

eISSN 2353-8414
pISSN 2353-8503

MARKETING OF SCIENTIFIC AND RESEARCH ORGANIZATIONS

NO. 35 no. 1(35)/2020



DETERMINANTS OF BUILDING IMAGE AND REPUTATION OF UNIVERSITY TOWARDS ITS STAKEHOLDERS

DETERMINANTY BUDOWANIA WIZERUNKU I REPUTACJI
WYŻSZEJ UCZELNI WOBEC ICH INTERSARIUSZY

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DOI: 10.2478/minib-2020-0008

ABSTRACT

The aim of the article is describing the role and place of image and reputation in a university and research institution in the process of competing on the education market. The article presents current views on the scope of these concepts as well as the mutual relations between the image and reputation in business entities. The fundamental importance of university relations with internal and external stakeholders in shaping both image and reputation was pointed out. The second part presents a set of image and reputation determinants in the case of a university. In addition, the role and place of the university rector was emphasized in building the image and reputation of the parent university in the light of Act 2.0.

Key words: image, reputation, stakeholders

ABSTRAKT

Celem artykułu jest przedstawienie roli i miejsca wizerunku oraz reputacji szkoły wyższej i instytucji badawczej w procesie budowania relacji wewnętrznych i zewnętrznych na rynku edukacyjnym. W artykule przedstawiono aktualne poglądy na temat zakresu tych pojęć, jak też wzajemnych relacji pomiędzy wizerunkiem a reputacją w podmiotach gospodarczych. Wskazano na fundamentalne znaczenie relacji uczelni wyższej z wewnętrznymi i zewnętrznymi interesariuszami w kształtowaniu zarówno wizerunku, jak i reputacji. W drugiej części artykułu przedstawiono zbiór determinant wizerunku i reputacji w przypadku uczelni wyższej. Ponadto podkreślono rolę i miejsce rektora uczelni w budowaniu wizerunku i reputacji macierzystej uczelni w świetle Ustawy 2.0.

Słowa kluczowe: wizerunek, reputacja, interesariusze

Introduction

Implemented in the academic year 2019/2020, the Act on Higher Education very clearly indicated the need to take a new look at the role and place of science and research institutions in the education and research market, and thus also at the issue of building the image and reputation of both institutions. The new legal conditions of their functioning, combined with the changing social and economic conditions (broadly understood) and the need to internationalise education and research, resulted in the need to re-evaluate many of the existing activities and tools used to create the image and reputation of institutions in this sector. This is particularly important in terms of their competitiveness not only in the regional or national aspect, but also in the international dimension and building relations with the environment, i.e. cooperation with internal and external stakeholders. Moreover, the new act expands the cooperation with foreign scientific circles and emphasizes the need to internationalize the research and didactic process. The consequence of this should be to modify the current view on building the image of foreign partners, such as analysing and supplementing instruments of communication with the international environment.

Progressive internationalisation of the education process, virtualization of the didactic process, the need to make the education process more

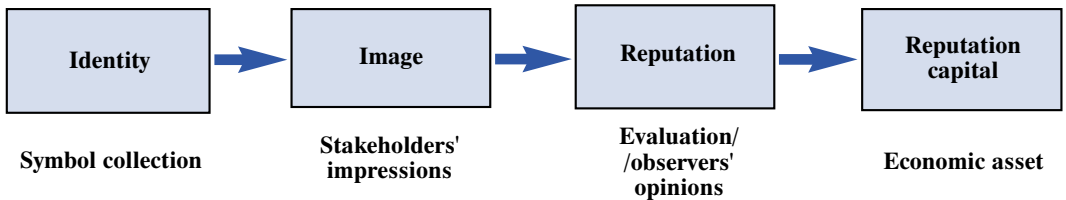
practical or to cooperate with the economic practice makes these elements impose the need to take them into account in strategies of image creation and building reputation in the long term as part of the strategy of functioning of these entities on the market. The environment is created by very diverse and changing groups of stakeholders (internal and external), and each of them sets separate expectations towards the university (Piotrowska, 2016). In this situation, the assessment of the image and reputation will be a result of meeting these expectations and meeting and creating new proposals of an innovative nature. Adopting such an assumption means that we cannot speak of building a single image or reputation. According to the authors, due to the nature of its activities, the university must, of course, build several coherent images. Other aspects are important when the university strives for future students, building its image among high school students and their parents, showing its scientific and didactic potential, professional careers of former students and graduates (the possibility of studying at foreign universities or professional positions in business practice). When the university tries to attract business partners supporting it financially and in terms of content, it tries to emphasize its scientific and research potential by offering potential fields of cooperation with practice and resulting benefits for both sides.

The image and reputation have many dimensions and therefore their characteristics such as: variability, flexibility, adequacy, relativity, interchangeability or adaptability are important. Therefore, when speaking of dimensions, one can cite as an example the integrative approach which assumes central, subjective dimensions and includes: emotional appeal, products and services, vision and leadership, workplace environment, social and environmental responsibility, financial efficiency (Fombrun, Gardberg, Sever, 2000). In the case of universities or selected scientific-research institutions, additional consideration should be given to education systems and formulas, qualification procedures for faculties, national environment financing educational and research programmes, procedures for commercialisation of innovations, creation of new business models as proposals for market solutions, relations with business practice, international institutions supporting scientific, research and implementation activities in various forms; which, however, differentiate the dimensions of reputation in different countries.

