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THE ANALYSIS OF SELECTED ASPECTS OF MARKETING IN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION

ANALÝZA VYBRANÝCH ASPEKTOV MARKETINGU VO VZDELÁVACÍCH INŠTITÚCIÁCH

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Abstract

The aim of the paper is to analyze current trends in marketing schools and other educational institutions to achieve the required quality of education under turbulent conditions of different funding of these organizations by their founders in Slovakia. Marketing research can objectively evaluate the internal environment of educational institutions, the effectiveness of their marketing communications, and the suitability of set marketing objectives. One of the instruments of evaluating effective marketing in educational institutions is a reflexive SWOT analysis that provides a realistic response to school management and complements other evaluation indicators of the conditions for the implementation of the educational process.

Key words: Marketing, educational institutions, reflective SWOT analysis

Abstrakt

Cieľom príspevku je analýza aktuálnych trendov v marketingu škôl a ostatných vzdelávacích inštitúcií pre dosiahnutie požadovanej kvality vzdelávania v turbulentných podmienkach rozdielneho financovania týchto organizácií ich zriaďovateľmi na Slovensku. Marketingovým výskumom možno objektívne hodnotiť vnútorné prostredie vzdelávacích inštitúcií, efektivitu ich marketingovej komunikácie a vhodnosť nastavených marketingových cieľov. Jedným

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z nástrojov hodnotenia efektívneho marketingu vo vzdelávacích inštitúciách je reflexná SWOT analýza, ktorá poskytne reálnu odozvu pre manažment škôl a doplní ostatné hodnotiace ukazovatele podmienok realizácie edukačného procesu.

Kľúčové slová: Marketing, vzdelávacie inštitúcie, reflexná SWOT analýza

Introduction

Educational institutions form the education system. The main function and content of their work is to provide education to certain groups of the population. Educational institutions can be founded by state, church, private legal entities, foundations, businesses, local communities (school education, school facilities, equipment constitutional and protective care). The organization (school or the other educational institution) must be in search of opportunities and risks of future investigations are based on knowledge of the marketing environment, in which plans to enter respects the place where it already exists. Education determines the relationship of an individual to the world, individual development process, which is performed by acquisition of knowledge, skills and abilities. It is the acquisition of knowledge, skills, which results in education (Matúš, 2007; Hagara et al., 2015).

The educational institution is a part of the education system. Its main function and purpose

of educational institutions is to provide training for certain groups of people. The most characteristic form of institutionalized education and training is school. It is an organized educational institution connected with the legal process of completing the consolidation and administrative (Matúš, 2007; Světlík, 2009).

Marketing of school - it was not known phrase in Slovakia years ago. Nowadays, it is becoming a need. Financing of regional education depending on the number of students has created a competition between schools. It is more depened on the decreasing number of students due to declining demographic trends. The first step in the application of marketing principles are private schools, but, gradually, a few state are being added. The schools that will apply marketing mindset wil succeed, many others will disappear. In this area, however, there is not entirely fair competition between schools. By state schools, there are, unfortunately, often not very correct relations. (Matúš, 2007; Vargová and Kučerka, 2017).

The management of state schools and teachers are trying to persuade parents to keep their children away from private schools. There are more ways of preventing a healthy competition to grow. A parent is so often influenced and decides for a public school instead of a private one. By no means negligible amount of school budget. It is in the current system of financing also directly proportional to the number of students. The student becomes a customer of the school - like goods and similar customers in the private sector. Smaller, but significant difference lies in the fact that the school is not chosen by the student himself/herself, but it is often decided by a parent. But the road to success leads through the needs and demands of students and parents. Here too it must be said that private schools are pulling the shorter end Hromada, 2006; Hagara et al., 2015; Ptačin and Čábiová, 2016).

Marketing mainly involves assessing the target group they are destined, as the use of market research and other tools determine how to reach these groups best. The school as an educational institution is also located in a competitive environment where in a smaller district

center there are more primary schools and also all secondary schools were that are nowadays able to compete not only concerning qualified teachers, but also the equipment in schools.

Marketing in educational institutions

Marketing is a method that controls the process of implementation of planned ideas in the market. The ultimate judge who decides about the quality of the idea is the market. Gain on sale of a reward, but the main measure of business success. The emergence of conditional marketing efforts to minimize the risk that arises when entering the market and maximize profit for materialization of the idea (Ptačin and Čábiová, 2016).

