

## THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL ASPECTS ON THE ANALYSIS OF SPORTS MARKETING PLAN

Ecaterina AMELICICHIN<sup>1</sup>, Liliana BUDEVICI – PUIU<sup>1\*</sup>

<sup>1\*</sup>The State University of Physical Education and Sport, 22 Andrei Doga street, Chisinau, Republic of Moldova  
Corresponding Author: *lbudevici@yahoo.com*

### ABSTRACT

The analysis of marketing plan at the level of the sports organization contributes to the identification of the dimensions of a certain concrete problem in a given situation and to the assessment of the adequacy of the information basis necessary for the development of a strategic decision to develop and to activate the internal resources realisation of a such entity. Thus, in order to cope with contemporary progress, the sports organization has to look for ways, find new forms to develop, study, research and know the sports consumers market, plan and monitor the achievement of its strategic goals, distributing to consumers a product or sports service into groups, in order to be able to highlight how the sports entity can meet the consumers' expectations compared to other tenderers. At the same time, the marketing mix and the implementation of a program in this respect depend on a large extent by leadership and assuming, communicating and delegating tasks, team work and projects, and last but not least, the payments and sanctions applied to the human resources involved in their realisation at organizational level. Among the tools to measure the effectiveness of planning and implementing the marketing plan, we can use the surveys, the annual focus groups, the media monitoring, the number of subscribers on the entity's website, the number of participants in a sports event, which will ensure the control and evaluation of the strategic objectives, expectations and competitive advantage expected by the sports organization.

**Keywords:** *marketing plan, the sports organization, the analysis.*

### INTRODUCTION

Sports marketing is an important area for the existence and development of sports organizations, weather it public or private. In general, sports entities are concerned with developing sports, increasing their performance and reward, promoting a healthy lifestyle, improving the quality of life and social welfare by organizing and conducting sports activities, and last but not least combating doping. All these activities can be efficiently achieved by the existence at the institutional level of a well-developed marketing plan in which the direction the entity has to follow in line with the concrete performed activities, as well as the basic arguments based on the drawn direction must be presented [1]. Moreover, the effectiveness of the marketing plan must be established in conjunction with overall budget planning and management. Also, the marketing plan is a communication tool that combines all the elements of a marketing mix into a coordinated action plan based on the responsibilities and duties of the individuals identified in the sports institution for achieving certain strategic objectives, deadlines and means of action for their achievement [2, 3].

The mission of the sports organization is identified mainly by its fundamental and declared purpose, as well as by its own conception of development over

time which arises from its object of activity and the market it serves. As a rule, the sport entity's mission targets all its stakeholders: shareholders/associates, employed human resources, clients / beneficiaries, sponsors, athletes, supporters.

Marketing planning analysis involves knowing the consumer as the main pawn in the efficient functioning and development of the sports organization.

Aim of research is the elaboration and implementation of an effective marketing plan by the sports entity for the achievement of the sport and the economic success.

Sports success is equivalent with performances based on trophies, cups, medals, rankings, championships, first league membership, etc. At the same time, for the priority sporting entity in its activity is also the profit that can provide, for example, incomes for transfers of talented athletes and for increasing competitiveness. This will lead to a greater number of supporters, spectators/viewers, and the development of media rights profits. Succinctly, through competitiveness, we actually understand the sporting and financial performance of the sporting entity that can be achieved even through a careful planning of marketing activities [4].

In order to achieve the proposed goal, it is important to answer the following questions [5, 6]:

- What sports entity is considered in research (federation, sports club, sports equipment manufacturers, sports service providers, etc.)?;
- What are the products and services that it offers?;
- What are the requirements of the clients / beneficiaries that the sports organization satisfies?;
- What is the target market and what are the defining elements of customer-specific behaviours as buyers?;
- What are the products and services offered by competition in the field?

In our research we took as example a sports service provider (private fitness club). When designing the marketing plan, we took into account the opinion of the specialists in the field, namely employees from the marketing departments, managers of sporting organizations of different levels, clients of the fitness clubs (to measure the degree of satisfaction with the services provided by the monitored fitness club).

The study was carried out by organizing two focus groups, one with senior-level managers from national sports organizations (private sports clubs and national sports federations) and the second one with mid-level or low-level representatives of pre-university education institutions (sports high schools from Chisinau).