Reputation and image of the scientific-research institution

The terms: identity, image and reputation function side by side (separately but linked) as well as often interchangeably (identical) in the rich literature on management, marketing and public relations (and beyond) (Gotsi, Wilson, 2001). Analyses carried out within the framework of management, marketing and public relations indicate — especially in recent years — arguments for the necessity of their different approach to and definition of the three concepts (Walker, 2010). In the case of identity, there is a consensus on its definition which includes everything that allows to fully answer the question — who is the subject (participant) of the market space. In other words, these are all its essential characteristics that allow it to be identified and distinguished from other market participants. In the case of image and reputation, on the other hand, much has been written on this subject in particular in the field of marketing, and mainly from the public relations point of view; the concept of reputation as a reflection of his image and position in the environment of the institution (mainly stakeholders) is more appropriate. By contrast, the image is attributed to the value of the relationship-opinion-evaluation by clients (stakeholders) (Fombrun, 1996). The ongoing discussion on the difference and consistency of these terms stems from the fact that they focus on the same factors and generally perform almost identical tasks consisting in creating the desired — by management and stakeholders — image of the institution and its perception. It is important in the context of trust and individual assessment in a multidimensional market space considered in the short or long term.

In the rich literature on the subject, the supporters of each school/approach presented exhaustive arguments for each of them. The authors deliberately omit the broader consideration leaning clearly towards the separation of the view on image and reputation. In a very recent publication on the reputation of the university, D.Vogler and S.Post clearly indicate that there is a lack of clearly readable relationships between reputation and other constructs related to it, such as identity and image (Vogler, Post, 2019). Figure 1 shows a diagram reflecting the logic of the approach and direction of thinking of the different authors. It is a specific,

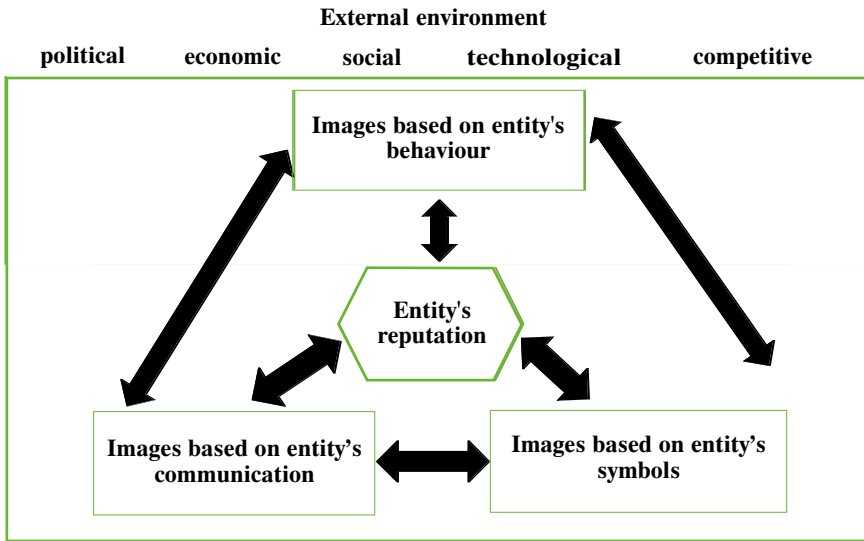
Figure 1. Disaggregation of corporate reputation

Source: (Barnett, Jermier, Lafferty, 2006).

generalized landscape of relations between the discussed concepts. The final stage, to which each market entity (participant) is heading, is to build in the market space adequate reputation capital, guaranteeing trust from stakeholders and a "strong" market position. However, new challenges have recently emerged, which include: sustainable development, corporate social responsibility or socially responsible investment. This has led to the need to take a new look at the effects of the activities. A new term appears in the literature: public value (Meynhardt, Stathoff, Frohlich, Brieger, 2019). Its essence boils down to a new interpretation of the notion of "value" which is not only presented from the perspective of economics, but also in other dimensions, contributing to the creation and reproduction of social reality. In this approach, the understanding of "public value" is connected with the activity of the university or scientific-research institution for the benefit of its stakeholders, and in turn, the reputation reflects the recognition of the institution in their opinions and assessments.

The literature generally accepts that the difference between image and reputation comes down to the time perspective of both concepts and the actions taken to communicate with stakeholders (Balmer, Gray 2000; van Riel, Balmer, 1997). As a result, reputation is a reflection of longer contacts (relations) and the resulting experiences (history of experiences). In the case of image, we refer to the current, current, recent experience, i.e. we assess the current, external perception of the institution (Skowronek, 2012). The essence of the adopted approach is reflected in Figure 2 which clearly shows the reputation as a result of images created on the basis of behavior, noticeable and recorded effects resulting from activities in the process of communication and the university's symbols.

Figure 2. Reputation of the market operator



Source: (Gotsi, Wilson, 2001).

