



Making your Global Mark University branding, internationalisation and reputation management conference and workshops

December 2012 Japan

Summary report

Making your Global Mark: University branding, internationalisation, and reputation management conference and workshops

Achieving global presence and establishing distinctiveness through powerful international strategies is a shared agenda among higher education institutions in an ever more globalising world. This programme, staged in Japan in December 2012 and co-hosted by the British Council in Japan and The World 100 Reputation Network (<http://www.theworld100.com/>), brought together senior directors from leading universities in Japan and around the world with corporate affairs, international or reputational/brand responsibilities for their organisations, to share and build on their expertise of communicating the value of higher education and its institutions. The two-day event, consisting of a conference on day 1 and parallel workshops on day 2, provided opportunities to explore different aspects of reputation management including branding and public engagement, and to take part in interactive dialogues on these issues with experts from world class universities.



Below is a brief summary report of the event.

1. Conference 10 December 13:00 – 17:15

Opening and Introduction

Shigeharu Kato, Director-General for International Affairs, Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT)

In his introduction, Mr. Kato spoke of Japan's strengths in areas such as Engineering and quality assurance and how they were not always translated into the world university rankings, where Japan scores high for reputation but less so against other criteria. He spoke of the need to improve the clarity of message from Japan's higher education sector and to engage in two-way communication with stakeholders. He also put forward three key areas in 21st century university education – global citizenship, new learning methods and digital materials.



‘The impact of reputation management, public engagement and branding’

Mark Sudbury, Director of Communications, University College London

Mr. Sudbury first looked at various definitions of reputation, concluding that the simplest definition is “what people say about us”. He discussed how reputation is very often shaped by history and legacy and suggested that the top ten universities of 100 years ago would be similar to the top ten today. In offering suggestions as to why reputation matters, Mr. Sudbury suggested that it helps attract the best staff and students, it affects funding to support research, and it affects the partnerships forged by institutions. In order to build a reputation, institutions need to identify their own strengths and link reputation management to the institution’s corporate strategy. However, the key to achieving a good reputation has to be the provision of excellence in research and teaching. Public engagement, consisting of a two-way dialogue between the public and universities, was also highlighted as an important area for universities, particularly with the increased expectation from government and society that universities should work for them. In closing, Mr. Sudbury suggested that any institution engaging in reputation management needs to measure its success by starting with a base point and measuring changes in perceptions before and after.

‘The role of the World 100 Reputation Network in supporting reputation management’

Louise Simpson, Director, The World 100 Reputation Network

Ms. Simpson began by discussing how reputation management is by no means a recent phenomenon; it is something that can be seen throughout history and was often employed by the British monarchy. US and UK universities are becoming increasingly active in reputation management as the higher education power base shows signs of shifting eastwards. This can be demonstrated by a number of UK institutions who now include their communications manager in their senior management team. According to Ms. Simpson, the World 100 Reputation Network was established from a desire to share global best practice between university communications leaders and it is a research network specialising in the production of data to benchmark universities. Ms. Simpson put forward an example of the Network’s research which indicated that researchers tend only to move to institutions ranked above their current employer.

‘Reputation Management in Higher Education in Japan – Challenges and Prospects’

Takeshi Hirose, Associate Professor, Office for Promotion International Education/Global 30 Project Office, Kyushu University

Mr. Hirose began by suggesting that reputation management is actually more important for universities than private companies because their product is undifferentiated by nature and also expensive, yet it cannot be sampled in advance. In Japan there is a distinction between domestic and international reputation management – Japanese universities have traditionally been good at building networks with domestic media and high schools but there has been less focus on international audiences. He stressed that Japanese universities lack institution wide policies on reputation management – there is usually no one at senior management level coordinating communications and staff numbers in their public relations offices are far smaller than in the UK. Mr. Hirose suggested that Japanese universities’ laissez-faire approach to international reputation management can be traced to a lack of commitment to internationalization borne about by the fact that there is no financial incentive for Japanese universities to increase their intake of international students and because international students mean an increased workload due to language issues and other factors.

‘How universities are amplifying their reputation around the world: a global overview’

Phil Baty, Editor, Times Higher Education Rankings

Mr. Baty provided an introduction to the role of rankings and suggested that they have been influential in encouraging universities to look outwards. He gave an overview of Japan’s performance in the Times Higher Education Rankings, highlighting how Japan has the highest ranked Asian university (The University of Tokyo) as well as more universities in the top 400 than any other Asian country. He also highlighted its



strength in the reputation rankings. However, he indicated that Japan is a poor performer in international indicators such as the number of joint international papers produced and the number of international staff. Looking at rankings trends in recent years, Mr. Baty highlighted that Japan was losing ground in the rankings while other Asian universities were on the rise, something which Japan might like to address.

‘Understanding the case studies in a Japanese context’

Sachiko Miyashita, Branding Consultant, Yuit Inc.

Ms. Miyashita discussed some of the findings of her recent interviews with communications directors from various UK universities, identifying ‘public engagement’, ‘competition and collaboration’, ‘two-way communications’, ‘fast changing world’, ‘one unified message’ and ‘original message with impact’ as some of the key words used by the people interviewed. She emphasised that it was important for universities looking to put more resources into reputation management to establish a way of assessing the return on their investment beforehand. She also provided examples of a regional marketing initiative created for a consortium of universities from the same area in southwest Japan and examples of study abroad event branding and promotional videos which her company was responsible for.