Throughout the centuries rationale of school, we can be convinced of a certain dissatisfaction in respect of its activities and effectiveness. This has also been one of the reasons for several attempts to reform the education system that have taken place in recent decades. But their problem was in the fact that they came "from above" and wanted to introduce them across the board, i.e., a single school system was preferred in a totalitarian state. If they tried to satisfy the conditions of schools, teaching staff, pupils and parents, they could be more successful. They could not be successful despite the fact that their implementation was usually preceded by a nationwide debate, because in every region, in every town, in every school the conditions are different (Matúš, 2007; Hagara et al., 2015; Vargová and Kučerka, 2017).

Adapting to local needs, personnel and material conditions, as well as to expectations of parents and students, each school can create its own school educational program that forms its own face. Most educators and institutions agree that changes are needed. But when indeed there is a change, people start to appeal, why it is so, if it has been good for decades, why it suddenly is not good, why to change sth. that has worked previously (Hagarová et al., 2015). The school itself elects its management. Therefore, a director is a crucial person. He/she should be well prepared, an experienced teacher, a manager who crucially determines the educational program, and thus the image of the school. He/she should have a good background, regarding his/her professional and business skills, he/she should maintain correct relations with the Department of Education and Ministry, parents and founder. His/her responsibilities include monitoring of educational activities, the selection of collaborators, i.e. recruitment of new teachers must therefore have the highest possible degree. The quality of schools is often judged by the teachers (Veverková, 2015).

Along with staff, students and parents are responsible for drawing up the training program and, therefore, a director must be tolerant, but at the same time strong and purposeful in making programs. He/ she would be unable to take care of everything, so it is important to choose a good deputy, chairperson of the curriculum committee, classroom teachers', students' self-government (Kita, 2010).

The existence of schools nowadays depends mainly on the number of students. Therefore, each one is trying to make the most of it to convince parents and students currently studying with them. It is a struggle for every student which causes that the majority of schools is not about the quality, but, unfortunately, the quantity of students. If they fail to provide a sufficient number, what follows is their elimination, at best merge with the nearest school (Světlik, 2009).

School marketing is a process whose main aim is to meet the needs of its customers while meeting the objectives of the school. It is a social concept of marketing management, which involves meeting the needs and to increase the prosperity of society. Marketing of educational institutions consists of activities that aim to establish and maintain, or, if necessary, change attitudes and behaviour of the target audience for an educational institution. The educational establishment is to fulfill its basic tasks in the field of education, or in free-time activities, so it must be above all make market segmentation, education, choose your target market and create conditions for the determination of its market position. The next step is to develop its market segment efficiently and an effective marketing program in the form of a balanced marketing mix, which is in this case intended to create the desired response in its target market in the form of a sufficient number of prospective students, plenty of students and their orientation in accordance with accredited study programs and finally the application (Kita, 2010; Kotler and Keller, 2013; Hagara et al., 2015; Ptačin and Čábiová, 2016).

School marketing focuses on and should:

- ❖ increase of the quality and variety of choice of education;
- ❖ find out who the customers of the schools are;
- ❖ meet school customer's needs;
- ❖ schools' visibility and positive image formation;
- ❖ naming the real issues and the implementation of remedies.

School marketing should respond to:

- ❖ formation of favorable public opinion, not only communication policy, but especially the quality of education;
- ❖ offer the public good reputation, the introduction of quality management system.

Marketing communication in educational institutions

The primary function of *communication in educational institutions* is communicating and informing the public about the existence of the education market. The target group must first of all know that the school in question exists and provides certain specific services on that basis and then derive other customer activity that is necessary to stimulate and encourages real interest and demand for the services provided. The aim of the communication is to provide the right information at the right time, right place, addressed to the right people, in our case, the parents of children, their families, friends, school (Rajčák, M., 2013; Hagara et al., 2015).

Basic tools of *marketing communication* are: advertising, personal selling, sales promotion, public relations and direct marketing. The most suitable and most common tools of marketing communication educational institutions are relationships (Matúš and Ďurková, 2005; Kita, 2010; Kokavcová, 2012; Nagyová, 2012; Rajčák, 2013; Kotler and Keller, 2013; Ptačin and Čábiová, 2016).

Advertisement - can be used on TV, radio and regional newspapers, they are classified here even promotional material and various events. Advertising is used to create the image of schools, but might also take the form of information about the study program of the school, the deadline for entrance examinations, beginning of the course etc.

Public relations - this is the tool by which we build a positive image of schools and subdue negative. It is a communication activity on the public, which creates and maintains a positive public attitudes to school.

