

STRATEGIES AND MODELS OF MARKETING COMMUNICATION AS A BASIS FOR BUILDING COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE AND POSITION QUOTING AN EXAMPLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION MARKET

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Abstract: In the article the author presents strategies and models of marketing communication referring them to the higher education market showing their importance in building the advantage and competitive position of a university. By comparing different strategies and methods the author shows their area of operation and indicates which the most common methods are selected by universities.

Keywords: strategies, models, higher education

JEL Classification: M31, M37

1. ADMISSION

A competitive advantage can be achieved in relation to the environment as a result of adapting it better than other competitors by means of internal sources, which arise from the organization resources, planned activities, a specified proceeding model and skills. The structure of the market on which the company operates or universities, puts pressure and causes the need for effective response in order to achieve a better position [1]. It is about greater efficiency in the business on the market as compared to other competitors, which measures up to the expectations of all stakeholders of the external environment as well as the management and staff.

A competitive advantage provides large admissions to university, creates good conditions for the smooth functioning of a university collegiate unit and its development.

A competitive position is a result of the process of competition, the result of applying a particular competitive strategy against a specific competitive potential, i.e. the result of the assessment by the market (and especially by the customer service of higher education) and of what a college offers on it [2].

Thus, the competitive position a quantitative and qualitative assessment of the strength of the organization (higher education) in relation to its competitors on the higher education market and its specified segment [3]. The variety of marketing strategies and their selection covers a wide range of phenomena and processes of decision-making. This is a result of both, the nature of marketing as well as mechanisms for the provision of information and decision-making conditioned by the existence of many variants to choose which are provided by the market and its transformation [4]. The use of specific marketing communication strategy makes it possible to realize the objectives of marketing communication, resulting from the general objectives of the organization. These aims depend on the adapted market orientation and the functioning of the organization. Regardless of the adapted strategy, all the

activities that are carried out by any organization must be associated with a particular model of communication which is used by the organization therefore, it is essential to select a specific model and marketing communication strategy, which together become the basis for building competitive advantage and position of the higher education.

1.1 Selected marketing communication strategies in relation to higher education

According Ph. Kotler, a marketing strategy is the "logic of marketing, through which operators are hoping to achieve their marketing objectives"[5].

Choosing the right marketing strategy requires a number of steps, which include [6]:

- forecast of market developments and changes in the institutions,
- establishing distinctive market competencies and capacities,
- evaluation of internal and external factors that may enhance or weaken the position of the company,
- determination of vision and development objectives in measurable units,
- making an account of the profitability of individual operations and identify ways to depreciation of the risk, formulating strategies and identifying the necessary actions.

Commercial and non-commercial strategies used differ from each other in the way and intensity of using particular instruments, such as [7]:

- scope and content information communicated by the organization,
- time implementation of communication activities - when and how long,
- budget - costs that will have to be incurred for communication activities,
- forms and methods of communication feedback.

Marketing communication strategy must be coherent, well thought out and adapted to the target group communication.

Strategies and Models of Marketing Communication as a Basis for Building Competitive Advantage Position Quoting an Example of Higher Education Market

In the literature, the authors distinguish marketing communication strategies on account of:

- objectives of marketing communication
- instruments used for marketing communication.

From the point of view of the objectives pursued there are five major types of strategies that can be put into action in higher education [8]:

1. Informing of new goods or services - information strategies (new course of study, which is expected to attract the attention of potential candidates). The main instruments which are typically used for this strategy include advertising, public relations and direct sales.
2. Activating interest in the product and its very willingness to purchase - activation strategies (e.g. through additional incentives in the form of scholarship). A special role in this strategy plays a sales promotion supported by public relations and advertising, which function as indicating the "customer" for additional benefits.
3. Communicating the elements of competitive advantage and convincing to a particular brand of product - persuasive strategies (e.g. by reference to the rankings). This strategy allows the transmission of information about the particular attractiveness of the product in relation to the other competitors in terms of e.g. quality, price or other attributes. The most frequently used instruments are advertising and personal selling.
4. Influencing the formation of loyalty and relationship - relationship building strategies
5. (e.g. engaging high school students in the university policy). The organization puts it mainly on building relationships with customers.

Shaping or supporting image - image strategies (e.g. indicating whether the tradition of scientific and technical base). The main moment of its use is the introduction of the offer to the market or change in the market in which the organization operated previously. The primary objective is to give a particular image to the brand or organization.

In the case of strategies using various instruments of marketing communication strategies, monoinstrumental and multiinstrumental ones are distinguished.

Monoinstrumental strategies focus their efforts on one main instrument of marketing communication. Choosing just one, it can take full advantage of all the benefits and characteristics to satisfy one's needs. Monoinstrumental nature does not mean abandoning other instruments. However, they have mostly a marginal meaning.

Multiinstrumental strategies use several instruments simultaneously to various degrees. This allows for synergies, because the action of at least 2 instruments at the same time is greater than the sum of the interactions involved [9].

Universities use a multiinstrumental strategy, in order to target different stakeholder groups offering higher education according to the age, origin or contact preferences with an offer. Mentioning a few different strategies does not mean that it is appropriate to select only one. In many situations, it becomes necessary to use several ones at the same time. The adoption of a strategy, which is just as important for the functioning of such an organization

as higher education, allows for efficient and effective functioning of the whole institution and its individual units.

