

# DOCTORAL THESIS SUMMARY

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## **Creating the image of an employer vs brand recognition of the organization on the example of Polish technical universities**

**Keywords:** *employer branding, employer image, brand recognition, higher education, university image, technical universities*

The dissertation is devoted to the issue of creating the employer's image (employer branding) in the context of building the brand recognition of the organization in relation to higher education, in particular Polish technical universities. A review of the scientific literature of the subject indicates that the issue of employer branding in higher education has not been sufficiently researched yet. As a result there is a clearly visible both knowledge and research gap, which can be filled in by the research material contained in the presented dissertation. Timeliness of the issue and relatively little of its recognition in the scientific literature, especially concerning higher education, have therefore decided to define the research problem contained in the question about the necessity of conducting activities aimed at building the image of Polish technical universities as a good employer in the context of contemporary conditions of their functioning and to accept the assumption of the existence of a relationship between the image of the university as an employer and the recognition of the university's brand. The main objective of the dissertation was to diagnose and assess the current state of activities (their scope, type, main recipients) conducted in the framework of building the image of a good employer in the context of shaping and consolidating the brand recognition of Polish technical universities and on this basis recommending comprehensive activities in the field of employer branding.

Observation of the changes occurring in higher education in Poland indicates that the universities deal with many problems and face serious challenges. The future of the universities depends increasingly on their ability to attract talented and valuable employees and students. This entails the need to compete in a competitive education market and to find out a solution to differentiate between other competing units.

The concept of employer branding presented in the dissertation was therefore indicated as a distinctive feature of the university, which may contribute to achieving a competitive advantage. The author's attempt to diagnose on the ground of personal research the actual perception of the image of public technical universities as a good employer among the research and teaching staff, administrative employees, doctoral candidates and students of these universities as well as among the employees of science and technology parks cooperating with universities – allows to conclude that the presented dissertation is entered into the existing, above mentioned gap, significantly reducing it. Regularities observed on the basis of the research results indicate the complexity of the employer image. They show that this image is influenced by many solutions applied in the university. These activities also indirectly shape the brand recognition of the university. The presented results of own research indicate in fact that the image of a good employer is one of the most important prerequisites of strengthening the university's brand and its recognition on the educational market. Therefore, having regard the analysis of the literature content in the dissertation referring to the role of the organization's image in building the brand recognition, supported by the results of own research, it can be concluded that the evidence was provided to confirm the truth of the adopted thesis statement – the image of a good employer contributes to the building of the brand recognition of the university.

Considerations on the image of the university as the employer were presented in the context of management sciences. References to psychological sciences proved necessary at certain stages of the analysis, which was done only to confirm phenomena occurring in the sphere of management sciences. The discussion was based on a broad analysis of both Polish and English scientific literature devoted to the issue of employer image and the brand of the organization, referring mainly to literature on of human capital management and marketing. Interwoven threads from the area of management, marketing or psychology are a reflection of the complexity of the problem under investigation. In addition, the source basis of the dissertation are also secondary sources and generally available statistical data. Literature studies were supplemented with the results of own research. The dissertation is therefore theoretical and empirical.

The dissertation consists of six chapters (including three based on literature studies and three empirical). The first chapter presents the concept of creating the image of the employer – employer branding on theoretical grounds. Due to the heterogeneity of the term, the definitions were reviewed, indicating the characteristics of the concept, the tools used and its recipients. Recognizing the employer branding for a holistic approach to human capital

management in the organization and accepting that this concept is associated with categories such as identity, image, reputation and brand – the complexity of relationships between these categories and their significance for the functioning of contemporary organizations was approximated. Attention was also drawn to the compounds for the use of the employer image in creating a strong and recognizable brand of the organization. The process of creating the employer image as well as the role of personnel marketing in this process was characterized. The chapter ends with a reference to the importance of the image in the functioning of higher education institutions, including the reasons for the application of employer branding activities at universities.

The second chapter is both a theoretical and statistical one. Due to the fact that employer branding is closely connected with the environment in which the organization operates, an important element of the dissertation is the diagnosis of the state of higher education in Poland, with emphasis on the difficulties faced by universities. Among the main problems identified were demographic challenges, including migration as well as economic challenges implying an undeniable necessity for universities to undertake "battles" in the competitive education market. The problems and determinants of functioning of higher education described in this chapter on the one hand constitute the background on which increasingly difficult conditions for higher education institutions can be observed, and on the other hand – they are a picture of a contemporary university, on the basis of which the image of the university as the employer is created among different stakeholder groups. The last part of the chapter is devoted to the characteristics of technical universities.

The current trends in higher education in Poland outlined and diagnosed in the second chapter constitute a link to the next chapter – the third one, in which the starting point for consideration was the discussion on the consequences of changes and processes taking place in the environment of academic institutions. Competitive environment and changing social, legal and economic conditions cause the necessity of constant changes in the ways of their functioning, including the adoption of marketing orientation by universities. Reflection was given to the ongoing discussion over the university's identity in recent years. The relations between universities and the labour market were highlighted, including the main problems associated with the transition of graduates to the labour market or educating in the context of changing needs of the environment. However, the main focus was on the academic staff, the specifics of employment and working conditions at universities. Attention was also paid to a change in the perception of the academic teacher profession, barriers to professional

development of the university employees as well as to the multi-employment phenomenon occurring at universities.

The fourth chapter is devoted to the results of own research on the employer image, carried out in technical universities among internal stakeholders (research and teaching staff, administrative employees as well as doctoral candidates and students). The research was conducted in order to verify the hypotheses formulated on the basis of in-depth theoretical reflection on the complex nature of the image of academic institutions in the role of the employer. At the beginning the subject and purpose of the research, the methods used and research tools (survey questionnaires) along with the course of the research were characterized. The selection of the research sample was justified and its characteristics were presented. The following sections describe and present in the form of tables and graphs the results of empirical research among various groups of technical universities' internal stakeholders.

The fifth chapter presents the results of own research concerning the image of the university as a good employer in the perception of external stakeholders – employees of science and technology parks. The research methodology of external stakeholders was defined on the example of science and technology parks, and the results of empirical investigations in particular categories of questions included in the questionnaire used in own research were presented.

The sixth chapter contains a critical judgment of the most important research results in reference to the adopted hypotheses as well as recommendations in the context of the obtained research results on the employer image, including guidelines for managers of technical universities. Actions and conditions to be created for the employees have been proposed in order to be able to use selected employer branding tools, through which the image of the university as a good employer will be created.

The presented dissertation closes with the conclusion in which a summary of the conducted research proceedings and the achievement of the main objective of the thesis were included. The limitations of these research studies were presented as well as the possibilities of further scientific explorations within the scope of building the image of the university as the employer.