SCHOOL IMAGE IN THE CONTEXT OF NEW COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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Abstract:
Reconsidering the strategy regarding the institutional image amongst students, parents and the community represents an opportunity for the organization and distribution of special responsibilities linked with the relationship with the recipients of the educational act, for ensuring the transparency that is necessary for the responsible participation of all the members in partner structures with the local community, the parents, the socio-economic organizations in what concerns the appropriate educational offer of the school in relation with the specific community needs.

This paper proposes to investigate the image of the school institution in the community and the promoting strategies, using classical methods as well as modern communication technology, web sites and social network sites for the implementing of educational marketing. The study focuses on the image of the Santana Scholar Group and the promoting strategies based on a questionnaire made in Google Docs, which was included on the school’s web site to be filled in.

Key words: education, new technologies, image, educational marketing, questionnaire, school site.

JEL Classification: I25

INTRODUCTION

The promoting of school units is becoming more and more important, the image being an important factor, which has been recognized and studied since 1950. In his work called "Marketing Management" (2008), Philip Kotler defined the image in a large sense, as being "the assemble of perceptions which an individual has over an object".

The importance of using new technologies in the educational field is largely recognized, becoming in the last decades a leitmotiv in the speech about education at all levels: curriculum and didactic practice, training school staff, the development of school institutions, educational policies and the implementation of them in the school system (Dobrică L., 2011).

The investigation focuses on highlighting the importance of using new technologies for promoting the image of The Santana Scholar Group. The school is located in the town of Santana, in Arad County, in the West Plain, at a distance of 23 km from the city of Arad. The Santana Scholar Group celebrates 260 years of education with pride and responsibility for the importance of the event. The school functions today in a new organizational format, the Santana Scholar Group including The Elementary School „Santa Ana” and The Kindergarten with extended...
Program Number 1. The school is represented by a number of over 1300 students and pre-primary school children, eager for knowledge, whose parents cherish teaching, and the exceptional teacher staff. The students come here from a special intercultural environment to study in harmony: Romanian children that descend from native families or from families with roots in the Criș region and in the North-East of the country (that have settled here during the last decades), the children of the Santana Swabian community, gypsy children, Hungarian children, as well as institutionalized children that have been adopted by the Santana community. The vitality and the extraordinary potential that this intercultural mix gives, translates into very good results obtained by these children every year in school competitions (general skills, cultural and sports competitions), by preserving the traditions of all ethnic groups as an important community heritage, and by developing numerous successful personalities amongst the school’s alumni.

The promotion of school-image in the context of today’s competitional climate of decentralization and institutional autonomy has become, for many scholar institutions, a strategic purpose (Dumitrescu L. 2002).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study regarding the image of the Santana Scholar Group and the strategies for promoting it were realized based on a questionnaire that was applied to a pilot sample of 101 persons. The volume of the pilot sample was established using following formula (Szentesi S. et al., 2011; Szentesi S., 2010):

\[ n = \frac{t^2 \times p \times q}{e^2} \]

Where:
- \( n \) – volume of the sample
- \( t \) – standard random variable
- \( q = p(1-p) \) – dispersion for the selection of the chosen characteristic
- \( e \) – maximum allowable error.

In order to ensure the result of the opinion poll with a probability of 90%, in accordance with the objectives of the study, I chose from the Laplace table the value of the random variable \( t \)

\[ t = 1.64 \Delta x = e = 6\% \ P = 70\% \]

By applying the formula to our case referring to the 1315 students of which 565 students are at high school level, it is revealed that it is necessary to apply the questionnaire to a number of 96 persons.

The structure of the sample is represented in equal proportions by following categories: students, parents, teachers and members of the community that have no link to the school institution.

In order to elaborate the questionnaire as an instrument of work, I used Google Docs (Chicioreanu, 2011). The documents that resulted where saved in the same place (on a server, in the cloud system) and can be accessed from any computer with an internet connection (Vlădoiu, 2011). The answers of the participants were automatically centralized in Google Docs, in a table (Excel) and are very easy to process. The table was processed in MS Excel. The collected opinions were then quantified and diagrams were created in order to better illustrate the aspect we wanted to study. The questionnaire was included through a link on the school’s web site, to be completed by the participants. The gathering of information was made with the method of the survey, as a structured form of communication (Stoica, 2005).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The Santana Scholar Group has promoted its image, starting with the year 2000, as it marked 250 years of Santana – education, by publishing information about the schools events in the local mass media.

