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Brand-oriented project management: theoretical framework and practical implementation aspects

The article explores the essence of brand-oriented project management as an approach in which brand values, positioning and the «brand promise» are integrated into managerial decisions at all stages of the project life cycle alongside the traditional constraints of time, budget and quality. The key principles of brand-oriented project management are identified: value alignment, stakeholder orientation, reputational responsibility, and the integration of corporate culture. It is substantiated that brand-oriented project management is closely related to the concept of sustainable development. Within this approach, projects should comply with ESG principles, which imply responsible resource use, social responsibility, and transparency of managerial decisions. It is demonstrated that brand-oriented project management can be considered an instrument for ensuring strategic coherence between brand management, project activities, and the sustainable development goals of an enterprise. Under current conditions, this approach enables enterprises not only to implement projects effectively, but also to build long-term brand value, increase stakeholder trust, and ensure development resilience under uncertainty. The feasibility of combining the complementary brand methodologies Brand Key and Brand Ladder with Agile processes is substantiated, as this allows transforming brand strategy into measurable value hypotheses and a managed portfolio of project increments. The practical significance of the results lies in the possibility of applying the proposed model in the activities of enterprises to improve project performance, strengthen stakeholder trust, and increase brand equity in the context of wartime risks and post-war recovery.

Keywords: *brand; brand-oriented management; project management; Agile; Brand Key; Brand Ladder; Brand Fit; Brand Gates; ESG; sustainable development; project; brand value; resilience.*

Problem statement in general terms and its connection with important scientific or practical tasks.

In today's environment of intensified competition, the digitalization of business processes, and the growing role of intangible assets, a brand ceases to be solely a marketing category and gains strategic significance for the enterprise management system. This is especially evident in the field of project management, where each project serves not only as a tool for achieving operational objectives but also as a carrier of the brand's values, reputation, and promises.

Traditional approaches to project management primarily focus on meeting deadlines, budgets, and the quality of deliverables; however, they insufficiently consider the impact of project activities on building and sustaining the organization's brand. Under conditions of an unstable external environment, rising stakeholder expectations, and heightened consumer sensitivity to reputational aspects, there is a need to develop a brand-oriented approach to project management.

Analysis of recent research and publications on which the author relies, in which this problem and approaches to its solution are considered. Issues of project management are widely covered in the works of domestic and foreign scholars, in particular in the context of project management, agile methodologies, and strategic management. At the same time, branding is mostly studied within marketing, corporate culture, and strategic positioning. The study of brand-oriented project management has been addressed in the works of many well-known Ukrainian and international researchers, such as A.Vdovichena, I.Yepifanova, O.Marukhlenko, P.Mykiytiuk, A.Kasich, Yu.Kholodna, S.Sarachevych, J.M. Parchi, S.Haidok, N.Paharia, S.Blair, A.Cammarota, and others.

Professor A.Vdovichen, in his monograph, notes that: «The leading role in modern marketing activity belongs to the brand, which reveals the purpose, the hierarchy of tasks, generates its nature, and coordinates interaction in all areas of the enterprise's functioning. This direction in the enterprise's activity has been called brand-oriented management» [1].

Under wartime conditions, the brand performs not only a market function but also a social one, as it becomes associated with reliability, responsibility, and support for the state and society. As a result, every project of an enterprise-investment, operational, social, or transformational-directly or indirectly affects trust in the brand on the part of customers, partners, employees, and society as a whole. In this context, brand-oriented project management implies the conscious alignment of project decisions with reputational risks and stakeholder expectations, which is particularly critical in times of war.

Pidhurska V., based on the results of her study, concludes that a brand development strategy should correspond to the enterprise's philosophy, its mission, and its organizational and corporate culture. She emphasizes that brand management is one of the key areas of strategic enterprise management, as it makes it possible to capitalize the value of branded assets and enhance competitiveness [2]. Barkov I., in turn, argues that brand management is an integral component of any project and of the enterprise's marketing policy, given the intensive development of goods and services production and the intensification of market competition [3].

Kholodna Yu. emphasizes the potential of digital branding, while noting that its implementation requires enterprises to adjust their existing strategy [4]. Marukhlenko O. considers the development of project management maturity an important factor in strengthening business reputation, increasing process transparency, and enhancing organizational competitiveness [5].

