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MANAGING BRAND IMAGE IN SCHOOL

Abstract

Purpose: The paper discusses managing brand image in the school. Brand image is observed in the context of school management. Emphasis is placed on research and analysis of school branding from the aspect of service marketing. **Methodology/approach:** The research is based on relevant theories of brand management. It starts from the construct of brand identity according to Kapferer and brand image according to Keller. The brand service context was observed according to Gronroos.

Results: In order to achieve a desirable school culture, which is a condition for developing the brand image of the school, it is necessary to develop internal marketing. Teachers are the most important segment of the school. The paper analyses different identities of the school and connects them with the construct of the teacher's identity. The results confirm that the teacher's identity construct, which represents a large part of school culture, is extremely important for school branding.

Conclusion: Proper management of school culture and building the school's identity creates an image in the minds of consumers. Since the image of the school is closely related to the service providers, the employees are both, promoters of the brand, and its creators. School branding was observed in the context of brand relationship. A brand develops in the minds of customers as a result of accumulated experiences of contacts.

Limitations/future research: This study is theoretical and is based on qualitative methodologies. Further empirical research can be conducted on different types of schools to identify models of school culture and school image.

Keywords: brand, employee, identity, image, school

1. INTRODUCTION

School management (SM) is a part of educational management and represents an interdisciplinary field because it includes economics, educational sciences, sociology, and psychology. SM, along with school leadership, also includes determining the goals and tasks of employees so that they can deal with new challenges and problems. In this sense, the task of SM is to coordinate the efforts of the staff to achieve the school's program goals, create a favourable school culture (SC), encourage increased activity, and motivate employees, as well as create the school's identity (SI). Thus, SM encompasses management, leadership, and the creation of the SI.

SI is very important because with the help of identity, among other things, we achieve the branding of the school. SI is a set of individual identities of employees and is established in the correlation between managers and employees. On the one hand, SI depends on the management, the way of leadership and the goals of the organization, and on the other hand, it depends on the perception of employees, their job satisfaction, and their own self-concept.

Consumers perceive the brand as a guarantee of constant value. That value depends on consumer to consumer and for some it can represent quality, guarantee, speed of service, design, low price and similar. In this sense, the brand represents a recognizable entity and symbol. A brand is a combination of the above attributes that gives a company, organizational product, service concept, or even an individual a distinctive identity and value. What is specific to the brand in service industries, such as schools, the attributes that make up the brand are both tangible and intangible.

The topic of this study is the research of the brand image of the school. The study research, questions and analyses the impact of employee identity, SC, and brand relationship in the context of SM. By analysing the content of relevant

literature in the field of SM, corporate marketing and service marketing, an interdisciplinary approach will be used to research what are the characteristics of brand relationships in the context of SM. Also, an attempt will be made to give a deeper insight into the propositions of brand building in the school, as well as the importance of brand values and the connection between employees and users.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The paper uses an analytical method (Willig, 2013, p. 101-109) and deconstruction model (Romčević, 2018, p. 627), which analyses the meaning of the brand phenomenon to get a clearer and more detailed meaning of the branding school. The study uses the deconstruction method as a structure of thought (Romčević, 2018, p. 627-629). Also, the paper uses the method of brand resonance (Keller, 2013, p. 107-128), the identity prism (Kapferer, 2008, p. 182-190), and the service brand-relationship-value triangle (Grönroos, 2007, p. 337). This study is theoretical and is based on qualitative methodologies. The purpose of the study is based on the analysis of scientific literature.

The aim of the paper is to research, present and analyse the branding school in the context of educational management. The role of brand will be analysed using Keller' brand resonance model, and Kapferer's identity prism. Based on recent research (Mojsovska Salamovska & Todorovska, 2016, p. 38; Lukić & Vojteški Kljenak, 2017, p. 20; Jukić, 2017, p. 12; Jukić, 2019, p. 13; Tierno-García et al, 2020, p. 11-13; Jukić, 2022, p. 24; Trninić, 2022) we can conclude that brand image is crucial in creating image of the organizations. Also, based on recent research from perspective of service marketing (Grönroos, 2007; Grönroos, 2009; Grönroos, 2011; Grönroos & Ravald, 2011; Grönroos, 2019; Grönroos, 2020) we can conclude that marketing service is much more than organizational function. Research questions arise from all the above: What makes a school brand? What is the best strategy for branding schools? What is the role of school culture? Therefore, we start from the concept of brand relationship and the phenomenon of brand image.