‘Case study from Kyoto University’

Tetsuo Sawaragi, Professor and Deputy Director for Research and International Affairs, Kyoto University

Mr. Sawaragi offered his perspective on rankings, discussing how Kyoto University performs very well in reputation rankings but less so in others, such as employer reputation. He discussed how Kyoto is trying to communicate with a wider audience through establishing a website specifically for companies looking to collaborate with the university and putting open courseware on I-Tunes University. Mr. Sawaragi also discussed how reputation data can be used to identify partner universities. He displayed data that compared the research strengths of particular universities and explained how Kyoto used the data to make sure the universities they partnered with were a good match. Mr. Sawaragi concluded by stating that while rankings and statistics serve a purpose, they should not dictate everything universities do.

‘International branding case study’

Kirsti Lehmusto, Director of Communications and Community Relations, University of Helsinki

Ms. Lehmusto opened by stressing that universities should not engage in any branding initiative that will not prove beneficial for students or researchers. She introduced various case studies on how the University of Helsinki was looking to communicate its research to the public. These included researchers taking part in ‘Pecha Kucha’ events at which they have to summarize their research in six minutes and forty seconds as well as full page newspaper adverts promoting their research using engaging language and evocative images. She also introduced the university’s ‘pop-up science store’ in the centre of Helsinki which allows members of the public to come together in a relaxed coffee shop atmosphere to engage with science.

‘Reputation management in an Asian context’

Katherine Ma, Director of Communications, University of Hong Kong

Ms. Ma opened by describing rankings as being all about connectivity. She emphasised how her institution scores very high against the internationalization criteria in the rankings because of its diverse student population. Ms. Ma linked her current work with her time spent working in the tourist industry, saying that, as with travel agencies, universities are all about marketing an experience and touching people’s hearts. She highlighted the importance of encouraging faculty to engage with the media and share their research and suggested highlighting media coverage on the university intranet as a means to motivate staff.



2. Workshops 11 December 10:00 – 16:30

1. ‘Public engagement as a means of raising the profile of university research’

Chris Coe, Director of Public Engagement, King’s College London

This workshop looked at how universities should implement successful public engagement strategies, noting that it needs to be something that is embedded into the culture of the institution to truly work. King’s College London has a gallery specifically for public engagement which strives to reach out to new audiences who rarely interact with academia. The reasons behind public engagement were also debated. These included universities needing to demonstrate that, as tax-funded institutions, they benefit society. The less altruistic reasons for public engagement, such as benefitting researchers’ careers and promoting the university name, were also discussed. There was also a discussion of the public engagement of Japanese universities in the aftermath of the earthquake and tsunami in March 2011, with some criticism of universities for not being clear with their communications and some praise for the work of staff and students with the recovery efforts.

2. ‘Extending the brand through international PR and media coverage’

Emma Leech, Director of Marketing, Communications and Recruitment, University of Nottingham
Katherine Ma, Director of Communications, University of Hong Kong

There was discussion of how to encourage researchers to promote their work to the media and also of the systems that can be used to track and analyze media coverage. It was suggested that marketing strategies need to be customized for the target country, as the University of Nottingham did when opening a campus in Malaysia. The role of social media was also explored, as were the difficulties of protecting your brand on a social media platform. Participants agreed that in the world of social media, university communications have to be up-to-date and highly responsive.

3. ‘Creating a marketing strategy for an international university’

Tania Rhodes Taylor, Director of Marketing and Communications, Queen Mary, University of London

This session explored the importance of having a marketing strategy and the difficulties in implementing an institution-wide strategy in large universities. A successful marketing strategy should be informed by the corporate strategy and have buy-in from across the university. An effective marketing strategy is particularly important for Japanese universities to attract more international students, especially given its declining domestic population. Research strengths might be the key driver behind a marketing strategy. Hurdles in implementing a marketing strategy included finding money for consultants, getting consensus from the senior management team and having non-specialist staff in the PR section (due to job rotation). The importance of having key performance indicators (such as student numbers or press coverage) in place before implementing a marketing strategy was also highlighted as a means to justify the marketing internally.

4. ‘Crisis planning/managing reputation during natural/human disasters’

Mark Sudbury, Director of Communications, University College London

This session looked at the crisis management experiences of universities and government in the aftermath of the March 2011 earthquake and tsunami and the plane terrorism attempt originating from London in December 2009. Disaster can strike at any time and as such it is important to have a plan of action in place and to rehearse and practice crisis management. Any crisis has the potential to become global news and as such universities should try and maintain good links with international media so that they can communicate their message during these times and get on the front foot.



5. 'Establishing brand distinctiveness'

Robin Hoggard, Director of External Relations, London School of Economics and Political Science
Kirsti Lehmusto, Director of Communications and Community Relations, University of Helsinki

In this workshop there was a discussion of the importance of ensuring that a brand neither undersells nor oversells an institution – it should be a true reflection of an institution's strengths. There needs to be overall guidelines governing the use of the brand to ensure it is not diluted when used throughout the institution. There were case studies from the University of Helsinki, which has faculty specific brands underneath an overarching institution brand.

6. 'Reputation in higher education: What is it? Why does it matter? How is it measured? The THE word ranking'

Phil Baty, Editor, Times Higher Education Rankings
Louise Simpson, Director, The World 100 Reputation Network

This session looked in detail at the Time Higher Reputation Rankings, a ranking system conducted by peer review in which Japan ranks very highly. Rankings were described as being all about visibility. The advice given to universities wanting to move up the rankings was to study the methodology involved and focus on an institution's particular strengths while increasing visibility through use of social media and other means. China, Korea, Singapore and Hong Kong universities are all rising rapidly in the rankings. This was partly attributed to the support these universities receive from their governments who have placed rankings on the national agenda because they recognize that they tie in with national growth and the knowledge economy. The session concluded with a comment on the importance of universities differentiating themselves from one another and having unique selling points to increase their visibility in a global society.