The issue of how to approach the interpretation of these concepts and determine their material scope is important primarily in the context of activities leading to the achievement of market power, and is particularly important when we look at these concepts from the perspective of stakeholders. Thus, suggesting that in principle there is no basis for considering them separately; but at the same time pointing out that research is conducted in relation to universities mainly in terms of their reputation. These issues are present in many scientific disciplines such as economics, accounting, management, marketing and sociology. In each of these disciplines exist common elements and differences (Fombrun, van Riel, 1997).

Preparing an appropriate strategy of action, consistent with the current market challenges and including in it the appropriate structure of tools for its shaping is a difficult challenge taking into account the diversity of expectations of the university or research institution's stakeholders and their ability to implement the strategy. If we take into account the very visible diversity of research institutions, starting from universities, through "adjective" universities, polytechnics, scientific

and research institutes, scientific associations, educational institutions or various research support institutions, the need to separate the image from the reputation clearly emerges from the perspective of their specificity. The specificity of their activities is determined by a number of features that characterise them and can be counted among them:

- narrow but diverse product portfolio;
- domination of services as products/offers, so capturing value creation is complicated and difficult;
- complex and heterogeneous group of stakeholders;
- dependence on current legal and public finances combined with increasing competition between research organisations for research funding and grants;
- mainly international target markets;
- marketing and sales are seen neither as a major part of the value chain nor as an important competence;
- very diverse approaches and skills for commercialising innovation;
- reputation seen as the key to market competition (Morschheuser, Riedler, 2015).

University's relations in shaping its image and reputation

The shaping of relations between a research institution or a higher education institution should be understood as various forms of its involvement in cooperation with internal and external stakeholders, and its aim is to implement the tasks resulting from the statute and the adopted strategy and to achieve the expected market position. The cooperation may adopt the following solutions: education, communication, consultation, dialogue, coordination, partnership, research, commercialization, control, audit and exchange/implementation of experience and achievements (Grucz, 2012). It is extremely important in shaping relations to make sure that they are characterised by openness to changes taking place in the environment and take into account emerging challenges related to the future, i.e. a multidimensional

national and international perspective. This concerns not only changes and challenges in the economic or political sphere, but also social, technological and environmental. In the market space, each of them may adopt different implementation procedures determined by the objectives set, the anticipated scope of cooperation and the established rules of conducted activities, and also depends on the phase of the relationship being formed (beginning, development, maturity and ending).

Table 1. Stakeholders and types of relations of a research institution

Group participants	Form of cooperation
Other national scientific and research institutions	communication, consultation, dialogue, partnership, research
Foreign scientific and research institutions	communication, consultation, partnership, dialogue, exchange of experience, research
International scientific, research and accreditation organisations and associations	communication, consultation, partnership, dialogue, exchange of experience
Managers of R&D programmes targeting research market participants in the EU	communication, research, control, audit
National and foreign institutions managing funds for science and research	communication, control, audit
Support institutions such as: technology parks, technology incubators, pre-incubators and business incubators, business incubators, technology development centres, seed capital funds, business angel networks, technology platforms, training and advisory centres and clusters	communication, consultation; dialogue, coordination, partnership, research, commercialisation, exchange/implementation of experience and achievements
Socio-economic environment	communication, dialogue, partnership, commercialisation
Local and governmental authorities	communication, consultation, dialogue, partnership
Non-governmental organisations	communication, dialogue, consultation
Investors, banks, investment and loan funds	communication, consultation, partnership, commercialisation, control, audit
Traditional and electronic media	communication, dialogue, partnership
Employees, shareholders, managers of institutions	communication, consultation, dialogue, implementation of achievements

Source: (Sojkin, Michalak, 2018, p. 46).

The literature on the subject emphasizes that the implementation phase, the structure of relations and the form of cooperation determine the value of these relations (Storbacka, Lehtinen, 2001). Furthermore, it

should be stressed that both image and reputation are a collective/group assessment of a company's attractiveness to a specific group of stakeholders in relation to other companies in the reference group that compete for available resources. Therefore, the relations built should be individualised due to the comparative and competitive nature of the image and reputation of each university/research institution. Tables 1, 2 and 3 present separate stakeholder groups of a research institution and a university in more detail. Each of them has been assigned general forms of cooperation with the relevant institution, and for the higher education institution the stakeholders have been divided into internal and external ones.

Table 2. Internal stakeholders and types of relations with the university

Group participants	Form of cooperation
Internal stakeholders	
Rector	communication, dialogue, consultation, control, audit
Senate, University Council	communication, dialogue, consultation, control, audit
Employees: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • executive • academics • research • technical staff • administrative bodies 	education, research, communication, dialogue, consultation, control, exchange/implementation of experience and achievements, audit
Current and future students and their families	education, communication, consultation, partnership, research, control, audit
Internal organizations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students' Parliament • student organisations • trade unions • community organizations 	communication, dialogue, partnership, research
University pensioners	education, communication, consultation, dialogue
Associations and support institutions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alumni • partners • Foundations • special purpose vehicles 	education, communication, research, consultation, dialogue, exchange/implementation of experience and achievements, commercialisation

Source: own elaboration.