As researchers have pointed out, in crisis situations it is a strong brand that enables an enterprise to maintain resilience, sustain the loyalty of customers and partners, and ensure recovery after shocks [6]. In this regard, projects serve as instruments for implementing strategic change, and their success is assessed not only by financial indicators but also by their contribution to the long-term reputational and social value of the brand.

Brand-oriented project management is also closely connected with the concept of sustainable development, which is based on balancing the economic, social, and environmental goals of an enterprise's activity. Within this approach, projects should comply with ESG principles, which implies responsible resource use, social responsibility, and transparency of managerial decisions [7]. The brand, in turn, acts as a mechanism for communicating these principles to both internal and external stakeholders.

By analyzing the works of researchers, it can be concluded that brand-oriented project management can be viewed as a tool for ensuring strategic alignment between brand management, project activities, and an enterprise's sustainable development goals. Under current conditions, such an approach enables enterprises not only to implement projects effectively, but also to build long-term brand value, increase stakeholder trust, and ensure resilience of development in an environment of uncertainty. However, despite the considerable number of publications on this issue, there is still a lack of studies that specifically address this particular combination.

Formulation of the article's objectives (task statement). The purpose of the article is to examine the theoretical foundations of brand-oriented project management and to develop practical recommendations for its implementation in the activities of enterprises.

Presentation of the main research material. Brand-oriented project management should be considered as an approach in which all stages of the project life cycle—from initiation to completion—are aligned with the values, positioning, and strategic goals of the organization's brand. Within this model, a project acts as a tool for communicating brand identity to both external and internal stakeholders.

The key principles of brand-oriented project management are:

- value alignment, which implies that project decisions correspond to the brand's values;
- stakeholder orientation, which takes into account the expectations of customers, partners, and employees regarding the brand;
- reputational responsibility, which involves assessing the project's impact on the organization's image;
- integration of corporate culture, where the project team serves as a carrier of the brand.

The practical implementation of a brand-oriented approach involves incorporating brand-related criteria into project selection processes, team formation, communications management, and performance evaluation. Of particular importance is the role of the project manager, who acts as a brand ambassador and ensures compliance with brand standards throughout project implementation. Effective project management serves as a bridge between a branding vision and its realization. From brand creation, identity design, and culture development to market expansion, structured project management ensures seamless execution and long-term success. Through structured yet flexible communication, project effectiveness increases, trust and loyalty are strengthened, ensuring that the brand's DNA is embedded in every detail [8].

Under the conditions of the full-scale war in Ukraine, the ESG concept has undergone a significant transformation, shifting the focus from long-term declarative goals to practical instruments for ensuring business resilience, energy security, and social stability. For Ukrainian enterprises, ESG is no longer merely an element of image-building policy; instead, it is increasingly integrated into the system of crisis management and project management.

Military hostilities have caused significant damage to Ukraine's energy infrastructure, which has brought to the forefront the need for decentralized energy supply and the development of renewable energy sources. In this context, solar energy projects acquire strategic importance not only from the standpoint of environmental feasibility, but also as an instrument for increasing the energy autonomy of enterprises and communities. Energy security has become one of Ukraine's key priorities due to the full-scale invasion and Russia's shelling of Ukraine's civilian infrastructure.

A relevant practical example of brand-oriented project management in the solar energy sector is based on the premise that the implementation of such projects is perceived by stakeholders as a manifestation of the brand's responsibility for the environmental consequences of its activities and its contribution to restoring the country's

critical infrastructure. According to international studies, companies that invest in renewable energy under crisis conditions build more resilient reputational capital and gain a higher level of trust from society and investors.

Solar power plants are becoming an increasingly popular choice among large corporations worldwide. The reasons for this choice are not only environmental, but also economic. Due to their numerous advantages, solar plants help companies optimize costs, increase energy independence, and strengthen their corporate image. The reasons why corporations choose solar power plants include: savings on electricity costs; energy independence; competitive advantage; a positive impact on corporate image; long-term savings; and support for corporate social responsibility. Solar power plants are an important element of CSR implementation, as companies demonstrate their efforts to reduce their carbon footprint and contribute to sustainable development [9].

Thus, it can be concluded that the theoretical basis of the essence of a brand-oriented project lies in the fact that it is a project in which the brand (its identity, values, and promise to stakeholders) functions not as an additional communication layer but as a managerial principle: it determines the selection of initiatives, the design of solutions, interaction standards, and success metrics. This target brand-oriented approach implies that the project should «become a brand» within the organization, while the project manager should act as an ambassador of the project's values and ensure the consistency of the team's «brand behavior». Brand-oriented projects in terms of brand content and values are presented in table 1.