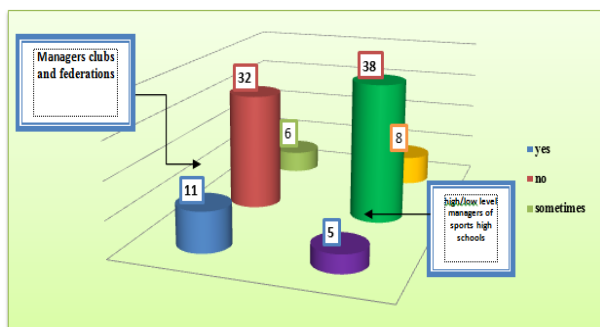


Figure 1. Responses to the use of marketing research

With regard to collecting customer information on the market, competition, product image, or reference sports organization, most respondents declared they did not undertake such activities. Among the activities underlying the elaboration of the communication strategy, the following emerged as being mainly achieved within their own organizations: elaboration of the development and communication strategy; SWOT analysis to identify opportunities, threats, strengths and weaknesses that can influence the effectiveness of the monitored sports institution (Figure 2).

Focus groups were conducted during the 2017-2018 study year, analysed and interpreted in the scientific laboratory of the Department of Physical Culture Management, Faculty of Sports, SUPES, Chisinau. The two groups were composed of a number of homogeneous individuals. Group discussions were focused on the following main themes:

- organizing the marketing activity and the place of the marketing / promotion communication in the marketing activity of the sports organization;
  - the role of the marketing plan in the development of the sports entity;
  - The specific elements of a marketing plan and the assessment of its implementation at the level of the sports organization monitored in the research.
- Methods used in research: literature analysis, interview, interpretation and generalization of data; observation and graphic method.

Results and discussions.

Figure 1 reflects the data of the two focus groups by interpreting the answers given to the question "Do you use marketing research as a sustainable development strategy of your organization that you lead?" Most of the interviewees gave negative answers, motivating that they did not have in the organizational structure of the institution by a specialized marketing department and specialists that could carry out such studies, having as consequence the formulation of proposals for the continuous improvement of the quality of sports services / products.

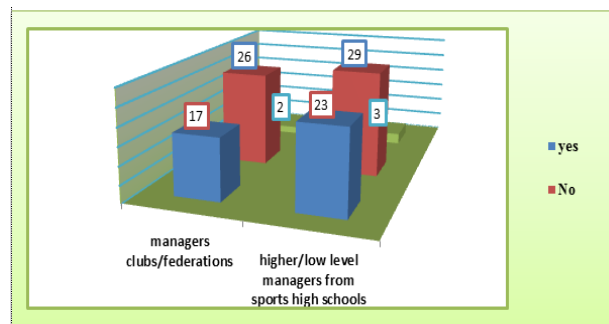


Figure 2. Responses on collecting customer information about the market, competition, product image or sports organization

At the end of the discussions we wanted to find the participants' opinion on the necessity of the marketing plan for the effective realization of the sports business (Figure 3), as well as whether the respondents know what would be the most relevant elements of such a plan. From the answers given to them, we observe that most of the respondents responded positively to this question, but among the content elements of the marketing plan can be determined as reflected in Table 1.

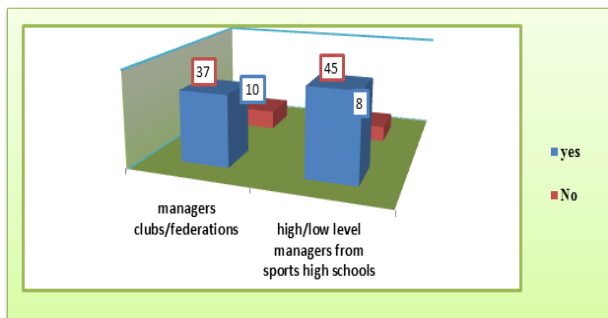


Figure 3. Responses to the need for a marketing plan

In Table 1 we present the elements of the marketing plan identified and elaborated by us in terms of the responses acquired by the respondents.

Table 1. Marketing plan applied by sports club "SP"

