

# MARKETING ASSETS OF THE HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION: IMPORTANT ASPECTS OF MANAGEMENT

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**Abstract.** The article examines the relationship between long-term successes, competitiveness of the higher educational institution and better management of its marketing assets. The emphasis is placed on such marketing assets as the corporate culture of the university, staff loyalty, consumer loyalty, and the university's reputation. The increase in the efficiency of the use of marketing assets as important intangible assets is linked to the more intensive integration of marketing in the general management system of the higher educational institution.

**Keywords:** marketing assets, higher educational institution, management, corporate culture, reputation, loyalty

## Introduction

Marketing assets are consumer-oriented measures of the organization's value. For higher educational institutions, marketing assets represent an opportunity to assess the impact of marketing on the development and growth of their sustainable competitive advantages along with financial and other indicators of their activities (Борисова, 2010). As marketing assets in higher education, the article will examine assets which are used to solve marketing problems and make higher educational institutions competitive and successful on the market. These assets play a role of a catalyst in the process of combining academic and market interests of universities and in achieving long-term success.

The key marketing assets of the higher educational institution can be identified as reputation, corporate culture, market knowledge (knowledge of the market), brands, the strategic partnership, loyalty of staff (professors, teaching staff, assistants), students and stakeholders. This approach reflects the fact that the human factor always dominates in the educational process. The management of marketing knowledge and education is actually part of the concept of intellectual capital management.

### **1. Management of the higher educational institution's marketing assets: essence, specificity**

The management of marketing assets is a process of development, implementation and controlling of management decisions aimed at their formation and development, taking into account the specifics of the educational services. The purpose of marketing assets' management is to increase the productivity of the entire management system of the higher

educational institution by establishing a close link between common-based managerial and marketing-based managerial decisions on the basis of the realization of the principles of marketing management.

The management of marketing assets of the higher educational institution is distinct because of its specificity which is determined by a number of factors among which the most important are:

- the social function of the educational system, which provides combination and balance between social, academic and market objectives of the educational organization. This means the availability of educational programs which according to cyclical factors are less in demand but essential for the society, along with limiting the choice for so-called cyclical degrees or degrees which produce an excessive number of graduates

- the domination of the human factor in achieving the efficiency of the educational process. This determines the particular importance of the structure of the marketing assets of the higher educational institution

The essence of the concept of marketing assets as based on the effectiveness of marketing has been analyzed by a number of American researchers such as Roland, T. Rust, Tim Ambler, Gregory S. Carpenter, V. Kumar, Rajendra K. Srivastava and others. The concept is to establish a connection between the realization of the marketing assets, the results of the particular marketing activity and the efficiency on management as a whole. This relationship is reflected in the system of financial indicators.

In line with modern approaches in management and marketing, under the management of the effectiveness of marketing (Marketing Performance Management - MPM) one should understand the sum of processes, methodologies, indicators and software needed to measure and manage the

marketing activity of the organization (Clark, 1999). MPM does not deny or replace existing methods of planning and management of marketing activities, but rather creates a mechanism which allows for their efficient use in practice, ensuring the realization of client-oriented marketing strategies. Performance management leads to:

- Transformation of strategic moves into measurable targets and actions.

- Establishment of a balanced system of indicators (a framework measuring the operative performance of the organization and describing the links between inputs, processes, outputs and outcomes - Balanced scorecard BSS) to evaluate the effectiveness of marketing.

- Coordination of objectives and combination of work efforts of the separate structural units of the higher educational institution for the implementation of marketing strategies.

- Improvement of the system for internal and external reporting.

The concept of marketing assets management is particularly relevant for the higher educational institution for a number of reasons. Firstly, this concept reflects the achievements of modern management theory as related to optimizing the process of marketing integration into the general management system of the higher educational institution. Secondly, it allows full consideration of the specifics of the educational sphere. Moreover, it establishes a consecutive relationship between the state of marketing assets and the effectiveness of the overall management activity of the higher educational institution.

A clear indicator of this relationship is the competitiveness of the higher educational institution on the market of educational services. In reality, the strategic role of marketing lies in determining the development strategies of the higher educational institution along with the formation and development of the marketing assets, which provide sustainable competitive advantages. Significantly, these advantages are associated to the balance of interests of all consumers (students, employers, the state and society). The concept offers new approaches towards assessment of the effectiveness of the management of the higher educational institution, which are more relevant to present day circumstances and which take into account the criteria of international educational ratings. Along with traditional indicators measuring the quality of education, the concept also includes indicators such as mobility and demand for graduates on the labor market, capitalization of the higher educational institution, the place occupied in national ratings and more.