3. BRANDING AND BRAND MANAGEMENT

Marketing in SM has come to be seen as the central business discipline. Brand management represents a set of activities related to launching a brand on the market and managing the brand during its life cycle (Veljković, 2010, p. 29). The brand, therefore, should be an expression of the organizational culture and values that the organization cherishes and be integrated into the organization's mission. The brand is a fundamental component of the company's strategy (Vranešević, 2007, p. 65). What is specific to creating a brand in service activities is certainly intangibility, time indivisibility and dependence on service providers. This is why the brand's basic strategy is based on added value. It is precisely the segment of added value that is crucial in service branding, as it refers to the possibility that a brand service has a greater value than a generic service.

Brands and brand marketing are at the very centre of successful service activities. Successful companies become attractive because of their strong brands. At its core, the brand represents the consumer's perception, and it reflects the individual characteristics of the customers and the result of integrated marketing communication (IMC). Brands perform important functions for any organization. The role of a brand is to focus attention on a product or service that could satisfy specific customer needs. This means that in the very philosophy of the brand is warning about the product or service and about its ability to satisfy needs (Keller et al, 2008, p. 48-52).

Branding involves creating mental structures to help customers make decisions. To build a school brand (see Table 1), an organizational structure that supports a modern brand management approach is needed. The first and most important assumption is to develop a brand strategy as a key process that will represent a leading role in the business of a service activity, such as a school. Brand image is the result of many factors, but the fact is that it largely depends on consumer experience, consumer perception, added values that consumers give to the brand and symbolic meaning (Kapferer, 2008; Keller, 2013).

However, what is particularly important, and relates to the school's brand, are definitely the employees. To realize the branding strategy of the school, it is necessary to harmonize the branding strategy and the business strategy and create an impression of the brand among employees, stakeholders, and users. Only then can SC be built, which becomes the basis for creating the user's impressions of the school.

Table 1: Propositions of brand building in school

School board		Vision of the school	
The principal		SI	
Employees		Teacher's identity	
SC	•	Image of the school	

Source: the author

Strong brands are as important to the profit and non-profit sector as they are to products or services. Scholars highlight the importance of the brand (de Chernatony & McDonald, 2003; Keller, & Lehmann, 2006; Grönroos, 2007; Kapferer,

2008; Keller, 2013) in the context of added value and developing brand relationships. However, from the aspect of corporate branding (Balmer, 2001; Balmer & Gray, 2003; Grönroos, 2007; Keller, 2013), the relationship between organizational culture and organizational climate is emphasized (Göhlich, 2009; Jukić, 2020; Wagner-Herrbach, & Skenderski, 2020; Jukić, 2022). Therefore, according to Jukić (2017; 2020; 2022), in the study we follow the proposition of corporate marketing and branding of the school, which emphasizes the importance of the identity of the teacher and the identity of the school.

3.1. The value of brands

The attitude towards the brand can be positive or negative. If the attitude towards the brand is positive, it is more likely that users will take appropriate action (Evans, Jamal & Foxall, 2006; Kotler & Armstrong, 2008; Keller, 2013). The user's perception of the brand, i.e., the service provided, tells us about the user's satisfaction. In this context, we view school as a service activity that provides subjective value for users (Jukić, 2017; Jukić, 2022). This means that the expected value for users is not the same as the expected value for stakeholders (school founders). This is also the reason why there is a discrepancy between the expected value of the service user and the cognitive value of the founder of the school (see Table 2).

