the growing role of data in university brand management. Digital tools allow you to collect and analyze information about the behavior of applicants, students, graduates and partners, which creates opportunities for more informed management decisions. At the same time, this changes the approaches to assessing brand effectiveness: instead of purely reputational indicators, digital metrics of engagement, recognition and loyalty are becoming increasingly important. University brand management in this context turns into a process of continuous analysis and adaptation. The relationship between the university brand and the digital culture of the organization deserves special attention. Digital changes affect not only the external image of a higher education institution, but also internal management practices, leadership style and interaction between structural units. Brand formation in the context of digital transformation is impossible without developing a culture of openness, innovation and readiness for change. A management approach that ignores these aspects leads to formal branding that is not confirmed in the real processes of the university's activities.

Digital changes also intensify competition between universities for the attention and trust of target audiences. In such conditions, the university brand becomes a strategic reference point that allows differentiating a higher education institution in an oversaturated information space. Brand management ceases to be reactive and becomes proactive, focused on forming a unique value proposition of the university. This requires management structures to be able to predict changes in the educational environment and timely adjust the brand strategy. In the context of digital changes, the importance of external partnerships in the development of the university brand is increasing. Cooperation with business, government bodies, international educational platforms and scientific networks expands the university's brand presence and strengthens its reputational capital. Managing such partnerships requires a systemic approach, as each form of interaction in the digital space affects the perception of the university as a reliable and innovative institutional partner.

Thus, the development of the university brand in the context of digital change should be considered as a multi-level management process that encompasses strategic vision, organizational culture, digital tools and institutional interaction. Management approaches to the brand in modern conditions should be focused not only on communication, but also on a deep transformation of the university's internal processes. It is this integration of management decisions that creates the prerequisites for the formation of a sustainable, authentic and competitive university brand in the digital age.

**Conclusions.** The conducted research allows us to conclude that the development of the university brand in the context of digital changes acquires a systemic managerial character and goes beyond the traditional marketing interpretation. The digital environment transforms the very logic of the functioning of higher education institutions, as a result of which the university brand is formed as a result of the interaction of strategic decisions, digital practices, organizational culture and institutional behavior in the information space. In such conditions, the brand acts not only as a communication tool, but also as an integral indicator of the quality of university management in the digital era. It has been established that managerial approaches to the development of the university brand in the context of digital changes should be based

on the consistency between internal transformations and external positioning. An effective brand is formed provided that the declared values correspond to real digital practices of educational, scientific and managerial activities. This means that the digitalization of educational processes, the use of data analytics, the development of online communications and partner networks should be integrated into a single system of strategic brand management.

It is proven that digital changes enhance the role of adaptability of management decisions in the formation of the university brand. In conditions of high dynamics of the information environment, the brand cannot be considered as a static category, but appears as a dynamic construction that requires constant updating and adjustment in accordance with changes in the requests of target audiences, educational technologies and the competitive environment. University brand management acquires the features of a continuous process focused on monitoring, analysis and forecasting digital trends. It is substantiated that the key factor in the sustainable development of the university brand in the digital environment is the formation of an appropriate organizational culture focused on innovation, openness and readiness for change. It is the internal ability of the university to adapt to digital transformations that determines the authenticity of the brand and the level of trust from stakeholders. A formal approach to branding without deep management changes does not provide long-term competitive advantages and reduces the effectiveness of digital initiatives.

The generalization of the research results shows that university brand management in the context of digital change should be considered as an integrated management model that combines a strategic vision for the development of a higher education institution, digital infrastructure, human capital management, and institutional interaction. The implementation of such an approach creates the prerequisites for increasing the competitiveness of universities, strengthening their positions in the national and international educational space, and forming sustainable reputational capital in the context of the digital transformation of society.

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