Table 1

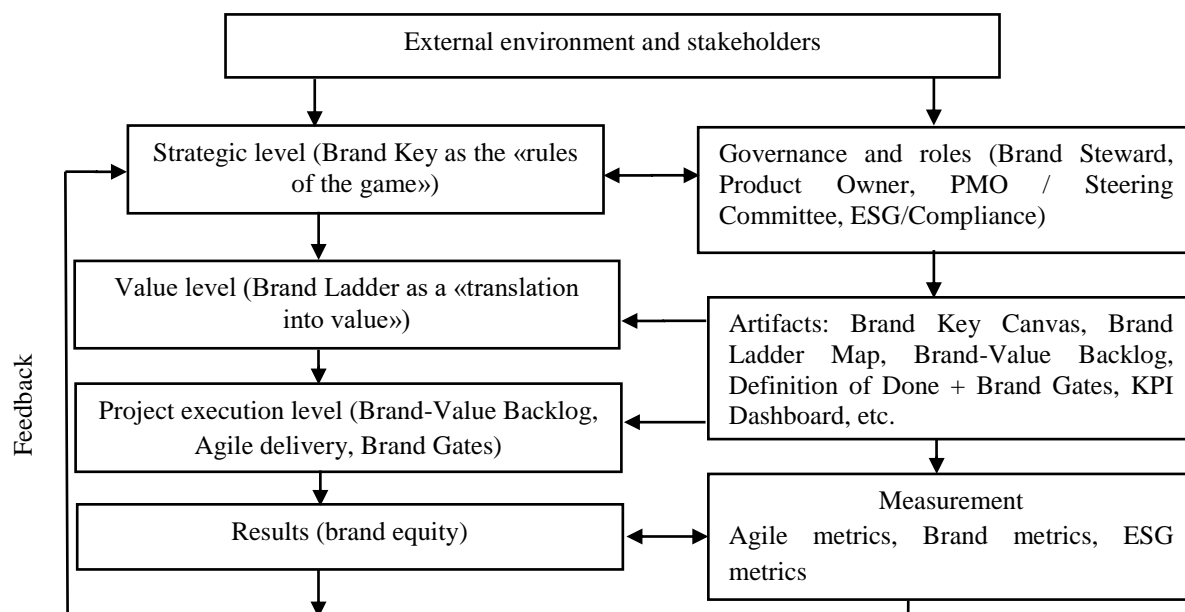
Brand-oriented «solar projects» and the formation of brand values

№	Project name	Brand-oriented concept for enhancing the project objectives	Brand value type	Typical KPIs
1	ESCO Solar Power Plants for hospitals and water utilities in Ukraine (UNDP)	«Reliability of critical infrastructure during blackouts»	Resilience and social value	number of facilities, installed PV capacity (MW), continuity of services
2	Ukraine Energy Support Fund (winterisation, distributed generation)	«System-wide energy sector resilience as a prerequisite for recovery»	Trust in institutions/partnerships	funding volume, restored/installed capacity, winter preparedness
3	A «prestige» project as external marketing (a typical construction case: implemented even with low economic return)	«Brand reputation/visibility in the market»	Reputational capital	media reach, order backlog, partnership contracts
4	Distributed generation/renewables for winter (fund- and donor-backed instruments)	«Reliability in crisis + partner trust»	Resilience and social value	amount of funds raised; audit/compliance; recovery time
5	PV + energy storage for businesses (or Solar PV + storage for businesses)	«We operate without interruptions»	Job retention and continuity of operations	% of critical processes powered autonomously; RTO/BCP; share of on-site generation
6	A «solar + transparent ESG reporting» portfolio	«Accountability you can verify»	The «project as a brand» concept and the role of the project manager as a brand ambassador	non-financial indicators; independent audit; data verifiability

Source: compiled by the authors based on [10–13]

To implement a brand-oriented approach in project management, in our view, it is advisable to combine different methodologies and apply an integrative model (Brand Key + Brand Ladder + Agile). This makes it possible to form a methodological foundation of brand value, which is embedded into agile project management through backlog mechanisms, iterative delivery, and quality «brand gates» (fig. 1).

