



Digital Transformation in Branding Building for Vietnam Higher Education Industry



Pham Dinh Thang ^a
Hoang Nguyen Phong ^b

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Abstract

Any industry or any field that wants to be well known they need a right branding and PR strategy. Especially in the era of IT boom and globalization today, branding and communication are becoming more important than ever. It is considered a vital issue that determines the survival of any business. Education is a specific area and brand advertising needs its own strategy. In the context of today's powerful digital transformation, Vietnam's universities are making specific plans to begin their own transformations. We assert that digital communication in school brand communication is an important aspect of the digital transformation process at universities. Federating the on-campus digital data is fundamental to planning and executing brand communication programs for universities. Digital transformation plays an important part in improving the quality and efficiency of universities' operation and their brand communication, whose mission is to showcase their educational achievements, establish competitive advantages and maintain social reputation.

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Corresponding author:

Hoang Nguyen Phong,

HaNoi Univesty of Pharmacy, VietNam, No. 13-15, Le Thanh Tong Street,

Hoan Kiem District, Hanoi City, Vietnam.

Email address: hoangphong@hupedu.vn

^a HaNoi Univesty, Of Phamarcy, Vietnam, No. 13-15, Le Thanh Tong Street, Hoan Kiem District, Hanoi City, Vietnam

^b HaNoi Univesty of Pharmacy, VietNam, No. 13-15, Le Thanh Tong Street, Hoan Kiem District, Hanoi City, Vietnam

1 Introduction

Digital transformation is a fast-paced and inevitable trend, especially in the context of the 4.0 Industrial Revolution. Digital transformation offers opportunities for every country, especially developing countries such as Vietnam. These include new venues for technological breakthroughs and economic growth; taking advantage of open information access from the Internet; making use of digital platforms and digital technologies. In this rapid development, universities need to be acutely aware of their role. Those that embrace digital transformation hold a distinct advantage when integrating with the global market and establishing their position in Vietnam's education system (Broucker et al., 2021; Thuy & Thao 2017; Tien et al., 2019). For universities, communication platforms are the specific methods, channels chosen to deliver their messages, advertisements and PR campaigns for specific demographics. These messages are aimed at changing the perception of students, parents and the public, which motivates them to learn more about the school, eventually enrolling with a high level of trust. A university with a good brand communication campaign can approach more students, receive more positive feedback and expand their brand recognition... Digital transformation helps brand communication be more accessible, overcoming physical distances, saving time in the mission to convey the university's values and brand culture and improving social perception (Mampaey, 2018; Scharf & Correia, 2015). Vietnam is one of the typical countries in the world with a focus on learning. With more than 224 universities, the competition among the schools is very intense to recruit high school scholars into the school. Since then, branding at school is very important (Braun et al., 2014; Zehir et al., 2011).

University brand communication in Vietnam

Digital transformation is an important mission to improve education and human-resource quality in the face of new requirements and challenges of the global integration process. A new trend in building university brands internationally is doing so through specific activities such as: expanding facilities, increasing international research collaboration; diversifying partnerships between schools and businesses; building learning centers to attract foreign investors; recruiting experts in brand development, finance and human resources; building the brand's presence on social media. These activities help improve the university's brand, creating prestige among the community, the public and internationally. Media activities are the brand's "voice", creating its image and is the tool for building and maintaining the school's relationship with its students, parents and the public. Traditional media such as radio, television, printed press, billboards, mails, telemarketing are time-consuming and costly (Ailawadi & Keller, 2004; Almaçık & Almaçık, 2012).

The role of brand communication is to change the behavior and attitude of target demographics in ways that are desirable to the brand, by focusing on their motivation. Brand communication should reflect the level of interest from students and the public in the university's brand campaigns. Digital transformation in brand communication can speed up recommendations for programs and services, improve experience for potential students, strengthen competitive position among universities, and analyze the effectiveness of marketing programs. Through this, the university can adjust administrative policies or brand communication campaigns to increase effectiveness (Thuy & Thao, 2017; Tien et al., 2019; Mampaey, 2018).

Digital communications campaigns in the planning and execution of university brand communication

In order for brand communication campaigns to be effective, one should pay attention to aspects that students and the public care about, as well as convey key differences that make up the brand's values. Brand communication is an important part of improving a school's brand value, in order to enhance competitive advantages and achieve sustained growth (Armstrong & Lumsden, 2000; Kotler & Keller, 2016). To improve brand value in the university education system, brand communication campaigns need to make sure: (1) To create a difference for the school/faculty's brand, (2) To make sure the brand serves the students' interest, (3) To deliver the brand's experience to students (Scharf & Correia, 2015; Mampaey, 2018). Digital content in brand communication includes:

1. Conveying the school's brand recognition: includes the university's name, logo, motto, symbols, package designs, website designs, profile designs, brochures, catalogs, flyers,... Brand recognition is built based on creative combinations of images, graphics and language to form lasting first impressions in people's minds. The goal of spreading brand recognition is to help students, parents and the public acknowledge the brand as a

unique entity; to bring values in terms of impression, to create a desire to pursue an education at the university (Valitov, 2014; Rauschnabel et al., 2016).

