

05.7.2025

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**Title**

External perceptions of successful university brands

**Publication year**

2008

**Source/Footnote**

In: International Journal of Educational Advancement. - 8 (2008) 3-4, S. 126 - 135, Intranet:

N:\Intranet\Bibliothek\Verschiedene Volltexte\International Journal of Educational

Advancement\Chapleo External perceptions International journal of educational advancement 8 (2009) 3-4.pdf

**Inventory number**

27426

**Keywords**

Hochschulmarketing ; Hochschule und Öffentlichkeit ; Ausland : Großbritannien : einzelne Hochschulen ; Ausland : Großbritannien : Finanzierung, Stiftungen

**Abstract**

Branding in universities has become an increasingly topical issue, with some institutions committing substantial financial resources to branding activities. The particular characteristics of the sector present challenges for those seeking to build brands, and it therefore seems to be timely and appropriate to investigate the common approaches of those institutions perceived as having successful brands. This study is exploratory in nature, seeking to investigate how successfully UK universities brand themselves, whether they are distinct and whether the sector overall communicates effectively. This is approached through examining the perspective of opinion-formers external to universities but closely involved with the sector ? a key stakeholder group in UK higher education (HE). Overall, the research's exploratory nature aims to further the debate on effective branding in UK HE. The findings

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and conclusions identify some issues surrounding university branding activity; most UK universities were considered to be distinct from one another, but few were seen to have real fully formed brands. Although a number of institutions that were seen as having more 'successful' brands were identified, it was argued that although many UK universities communicate their brand well enough to key stakeholders, they fail to consistently do this across all audiences. It was also suggested that UK universities may concentrate on areas of perceived immediate strategic importance (in terms of branding) to an extent where others are neglected. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)

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