Brand Key defines invariant positioning and evidence-based parameters, while Brand Ladder transforms them into value hypotheses for stakeholders, which are then tested within Agile project management through increments and metrics [14]. This model ensures strategic alignment between the brand and project decisions and reduces the risk of a gap between the «brand promise» and the actual experience.



Source: developed by the author

Fig. 1. Integrative model (Brand Key + Brand Ladder + Agile) of brand-oriented project management

The conceptual essence of the model lies in combining brand methodologies that perform different functions with agile management methodology as the implementation mechanism. The strategic brand content and its essence are defined by the Brand Key; the Brand Ladder converts brand strategy into a hierarchy of values; and iterative execution, learning, and adaptation are enabled by the tools and mechanisms of agile project management.

The promising directions for implementing this model in enterprises, in our view, include:

1. Developing a system of quantitative KPIs for brand value and ESG impact for different types of solar projects;
2. Developing a methodology for assessing Brand Fit (as the degree to which a project, product, or decision aligns with the company's brand strategy) and Brand Gates (as control «gates» in a project where the team must verify that the outcome matches the brand before moving forward) within Agile processes (backlog, sprints, Definition of Done);
3. Piloting the model through case studies of Ukrainian companies, taking into account wartime risks (energy resilience, logistics, staff safety) and the impact of projects on the trust of key stakeholders;
4. Determining the optimal configuration of roles and corporate governance (PMO/Brand Steward/ESG compliance) to ensure strategic alignment between the brand and project activities.

The results obtained will make it possible to refine the toolkit of brand-oriented project management and to develop practical recommendations for its implementation within the strategic management system of enterprises in the context of post-war recovery.

Conclusions and prospects for further research in this area. The practical significance of this study lies in the fact that, having examined the essence of brand-oriented project management and analyzed practical experience of its application in the solar energy sector-where the implementation of such projects is perceived by stakeholders as a manifestation of the brand's responsibility for the environmental consequences of its activities and its contribution to the restoration of the country's critical infrastructure-we have concluded that, in order to enhance the success and effectiveness of the project management system, it is advisable to combine different methodologies and apply an integrative model (Brand Key + Brand Ladder + Agile), thereby forming a methodological foundation of brand value. Our further research will focus on the methodological aspects of implementing this model in company practice.

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Наукові інтереси:

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- управління проектами;
- проблеми розвитку туризму та закладів готельно-ресторанної індустрії;
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Бренд-орієнтоване управління проектами: теоретичні основи та аспекти практичної реалізації

У статті досліджено сутність бренд-орієнтованого управління проектами як підходу, за якого цінності, позиціонування та «обіцянка бренду» інтегруються в управлінські рішення на всіх етапах життєвого циклу проекту поряд із традиційними обмеженнями часу, бюджету та якості. Визначені ключові принципи бренд-орієнтованого управління проектами: ціннісна узгодженість, стейкхолдер-орієнтованість, репутаційна відповідальність, інтеграція корпоративної культури. Обґрунтовано, що бренд-орієнтоване управління проектами тісно пов'язане з концепцією сталого розвитку. У межах цього підходу проекти мають відповідати принципам ESG, що передбачає відповідальне використання ресурсів, соціальну відповідальність та прозорість управлінських рішень. Доведено, що бренд-орієнтоване управління проектами можна розглядати як інструмент забезпечення стратегічної узгодженості між бренд-менеджментом, проектною діяльністю та цілями сталого розвитку підприємства. У сучасних умовах такий підхід дозволяє підприємствам не лише ефективно реалізовувати проекти, але й формувати довгострокову цінність бренду, підвищувати довіру стейкхолдерів і забезпечувати стійкість розвитку в умовах невизначеності. Обґрунтовано доцільність поєднання взаємодоповнюючих бренд-методологій Brand Key і Brand Ladder із Agileпроцесами, що дозволяє перетворити бренд-стратегію на вимірювані ціннісні гіпотези та керований портфель проектних інкрементів. Практична цінність результатів полягає у можливості застосування запропонованої моделі в діяльності підприємств для підвищення результативності проектів, зміцнення довіри стейкхолдерів і зростання brand equity в умовах воєнних ризиків та післявоєнного відновлення.

Ключові слова: бренд; бренд-орієнтоване управління; управління проектами; Agile, Brand Key; Brand Ladder; Brand Fit; Brand Gates; ESG; сталий розвиток; проект; цінність бренду; стійкість.

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