

UNIVERSITY IMAGE: NEW APPROACH AND PERSPECTIVE THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL DECISIONS

**Greta Drūteikienė, Albinas Marčinskas. Universiteto įvaizdžio kaita.
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The scientists of Faculty of Economics of Vilnius University Prof. Dr Habil. Albinas Marcinkas and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Greta Druteikienė have prepared a valuable and thorough scientific monograph “Change of the University Image”.

The monograph is not only valuable and interesting in theoretical and practical aspects, but is also very timely. The topic of the monograph is relevant and original; it opens up new, much deeper perspectives of scientific knowledge in a complex and modestly researched area.

The relevance and originality of the monograph is confirmed by several factors, which reflect the monograph’s orientation towards solving the topical problems typical of our society, as well by as the initiation and dissemination of the new and perspective approaches.

Firstly, the topic of the monograph is directly related to the issues faced by recent higher education reforms. As is known, now in Lithuania, as well as in many other countries, intensive and complex reforms of higher education are taking place; they lead to significant changes not only in the university life, but also in the development of human resources’ in society through the advance of scientific and technological systems’; these reforms, in many respects, determine the perspectives of the future social and economic development of society and the quality of life. Universities, their practice and modernization processes are one of the most important objects of higher education reforms. Therefore, selection of the topic of university image reflects the inclination of the author to analyze the relevance and originality of the eminent issues: the focus on university image reflects the aspiration to deepen the understanding of the problems faced by the higher education and higher education reforms through scientific research, which is very useful and even necessary in order to develop and implement the measures of the reform.

Secondly, the socio-economic development of internationalization reveals qualitatively new conditions of competitiveness, including areas such as universities and academic life. The topic of the monograph eminently focuses on the competitiveness of the universities at national and international levels, the perception of problems and their

solutions, which undoubtedly show both the relevance and originality of this topic: it goes without saying that university image is a very important factor which determines its competitiveness; therefore, the research on the topic analyzed in the monograph is perceived as a search for the new competitive opportunities in the university's life.

Thirdly, recently, in the practice of social-economic development and improvement of the quality of life in society and in theories of management, in economic and other social sciences more and more attention is given to social responsibility issues, especially as members of society, their actions and decisions are increasingly affected by various image-creating measures. This circumstance is particularly significant for the universities to which we apply exceptional standards of social responsibility, especially as the issues stressed in the monograph reflect, indisputably increasing the importance of social responsibility in universities and their social importance.

Fourthly, the topic of the monograph widens the theoretical and practical conceptions of management, marketing and public relations regarding the image of various institutions, including the complex peculiarities of image and its creation at the universities as highly specific public sector organizations distinguished by the features typical of knowledge organizations. The topic of the monograph is highly relevant and original, because it is oriented towards the perception of the image of various organizations and compares theoretical decisions of creating the image of diverse organizations.

Fifth, the topic of the monograph is important for the development of the universities' sector in Lithuania: this monograph is the first major scientific work, prepared and published in Lithuania, which reflects the image creation and expression issues relevant to Lithuanian science, education, culture and universities.

The monograph is not only relevant and original, but it is also distinct in its scientific novelty and academic value. The scientific novelty of the monograph is well expressed through revealing the lack of theoretical and practical research in the field, offering original views on understanding the university's image and its typology, revealing presumptions for creating university image, offering new theoretical decisions for changing the university image, including managerial and auditing measures. Scientific novelty is also characteristic of the results of studying the trends of the changing university environment in Lithuania: these results reflect long-term changes in the university environment and construct the understanding of a relationship between the values of the university life and general social-economic processes.

The material of the monograph is set out in a good style, consistency, and is well structured.

The first part of the monograph raises the problem of creating the image of a modern university and demonstrates its relevance. The publication underlines that, in the conditions of globalization, the image of a university becomes extremely important and determines its survival, long-term success and stability. Universities ought to constantly

improve their relationships with society, businesses and other social partners in order to ensure a successful recruiting of potential students, dissemination of innovative ideas, employment of graduates, their success in the labour market and in life in general. Each university must ensure its good image in society in order to gain visibility and trust. The authors of the monograph stress that the image is a strategic instrument which ensures the realization of the long-term aims of the university, and all universities ought to be able to plan, implement and control the process of creating their image.

The second part of the monograph describes various theoretical approaches to university image in an integrated way and presents in detail the image researches in foreign universities. It shows that, although the conditions for creating university image in Lithuania have been only studied, there are valuable and interesting researches, especially on Vilnius University, and the results of these studies are described in detail.

The third part of the monograph discusses the developments of university image in the global and Lithuanian academic discourse. It stresses that image perception is analyzed in the theories of various scientific fields, but it was derived from functional and social psychology. The monograph reveals that the evolution of image perception could be analyzed using two methods: historical and content. The image analysis of university's context reveals that university image in theory is described as a concept of the organization's image modified according to the specific features of the institution. The monograph reveals that the objects of university image are individuals or their groups in one way or another related to the university. The analysis of university image typologies shows that a variety and multi-criteria is common for such typologies. This part of the monograph also discusses the conceptualization of university image and the perception of its reputation.

The fourth part of the monograph is dedicated to the discussion of the main components and principles for creating a university image. The authors note that it is impossible to avoid the first impression which is formed during the first contact with the university; university image formation is first of all a psychological process based on a strong emotional experience of an individual. Authors note that the formation of positive university image at a certain level is a social-cultural intervention into the individual's reality in order to change his / her behaviour and perceptions in respect to university as an organization. Various structural models of university image are presented and analyzed in the monograph.

The fifth part of the monograph contains a discussion on the modification of the university image, using identity, internal image, management of crisis and marketing communication. The main aim of managing the university's identity is to identify, develop and preserve its unique aspects. The management of the university identity should be based on understanding that the efficiency of this process is a condition of the positive image and good reputation which will determine the positive attitude of the main influ-

ence groups towards the university. This part of the monograph discusses one of the most important objectives of the university image formation, which is creating a positive image of the university personnel through direct contacts, which would be transferred to the university students and other influence groups, thus strengthening the overall image of the university. This part also analyses the professional concept of adapting its image to the teacher's profession. The monograph discusses the crisis communication actions of the university. Unfavourable situations also foster the discussions regarding marketing communication and its application for creating the university image.

The sixth part of the monograph presents university ranking methodologies, discusses how a university can research its identity, image, reputation and which actions should be taken after the self-assessment process is completed.

The seventh part of the monograph mainly focuses on the analysis of changes in the external environment of universities. Very interesting generalizations of historical knowledge about university life in Lithuania are presented, the patterns of long-term changes are revealed. It is assumed that in each stage of its historical development, the external university's environment shapes the so-called image of the university studies, which must be considered the "primary" university image. The monograph analyzes in detail the specific features of the changes that took place in the past decade, discusses the present situation and current issues.

The monograph contains overviews of vast theoretical sources and plenty of practical material.

It should be noted that the monograph is distinctive in its interdisciplinary approach, which means that the monograph will appeal to specialists of various fields representing different layers of academic society.

The monograph will undoubtedly be interesting to the leaders of scientific and educational institutions, specialists performing educational, scientific or administrative functions at the universities.

Conclusively, the monograph "Change of University Image" should not only be evaluated positively in all respects; also, it represents a new and very promising field of further complex research.

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