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Methodology for sustainable and deep positioningof online university education in a rapidly changing world

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Abstract

The present work is devoted to the methodology for sustainable and deep positioning of educational organizations in a rapidly changing world. It is considered the development of online university education in the world and effective marketing approach to positioning. The methodology is based on comparative user experience research of online universities digital products.

Keywords

Online university education, project, marketing of educational organizations, positioning of universities, expertise of educational organizations, recognition of educational organizations, market for educational

traditions, methodologies, approaches, scientific and pedagogical schools ensure its main functions - the transfer of professional knowledge from generation to generation, education and comprehensive development of the individual. Throughout the world, education strives for the consistent development of traditions preserved and accumulated over centuries, carefully taking into account and responding to the technological development of society and the economy.
At the same time, rapid and constant technological, economic, social, cultural changes require educational organizations to meet and correspond the new demands of the economy and society. Also, there is an emerging and rapidly developing market for educational services and competition between educational institutions. There was a need to promote, search for unique competitive advantages, and expertise of the organization in the educational services market, including in competition.

One of the answers to the Internet development and factors of isolation in the pandemic COVID-19 became the increase of university education market. With the increasing role of information on the Internet, as well as the degree of involvement of target groups in Internet communities, projects and positioning in the context of the discourse, meanings and agendas of the current information and public field come to the fore in the promotion of educational organizations (educational organizations, in fact, talk about their uniqueness and features through projects).

The goal of this article is to consider the methodology for sustainable and deep positioning of educational organizations in a rapidly changing world.

Modern problems of universities' positioning are studied within the framework of the sociology of education and knowledge, economics, and management and other fields of science. To consider consumer behavior in the modern market of educational services, we apply a number of theoretical aspects of social knowledge: marketing of education; human capital theory; the concept of the sociology of knowledge, representing knowledge as a commodity; concepts of value-motivational strategies for student choice; concepts of career preferences; university management concepts.

Marketing strategy is the main tool of classical marketing, which helps to tell target groups and the general public about the organization, position and promote the organization's products and services. Economic transformation, which requires development in the product line, also entails social changes - public expectations change, types of target groups change, the effectiveness of information channels changes, aesthetic tastes, and reactions to a designer product (service packaging) change. An effective marketing strategy is based on the target audience, its characteristics and needs.

In the last decade, the formation and increase in the scale of the information and public field of activity of educational organizations, especially – online universities, has most clearly manifested itself, in which colleges, universities, public aggregator organizations, organizations of additional professional education manifest themselves in the form of projects.

game “Trajectory”[2], the university movement of the WorldSkills championships of professional excellence, the program for including advanced professional competencies in the educational programs of universities “Future Skills University”[3], the career guidance magazine “Ladder”, the soft-skills development program “Management of Career”, career development school “Marketing of Professional Development”[4] and etc.

The goal of the Project-telling[5] approach is the controlled positioning of the unique expertise of an educational organization in the field of training, research and science, youth policy, culture and socio-political activities, the demand for graduates in the labor market, professional guidance and careers.

The key to the Project-telling method is expertise, not the practice of uninterrupted functioning of certain aspects or processes that has developed over the years, only - expertise. Expertise is understood as a direction that has socio-economic recognition (market value, scientific weight, 100% demand for graduates in the specialized professional labor market, etc.) that corresponds to the strategy and mission of the educational organization.

The core of the Project-telling method is represented by four mandatory layers:
1. A product in demand - solving a problem for the target audience or achieving high-order goals (dreams, ideals) – What does Project-telling tell?
2. Competence of product manufacturers (unique expertise) – Why does Project-telling tell?
3. Design, packaging, contextual marketing – How does Project-telling tell?
4. Location, employees and product ecosystem – Where and Who does Project-telling tell?

Basic principles of the Project-telling method:
- clear knowledge of traditions and a deep understanding of the essence of each service and product in a particular educational organization.
- selection of a network project or development of your own project is implemented as a new packaging of an existing educational service and traditions.
- mandatory compliance with project management elements.
- goal setting: the place of the project in the positioning of the brand of the educational organization.
- the project is implemented according to the classical canons of public relations (PR) as a management function to establish mutually beneficial cooperation between the organization and the target audience, using business rules and approaches in organizing the press service and information coverage.
- the target audience determines the format, design, techniques, volume of content,
- not only the result and fact of the implemented project is important, but also no less important is the socio-economic effect.
Project-telling is a multifunctional method that contributes to the comprehensive development of the organization[6].

Functions of the Project-telling method:

and management team in the field of project management, organization management, etc.,
3. Works for create and strengthen internal corporate motivational communications, an organizational culture around which the team rallies and proudly carries this mission in its professional activities and business environment,
4. Forms long-term partnerships with leading stakeholders, media, representatives of industry, public organizations, authorities to expand business opportunities and projects in the future,
5. Develops qualitative and quantitative characteristics of clients, increases the volume of investment in an educational organization due to the fact that the introduction of the Project-telling methodology carries out a controlled change in the consciousness of the target group on the theme of the project.

The project development stage defines, what the organization says about itself through the project. The work on designing a project can be represented in the form of three successive stages[7]:
1. Definition of the project framework,
2. Formation of the project content,
3. Testing and assessment of readiness for project implementation.
The proposed project development methodology in the logic of Project-telling[8] is based on three principles - SSB: strategic analysis, system analysis (searching for the expertise of an educational organization), branding.

Storytelling Project, as a method of deep positioning in constantly changing conditions, is a three-dimensional, multifaceted entity and is designed in a three-dimensional coordinate system in which each of the principles forms axial directions.

