

CONSULTING AS AN INTERMEDIARY INSTITUTION IN THE BEAUTY INDUSTRY: INSTITUTIONAL ANALYSIS OF ACCESS BARRIERS AND SERVICE QUALITY

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Abstract. *The thesis presents the results of a comparative institutional analysis of access to the beauty profession [1]. Based on a comparison of liberal (e.g., the United Kingdom) and regulated (e.g., certain US states - New York, California) regulatory models, it is shown that formal requirements form different types of structural barriers. It is substantiated that online education emerges as an adaptive market response but does not acquire full institutional legitimacy. Based on data analysis, it is shown that management consulting functions as a key intermediary institution, reducing the transaction costs of entering the profession by interpreting rules and forming individual trajectories, indirectly influencing the perception of service quality.*

Key words: *beauty industry, institutional analysis, regulatory models, access barriers, online education, management consulting, service quality.*

Introduction.

The beauty industry as a dynamic segment of the service economy operates under different regulatory regimes, which significantly affects the institutional architecture of access to the profession. The scientific problem lies in the need for a systematic analysis of the mechanisms by which market agents overcome institutional complexity generated by the interaction of formal rules, educational trajectories, and market expectations [2].

The aim of the study is to analyze the role of management consulting as an institutional intermediary that ensures adaptation to regulatory requirements and influences the perception of service quality [4].

Methodology. The research is based on a comparative institutional analysis. The empirical basis is the typology of regulatory models and the analysis of data from the consulting services market in the beauty industry. Normative documents, online education programs, and proposals from leading consulting agencies regarding specialist training and navigation of regulatory processes were analyzed. The conceptual analysis of the role of consulting is based on a synthesis of institutional theory and transaction cost theory [3].

Two ideal types of regulatory models are analyzed:

1. Liberal model (United Kingdom, Ireland) - the emphasis is on professional standards and insurance;

2. Regulated model (certain US states - New York, California) - mandatory licensing, fixed training hours, and state exams.

Main Text

1. Regulatory Models and the Nature of Barriers

The comparison of models revealed a significant difference in the nature of barriers. In the regulated model, administrative-time barriers dominate (mandatory attendance at accredited schools, 1000+ training hours, state exams) [6]. In the liberal model, barriers are primarily of a financial-market nature (costs of professional insurance, certification from private associations, building a reputation). [7] In both cases, regulation performs a selective function, structuring the labor market [5].

2. Online Education as an Institutional Hybrid

Online formats quickly adapt to market needs, but their institutional legitimacy varies. In regulated systems, online courses are not recognized for licensing, creating a parallel space of informal training [8]. In liberal ones, they are integrated into private certification systems. This confirms the thesis about the adaptability but institutional incompleteness of online education [9].

3. Consulting as a Mechanism for Reducing Transaction Costs

Data analysis shows that consulting performs a dual role:

In a regulated model: Consulting provides bureaucratic navigation - preparation for state exams, document preparation for licenses, translation of official requirements [10].

In a liberal model: The focus shifts to building a professional brand, reputation management, and communication with clients.

Consulting does not change the rules but is a key institution that reduces information asymmetry and transaction costs of entering the profession [11].

4. Impact on the Perception of Quality

The perception of quality by clients is mediated by institutional signals (licenses,

certificates, professional image) [12]. Consulting ensures the acquisition of legal certificates or helps create a convincing professional profile, thereby increasing consumer trust [13].

Conclusions

1. Comparative analysis revealed two dominant regulatory models in the beauty industry, which form different types of barriers: administrative-time (regulated) and financial-market (liberal).

2. Online education is an adaptive tool, but its institutional role is determined by the type of regulation, without eliminating systemic barriers.

3. Data analysis shows that management consulting functions as a universal mechanism for reducing transaction costs, performing specialized functions depending on the regulatory context: bureaucratic navigation or building a market brand.

4. The indirect influence of consulting on the perception of quality is realized through the enhancement of institutional signals underlying consumer trust [15].

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