In further considerations, we will focus on discussing the university's relations with stakeholders, as a detailed discussion of the relations and their value for the scientific-research institution was the subject of analysis in one of the previous articles (Sojkin, Michalak, 2018). The presentation will be typically descriptive. It should be remembered that in the theory of stakeholders there is a possibility to present a normative and institutional approach (Donaldson, Preston, 1995). In the case of universities, relations with stakeholders have been divided into internal and external ones and will be discussed in more detail later in the article. The group of internal stakeholders includes the rector of the university, the senate and the university council. Such a separation is a direct consequence of the provisions of the new Act on Higher Education and Science, which assign new, significant competences in the management of the university to these bodies. In this context, they should be treated as important stakeholders (Act on Higher Education and Science, 2018).

A particularly important place is given to the rector as a creator of the university structure and a vision of its future functioning. The rector's personality may prove to be an important argument in building the image and reputation in the new reality of higher education in Poland. Article 11.1.3. of the aforementioned Act 2.0 sets another important task for the rector, apart from education, which is the responsibility for: conducting scientific activity, providing research services and transferring knowledge and technology to the economy. In the case of the other stakeholders, the most significant group should be considered to be the employees (scientific, didactic, research) who create "a living, active and creative tissue in the body of the university", which determines to a large extent the market value of the image and reputation of the university, both in its current operations and in the long term. Of course, students and their families and internal organisations are two more groups of great importance in building the foundations of the image and consequently creating a very distinct reputation of the university. The other groups mentioned above are to complement both the image and the reputation in appropriate parts. As mentioned before, the forms of implementation change over time and it is difficult to speak of one coherent image. Rather, we are talking about many images created by particular groups and their contribution to the creation of a uniform, coherent and distinct reputation.

Table 3. External stakeholders and types of relations with the university

Group participants	Form of cooperation
Internal stakeholders	
Policy and public administration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● local government (voivodeship, county, town, commune) ● political parties and politicians (senators, MPs, councillors) ● authorities (parliament, voivode) ● local, national and international community 	education, communication, consultation, dialogue, partnership
Economy/employers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● enterprises and institutions ● business people ● business associations (central and regional) ● labour market institutions ● credit rating agencies ● companies supporting the university (e.g. Partner Club, Faculty Business Council...) 	communication, consultation, partnership, dialogue, exchange of experience, research, commercialisation
Competition/Cooperation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● national universities ● foreign universities ● scientific and research institutions ● science financiers/grants/ (EU, foundations, ● accreditation agencies ● scientific community (domestic, foreign) ● science and research organisations 	communication, consultation, partnership, dialogue, exchange of experience
Secondary schools/potential students <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● in the region ● in other regions ● foreign 	education, communication, dialogue
Media — old media (central and regional) and social media	communication, control, audit
Social organisations	education, communication, consultation; dialogue, coordination, partnership, research, exchange/ /implementation of experience and achievements
Public institutions — central and regional offices	education, communication, dialogue, partnership, commercialisation
Non-governmental organisations (regional and central)	communication, consultation, dialogue, partnership

Source: own elaboration.

In the case of external stakeholders, there are many more groups than in the case of internal stakeholders, so the "landscape" of relation forms and ways of their implementation is much richer. What is important is that there is a clear diversity in the number, forms and ways of implementing relations in various types of universities, which is connected with the educational offer, form of ownership, number of external sources of financing (projects, programmes, grants), intensity of contacts with the economic environment and the scope of cooperation with competitors. Therefore, the cooperation of the university with external stakeholders takes place in a very diverse form, as well as the direction and strength of relations between them (mutual interaction) clearly varies, which is confirmed by the results of research (Piotrowska-Piątek, 2016). Generally, it should be remembered that the landscape of external stakeholders is shaped to a large extent by the regulatory dimension of the state's public policy, which is not always consistent with the mechanisms developed for the functioning of national and international markets. In the further part of the article, the considerations will focus on the exemplification of the essence of the image and reputation of the university in the context of the aforementioned determinants, mainly external stakeholders.

Determinants of the image and reputation of the university

When we talk about universities, we often use the term "...it's a prestigious university", with a view to its reputation and position in the market for educational services. When someone asks us what studies his or her child should choose, we often say "...this is a university that I can recommend to everyone". When we think about the direction of further education, we hear that "...it is a university whose graduation creates a chance to find a good job, high earnings and rapid professional advancement". More and more often we realize that the source of such opinions is the image and reputation of the university. The image is becoming an increasingly important attribute of any organization, including, and perhaps most importantly, the university. Informing or, to

put it more broadly, communicating with the environment or building relationships becomes an attribute of an institution that must respond to the calls of the so-called "new economy" (Waszkiewicz, 2011a). It is hard to disagree with the opinion expressed by P. Morschheuser and J. Redler that reputation as a feature of the organisation "...is seen as the key to market competition" and "...a key issue for future success". These authors point out that, unlike a commercial company, the university has a much larger number of stakeholders and their structure is of different quality. In the literature we can find examples of research on the image and reputation of Polish universities. And so A. Waszkiewicz has made several Polish universities the subject of his research (Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Jagiellonian University, Kazimierz Wielki University in Bydgoszcz and the Universities of Opole, Rzeszów and Warsaw), and the research has covered the faculties of humanities and mathematics (Waszkiewicz, 2011b, p. 116–151). The research was conducted on a population of over 700 people (respondents), and the author analysed the image through the prism of seven dimensions of the university's image, such as: moral authority, teacher, creator of science and culture, employer, investor, financially supported entity and knowledge transmitter. In turn, the previously mentioned A. Piotrowska-Piątek focused her research on the stakeholders of higher education institutions in Poland, both public academic institutions (including state vocational higher education institutions) and non-public universities (Piotrowska-Piątek, 2016). In these studies, all entities operated under the supervision of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education, and basic research was preceded by a pilot in four higher education institutions operating in Świętokrzyskie voivodship (one public and three non-public ones).