Table 2: User values and brand relationship

Expected value	An idea (brand image)	
Cognitive value	Subjective perception (brand personality)	
Actual value	Attitude (brand experience)	

Source: the author

Expected value is the user's idea of how the service will fulfil his needs and expectations. Cognitive value represents a subjective experience. For SM to be successful, it is necessary to establish and accept the user's assessment of the value of the service. This means that students see various benefits and values in services and their perception is often not in line with the perception of the school board and principal. The actual value represents what the users received, i.e., the result of the service provided and the perceived quality. Constant knowledge about service users is an important component of service marketing (Grönroos, 2007; Grönroos, 2009; Grönroos & Ravald, 2011; Grönroos, 2019; Grönroos, 2020). According to Grönroos (2011, p. 295), value is accumulated during the user's interaction with the service, is always unique and depends on the customer's experience. The value that the consumer receives from the service provided is created through the interaction of the service itself. We conclude that the employee is a brand promoter and service provider. Therefore, the entire process of creating service customer loyalty (Grönroos, 2009) is crucial in marketing practice.

A brand is a promise that marketers will deliver predictable service attributes. Therefore, the brand promise represents a vision of what the brand should be and what it should do for consumers. This is both the greatest strength and weakness of the brand because, if it does not fulfil its promise, the real value of the brand lies in the image (consumer impressions). Brand identity can most simply be seen as the way in which an organization wants to be identified and position itself or its product (Kotler & Keller, 2007; Kapferer, 2008; Keller, 2013). Brand identity is the way in which various elements of a brand are made to appear externally. The model presented by Kapferer, the brand identity prism (2008, p. 183), is conceived as a hexagonal prism of six facets. A brand has its physique (made from salient objective features) and represent added value. Second facet is brand personality. A brand is a culture (means of communication) and set of values. Brand culture plays an essential role in differentiating brands (Kapferer, 2008, p. 185). A brand is a relationship, and this is particularly true in the service sector. A brand is a customer reflection (customers use brands to build their own identity). Finally, a brand represents our self-image. For the school to be able to build a brand identity, it should have an appropriate identity that should realistically show the value of the brand for the user.

According to brand resonance model (Keller et al, 2008, p. 57; Keller, 2013, p. 108) looks at building a brand as a sequence of step. Before we analyse the brand resonance model (Keller, 2013, p. 108-127) and connect it with the brand identity prism (Kapferer, 2008, p. 171-185), it is necessary to ask the question: What makes a brand strong? As an answer to the question, we will take the concept of customer-based brand equity (CBBE), which represents a unique point of view on what brand equity is and how it should be built and managed. The basic premise of the CBBE concept is that the power of a brand lies in what customers have learned, felt, seen, and heard about the brand because of their experiences over time (Keller, 2013, p. 69). Keller presents his model in the form of a pyramid, where brand resonance is at the top and brand salience at the bottom. As an example of school branding, we will analyse an art school (see Table 3). To achieve the first step (identity), we first start from brand salience, which points us to brand awareness, the ease of displaying the brand and SI, in this case the physical characteristics of the identity (Kapferer, 2008) of the school building, and the basic elements of identity (Keller, 2013) such as slogans, logos and similar. The second level is the school's brand meaning, i.e., the school's values and the very style that the school cultivates (school climate, ceremonies) to identify the school's image.

Table 3: Brand resonance in school service

Stage of Brand Development	School construct	Branding Objective
Brand relationship	Teacher's identity	Brand loyalty
Brand response	School culture	Brand personality
Brand meaning	School style, school values	Brand image
Brand identity	Art school	Brand awareness

Source: the author

The third step is the brand response, which according to Keller (2013, p. 108) is divided into two categories: judgments and feelings. Judgments, in the context of SM, includes the user's judgments and evaluations of the service brand, and feeling includes the emotional connection with the school. Specifically, brand response expands the understanding of the brand in the context of relationships, and positive perceptions and emotional reactions represent the possibility of developing the SC construct. Finally, brand relationship represents brand resonance because it refers to the mutual relationship between student and teacher. This means that brand resonance represents the realization of all three values (expected, cognitive and experiential) and opens the possibility of creating brand loyalty.