Media relations - relations with the media (publishing articles in the press, granting interviews to the media, school management).

Event marketing - social events that favorably affect the image building of schools (open day, competitions, Olympics).

Lobbismus - influencing city representatives of higher territorial units, state schools to promote the interests legally acquired.

Crisis communication – communication of a school in times of crisis (epidemics, infectious diseases).

Corporate identity - identity building of schools, respectively a brand school.

The marketing applications in the internal structure of the educational organization

The concept of marketing is necessary in response to educational institutions emphasize some elements. Marketing is primarily a concept of precisely formulated programs, its center of gravity is not random or sporadic events and activities. The marketing process must be efficient and therefore seriously and systematically planned.

Marketing management organization performs selection of target markets, does not offer everything to everyone, in other words, it is a very professional distinction of market segments and selects differentiated, often very different approaches to them. Marketing helps the institution to survive and thrive by effectively meeting the needs of its target markets, and the effective management requires clear and properly declared objectives of the organization. Marketing concept includes and supports the entire management process and helps workers organization's decisions at times and situations where they are faced with specific practical problems in the market environment (Hagara et al., 2015, Hagarová et al., 2015).

The aim of marketing efforts in inducing voluntary exchange of values, marketers are looking for the other side formulating a response characterized summaries offer such performances, which are sufficiently attractive to the target market so that there was a voluntary

exchange – for example seeking a private school, students must be offered an attractive basic and optional training program, possible financial assistance, counseling and other benefits to those who choose to attend it (Ptačin and Čábyová, 2016).

Marketing uses a toolkit called *marketing mix*, from classical sense four basic and well-known tools that have undergone many variations and different conditions and have been extended by other instruments. Marketing mix of educational institutions must contain at least four other components (except of product and pricing policy, communication and distribution), as follows: *P - publishing*, namely target markets and the public (publics), *P - personality* that is key representatives of the institution (personalities), *P - participatory activation*, thus generating interest and involvement of all in the process of development and improvement of the organization (participation), *P - material conditions* (physical evidence). The process of applying marketing concepts as the organization (school,

educational institution) aligns resources with market needs (Světlík, 2009; Rajčák, 2013; Sedlák and Paulová, 2015; Hagara et al., 2015; Ptačin and Čábyová, 2016).

Marketing environment of educational institutions, secondary schools in the private sector, is made up of wide external environment that the critical factors for its existence can be defined in particular the following (Matúš, 2007; Kotler and Keller, 2013):

- Political - defined by law in the country as well as a measure of the stability of the legislation in private education;
- Economic - defined and limited social status in the country and household income, thus their capabilities in terms of financial security and financial support from their offspring;
- Demographic - the area of secondary school age population in the country and birth rates to determine future development;
- Cultural and social - clearly influenced by the mentality of the public and supporting formed subcultures, interest-eliminating.

The external environment also includes a direct competitive environment consisting of direct and indirect acting competitive strength, depending on the type of educational institution and its focus. Established state church and educational institutions, as well as non-state educational associations active in the country providing training courses and reduced supplemental education, are becoming direct competition in the case of private secondary schools. Indirect competitors in this sense we understand a bit different secondary schools that can attract, convince a potential customer, so prospective students and their parents to the interest of the institution, respectively, or to the interest in this type of education. Defining potential customers is getting closer to characterize the environment of the institution and the public about the environment and the market environment (Hagara et al., 2015; Veverková, 2015).

The environment is a broader public limited by specific market environment and we perceive it as diverse spectrum of potential customers and existing customers of the services of the educational institution. At the same time, however, we include here the mass media commission, municipal authorities, wider public, sponsors, promoters of the idea of a private school, marketing and information intermediaries and under. The closest neighborhood private school, which is of direct and immediate surroundings, is made up of internal staff, i.e. teachers, school management, administration (Hagarová et al., 2015).

The result and the reason for defining and monitoring the marketing environment of the educational institution are carried out by marketing situational analysis, respectively to marketing audit. It is a critical, impartial, systematic and thorough analysis of the internal situation in the school with an emphasis on marketing activities and reviewing the position of schools in a given environment with joint focus on market analysis. The given analysis is performed in three basic time horizons, as part of the development so far, i.e. where the school was situated in the past, under the status quo, i.e., where the company is now and as part of the estimate of future possible developments, i.e. where they want the school, or organization in the future to come. (Horváthová, 2010; Ptačin and Čábyová, 2016).