Among the most important criteria for the image and reputation of a university, the authors of this article — being aware that this is not a complete list — have counted more than thirty determinants bearing in mind the discussion on the proposal presented and assuming that it is impossible to build a single, hierarchical list of criteria. The validity of each criterion, and thus its place in the whole presented set, depends on the nature of the institution, its functions, the location of the university and many other changing conditions, including time. The stakeholders of the university and their expectations towards students, graduates and

employees of the research and teaching institution are also important. The presented proposal may constitute a starting point for broader reflection among theoreticians and practitioners, i.e. people who build the image and reputation of particular universities.

The most important determinants of the image and reputation of the university (scientific and research institution) can be counted among them.

History — date of establishment of the university and stages of its development. The history of the university is built also (or maybe most importantly) by the most outstanding scientists employed at the university throughout its operation. Its history is also determined by the most eminent graduates. Most universities strongly expose people who in the past — after graduation — became outstanding politicians, entrepreneurs, creators of culture, scientists. Therefore, history must be looked at through the prism of events that influenced the history of the university and the people who shaped it. It should be remembered that an important distinction for such an institution as a university is the influence or participation of outstanding graduates in shaping public space (economic, social, technological, ...) of a city, region or country.

Status — ownership structure of modern universities (scientific and research institutions). Private and public (state) higher education institutions are perceived very differently by public opinion. There is no doubt that the form of ownership is one of the factors influencing the image and reputation of these institutions, especially in the countries that have recently established private scientific and didactic institutions.

Interdisciplinarity — the number of scientific disciplines in which the university runs and educates students. The establishments which are characterised by an extensive number of disciplines and specialisations have greater opportunities to build their image and reputation on many levels. For this reason — in various rankings — universities are in the top positions and generally overtake the so-called industry universities (e.g. medical or economic universities).

Development — systematic growth of particular indicators characterizing the university, such as the number of: employees ("own" and foreign), students (domestic and foreign), graduates (domestic and foreign), scientific disciplines, publications (domestic and foreign), organized scientific conferences, foreign scholarships, patents, prestigious awards, or

the intensity of the science-practice relationship, etc. The development must also be identified with the expansion of the university base (new facilities).

Rankings — place of universities in international and national lists of the best universities. It can be assumed that a place in the ranking is one of the key arguments in favour of choosing an educational path for young people. Rankings of universities are a key source of information about the quality of education. It can be assumed that a place in the prestigious ranking builds the prestige of the university. Nowadays several significant rankings should be indicated: Times Higher Education, QS, Shanghai and U-Multirank, referring to indicators from five areas — education, research, citation, internationalisation and technology transfer. National rankings should also be taken into account, such as the already 20-year-old "Perspektywy" ranking.¹

International certificates — evaluation of education quality. The analysis of this criterion should be preceded by an indication of the most prestigious and internationally recognized certification institutions. Almost every scientific discipline has its own prestigious institutions certifying the quality of scientific research and education process. It is also necessary to take into account their experience (since when they grant their certificates) in assessing the quality of work of universities and their rank in the environment.

Publications — articles and monographs written by university employees. The publications that have been published in prestigious international (Philadelphia list, presence in bibliographic databases, bibliometric indicators) and national publications should be taken into account. In each scientific discipline, a group of publications and titles of journals that are highly regarded and considered to be prestigious in the community can be indicated. The starting point for the use of this criterion should be a list of the most prestigious publications, preferential lists of ministries or scientific institutions or standardized evaluation systems.

Lecturers — the number (its increase or decrease) of employees of universities conducting classes at foreign universities. It would be necessary to analyse the nature of these classes, i.e. how many lecturers gave — in the analysed period — one-time lectures, were on a short-term

contract (several classes e.g. during a month) and how many of them gave a longer series of lectures (a semester or a whole academic year). It is also possible to take into account how many direct invitations were made to lecturers from a given university. The second area of interest should be the analysis of the university's prestige in terms of invited lecturers (scientists, politicians, representatives of business practice).

Foreign lecturers — "attractiveness" (increasing or decreasing) universities as places of work or meetings for foreign lecturers. In this category, the question of the duration of the stay of foreign researchers at the university should also be examined. Whether their arrival is connected with giving an occasional lecture, or it is a series of classes (several lectures per month) or long-term stays (semester or academic year). One can also consider the frequency of arrivals of specific lecturers (a person comes to one lecture, but does so several times a year in a given academic year). Not without significance for the image and reputation of the university is the answer to the question: from which universities foreign lecturers come, how these universities are perceived in the world.