One way to create brand value for a service is to create a brand image. Brand image is the perceptions and beliefs of customers that are reflected in associations. A key measure of the success of the brand image is the preference that customers show towards the brand. Since the brand image is on the receiver's side (Kapferer, 2008, p. 174), the brand identity precedes it because it is on the sender's side, which means that in school branding it represents a means of communication. In this sense, brand image reflects current perceptions of a brand. Like brand identity, brand position is more aspirational, reflecting perceptions that the strategist wants to have associated with the brand. Comparing brand image and brand identity, any brand image can be: a) augmented, b) reinforced, and c) diffused. In Table 4, we show the brand position and the brand image in SM.

Table 4: Brand communication in school

Brand Image	School communication	
Augmented	Add association	
Reinforced	Exploit strength	
Diffused	Visual imagery	

Source: the author

Augmenting image in the school context means an attempt to position the image or by adding associations to the existing image. Sometimes the image of the organization, as well as SI (Jukić, 2022), is not in agreement with the identity of the organization as imagined by the management. The brand position might, therefore, attempt to add associations to the brand image and to soften restrictive perceptions. The challenge of a school or college is to add associations and develop an image, creating the second step in the CBBE model, creating brand meaning (Keller, 2013), and expanding the school's values, such as additional activities, equipped libraries, gyms, and IT equipment, and similar. Reinforcing image marks the moment when brand image associations are consistent with brand identity (Kapferer, 2008), but this consistency is too strong and dictates the position of the school brand. Then it is allowed to use points-of-parity (POPs) and extend the image to other segments, for example when a school or college tries to build an image of a new program and the skills it teaches. Diffusing an image is used when the image is inconsistent with the brand identity, for example when analysing the identity of the school according to the AC²ID Test model (Balmer & Gray, 2003, p. 972-997).

In this way, SM learns the actual state of the existing from the desired identity and enables them to create communication that will project the desired image. The above model serves to enable strategic leadership and management of a corporate brand. As can be seen, the image of the brand refers to the way of decoding the stimulus by the recipient of the message, which is in accordance with all relevant theories of branding (de Chernatony & McDonald, 2003; Kapferer, 2008; Keller, 2013).

3.2. Brand customer experience

To position the brand, it is necessary to determine the frame of reference (Kotler & Keller, 2007). We determine the brand service frame of reference by identifying the target market and competition. When it comes to secondary schools, three different types of schools must be considered: gymnasium, vocational school, and art school. The same applies to colleges and universities, i.e., depending on study programs and market segmentation. School missions reveal school models and ways of leading and managing the school. By understanding the definition of the school's mission, it is possible to create a school strategy, create a school identity (SI) and a school culture (SC). Comparing the types of secondary schools and their characteristics, it is evident that gymnasiums have a different SC than vocational and art schools.

Therefore, we present the reference frame of the identity positioning strategy according to Kotler and Keller (2007, p. 312-316) in terms of competing points-of-parity in three segments: a) points-of-difference (PODs), b) points-of-parity-(POPs) and c) points-of-parity vs points-of-difference (POPs vs PODs). Simply put, PODs represent qualities that students associate with the school and value positively. Also, POPs make associations towards competitive schools that students perceive in the context of similar schools (categorize them) and in the context of competitive schools (compare the characteristics of competitive schools). To achieve a degree of similarity for certain benefits (values), it is necessary that there is a certain number of users who believe that their service is better (see Table 5).

Table 5: School brand positioning strategy

PODs	Brand image
POPs	Brand identity
POPs vs PODs	Brand relationship

Source: the author

The preferred approach to positioning the image of the high school starts from PODs because it emphasizes the diversity of the school, its characteristics, specifics, and consumer benefits. Strong and desirable associations are built through the creation of SC, the quality of service and the creation of the image of the school. However, if we start from the vocational school positioning strategy, then it is necessary to give preference to POPs because the goal is to emphasize the similarity of school categories, especially since the image is built on comparison with stronger schools (gymnasiums). Then the emphasis is on the "categorization" of subjects, teachers, and curriculum and, at the same time, emphasizing the advantages of competitive qualities. Therefore, PODs represent brand image, POPs brand identity, and POPs vs PODs represent brand relationship.

