

Analysis University Identity System (UIS) in the Perspective of Soft Power

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Abstract

The paper explains the basic connotation of University Identity System (UIS) and analyzes the process of the theory of UIS developing at first. On this basis, the paper puts forward the fundamental principles of strategic designing UIS, such as systematic principle, principle of unity, uniqueness principle, dynamic principle and aesthetic principle, and it also advances that there are some problems and some thoughts which universities must pay attention to when introducing and implementing UIS.

Key words: Soft power; University mind identity system; University identity system

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In 1980s, China Academy of Art introduced the materials about Corporate Identity System (CIS) and put it into their teaching practice. Subsequently some universities began to offer relevant classes on CIS one after another and developed cooperation with enterprises to help Chinese enterprises shape their new images. After entering into the 21st century, some of China's universities absorbed the theory of designing Corporate Identity (CI) and led the way in implementing the UIS (University Identity System) project to build their own identity system. Hence the UIS theoretical research and practical application have begun entering into a period of rapid development.

1. THE THEORETICAL CONNOTATION OF UIS

Under the theory of designing CI and universities' characteristics, UIS contains three main elements: UMI (University Mind Identity system); UBI (University Behavior Identity system); UVI (University Visual identity system). The three elements constitute a completely strategic system. They not only play their own independent roles, but also complement each other and eventually merge into an organic entity.

UMI (University Mind Identity system). UMI refers to the main spiritual concepts of universities, the guideline and tenet of operating universities. UMI is not only the soul of the universities, but also the essence of their history, culture and humanistic ideas, not only the foundation of the universities' characteristics, but also the distinctive values and the impetus to development. UMI is the essential part of UIS, so it decides the direction of design as a whole. Relying on the values and organizational structures of universities, UMI reflects a sense of community and behavioral culture of university teachers and students and forms the specific operating ideas, styles and characteristics of the university, with the basic requirements as follows: Accurate understanding of the university's spiritual concepts in education, scholarly tradition and style of the times; reflections of the historical inheritance, characteristics and prospective.

UBI (University Behavior Identity system). UBI includes rules, regulations and strategies in the operation of universities. It is also the concrete embodiment of universities' operating concepts and values. The concepts and values will penetrate into daily management work and the behaviors of staff and students, which can produce overall innovation activities and create the perfect images of universities through coordination and integration among internal departments. UMI asks universities to build up a series of comprehensive and internal systems, such as

organizing and management, education and research, rewards and penalties, rules and regulations of conduct, and even welfare for all the teachers and students. On the other hand, universities should manifest their abilities of teaching and scientific research and exhibit the quality of their personnel training through social welfare and cultural activities. The community could identify and distinguish different universities in light of universities' behavior characteristics and their outcomes.

UVI (University Visual Identity system). UVI means that universities should start with the appearance to put the abstract language of their operating concepts, cultural and professional characteristics and criterion into a kind of concrete symbolic language. The various visual elements of the university image are supposed to get comprehensive and unified planned and designed. UVI is the most internal and intuitive part of UIS, and it is the best means to transmit universities' overall information, featuring clear vision, easily understanding and a special appeal and dissemination. The elements of UVI can be divided into two groups: One group is called basic elements which include the name, the sign, the typeface, the colors and the formation; the other is applied elements including office supplies, building facilities, campus environment, school uniforms and badges, letterheads and the vehicles, etc.. Its unique visual identity system will help the public quickly find and recognize universities. The basic requirements are to express the spiritual concepts through the forms and to give the profound meaning of the concepts.

UIS theory and CIS theory are in essence derived from the same origin and share common goals to design and rebuild organizations' own images, to realize products' values and to strengthen organizations' credibility. It is a long-term activity to introduce and implement either CIS theory or UIS theory and we can not expect to build up a good university or a corporate image overnight, especially in terms of management innovation. The managers of both universities and corporate must be mentally prepared to make constant efforts introducing and implementing steadily CIS theory and UIS theory. Furthermore, they must firmly establish the fundamental ideas of putting identification of concepts into shape avoiding the one-sided approach of paying attention to appearance but not reality.

2. THE PRINCIPLES OF DESIGNING UIS IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF SOFT POWER

At present, to enhance soft power of universities is becoming a common view gradually. UIS is an important way to highlight the universities' soft power and to reflect the campus styles of spiritual civilization. Hence comprehensive and rational planning and arrangements for UIS need to be made.

According to CIS theory, universities must follow a few principles in the process of designing UIS:

(1) The systematic principle. UIS is a complete system.

The relevance of such factors as universities' historical origins, culture, operating concepts, geographic conditions and architectural styles, must be fully considered in the design and construction process. Meanwhile, the original organizational structure and personnel composition of universities must be preserved, and three parts of UIS, MI, BI, and VI must be systematically and harmoniously planned. Through coordination and harmonization of the three subsystems and their functions combined with each other, the deep elements can be accurately reflected from different aspects, including the school culture, organizing and management, human resources and science, the concept and strategy of development and social responsibility. Therefore, universities should introduce UIS as a whole including MI, BI, and VI.