Situation analysis is a tool which, based on an analytical assessment of past development and current status on a best estimate of the probable future development of the strategy period may help to shape the market position of the organization. It is obvious that

the key attributes and mode of existence of organizations in market-oriented economies typical of democratic societies, represent a marketing management concept and set of activities that are known as marketing. Its present form represents the most modern way of management, entrepreneurial thinking and acting in a competitive environment. Marketing is undeniably the most appropriate concept and management of all types of secondary schools that are in the market environment businesses providing education (Světlík, 2009; Blažek, 2014; Majtán, 2016).

Marketing research in educational institutions

Nowadays, the *school's marketing* becomes very a very actual issue. It is the result of not only new legislative amendments, conditions for the establishment of schools, but also opportunities to study abroad and that causes more competition and pressure on students and parents. It often comes to funding opportunities, a struggle for each pupil arises, school management causes significant problems in the area of filling the school in the required state year, ensuring this way the effective functioning of educational institutions. We need to think about which way is possible, it is necessary to attract new customers, what the strengths and weaknesses of the educational institution are. In addition, we have to consider the question, what the competitiveness of educational institutions is in the region (Hagara et al., 2015).

Marketing of the school can be characterized as a process whose main aim is to meet the needs of customers, students and parents, and, at the same time, to fulfill the mission and objectives of the school. Education generally contributes to increasing overall educational level of the population, which creates the need to consider the needs of marketing activities. Marketing of educational institutions shall consist of activities that are aimed at establishing, maintaining, and, if necessary, changing attitudes and behavior. Marketing research is one of the essential elements of marketing (Matulčíková, 2009).

Education has become a product, and must also comply with the parameters in order to attract customers. If we view education as a product, we must also address issues of market research, its definition and implementation. The duties include ensuring marketing research perceptions of consumers and their preferences in behaviour. Then, the marketing research, can be maybe characterized as systematic planning, collecting and analyzing data and determining their importance for the specification of marketing situation (Matulčíková, 2009; Světlík, 2009; Ptačin and Čábyová, 2016).

Marketing research should be seen as a sequence of follow-up activities, with the possibility of review and revision of the successive steps. Marketing research can be incorporated into several stages. For an effective marketing research, it is recommended to include the types of activity:

- defining the decision problem and research of objectives,
- preparation of a research plan for gathering information,
- determining the survey sample and contacting respondents,
- data processing and analysis, interpretation of data and presentation of the final report.

The school facilities do not meet with the function of marketing manager and marketing researcher. When creating training programs and upgrading curricula as well as teaching methods, educational institutions often extend to information that will facilitate the process of

preparation and implementation of training so that they really provide desirable, interesting and quality education. One of the basic information is the graduates after graduation. The biggest success of the educational entity that forms the interest on the type of school and education is presented by graduates in the labor market and a higher percentage of type of education. The image of the educational mover decides on its long-term, trouble-free existence (Ubrežiová, 2012; Blažek, 2014; Sedlák and Papulová, 2015; Hagara et al., 2015).

The setting of the marketing targets of schools and educational institution

Each organization is trying to fulfill the wishes of its customers through the so-called *marketing mix*, which implies a generally "4 P's of marketing" that concern a product, marketing communications, point of sale, price. For the purposes of school, as an institution that provides a specific service, the marketing mix can be adjusted accordingly. It should help the school to build the image, to acquire customers, retain customers and create with them a mutually beneficial relationship (Matúš, 2007; Světlík, 2009).

Marketing mix of a school as an institution that provides specific services can be created as follows ((Gazdíková, 2011; Hagara et al., 2015):

- school services (wider range of an educational program, fewer students in classes);
- communication between school, parents, sponsors;
- schools adapt the price of education to the needs of clients, gifted children free of fees;
- location and physical environment of the school to transport availability, environmental quality schools;
- school staff, flexible choice of teachers;
- school atmosphere, a pleasant environment;
- Training;
- Education and interest (music, art, IT, foreign languages, school club);
- Complementary.

Educational services include identification of:

- Curriculum content,
- Educational methods,
- The quality of teachers,
- Access of teachers to pupils,
- Evaluation system and informing parents about the child's progress,
- The objective of fulfillment through education the school declares,
- other services related to education.

Additional services may include, for example:

- School trips,
- The possibility of interest education,
- Existing pass-time activities in school,
- Events for parents,
- The possibility of participation of parents of pupils at the school management and similar.