Let's note that what is crucial is what relates to the user's perception, i.e., the range of tolerance of students who accept their school's service as good enough for certain features, preferences, and benefits (Jukić, 2017, p. 12). From the above, we can conclude that there are three ways in which we can brand a school: a) emphasizing its categorization or type of school, b) benchmarking schools, c) storytelling schools. Emphasizing the categorization refers to the type of school, and declaring the affiliation of a certain school enables the creation of a product/service category in the consumer's mind. In this way, schools build their identity by creating a mental image of the type of school they aspire to or, in the process of reform and transition, build the image of the school they aspire to. Benchmarking means comparing with a competing school. Building the identity of a private school at an already existing private college can serve as an example. The last category is reliance on the description of the service, i.e., when, in addition to the existing service, additional attention is given to its specificity, characteristics or affiliation (private schools, sports academies, music schools).

3.3. Educational services and teacher professional identity

A service is an act or performance offered by one party to another (Lovelock & Wright, 2002, p. 6). The service product must be tailored to customer needs and actively promoted to customers. The service performance itself is an intangible. The benefits of using a product come from its physical properties, while in service, the benefits come from the nature of the performance. It is characteristic of services that they should pay attention to two types of markets: internal and external. Schools should respect different interest groups. Apart from students, who directly and indirectly influence their business, the key role comes from teachers, stakeholders, and founders.

In high-contact services, such as schools, the role of teachers is extremely important because teachers are not only service providers, but also promoters of their organization. Professional identity depends on the environments in which teachers work and develop. Satisfaction with the profession has been shown to be the best predictor in all aspects of professional identity in some studies. Korthagen (2004) argues that professional identity consists of unconscious needs, feelings, values, role models, previous experiences, and behaviours, which together create a sense of identity. The professional identity of a teacher is very complex because it includes the teacher's thoughts about teaching and their own realization (Vranješević & Vujisić-Živković, 2013, p. 588). Teachers define and realize their identity through self-image, attitudes, relationships with other employees, school culture and the service provided.

The identity of the teacher can be presented as the teacher's sense of self-worth and reflection on those values (Jukić, 2022, p. 22). The teacher identity construct is a combination of factors such as personal, professional, and situational factors (Granjo, Silva & Peixoto, 2021, p. 161). The teacher's identity is created by the emotional aspect of teaching, but also as a result of personal experience and SC. The identity of the teacher depends on the development of the professional community. It relates to the feeling of success at work, and includes the purposes of educational work, which are always in relation to ethical, and not only narrowly didactic-methodical values. We can conclude that the teacher's identity refers to a wider professional involvement in the school and the way teachers realize themselves. The most important research on the professional identity of teachers (Beijaard, 2019; Beijaard, Verloop & Vermunt, 2000) suggests the existence of different professional orientations in the community of teachers.

Organizational performance is determined by employee performance (Šafránková & Šikýř, 2018, p.532). Schools provide educational services, acquire, and retain users through capable, motivated, and satisfied employees. Principals who want to achieve excellent results in their schools should pay special attention to SM and HR management.

Corporate identity is created by employees. Positive identity is reflected in positive images in the mind of the consumer. Employees build a corporate identity through their work and organizational culture. Marketing in school should be viewed according to its focus on: a) teachers, b) students and c) stakeholders. Focusing on employees is a form of internal marketing because we see them as internal customers (Grönroos, 2007; Grönroos & Ravald, 2011; Grönroos, 2019; Grönroos, 2020), while focus on stakeholders is a form of managing activities that are focused on the service model itself.

3.4. School culture and brand relationship

The process of creating a school's image can be influenced by a whole series of factors, such as business behaviour, school reputation, SC, school behaviour towards society, school behaviour towards employees and students, quality of service, publicity, cooperation with other educational institutions, teacher education, teacher satisfaction and similar. It is obvious that many factors influence the image of the school in the public. One of the ways that a school can improve its image, i.e., expand and add new associations (see Table 4) is to create cooperation with other educational and cultural institutions by creating hidden promotions and in this way create a positive image by participating in promotions, ceremonies, and public events. Of course, part of the impressions can be built thanks to positive SC (Jukić, 2022), but also through reference points POPs vs PODs (see Table 5).