The management of marketing assets of the higher educational institution must ensure active integration of marketing in the general management system of the institution. Therefore the state and effectiveness of using one set of marketing assets (such as the corporate culture of universities or the loyalty of staff) depend to a greater extent on the effectiveness of the management decisions as related to the strategic and personnel management. Other sets of marketing assets (such as the loyalty of consumers) depend much more on the effectiveness of marketing programs and solutions. Irrelevant to this, the ultimate success factor is to unite the efforts of all university departments in this area. The degree of responsibility of different management structures for the status of key marketing assets is not the same. The responsibility for the state of corporate culture for example, lies mostly with the senior leadership of the higher educational institution while the responsibility for educational programmes/products lies with the deans of the various departments.

At the heart of the management of all marketing assets lies the following algorithm of processes:

- clarifying and defining the problem;
- analysis and evaluation of alternatives to managerial (including marketing) solutions;
- implementation of managerial (including marketing) decisions and events;
- controlling.

The focus is on increasing the efficiency of use of intangible assets such as marketing assets.

## **2. The corporate culture as a key marketing asset of the higher educational institution**

Much like the corporate culture of an industrial or commercial establishment, the corporate culture of the higher educational institution is its key marketing asset. Such corporate culture is reflected in its rules of operation and serves to achieve the institution's long-term goals. The corporate culture of the higher educational institution incorporates consumer-oriented principles (in this case oriented towards the students, the community and the state) and values (such as the quality of educational services) which affect its relationship with these consumers and influence its competitiveness in the long term.

The corporate culture is two-fold in nature: on the one hand it is a key marketing asset and on the other hand it is one of the most effective management tools of the higher educational institution, mainly through the management of personnel (faculty and staff). As a marketing asset, the corporate culture affects the reputation and

competitiveness of the higher educational institution, which in turn affects its development in the long term. As a management tool, it affects the productivity of effective (performance-based) management decisions and innovations.

The basic elements of the corporate culture of the higher educational institution are its history, mission, values, norms and standards of conduct of its staff, faculty and students. The concept of corporate culture is inextricably linked to the concept of corporate responsibility. In the case of the higher educational institution, this means that the satisfaction of consumer needs (or the interests of the consumers) should not conflict with the social objectives of the educational system and the community as a whole.

The main advantages of building a strong corporate culture within the higher educational institution, besides improving the psychological environment and increasing the loyalty and efficiency of the staff's work, are increasing the competitiveness of the educational services' market and improving the adaptability of graduates in the professional environment following the completion of their respective studies. A strong corporate culture is a guarantee for high quality of the educational services and for orientation towards long-term relationship with key stakeholders, i.e. consumers, employers, and other participants in the educational services market.

It should be noted that the corporate culture of the higher educational institution is multifaceted. It covers the corporate cultures of the scientific, academic, professional and student staff. Therefore, the corporate values of the higher educational institution consist of the corporate values of the respective staff groups mentioned above. Moreover, this co-relation should be developed without controversy in regards to the higher educational institution's mission.

The link between corporate culture and competitiveness is extremely strong because:

► The corporate culture is the framework which specifies the perspective and within which all organizational processes are fulfilled. It is

inextricably linked to both the style of management of the higher educational institution and to the ongoing communication within the institution.

► The corporate culture exerts influence as an "invisible value" or intangible value increasing the competitiveness of the higher educational institution, which in turn provides high quality educational services (such as professionalism among staff, communication practices, organizational behavior, etc.). In Bulgarian universities, for example, the importance of the corporate culture is increasingly recognized as crucial for increasing the competitive advantage.

► The basis of establishing and managing a particular type of corporate culture within a higher educational institution is its senior management. It sets certain communication practices which allow for the adoption and sharing of values and norms as enshrined in the corporate culture. On this basis, it creates and tolerates a certain type of organizational behavior. This in turn is essential for the successful implementation of the competitive strategies of the higher educational institutions.

The role of the corporate governance as one of the key elements of the relationship between corporate culture and competitiveness of higher educational institution has repeatedly been confirmed in the Bulgarian and world practice.

### **Conclusions**

The marketing assets of the higher educational institution make it possible to assess the impact of marketing on the institution's ranking and on the development of its sustainable competitive advantages and financial and other indicators as relevant for its activity. These key assets help solve important strategic tasks and obtain sustainable competitive advantages on the market of educational services. The assessment and management of the marketing assets is as much a part of the assessment and management of marketing as of the management system of the higher educational institution as a whole.

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