Honoris Causa Doctorate — a prestigious scientific title awarded by the university to prominent representatives of the world of science, but also to personalities from other fields (e.g. politicians) or their own graduates. Considering this criterion one has to answer the question: what is the reputation and image of the persons awarded this honorable title by the university and whether the selected person (and above all his actions) has influenced the public perception of the university.²

Science/results of scientific research — promotion of scientific works of the university employees. The art of promoting science seems to be extremely important, but often underestimated by universities. Stakeholders should know what problems scientists work on and what are the results of their research. Of course, the promotion of science (research results) may take place on many levels (publications, conferences), but it should be an independent tool for building the image and reputation of the university/research centre (Osica, Niedzicki, 2019).

Relations with practice — participation of persons from outside the employees of the university in the teaching process and cooperation of employees with economic institutions or local government. What is important is first of all the nature of this participation — whether we deal

with occasional lectures, or whether such classes are held regularly (e.g. in the form of so-called open lectures) and to what extent lectures with internships are complementary to the theoretical knowledge provided to students. The question arises, of course, about the competence and professional position of lecturers-practitioners and how the usefulness of such classes for students is examined. In turn, the second relation is important in the context of creating value for stakeholders from the economic sector with the participation of university employees.

Students — their number and their preferred fields of study (specialities). The evolution (increase or decrease) of the number of young people starting and finishing their studies — within the prescribed period of time — and their internationalisation will be important. In this case, internationalization will mean not only the number of foreign students, but also their geographical origin and their preferred specializations. It will also be important for the image of the university to be able to provide education in several languages.

Quality of graduates — their "attractiveness" on the national and international labour market. The media often publish reports from various so-called job fairs, during which employers look for new employees. A good illustration of this criterion are rankings of managers, in which information about the fields of study and universities of which they are graduates appears (e.g. "Rzeczpospolita" ranking). The quality of graduates is also reflected in their jobs and positions. A catalogue of companies, institutions or organisations (international and national) in which graduates work will help to clarify this criterion and its value.

Outstanding graduates — the most outstanding contemporary university graduates. These are people who currently perform the most important functions in the structures of state or local government and international institutions. They manage the most important organisations and institutions in the country and abroad, manage the largest enterprises (domestic and foreign) or represent the state in international organisations. Each university prides itself on such graduates, and their profiles appear in many related publications.

Improvement of qualifications — "attractiveness" of the university as a place for improving professional qualifications. This criterion does not only apply to the offer of doctoral studies, sub-field studies or MBI studies.

What is more important is the degree of interest in such a form of professional qualification improvement as post-graduate studies, seminar meetings or specialist courses. We must answer the question: how many employees benefit from the educational offer, and whether their number is gradually increasing. It also seems important to analyse the structure of the academic staff in terms of how many university employees there are, and how many practitioners and whether there are foreign lecturers. An interesting distinguishing feature in this criterion would be the educational effectiveness indicator, i.e. how many people start e.g. doctoral studies and how many of them defend their doctoral theses within the legal deadline.

Young scientists — scientific achievements of young employees (mainly doctoral students) as well as students from scientific circles. Their participation in national and international research projects (teams), scientific conferences, authorship of scientific articles may have a significant impact on the perception of the university as a "young talent smithy".

Internationalisation of science — participation of employees in international research teams, scientific consortia, congresses and discussion forums, both those established to solve a specific scientific problem and those with a more permanent (long-term) character, confirming not only permanent presence; but also trust in representatives of universities in European and world science.

Experts — university employees who are advisors to the most prestigious international institutions (e.g. UN committees, European Union committees, governmental teams, ...). Any form of consultancy seems to be important, but from the point of view of the image and reputation of the university, long-term forms of cooperation are particularly important, consisting in regular preparation of various expert opinions or reports for prestigious international institutions. The work for other governments may be considered an important form of such expert cooperation. The invitation issued by individual governments is generally an expression of recognition of the substantive achievements of the university and its staff. University employees can use their knowledge in advising international non-governmental organisations.

Relations with industry circles — another form of cooperation with the environment (stakeholders) bringing benefits to both parties. In the

case of e.g. economic universities it will be relations with the business world: entrepreneurs, companies, business associations. This is another determinant showing openness and readiness of universities to meet the needs of their stakeholders. These are mainly needs related to improving the qualifications of entrepreneurs and providing students with practical knowledge.

Prestigious awards — national and international distinctions granted to universities or individual employees, both for scientific and educational activities. The prestige of an award is directly related to the public perception of the institutions granting it. There is no doubt that many prizes appearing in the public space (this applies not only to prizes awarded to universities) have no greater value, as they are distinctions that can be "bought" in various ways. Therefore, as in the case of certification institutions, the reputation of the awarding institutions must be carefully analysed, and this does not only apply to the business world.

The organizer of prestigious conferences — the university is a place where international symposia or seminars are held, which are discussed and written about in the media. During such conferences, important reports are announced, which are a summary of scientific research. The prestige of a conference depends not only on the subject matter discussed or the number of participants. It seems important to publicize the conference in the media, i.e. whether 'the world was talking' about the conference and whether the main issues raised have reached the public opinion.