1. Information about sports entity	
The sports club "SP", with an area of over 4,000 sq. m, is located in a forest area in the northern part of Chisinau. The Club has a fitness centre equipped with a spacious gym for strength and cardio training, swimming pool and SPA (massage, hammam, Russian sauna, solarium), halls for group programs, Cross fit functional training area, table tennis, lawn tennis courts, modern dressing rooms with infrared sauna and shower, and parking spaces for club guests. The Club's activities are completed with lawn tennis training courses, tennis as a hobby, and performance tennis. Within the club, Taekwondo-DO can be practiced. The club also has a coffee shop and a relaxation room with the WI-FI area for its clients.	
Beneficial to achieving goals	It endangers the achievement of goals
Strengths	Weaknesses
Opportunities	Threats
2. SWOT Analysis	
Internal Source of the club	
External Source of the club "SP"	
The SWOT analysis is also important to reflect the degree of accessibility to the goal created and modernised by the sports club as well as the facilities offered in its implementation area.	
The analysis of marketing planning at the level of the sports entity in terms of its internal and external environment can be represented schematically by the model shown in Figure 4.	
3. Analysis of club market and consumers of sports activities and other club services (current and potential customers)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The sports club knows: the categories of customers, their needs for the quality of the provided services, the contact details, the frequency and the manner where they can be contacted, the marketing strategies that attract their the most positive responses, their interests and opinions, customers' request for existing services within the club in order to identify market opportunities in time.</li> <li>Market analysis implies its concrete description, its main characteristics, its size, sources of information with reference to it and of particular importance from the perspective of the respondents.</li> <li>The monitored sports club knows its target segment with which it works the most, so it knows how to address and which sports products to mark.</li> <li>The sports club has a profile of its consumers, drawn from the point of view of the socio-demographic and cultural, psychological characteristics, behaviour in consumption and acquisition of sports services, activities, interests and opinions.</li> <li>Knowledge of its consumers generally involves, knowing their condition of health and demand for existing products or services in order to identify market opportunities in time.</li> </ul>	
4. Establishment of marketing goals of Sports Club "SP"	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quality (improving the quality of the club's services and its image on the competitive market).</li> <li>Quantity (generally measurable and reflected by increased sales of subscriptions for the entire range of provided</li> </ul>	

services, increased number of organized competitions, number of customers in positive year-to-year dynamics, increasing annual profit, increasing consumer awareness of products or services offered by sports club, increase in the volume and frequency of use of a sporting product or service offered by the sports club "SP", etc.).

- Planned objectives generally answer the questions: What? Are these objectives measurable?; But actionable, that is, can be achieved?; Are they realistic (not to be too big or small and with a period of achievement specifying their duration)?
- The objectives of the sports club are usually related to clients / beneficiaries, performance, profit and promotion.

5. Position of the club on the market

- Sports club "SP" identifies its positioning on the market by taking into account the satisfaction of the consumers' service expectations provided in comparison to other tenderers and consecutively realizes its image that they have with regard to it as a whole.

- The position is based on certain points of parity (brand, product, service offered compared to other tenderers) and differentiation points (the attributes or benefits that club clients do not find in other tenderers but which are relevant to consumers, reliable and sustainable).

6. Marketing Mix (Marketing Strategies)

- Identification of the 4 P (product, price, distribution and promotion policy) and their characterization in comparison with the market tenderers.

- For club, marketing strategies are the way to follow the achievement of the set goals in the marketing plan and are the market strategies and the proper ones to the marketing mix.

7. Implementation of the marketing plan

- Implementation of the marketing plan by the sports club "SP" is based on the leadership and the assumption, communication and delegation of tasks, teamwork and the projects, payments and set sanctions.

- Annually the club's scoreboard is designed and posted for this purpose for the reference year, the Gantt chart is presented in order to introduce and monitor the achievement of the planned objectives, the activities of each individual.

8. Marketing Plan Budget

- The club estimates its costs for each action set out in the marketing plan

9. Control and evaluation of the marketing plan effectiveness

- The effectiveness of the marketing plan is measured annually by the sports club through the following tools: surveys for identifying online feedback with reference to the provided services; media monitoring, number of subscribers on the club's website, number of participants in sports events organized by it annually, etc.

- For the control and evaluation stage, the club defines critical success factors, measuring performance, compares the obtained results, identifies the variations and makes the necessary corrections in the marketing plan based on the findings and the desired expectations.

10. Expected results

The analysis of marketing planning at the level of the sports club in terms of its internal and external environment can be schematically represented by the model shown in Figure 1.

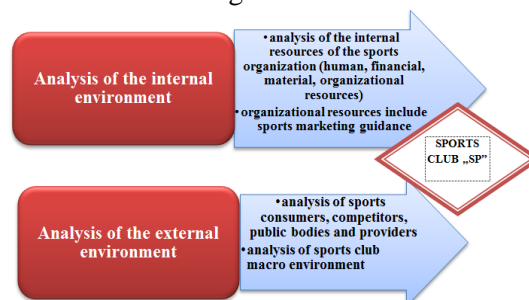


Figure 1. Analysis of marketing planning at the level of sports entity in terms of its internal and external environment

As a result of the study, we can assert that marketing plan has a significant role in formulating some basic principles underlying the sustainable development of the sports club, but the responsibility for defining the plan actions lies with the decision makers. At the same time, the marketing plan helps to identify the opportunities and threats related to the activity of the club and the environment in which it operates. The reference sports club with a marketing orientation cannot operate under normal conditions if it does not have enough information. Thus, the complexity and dynamics that characterize the information field requires a rigorous approach to collecting, inventory, evaluating and analysing them. To meet this requirement, the marketing plan comes to support the club with a specific tool: marketing research.

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