Theoretical And Practical Aspects for Branding in Schools

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Abstract. **In this article have been discussed the practical and theoretical aspects of the development of branding in schools. The author presents recommendations on marketing channels to increase clients in private schools.**

Keywords: Image, brand, brand strategy, private school, school education system.

I. INTRODUCTION

A school brand is a complex of ideas, emotions and value orientations in the minds of the audience. Under the school audience, we mean students, employees, parents, residents of the district, city.

There are many definitions of the word "brand". As a rule, everyone chooses those definitions and characteristics of this term that are beneficial to them.

So, a brand is a product familiar to a certain group of consumers, which has a certain community of adherents and embodies intangible values that are important for this community.

The public school is a non-profit organization and does not sell anything to anyone. Children from the nearest district come here to study. Here, a private school, on the contrary, sells its educational services to attract students: on the Internet, at educational exhibitions, at meetings with parents. But this does not mean that a private school should be engaged in brand development, but not a public school. The school brand is not about "sales", it's about the perception of the school.

The market for private schooling is growing at a tremendous pace, and the experience of the pandemic has given additional impetus to the demand for an alternative to public education.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

P. According to the concept of Farquhar [1], brand equity is studied as a means of delivering added value for the company or for the consumer. D. Aaker [2] studies it as a sum of brand name related assets, i.e. consumer awareness, loyalty, perceived quality and other financial assets. J. For Kapferer [3], brand equity is defined as the mental image (trademark) of the consumer's reflection and proposed values. K. According to Keller [4], brand equity is defined as the mental image (trademark) of the values that are reflected and offered to the consumer. In our opinion, brand equity is the added value given by the consumer to each product and service.

D. Aaker and K. According to Keller's theories, there are 4 main assets of brand equity, which include perceived quality, brand loyalty, brand awareness, and brand constituents (brand associations). B. Yuu, N. Donathu, and S. Lee argues that the level of brand equity can only be evaluated as positive when the level of brand quality, brand loyalty, brand associations, and awareness are clearly visible. [5]

S. Gronrus considers the quality of services as a positive opinion generally accepted by users of the service. [6] D. In Auker's research, although he recognizes perceived quality as one of the components of brand equity, he argues that it does not differentiate between goods or services and that it should be taken into account when evaluating brand value. [7]

The fact that consumers' brand awareness and brand founders are the main factors in the formation of brand equity is based on the researches carried out by Huang and Sarigollu [8], Keller [9], Rossiter and Percy [10]. This awareness, brand associations should be able to fit comfortably in the memory of consumers. Brand associations and brand awareness have a positive effect on brand equity because it is perceived as a sign of quality and loyalty and helps the customer consider the product at the point of purchase. This leads to positive brand behavior and positive decision making.

Several researchers agree that brand equity is associated with higher brand preference and loyalty. In Chang and Lui's brand preference model, customers' prior knowledge of a brand (brand loyalty) is identified as a key factor associated with a greater willingness to continue using services. [11] That is, brand loyalty forces consumers to continuously purchase a product and resist switching to another brand under the influence of internal psychological factors.

In the theories of relationship marketing, "trust" is considered as one of the main factors in the formation of brand equity. [12] From this point of view, "trust" is studied as a psychological state that favors the attitude of a person to the actions of others. Consumer trust in service providers can be studied as a factor in the formation of brand equity.

Since celebrities start endorsing brands, brands have their own image. These people help marketers position their brands because they introduce the consumer to celebrities. Theories that brands, like everyone else, can have a personality A. Azolau and J. Based on Kapferer's research. [13] J. Aaker notes brand personality as a set of human characteristics associated with a brand. He developed the Brand Personality Scale, which identified five dimensions or "a set of personality traits associated with the brand." They are: sincerity, excitement, authority, courtesy and rudeness. These five dimensions relate to the Big Five consumer characteristics of brand acceptance. [14] V.Norman and E.Tupes and R.Kristal researchers have identified 15 features of such features.[15]

Summarizing the opinions of the above scientists who have conducted scientific research in this field, we can say that the characteristic of a brand is a set of specific characteristics associated with the brand name. Brand identity is a consumer-related aspect, meaning that an effective brand has a set of enduring characteristics specific to a particular consumer and increases brand equity. This is a unique feature - the brand represents a collection of quality accessories that add value beyond its functional benefits.

Based on theories of organizational identification, any consumer tends to be a member of a certain social group. According to M. Long and L. Shiffman, consumers tend to associate themselves with certain brands depending on their social background. If the brand has a good reputation within the group to which consumers belong or want to belong, they will evaluate the brand positively. [15]

Thus, brand identification allows the consumer to join or separate from the group that constitutes his social circle, as indicated. Therefore, a consumer who identifies with a particular brand will be willing to be closer to that brand and will be proud to promote the brand, thus increasing perceived brand equity.

III. ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

3.1. Theorectical aspects for school branding

Parents during the distance saw a lack of modern teaching methods and educational content. The sacred cow of the lesson, traditionally inaccessible to outsiders, suddenly appeared in front of the parents, and even on a daily basis. Emotions about this spread like circles on water - in the form of memes, posts on the Internet, and even a social movement of parents to abolish distance education. Confidence in public education and the firm belief "as we studied, so let our children study" have been shaken.

The market responds to demand. In addition to the well-known private schools - philanthropic initiatives that showed how expensive quality education can cost - projects began to appear that the founders consider as a business: kindergartens "grow" into schools, and projects that have already proven themselves in the market are scaled up, open branches or master new locations.

The market for private education is growing rapidly, and parental demand is also growing rapidly, but the acute problem of choice is not removed. By what criteria to choose? What skills will the school instill in the child and what values will be taught? What is the atmosphere like in it? What will she really give the child? And, in general, how does one school differ from another?

In search of answers to these questions, parents turn to various and not always reliable sources of information. This is because schools, even private ones, are too closed and not used to thinking about how a parent perceives them, and often do not pay attention to marketing.

Private school education has recently begun to be seen as an area where serious business projects are possible. Therefore, many marketing tools that are actively used in other areas are still in their infancy in education, the culture and experience of their use is only being formed.

Moreover, there is a strong opinion that working with a brand is not about school, that the most important thing is the quality of education, which will always speak for itself, but to invest money and time in the design of a corporate identity or space, work on systematic communications and integrity its image is a secondary, less essential task, something like a beautiful wrapper.

In our opinion, these are all elements of one whole. A brand is about meanings and emotions, a culture and community are formed around the brand, and as a result, a living environment that works for the education of the child.[16]

We visited several interesting, in our opinion, private schools to see how the educational space is organized in the context of the school brand, and also interviewed directors about how the brand is created and works. The result of the study is a checklist for evaluating the brand of an educational organization according to criteria in three areas.

1) Visual and semantic components of the brand: general concept, logo, emblem, corporate identity, unity of style for all communication channels
2) School space as part of the educational environment
3) Indicators of the quality of education in the context of the school brand.[16]

For effective business, the main thing is the ability to offer a product that will be different from competitors.

Fierce competition puts forward the corresponding criterion in assessing success - competitiveness, that is, the ability to maintain high economic efficiency in a competitive environment. Due to the fact that this indicator most fully determines the efficiency of the functioning of an economic entity, the task of increasing competitiveness is currently the most acute. Competitiveness is a complex indicator that is formed under the influence of many factors that affect all aspects of the activities of an economic entity. Despite the large number of factors affecting this indicator, the main and determining of them remains the ability of an enterprise to produce competitive products and services, as well as create conditions for their promotion to the market. That is why the task of increasing competitiveness is currently the most acute. Practice shows that solving the problem of increasing competitiveness causes significant difficulties, and for many enterprises in the current economic environment this has become a problem due to the lack of a clear strategy, financial and economic goals and criteria for organizations. In this regard, it is extremely important to carefully and thoroughly think over the brand of the product offered to the consumer, which will make it possible to outperform competitors, increase the volume of products sold and, in the future, will increase the price of the product without reducing the volume of goods sold. In order to formulate the theses about the tools with which a successful brand is created, it is necessary to consider the concepts and principles underlying brand promotion, based on scientific, practical and professional literature.

Philip Kotler in his writings gives a simpler and more understandable definition of the concept of a brand - it is "a term, sign, symbol, drawing, or a combination of them, designed to identify the goods or services of sellers and differentiate them from the goods or services of competitors". Within the framework of this article, it is important to understand the difference between the terms "brand" and "trademark". A brand implies the benefits of a product that excite the emotions of the consumer, form a positive image of the product in his mind. A brand is tied to a specific product, when a trademark exclusively guarantees legal protection, both in general of the trademark, and in particular its name. Based on the foregoing, it can be argued that a brand is a complex that forms a positive attitude towards the product in the consumer. In other words, this is the image of a trademark, which is formed as the end result of marketing activities aimed at promoting a product on the market, a set of positive images behind the symbol [2].

When an educational organization offers educational services and ensures a sustainable level of their quality, it begins to work on creating its own image.

