Goals and Approaches for a Branding Project at Kumamoto University

1. Profile of Kumamoto University
2. Background to start a branding project
3. Set up for the Project and Studies for the Branding Model (2011-2012)
5. Discussion

Trustee and Vice President of Kumamoto University

Mitsuo Morozumi
1. Profile of Kumamoto University

Kumamoto University is located in a 400-year old castle city, Kumamoto.
1. Profile of Kumamoto University

Kumamoto city has beautiful natural surroundings, such as the Aso-Kujyu National Park and the Unzen-Amakusa National Park.

Kumamoto city also provides many urban amenities that support metropolitan populations of one million. Kumamoto is also known for its tasty water supply that uses fresh underground water run from the Aso Mountains.
Living costs are 10 to 15% cheaper than in the Tokyo area. Kumamoto City is one of the best places for foreign students to start their academic lives in Japan.
1. Profile of Kumamoto University

The university’s history can be traced back to the establishment of Japan’s first medical school by the Kumamoto feudal lord in 1756.

History of Kumamoto University

1700’s
- September 1756: Saishunkan established (Origin of medicine & University Hospital)
- July 1756: Banjien established (Origin of School of Pharmacy)

1800’s
- February 1896: Renamed as Kumamoto Medical College
- May 1874: Kumamoto Teachers College established (Origin of Faculty of Education)
- March 1885: Renamed as Kumamoto Pharmaceutical College
- May 1887: The Fifth High School Established (Origin of Kumamoto University)
- April 1897: Engineering Division of the Fifth High School Established (Origin of Faculty of Engineering)

1900’s
- May 1929: Renamed as Kumamoto Medical University
- May 1949: Unified as Kumamoto University
- March 1961: Renamed as National University Corporation Kumamoto University

2000’s
- April 2004: Renamed as National University Corporation Kumamoto University
1. Profile of Kumamoto University

The Fifth High School, the predecessor to today’s National University, was established in 1887.
1. Profile of Kumamoto University

The university boasts one of the longest histories of any national university in Japan
1. Profile of Kumamoto University

Today, the university has seven faculties, eight graduate schools and 17 research centres/institutions that support educational and research activities, ranging from the life sciences, science and technology to the humanities and social sciences.
1. Profile of Kumamoto University

In 2013, the university had more than 8000 undergraduate students and 2000 graduate students, including 400 to 550 international students from 42 countries or regions. Especially, at the graduate level, the foreign student rates had risen to 15%.
In 2013, the university was selected for the 22 research university group by the government, because of the world-class researches that had been carried out on the campus, in a diversity of fields.
2. Background to start a Branding Project
2. Background to start a Branding Project

1) Common awareness that KU’s public image is not high enough, especially outside the prefecture, compare to its member’s expectation.

2) The president’s wish to enhance both national and international recognition of KU as a globally active research university.

3) Reflections:
   The explanation or message regarding KU’s features or identity is not easily comprehensible and cannot be shared among the university community members.
   KU has lacked strategic approaches to publicity assuming its stakeholders
   Although all projects and measures conducted in the University were aimed to enhance its performance, they sometimes, lacked strategic connection or integration.
4) Past actions regarding KU branding

In 2006 KU started University Identity actions. Present Visual Identity (logo mark) of KU was introduced as of its actions. However, those actions could not develop into continuous actions for university branding. Some of the reasons were:
they failed in sharing an attractive concept for branding with the community members; they lacked a system to be involved in the administrative process.

In 2011, a task force WG was organized under the president to propose necessary measures of branding to the administrative meeting in the President’s Office.

Members:
- Professor (a member of the past project) + Special Aide to the President
- + 2 knowledgeable people* + Branding specialist*
- + General Manager of Strategic Management Planning Office

Facilitator for discussion:
- Trustee / Vice President + Chief of publicity unit, Marketing Department
- + Group work specialist*

Support
- Staff of Strategic Management Planning Office

* indicates a member invited from outside the university

Monthly meetings were held on the materials provided by the support team.

Analysis of brand-image studies of universities by region conducted by a private firm (Nikkei BP consulting, Co.)