1.2 Selected models of marketing communication in relation to higher education

In undertaking the analysis of marketing communications models, one should start by defining their meaning. Depending on the fields under consideration these models are defined differently. In social sciences, it is assumed that the models offer a description and explanation of the examined fragment of reality as well as designing and predicting the course of the examined process. A characteristic feature of them is that they are characterized by a low degree of formality; they present a picture of reality by means of simplistic schemes that are not tested immediately, but the phenomena they relate to [10].

Using a general model of the process of marketing communication may be difficult due to the possible lack of necessary data and time-consumption to collect information. The literature of the opinions is that it is worth to use several, simplistic models of the impact of marketing communication on the client.

In all the sequencing models the authors admit the necessity of a broader perspective on the communication aspect and they emphasize convergent, important reactions.

The literature shows in how many different ways the communication model can be approached. This can be illustrated by the division of marketing communication models presented by DL Hoffman and T.P. Novak [11]:

- an interpersonal communication model,
- a mass communication model,
- a communication model in hypermedia computing environment.

An interpersonal communication model is understood as a process of communication, mutual information and communication of stakeholders and ensuring the need of feedback, expressing both the understanding, acceptance and recognition or denial of transferred content.

This model in its simplest form defines a direct and primary reaction for a client „one to one“ (Fig. 1).

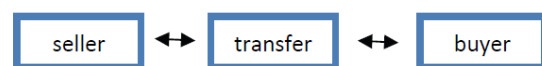


Figure 1 Basic types of relationships in interpersonal communication

Resource: J. W. Viktor, Promotion. The enterprise communication market, PWN, Warsaw -Krakow 2001, p 33.

The main difference of this model is symmetric feedback, which allows the buyer - seller interactions. An interactivity model creates the conditions for individualization of communication, expressing adjustment of the contents and forms of communication and how to handle the needs of the individual or those who create a market niche or a small segment of the market. The model indicates the importance of communication within the meaning of promotions, the personal achievement of the objectives of the organization market [12]. A mass communication model is to communicate the organization

with its environment using the mass media - "one - to many" (Fig. 2).

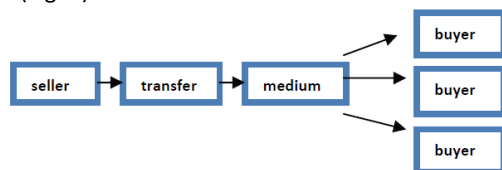


Figure 2 Model of mass marketing communication

Resource: J. W. Viktor, Promotion. The enterprise communication market, PWN, Warsaw -Krakow 2001, p 33

The hypermedia model shown in Figure 3, is performed by the system of the World Wide Web (www), a pillar of the Internet, and does not constitute a simple synthesis of interpersonal and mass communication, although it connects and uses the categories and concepts associated with them. It describes the communication of "many - to many." It presents a new meaning to the message, a different type of interaction, and a new interpretation of the function of the medium [13].

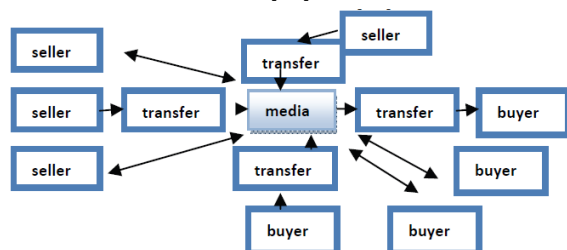


Figure 3 Model of marketing communication in hypermedia computing environment

Resource: J. W. Viktor: Promotion. The enterprise communication market, PWN, Warsaw-Cracow, 2001, p.33.

According to the author, while referring the above models of college marketing communication, you deal with the changes in the form of the transition from a marketing communication model (individual and mass), to the models

based to the higher degree on mass communication and hypermedia computing environment. The recruitment process itself is already being used by the web application, where yet by 2009/2010 the applicant had an opportunity to meet staff recruiters among whom there students, faculty and / or administrative staff. They had an influence on the final decisions of a potential candidate. An attempt to sustain personal communication consists in visiting secondary schools by college representatives or having a conversation between a promotion office representative and the candidate during education fairs. In the case of mass communication, colleges use the media to show their offers. Unfortunately, excessive communication, particularly formal (promotion) used by most colleges at the same time produces noise communication. Too similar communications makes it a candidate ceases responding to the extent expected by promotion and information centres of an individual school. The hypermedia environment is intensely used, which is reasonable. In the era of technological development the flow of information is essential, hence the Internet has become necessary for such a work [14]. Among the Poles under 30 years of age then the Internet is the medium which is the most difficult to be given up, and they use it most often to obtain all the information, only just changing a tool - a desktop computer, a laptop to a smartphone and a tablet [15].

2. SUMMARY

On the basis of the knowledge of their individual university and its customers, the university is able to plan an adequate marketing communication strategy and to choose a proper model of communication, which together enable the university to separate a communication advantage for university education over other units and will contribute to achieving competitive position on the market.

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