Public debates — how often the university is a place to discuss important social issues — political, economic or world-view ones. Are these debates preserving their open academic character and whether they are free of emotions, characteristic for discussions taking place, for example, in the media. It is the university's duty to organize meetings during which different world views clash and we can observe a different approach to the surrounding reality, and most participants can express their opinions. Thanks to such debates the public has the opportunity to listen to different arguments and learn about different effects of specific decisions of the authorities.

The voice of the university in a public debate — the institution is not only a place of public debate but also presents its position in public

discourse. Of course, it needs to be specified in more detail: the "voice of the university", whether it is the opinion of individual employees or just the opinion of its authorities — the rector, the senate, the dean, etc. — must be specified. It all depends on the extent to which the notion of 'autonomy of the university' is adopted in our reasoning. If we take into account the rankings of trust in particular professions³, it turns out that for the public the voice of the university is very important. It seems that for the public opinion the postulated neutrality of the university is particularly important.

The university for the local community — the so-called openness of the university to local problems. This term includes the possibility to participate in lectures (so-called open lectures), meetings (with so-called interesting people), lectures addressed to residents. Many universities organise "open days" (addressing not only future students), and university employees inform about the results of their research during, among others, Researchers' Night. Interest in this form of contact with the university can be measured not only by the number of participants, but also by their age, place of residence or education.

Media about the university — a number of publications and a catalogue of media that most often touch upon issues related to the functioning of the university. These publications assess its activity as well as its place and importance in a thematically diverse public debate. It concerns both local, national and international media. The analysis of this criterion cannot be limited only to the number of publications. What is important is, first of all, the nature of the media message, whether these are publications with a predominance of positive opinions, or on the contrary — the negative ones dominate or whether they are neutral in nature and boil down mainly to providing "dry" information.

The university in the media — media publications written by its employees and students. These include journalistic articles, essays and interviews, as well as their statements used by journalists in their articles or programmes. Also important is the place of publication, the prestige of the medium that has published the article/essay of the college employee or an interview with him/her. It is also worthwhile to analyze the media impact of such speeches and check whether such a speech was noticed by other media, e.g. by quoting the main thoughts expressed by the author.

University's non-scientific achievements — international and domestic successes of studios and students not related to science or education. They allow for building a visa for the university, where employees not only conduct research and teach students, but also have time to develop their passions and interests. Students, on the other hand, have created conditions for the development of their various activities (sports, tourism, culture). In this way, the image of a friendly to different groups of stakeholders is created.

Contacts with graduates — building regular contacts between current and former students, between the university and its graduates. In many Western universities these relations are beneficial for all parties. Graduates still maintain the relationship with the university, which can count on their support and it is not only about material support, although it is also very important. Students, on the other hand, have direct "access" to top-class specialists, find internship opportunities, and through the graduates can find work.⁴ This is a determinant that is underused by many universities in supporting their image and reputation.

Relations with competitors — contacts with similar types of universities. Are we only talking about competition (e.g. in attracting new students), or is it possible to cooperate on the level of seeking sources of financing for joint research and implementation of joint projects or joint environmental undertakings. It is a difficult and, with certainty, questionable criterion of building an individual image and reputation of the university. But creating a common 'front' for solving common problems and looking for possibly good solutions is probably possible, but it requires deeper reflection.

Relations with secondary schools — forms of searching for future students. In this case it is not about one-off meetings (so-called open days), but about the formation of regular forms of contact between students and the university whose students they intend to become (so-called academic classes, youth universities). The effectiveness of this form of contact can be verified by answering the question: how many people have decided to start studying at this university after having had such meetings. This criterion may be considered in terms of internationalisation — in which countries and how does the university look for potential foreign students?

Scandals (plagiarism, mobbing, nepotism) — all the controversies connected with the functioning of the university. Particularly important seem to be all contentious issues related to research (e.g. plagiarism of doctoral or post-doctoral theses) and the didactic process (plagiarism of master's or bachelor's theses). In this case, it is also important to address such situations, and in particular to take action that should limit their occurrence in the future. The source of crisis situations may also be the university's relations with the world of politics, especially when crossing a rather delicate border between the university as a place of public debate and the university as a place of promoting only one system of views and values. Broadcasting (e.g. by the media) the problems always leads the university to a crisis situation, and the way out of the crisis builds a positive (or negative) image and reputation of the university.

In every company a special role in building the image and reputation is played by its president as a leading 'personnel'. The degree of his involvement in this process is always varied and often depends on the personal predisposition of the manager, but in many situations his decisions and behaviour translate (directly or indirectly) into the public perception of the company. There are many examples of the president's positive and negative impact in building and destroying reputation (Kalinowska, Przybylski, 2019). His decisions, relations with employees or other external stakeholders, and environmental activity largely determine the perception of the company by stakeholder groups.⁵

This is no different for public organisations and institutions, including universities. The professional and social position of the rector translates into the image of the university in the eyes of the public in a broad sense. One can agree with the general opinion that the persons managing universities are not as recognisable as the heads of corporations or various political or social institutions. However, every known university is always a public institution, and the Rector representing its interests is also a person and assessed by — broadly understood — public opinion.