2. Increasing the influence of the school's core value - education quality: The key aspect of a successful communication campaign is the school's education quality. Parents and students tend to care about information regarding teaching curriculum, number of professors/PhDs/award-winning lecturers, opportunities for research collaborations, quality of graduates, post-graduation employment records, degree recognition, and domestic as well as international programs.
3. Spreading the school's culture: A brand goes hand in hand with a distinct style. Establishing style means creating the university's culture. Tangible values within the culture include the faculty - passionate and talented leaders, managers and lecturers, as well as the student body - individuals with knowledge, drive, ethics and achievements during and after their studies. These values often encompass the vision, location and mission statement for the university. Intangible values within the culture include: scientific methods for management; shared desire, faith and talent mentality among school members; social etiquettes on campus and among the community.
4. Using digital communication tools to promote the university's image: (1) Increasing image promotion, for example: sending introductory emails about the school and enrollment programs, using advertisements, search engine optimization, are common tactics in many universities. (2) Spreading positive reviews with testimonies from current students, students from other schools, parents at enrollment seminars. This requires universities to focus on their internal activities, and actively engage their demographics. (3) Increasing PR activities: Prestige is of the utmost importance in education, and PR is how universities can earn prestige and create positive perception through the support of the media and expert analysts.

Building a digital communication campaign for a university includes the following steps:

1. Step 1: Analyze the goal and important factors that may affect it most. The goal needs to have clear and measurable timeframes. Next, one needs to identify the target demographic: in the digital environment, everyone can connect easily and actively, allowing rapid spreading of information. The targets' networks need to be examined, using their social graphs and interest graphs. This helps identify the flow of information, or in other words, the targets' sphere of influence, from which different plans can be made to most appropriately approach each group for brand communication. In the digital environment, groups/communities can be seen as an effective media channel. In this step, one needs to predict the reactions that the target demographic might have to the message by asking: what motivates the target demographic to care about the message and take part in experiencing and sharing it?
2. Step 2: Propose media ideas and assess them based on their fulfillment of 2 requirements in the digital environment: spread ability and the ability to form prolonged engagement. Ideas are more powerful when they can create a network effect.
3. Step 3: A digital communication campaign is the increasing of engagement of the target demographic with the brand message, both qualitatively and quantitatively. The digital communication channel can be the only channel, or act as the primary channel to reach the campaign's final goals: (1) The digital communication channel acts as the starter (create the initial interest across communication targets). For example, in celebration of the school's anniversary, the Art club plans to set a record for the largest signature painting; (2) Share actual experiences (check-ins, photoshoots, interview); (3) Finally, the digital media channel is used to spread the experience and increase brand value, e.g. auctioning the painting to donate to social causes.

Selecting media tools: in the digital environment, the digital communication manager needs to constantly keep herself up-to-date on the latest technologies and apply them with regards to their feasibility on Vietnam's technological infrastructure. For example: advertising venues such as retargeting advertising - tracking users' search and browsing behaviors to display the most suitable advertisements; technologies such as projection mapping, QR codes and I-butterfly (Hinings et al., 2018; Sousa & Rocha, 2019). To select the proper media channels, one must understand the target demographic behaviors. Choosing digital media channels helps contribute to the brand's value and must be tied to the brand's original strategy and direction. Digital media tools have been created to provide support for digital communications and promotions, such as: TVs, search engines, banner advertisements, social media marketing, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, email marketing, out-of-home (OOH) or outdoor advertising,

street advertising, advertising on LCD screens, transit advertising, print ads, radio. Alongside basic metrics for digital media (number of downloads, views, shares, plays), effects on the brand's image, culture and health needs to be frequently considered to make appropriate responses. The role of digital communication in brand communication campaigns of Vietnam's universities are becoming more and more crucial in today's rapid global integration, gaining its fair share of interest and resources (Chee & Xu, 2005; Grewal et al., 2022).

4 Conclusion

Digital transformation is an inevitable and fast-paced trend, helping to increase universities' core values. In the highly competitive landscape of universities, each school needs to acknowledge the important role of digital transformation in solidifying their brand value. Digital transformation in administration, teaching and research should resonate with digital brand communication strategies to elevate the brand identity and standing of universities in today's changing education system (Vivas et al., 2017; Yuliara et al., 2020).

Conflict of interest statement

The authors declared that they have no competing interest.

Statement of authorship

The authors have a responsibility for the conception and design of the study. The authors have approved the final article.

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