To develop project content, it is extremely important to define the framework (frame) of the project, the work area, and the project desktop. The brain's abilities are enhanced when there are clear boundaries. The best way to become a creative person is not to stimulate limitless flights of thought, but rather to determine exactly where the limits are. The more specific you are, the easier it is to think creatively.

Strategic analysis during project development includes analysis of the investment attractiveness of the direction, analysis of the positions and competitive advantages of organizations existing in this project (SWOT analysis), possible share in the project, long-term forecast of project development, regional and international cooperation within the project and prospects for the export of services.

System analysis during project development. Design begins with understanding the value of the organization, for which the target audience is ready to come and increase. What in-demand product (determined based on the results of strategic analysis) does the organization offer to the market? Project-telling tells the public exactly about the value of the organization.

In order to answer the question about the value of an organization, it is necessary to carry out a systems analysis. This approach came to management from the technical sciences as an applied

System analysis became widespread after the publication of S. Optner's book "System Analysis for Solving Business and Industrial Problems". The value of the systems approach is that consideration of the categories of system analysis creates the basis for a logical and consistent approach to the problem of decision making.

In order to fit a nascent project into constantly changing conditions, the results of systemic and strategic analysis must be combined in the form of hypotheses - assumptions based on previously carried out analytics that the organization's expertise found can solve a market or social problem or fits into a trend of extreme demand.

*Branding during the project development process**[9].*** The storytelling project today is also based on branding. It is important not only to find expertise and fit it into changing market conditions, but also to find a concept for the sound and appearance of the proposed solution, i.e. package it in a way that is cognitively understandable and aesthetically pleasing to the target audience.

The principle of brand formation is always the same, regardless of the market or sector. A brand is a set of images and associations of the audience about an organization and its brand, product, service.

The algorithm and sequence of steps to develop a brand's university strategy includes study the company/product and identify around what constants a brand can be formed (features of the product, its production, the company's values, features of its corporate culture, etc.), study the external market and identify the stage of its development and competitive conditions (this greatly influences the type and type of brand strategy), study the audience and formulation of a strategy, find an idea for a future brand, and build its platform.

A brand is a stable image in the minds of your audience. If the brand strategy is developed correctly, then "external conditions and conditions are dynamic and unpredictable. In such conditions, we build brands around constants that we can rely on (value-driven and purpose-driven approaches).

So, after designing the project's boundaries, we can move on to the content development stage, which consists of 7 frequent steps: Determining the target audience of the project, Research (identifying the needs of the target audience, insights, problems), Project idea modeling, Creating a project prototype, Project audit, Project-telling project development, Development of benchmarks for projects[10].

So, Project-telling is a method of developing and implementing projects that change the socio-economic situation within and around the organization, built on positioning the university's expertise with the help of a popular product (solves problems of the target audience or achieves high-order goals), packaging that is interesting to the target audience (design, contextual marketing) and established business infrastructure (trained employees and partner ecosystem).

1. Research of online universities.
2. Model design of online universities positioning.
3. Evaluate of the effectiveness models and instruments for sustainable and deep positioning of online universities.

The object of the comparative research is 6 leading online universities:

- The Open University (United Kingdom) https://www.open.ac.uk/
- The University of the People (USA) https://www.uopeople.edu/
- The Shanghai Open University (China) https://global.sou.edu.cn/main.htm
- The Open University of Israel (Israel) https://www.openu.ac.il/
- The Open University of Netherlands (Netherlands) https://www.ou.nl/
- The Indira Gandhi National Open University (India) http://www.ignou.ac.in/

Subject is the models and tools for sustainable and deep positioning of educational organizations in a rapidly changing world. The comparative research was conducted in June of 2024.

The first stage study of online universities is the comparative research of online universities models. According to the history of my research and the fast screening of online universities websites it is possible to identify:

1. Situational positioning tools: visualization, interfaces and digital solution for interaction with the customers. Situational positioning tools include in:
2. Main user scenarios on the university website.
3. Main product on the university website.
4. Features for user experience on the university website.
5. User interaction in the App and on the website.

1. Deep positioning: meanings, values, expertise, projects. Deep positioning tools are connected with long-term effects in purpose groups' mind and include:
    1. Values of university.
    2. Projects of university.
    3. Expertise of university.
    4. Purpose groups of university.
    5. Partnership of university.

The comparative research of UX-scenarios utilizing on websites to allow identify the following tools of effective positioning of online universities:

- The main scenario is choice of the course or application for study at the University
- Virtual Open Day
- Description of the system of Distance Learning
- Free online courses

- Help Centre
- Scholarships and Fee
- Tutorials

The through values of online universities are to help refuges, disabled and home student to get high education, but we can identify some specific models of positioning using the Project-telling framework to consider the projects, expertise, partnership of online universities:

- University of professional cooperation for life / The Open University (UK).
- University of quality and affordable education for a career / The University of the People (USA).
- University for professional search and complete self-realization of the individual in society, the world and art / The Open University of Netherlands.
- University for the Development of Access to Education within the Country / The Indira Gandhi National Open University (India), The Shanghai Open University (China).

In conclusion, it should be emphasized the identified tools and positioning models can be useful in the practice of positioning new online universities and online educational courses. Maximum efficiency and sustainability in development are achieved by online universities that work on in-depth positioning. Markers of deep positioning are a clear understanding of one's own expertise, clearly defined topics of scientific research, partnership: school (college) – university – business, a clearly defined user experience for international students, own media or channel in recognized media, career support for graduates. Project-telling framework ensures deep and sustainable positioning of the universities, increases internal corporate involvement and pride, develops administrative and managerial competencies, forms long-term partnerships, and leads to qualitative and quantitative changes in potential clients and partners.

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Author

Dr. Anisimova Irina A.

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