Comparison of public reputations among target universities for 49 factors to study strong points and weak points of KU

Comparison of public reputations by respondent group (region, age, status) among target universities using synthesized index score

For the purpose of inner branding, a workshop on university branding for the Vice Deans and major administrative staff were held with the support of the British Council and Yuit Branding & Education Consulting Co.

WG proposed a tentative brand model for KU that defined brand truth, practical and emotional benefit, core value, personality, unique proposition, as well as approaches of publicity KU should take as early as possible.

External members gave WG members sharp views and ideas, though, the member also felt needs to invite internal members of various fields to broaden and deepen discussion on the brand truth and benefits before proposing an brand model for KU.

In 2012, a task force WG was reorganized with new members.

Members
- 2 Trustees / Vice Presidents + 4 Special Aides to President
  + 3 Vice Deans from different field + Professor (a member of the past branding project)
  + Adviser specialized in branding strategy *

Support
- Staff of Strategic Management Planning Office

* indicates a member invited from outside the university

WG conducted original questionnaires for stakeholders on their opinion of the present performance of KU and their expectations to the future of KU. They consist of 30 SD scale questions and 3 multiple choice type questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of stakeholders</th>
<th># of respondent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High school students and teachers</td>
<td>1612</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsible persons of private companies (executives, managers of research section, recruiting managers)</td>
<td>256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefectural Government executives in Kyushu region</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaders of university alumni groups</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guardians of undergraduate students</td>
<td>292</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University staff and students</td>
<td>309</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>2620</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Kumamoto University Karuta (Japanese traditional playing cards) project as a tool of inner branding in 2013 and 2014. It was initially proposed in the Branding Workshop in 2011.

+ to promote the University members being aware of various resources or assets that will form university identity.
+ carried out in the style of contest for short verses or haikus that starts with one of 43 Japanese syllabary.
+ nearly 6000 short verses were submitted from students and staff of the university, students of attached primary school and junior high school.
+ 43 excellent verses for the Karuta and 25 good verses were awarded by the president.

WG proposed a brand model for KU as a globally active research university and proposed a Communication Word that symbolizes its brand attributes and expresses its essential quality.

Communication Word
“Forest of creative powers, Blaze of Challenging spirits”

Core Value of KU
Nurture active leaders who can exhibit practical abilities.
Lead innovations for people’s happiness with the integrated powers of specialists.
Act as a gateway that inter-connect the region to the global world.

Actions of two different levels were carried out by standing committees chaired by Trustees or Vice Presidents.

+ Publicizing concepts of the model and implementing it in KU administration

Publicity Committee took the major role of the former level

+ Decided to ask a well-known comic artist studied in KU to write the Communication Word with a writing brush to design logotypes, assuming it would attract people’s attention
+ Carried out publicity actions both inside and outside of the campus.

Implementation of the brand model as a guide for KU administration

Ten year vision and six year plan of the University
The trustees and the Vice Presidents are now working out drafts for the ten year vision and also drafts for the third term six year plan of the University that starts in 2016, referring the model as a base of study.

University IR
The office of University IR will start in the first half of 2014, to support strategic decision making of the university administration, which will also coordinate bench-marking studies, or reputation analysis separately conducted by department or section of departments at present.

International Networking
To strengthen KU’s performance as a globally acting research university, though it is still limited, several projects have been conducted such as to support leading research teams for their international networking activities, or to hold a university forum in Asian Cities that a satellite office is located.
5. Discussion

Kumamoto University is on its process of university branding; therefore, it is too early to comment the project’s effects.

Though the number of foreign students studying in KU are rapidly increasing in the last five or six years, further effort to attract them are clearly inevitable.

Considering a handicap stemmed from the national location or a gap in university size, promotion as group of universities, or promotion with regional government, making use of the advantages inherited in the region, seems to be effective.

Promotion movie sign display in a station concourse in Tokyo that appeals Kumamoto as a suitable place for study, sponsored by Kumamoto Prefecture, Kumamoto City, the Kumamoto consortium of higher education academies.