Therefore, according to the authors, there are several important features that determine the image and reputation of the Rector, and thus of the institution they manage:

- scientific authority of the rector, determined by international and national publications, awards or distinctions granted by prestigious public and industry institutions;
- presence of the rector in the governing bodies of prestigious international and national scientific organisations;
- presence of the rector in editorial colleges of prestigious national and international publishers;
- the presence of the rector in prestigious advisory bodies operating at the most important bodies of state and local government, as well as international institutions (e.g. UN agencies or committees and other bodies of the European Union);
- participation and speeches of the rector in prestigious national and international conferences (e.g. Davos Forum, Economic Forum in Krynica), international industry congresses;
- The rector's environmental relations understood as cooperation with "managing" institutions of science and higher education (Ministry of Science and Higher Education, Conference of Rectors of Academic Schools (KRASP), Conference of Rectors of Economic Universities (KRUE), Polish Accreditation Committee (PKA), and with various levels of local government);
- rector's participation in the work of prestigious non-profit organizations (national and international);
- presence of the rector in honorary committees appointed on the occasion of important national and international issues, and important anniversaries of historical events;
- frequency of the rector's media appearances, i.e. statements, interviews, journalistic articles in prestigious national and international media;
- ability to solve conflicts and internal crises — the rector as a mediator;
- media opinions about the rector's person (positive, negative neutral) excluding the classic hate flooding the media;
- private image and reputation of the rector — his social, environmental contacts, interests.

The authors are aware that the above catalogue of criteria is not only debatable, but it certainly needs to be supplemented, especially when we

refer to a specific university or research institution. Certainly, there is a need to analyse and include in the above list, categories related to ethical values, attitudes and behaviours which should be shaped by the university. This problem has already been noted in the literature (Stasiuk-Krajewska, 2011), and the authors describe and analyse the content of various statutes of the university or its institutions (faculties, institutes, departments), codes of ethics binding on employees and students, principles stemming from the content of the mission of the university's activities or the content of student vows.

The practical application of the proposed criteria will also require their quantification in order to be able to: firstly, assess how particular criteria/determinants affect the image and reputation, and secondly, to compare the image and reputation of particular universities or groups of universities (research institutes).

Summary

To sum up, it should be stressed that many of the proposals contained in the article are debatable, but reflect the views and practical experience of the authors. Undoubtedly, they are not only an inducement for a debate, but can also be a starting point for studying the image and reputation of a particular university, similar groups of universities (e.g. economic universities) or universities located in a given city or province. Public and non-public institutions in a given region can also be compared.

In the new situation in which all Polish universities (public and non-public) and research centres find themselves, it is required to look at many issues related to the functioning of these institutions differently from the previous one. The problem of building their image is one of those issues, around which quick reflection is necessary. The effect of this reflection will certainly be a critical analysis of many activities in the field of science promotion, scientific policy and higher education. There is no doubt that many of the tools developed so far to build the image and reputation are not adequate to the surrounding infrastructural, social and technological reality and the changing trends in education. A new

approach to this issue is required, which will not be possible without critical reflection on the problems of creating relations with all stakeholders, of which communication (mainly dialogue) will be an important element. Building the market position and looking for competitive advantages will require the creation of permanent values for stakeholders, among which the basic one will be the product offer directed towards them and meeting their expectations (values). It should be remembered that the values expected by stakeholders quite often change as a result of changes in the environment.

We are convinced that the reputation will determine the directions of development of universities and research centres as well as their prospects in the market dimension. A positive image will be built mainly on the basis of scientific, didactic and practical achievements. They must be communicated and proven to the interested parties in an appropriate form and context, pointing out potential space for cooperation, as they will stimulate the development of universities and research centres.

At the end of the study one can recall the thesis put forward at the beginning of the study: a university (research centre) does not have a single image and reputation, because there are many different stakeholders located around them, having different (often different) expectations towards a scientific institution (educational, research). We must fully agree with the opinions that the circle of stakeholders and their expectations is much wider than in the case of an enterprise, public institution or social organisation (Piotrowska-Piątek, 2016; Fazlagić, 2012; Waszkiewicz, 2011b). Through the lens of these expectations, they will assess the image and reputation of all scientific and research, and academic institutions.

Footnotes

¹ Very often the media information about the university is preceded by a reminder which place it takes.

² The question must also be asked: does the awarding of this honorary title bring more "benefits" to the awarded or rewarding university. It is about prestigious benefits (for both parties) at the moment of awarding the title and several years afterwards.

³ Rankings prepared by Centre for Public Opinion Research (CBOS) show that the Polish people have the greatest trust in two professions: firefighter and university professor. It seems that there are many reasons for high social evaluation of both professions.

⁴ The changing environment of universities and, above all, the need to look for new sources of funding, makes it necessary to redefine the relationship between the university and its graduates. It is necessary to take a new look at the functioning of various alumni associations and to use existing international solutions. Such verification concerns practically all Polish universities.

⁵ Research conducted by Weber Shandwick shows that more than 80 percent of managers consider the CEO's commitment and activity inside and outside the company an important part of building the company's reputation. The opinion about the CEO has an impact on both the company's reputation and its business value. The first of these elements is emphasized by 45% of respondents. Fewer (44%) links the company's value with the reputation of its boss. Previous surveys of the same company show that the question: who spoils the company's reputation the most — 58% of managers answer "presidents" (survey on a group of 950 respondents in 11 countries of Europe, Asia and North America).

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