(2) The principle of unity. UIS has different layers; however, it has a wide range of uniformity in the content; it has coordination of performing universities' concepts and conveying ideas by multi-media; it has harmony of the tenet, spirit and culture of universities and it has consistency of the level of teaching and research, and students and staff image and the school overall image. No matter which part or element of the UIS happens to change, the basic image developed by the UIS can make it up and thus get the social identity quickly avoiding the damage of the overall image of UIS.

(3) Uniqueness principle. Uniqueness is to be personalized, which means it must have its own characteristics and reflect the distinct personality from educational concepts to the patterns of behavior and audiovisual communication. In today's society, to make universities' brands or images unique is to make exclusive images of universities in a sense. UIS, with the exclusiveness, is better able to help universities highlight the cultural characteristics, enhance the cohesion and win the public's long-termed concern. The competitive could not be formed by design without personality, which is worthless. The personality of the universities' images design is the best embodiment of the spirit and ability innovation.

(4) Dynamic principle. Firstly, designing and implementing UIS is a dynamic process of development. It generally takes a few years from planning to implement UIS. During this period, the internal and external conditions of the universities' development will change, with which every part of UIS should also be adjusted continuously. Secondly, this dynamic principle also means that UIS is open and sustainable. Developing UIS for universities should have a vision of sustainability and prospective. UIS is an open system and with the development of the human society, it is improved, integrated and located continuously in practice in order to adapt to the globalization.

(5) Aesthetic principle. UIS is designed to convey the educational ideas. At the same time, it gives a kind of beauty to enjoy. Not only teachers and students but the community

also enjoys watching the name of a university written with a specific font and the badge with the specific graphics and colors, using notebooks, envelopes, letterheads, paper bags and other supplies with the name and the badge of the school, and collecting schools' commemorative stamps and post currency. If people attach sentimentally the landmark and landscapes when lingering in a humanistic campus, the design of UIS is successful.

3. THE BASIC PROCESS OF IMPLEMENTING UIS

According to domestic and foreign universities' experience in introducing CIS and implementing UIS, after a comprehensive analysis of universities' own conditions and characteristics, the more feasible UIS process should include the following five stages:

First of all is proposal. The proposal stage is the primary stage of the introducing UIS, which directly decides whether the direction of the UIS is correct or not, and whether it will succeed or not. The main task in the primary stage is to make the proposal of introducing UIS and to get it approved on the basis of clear motivation and purpose of developing UIS.

Secondly, the work is research and analysis. The purpose of UIS in this stage is to evaluate internal and external conditions of universities through research and analysis. On this basis, universities can assess realistically their own strengths and weaknesses and establish their appropriate positions.

Thirdly, development and design. This is an important stage of operating UIS. Firstly, the general proposal must be written on the basis of research, which is the strategic planning of UIS. According to the proposal, the design and extend plans of universities' missions, standards of behavior and visual projects must be finished one by one, and the UIS manual is finally completed. Building UIS reaps preliminary fruit.

Fourthly, implementing and transmitting. The promotion and transmitting of UMI is to publicize the universities' concepts through establishing models, exchange of experience, training, and theme activities. The promotion and transmitting of UBI is to reflect the educational concepts and spiritual values through the work rules and regulations, ritual, celebration and entertainment activities, all of which are not only the beat ways to deliver and reflect the educational concepts and spiritual values, but also the main content of UIS. The promotion and transmitting of UVI is to display universities' concepts and highlight universities' characteristics through the material carriers including planned and unified architecture, school uniforms, brochures, and office and school supplies. Of course, the promotion

and transmitting of UIS as a whole is a continuous and consistent process of UMI, UHI and UVI's coordination, which requires a comprehensive mobilization of a variety of media and utilizing their respective advantages. The purpose of promotion and transmitting UIS is to establish links between universities and the public and to make it well known.

The last, feedback and adjustment. This stage follows the implementation and promotion in the full range of UIS proposal at home and abroad. It is a dynamic process in which UIS program gets effective adjustment and control through timely test, assessment, feedback and detection.

In the stage of feedback and adjustment, universities should constantly adjust and correct their images according to the change of situation and actual implementation. Feedback and adjustment of UIS depends on the timely communication between the campus and the community, information delivery system, sensitive information collection system and rapid information processing system. With the change of social environment, people's attitudes update, the school's condition improved, the images of universities in due time are likely to need adjustment. Therefore, the ability of timely and accurately responding to the developing situation safeguards the universities' invincible positions. Feedback and adjustment of UIS provide conditions for a new round of UIS design, and it makes UIS become an open system, and in the dynamic process of constantly updating and development.

In a word, UIS has a wealth of ideas and culture, and its value lies not only in the theory, but also in the practical operation and maintenance. Through introducing and implementing UIS, universities should fulfill basic work of their more solid images with richer meanings and higher values, and finally shape their better images. Only through exploring the essence of UIS theory gradually, compensating for deficiencies in theory and solving the existing problems when implementing UIS, universities can create favorable brands and images, gain an advantage in the competition and succeed finally.

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