Each school has its own specific SC, which depends on the school's mission, vision, and strategy. The type of SC depends on the type of school (gymnasium, vocational school, and art school), ownership of the school (private or public school), teacher's identity, students, urban or rural area, influence of school climate, interpersonal relations, principal's management style and similar. School culture can most simply be described as the shared beliefs and values of the school. Strong SC shapes employee behaviour. School culture consists of frameworks, products, expressions, and activities (Peterson & Costner, 2006, p. 249).

If schools invest in a SI building strategy, and users perceive the school's image as positive and desirable, then the school's reputation will increase. If teachers do not believe in the promise that the school makes through external marketing and do not know how to implement the service, then teachers will not use the service they provide. To achieve this, teachers must be satisfied in the environment in which they work and in their relationships with their colleagues, the school, and the principal. Grönroos claims that the branding process is actually a brand relationship. The brand as a concept is always an image. (Grönroos, 2007, p. 331). In this sense, branding is the process of creating an image. When the customer is given an active role in the branding process, our understanding of the brand changes (Grönroos, 2007, p. 331). It is a process that is constantly evolving and changing as users encounter the services. Therefore, the brand is the consequence of how a given customer perceives his relationship with the brand. Brand relationship develops in a series of brand contacts experienced by customers.

Precisely because of this, planning and managing the service process is at the heart of the branding process (Grönroos & Ravald, 2011; Grönroos, 2019). A service marketer who creates brand awareness must fulfil the promise that the brand made to its users. It is only a part of creating the brand image of the school. To develop a school brand, a continuous process of identity development (Kapferer, 2008) and reaching brand resonance (Keller, 2013) is needed. SM should involve teachers in the creation of SI and motivate them so that the service is impressive, high-quality, and unique. Only at such a moment, the metaphor "moment of truth" (Lovelock & Wright, 2002, p. 59), an impression of the school appears. That is why interactive marketing implies managing the activities of the service process itself. The main task in the branding school is to manage the service process so that they provide the customers with positive brand contacts and corresponding brand message (Grönroos, 2007; Grönroos, 2019; Grönroos, 2020).

Service process will not contribute to the emergence of an intended brand, if SI is out of proportion with SC. Also, SI must agree with the desired identity, which is actual, and not with the ideal identity (Jukić, 2022). The model that best illustrates the promise concept is the service brand-relationship-value triangle (Grönroos, 2007, p. 337). According to this model, the school creates a brand promise through various IMCs, which then creates brand awareness among customers and other stakeholders. What is specific to this model is that teachers become brand promoters and take on the most important role of providing service and creating value. Finally, the interactions that occur with students in the service process and the behaviours of the teachers must contribute to a brand fulfilment.

4. CONCLUSION

The school's brand image is built even when nothing is done to create it. Therefore, it is necessary to understand promotion as an important part of marketing communication that is aimed at the external market. The main goal of SM in the context of building the image of the school is to create an appropriate SI. Identity is based on all contacts with external and internal users, employees, and partners. In this sense, the IMC strategy should connect as many elements of the brand identity as possible and connect them to the mission of the school. However, it should be emphasized that communication is not the only generator of creating a positive image of the school. Brand communication must be strategically placed and connect all segments of the organization's identity.

Also, it is necessary to encourage important contacts that are not so much dependent on principles, but reflect on the organization, such as SC, school climate, employee satisfaction, teacher identity and experience with the service

provided. It is evident that the role of employees is extremely important because they are the bearers of the school's identity and image builders. The importance of teachers is related to the very nature of the service (high interaction), but also due to the determined intensity of contact with users, stakeholders, and colleagues. Teachers become promoters and spokespersons of the school, transmitters of SC and generators of new values for society.

Building a school's image is a strategic business process that greatly affects the value of the brand in the eyes of consumers. That is why it is very important to communicate with teachers, support them, build a favourable school climate, and build a positive SC that indirectly affects the satisfaction of all employees, teaching and non-teaching staff. It is necessary to develop awareness of the school's identity to form an image of the school's brand and create an appropriate school image. The brand identity is only one part of the presentation that the school presents, and the image is the subjective, perceptive thing that users associate with the school. Principals and teachers should be partners because only if teachers feel part of SC, their engagement can be expected.

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