Let's consider each of the components of the brand of an educational institution: The quality of educational services - it means the contribution of an educational organization to the development of students' training, their mental functions, good breeding, creativity, and the formation of a healthy lifestyle. It is also a clear vision of the goals of education and upbringing, formulated as the mission of an educational organization; connections of the educational organization with different social institutions. A positive image of the head of an educational organization is the professional characteristics of the head (knowledge and understanding of the education development strategy, various training and education technologies, economic and organizational and legal foundations for the functioning of the educational institution), as well as his personal traits (character, charm), social characteristics (biography , status, lifestyle, values, role behavior). The image of the staff means the qualifications of the employees of the educational organization, their personal qualities, appearance, pedagogical, social and managerial competence of the employees. The style of an educational organization consists in an effective organizational culture of an educational organization; the presence and effective functioning of children's associations, the visual identity of the institution, its traditions, as well as the style of interaction between participants in the educational process. The level of psychological comfort means the presence of respect in the system of teacher-student relationships; comfortable, conflict-free communication, goodwill and optimism in the team, timely psychological assistance to all participants in the educational process in the institution. External attributes mean the presence of the corporate identity of the organization (symbols), forms, own newspaper, own colorful website on the Internet [5].

It should be noted that the process of finding and developing your own style, image and work on the reputation of an educational organization can take a lot of time and effort, but this is a justified investment that will make the organization more competitive in the educational services market.

3.2. Practical aspects and recommendations for school branding

The work with the brand is carried out in 4 areas:
1) Strategic. If the school has a vision, a development plan, what it wants to become and what it strives for, what results to achieve, then the image, the brand of the school is built around this.
2) Building an internal culture, the ideology of the school. School is first of all a community, and identification is very important for it. The whole school community needs to answer the questions: "What are we? How are we different from others? What are our values and rules? What are we proud of? - all this relates to the brand of the school.

3) Management of internal communications. The school gives out a lot of information outside: reports on events, news on social networks, announcement of the results of olympiads and competitions, participation in various projects and city events. All this information should be presented in the same way, according to the same rules. It is desirable that the school has a responsible person who distributes all these flows of information. It's great if the school has a circle on media communications, then the children are involved in the process of presenting information, and they also help to design school content.

4) Personnel management (image of the school as an employer). And for private schools, it's also marketing and sales management. And this functionality must be properly divided if we are talking about a successful management model.[16]

For private educational institutions, the issue of attracting new customers is relevant in any market condition. During the first wave of coronavirus, the main task of commercial schools and courses was the adaptation of business to new market realities, in particular, the transfer of services from offline to online. The second wave has become a more predictable event. Market participants are already ready for it in terms of format, and now they want to return to active growth.

There is nothing impossible in the task of increasing the number of customers by 50%. Any private school can increase the flow of students tomorrow and start earning twice as much using advertising and marketing technologies.

Ready for growth

Before taking action, private school management should determine whether the business is ready for an explosive growth in the client base - and therefore, an increase in workload, an increase in staff and the corresponding additional costs. If not, 30-50% of new leads will be lost - there will not be enough resources to fully develop each one. In addition, a private school should already have a sales funnel built. If it exists, then there is an understanding of how and through what channels the client comes. In the absence of a funnel, scaling will result in a drain on the budget - in case of failure, it will be impossible to analyze the causes and eliminate them.

It is also not superfluous to check the readiness of the sales department or those employees who are responsible for interacting with potential customers. As practice shows, private schools are getting used to selling through word of mouth and brand queries - in other words, working with a hot audience. And scaling is a flow of cold customers, interaction with which requires much more training and sales skills.

Ways to increase customer traffic.

A preliminary assessment of the business showed that the private school could grow and handle the load. In this case, the next stage is the use of marketing technologies to multiply the number of customers.

The first way: amplification of existing channels.

We leave the sales funnel unchanged, but we strengthen the existing promotion channels by simply spending additional budget on them. As a result, the number of leads should increase. At the same time, the cost of a lead may increase, but their number in this case is a more important indicator for business.

The only limitation is the bandwidth of the channel itself. So, if a school has launched contextual advertising for a narrow set of requests, and 90-100% of the traffic has already been selected, it is useless to increase the budget.

The same goes for targeted ads. If it works for an audience of 10-15 thousand people, sharp scaling will not work. We will hit the DAU (Daily Active Users) indicator - the number of unique users who visited the site or landing page of the school over the past 24 hours (in the target settings, we can see an audience of 70 thousand people, and only 20 thousand people can be present on the social network daily). We simply cannot increase the budget and get an additional audience out of thin air. However, if the volume of the unreached audience is large enough, injecting additional funds into the promotion channel makes sense.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

Thus, for the effective implementation of brand positioning, a set of measures is required, which, in addition to advertising campaigns, should include public relations. On the one hand, it is necessary to connect all kinds of PR tools to the process of promotion and positioning in order to create a favorable communication climate in society and a manageable public position. It is necessary to understand and follow the steps of creating a strategy for building and positioning a brand, which in turn are based on the main forms and methods of brand promotion: market research, identification of a potential target audience; development of the concept of brand positioning, selection of the necessary marketing tools to be used; forming of budget; analysis of the degree of effectiveness of all steps; control. Thus, based on the information presented in the article, it can be argued that the modern brand of an educational organization is a condition for increasing its competitiveness.

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