Starting with the year 2010, the Santana Scholar Group has adopted the strategy of image promotion through the internet http://grupulscolarsantana.ro http://www.scoalasfanta-ana.ro and through social networks http://www.facebook.com/grupulscolarsantana, in agreement with the slogan “What can’t be found on the Internet, does not exist!”. The teachers and the students are encouraged to promote their activities online, in order to become visible, and to be subjected to the local and regional community’s attention, and even for European confrontations.

The general image of the Santana Scholar Group is presented as belonging to a school of a
high level (fig. 1), reaching towards excellence, but also suggesting that, in the public opinion, there are still aspects that need to be improved.

The Image of Grupul Scolar Santana in the local community

![Pie chart showing the image assessment of Grupul Scolar Santana](chart.png)

*Figure 1. Assessing the institution's image in the community*

From the data obtained by applying the questionnaire, we conclude that the two strengths, according to those surveyed, are the way in which teachers relate to students (fig. 2) this relationship is fundamental to smoothly conducting an educational process and the good quality of teaching. Both points relate to the quality of teachers, who are considered by applicants to be competent and successful teachers.

The main factor of promoting the image of the Santana School Group should continue to support the development of education and training, aimed at ensuring personal, social and professional fulfillment of all students, employability, promoting democratic values, social cohesion, active citizenship and intercultural dialogue.

![Circle chart showing school organisation strengths](chart1.png)

*Figure 2. Opinion on the strengths of the organization*

Most participants in the survey believe that the most effective way to promote is through activities such as “Open Day”. Also, many people believe that the school can best be promoted through the Internet (fig. 3), without neglecting any other methods that have received a lot of feedback, like promoting during meetings with parents, promotion in local newspapers, in the school magazine or through television.
Figure 3. Strategies for promoting the image of the institution

Promoting a school group on the Internet and in social networks makes it possible to promote academic mobility on a local, regional and European level. It also fosters the development of inter-school and cross-school (industry, businesses, training providers) partnerships and facilitates the implementation processes of new information and communication technologies.

Figure 4. Preferred profiles at the vocational school

Unlike the other types of schools, for school groups, mainly to operate the vocational school classes (fig. 4), the development of cross-curricular relationships with businesses is essential. Promoting a school group on the Internet and in social networks can help to promote the image of businesses and community partners in this school and can become an important element of marketing for these partners.

Promoting a school group on the Internet and in social networks offers to its students and teachers new opportunities for:

- acquiring skills to maintain an interactive dialogue with the computer, working as a work-partner;
- developing the capacity to understand the advantages offered by a computer;
- benefiting from the access to information, presented in different ways to view;
- presenting multiple static and dynamic representations to deepen understanding and long-term memory retention of new knowledge.

The Internet is both a resource and an outstanding support for promoting the image of schools because it has a high capacity to offer any
student or teacher, in any school, anytime, access to information in all fields of knowledge, opportunities for documentation, to obtain specific information that is up to date, and to multiply opportunities to express one's imagination and creativity, to exercise communicative skills or process information.

CONCLUSIONS

Educational marketing is focused on regularly updating the website, the operation of the site, maintaining or improving the image of the institution, initiating, implementing educational activities with community partners, in the idea of promoting the educational offer, and creating a discussion forum. Information and communication technology provides an opportunity to reconsider the strategy for the institutional image among students, parents and the community.

Given that promoting the Santana School Group on the Internet and in social networks meets all the requirements in the teaching plan, of the cultural model for an informational society (European Commission, 2001), based on knowledge, it is necessary to focus on the following aspects:

a) choosing the most essential part of the information (selecting, processing, storing, improving essential information);

b) permanent organization and reorganization of information, liaising between open context information;

c) encouraging secondary level classes to present their work through microblogs, made by students, supervised by head teachers, to have closer contact with parents, feedback from them;

d) creating a special page on the school website to promote the collaboration with businesses, thus contributing to better their image in the community, increasing the socio-economic and socio-professional impact;

e) promoting the cultural, geographical and regional dimensions, promoting opportunities for inter-European understanding and cooperation, by publishing key information simultaneously in German and English.

Promoting a school group can be considered as part of a broader approach to support the modernization of education, aimed at developing the knowledge, skills and attitudes of the graduate, envisioning an educational profile that is well adapted to the cultural, economic, social and professional realities of our century.

REFERENCES


Internet sources