The requirements of target families can be detected by means of questionnaires, interviews with parents and many other forms. Respect is being paid yet to secure a group of families who want to be reached. If our goal is to reach a wide range of families, we should not use segmentation and our priority is to focus on the satisfaction of current students and their parents, we can use a questionnaire querying directly to the school. Education of every one of us is every year a significant factor to which we will have to get used to. Price of education seems to matter in terms of private schools. But this is not true. Millions are accrued annually to state education. We pay all it in the form of taxes, during purchases at the store or from our income (Hagara et al., 2015; Hagarová et al., 2015).

Quality of service provision in schools nowadays is generally limited amount of resources of individual schools, which of course lack. Schools are more or less successful in seeking increasing flows from the state budget. Other sources of funding in addition to funds from the state budget are defined in the financing the schools and school facilities. Further education costs of children have to pay their parents. This is manifested in the form of exercise books, school supplies, commuting, books (Matúš, 2007; Světlík, 2009).

Private schools typically include the utility fees in education and they can be used more effectively. Changes must occur in every area of the marketing mix. If a parent has to pay fees to a private school and it costs more than the education in a state one, it has to be reflected in the quality of teaching staff, equipment, school equipment, as well as the overall approach to students which depends on a lower number of students per class and the greater possibilities and interest in teaching of each student (Hagara et al., 2015; Hagarová et al., 2015).

Reflective analysis of SWOT as a tool for evaluation of marketing concepts in educational institutions

The *SWOT analysis* is based on the assumption that the characteristic behavior of the system affects the dominant processes. The appropriate selection of these dominant processes and the evaluation of their behavior gives information on the impact of the system process on the environment in which the system is active. The analysis divides selected dominant processes according to their impact on the behavior of the analyzed system into four groups (Brtnář, 2016).

SWOT analysis divides the identified dominant processes in the system by the influence of the link to the overall behavior of the system at a given time. This division is realized only on the basis of a two - state evaluation well. This suggests that the analysis does not provide information on the qualitative impact of these impacts, nor on the overall quality of the system's behavior. It provides only basic classification, a system basis for further analysis. Therefore, any further misconduct with this information is misleading. It is not even possible to determine clearly whether the system process being analyzed in a given period is good or bad.

In the SWOT analysis, its actors are the management of schools, teachers, pupils, parents, employees use the brainstorming method, evaluate the individual factors and place them in the individual categories. SWOT analysis suggests the *strengths* of the school, such as: strong management, good teacher qualifications, high creativity, good building position, good building design, excellent technical equipment, modern sports facility, good reputation, well equipped school library, working school council.

The next step is to identify the *weaknesses* of the school: insufficient number of qualified teachers, fluctuation of teachers, poor support from parents, poor social background, disadvantageous location of the building, old school staff, bad technical equipment of the school, lack of communication with parents, poor financial resources, teachers, or complex transport links.

We then choose the school's *options*: how to create a curriculum, a wider choice of subjects, respecting pupils' learning styles, applying activation methods, increasing interest in school, improving school support by parents, entrepreneurs and self-governments, setting up school galleries, activities, use of sports facilities for public purposes, setting up an internet club, obtaining grants and promoting the school.

Finally, we identify the risks and *threats* of a school: demographic decline, class threat, rehabilitation or rejuvenation of the teaching staff, deterioration of social background, decrease in the real value of state support, increase in operating costs, lack of funding for investments, increase in teacher fluctuation, transport and communications.

The application of SWOT analysis is an important evaluation tool for evaluating the overall realized concept of effective marketing in educational institutions (Horváthová, 2010; Hagara et al., 2015).

Conclusion

The paper presented a realistic analysis of the current trends in the marketing of schools and other educational institutions in order to achieve the required quality of education in the changing and complex conditions of different financing of these organizations by their founders in Slovakia. Through marketing research, we have objectively evaluated the internal environment of educational institutions, the effectiveness of their marketing communications, and the suitability of set marketing objectives.

The paper analyzed the problem of setting and evaluating marketing goals in educational institutions according to the principles of marketing mix for schools in the scope of various founders. Every single element of the marketing mix can help schools to succeed in the education market, it can become a competitive advantage, the school may be distinguished from other schools and thus help it to success. School should be your potential customers, i.e. parents, families, it should reach specific range of services. The school should develop a range of services at several levels, respectively, broken down into services.

One of the instruments of evaluating effective marketing in educational institutions is a reflexive SWOT analysis that provides a realistic response to school management and complements other evaluation indicators of the conditions for the implementation of the educational process.

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