DETERMINATION OF GUIDELINES FOR SOCIAL MARKETING USAGE AT VYTAUTAS MAGNUS UNIVERSITY’S KAUNAS BOTANICAL GARDEN

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In the article are determined the guidelines for usage of social marketing. Vytautas Magnus University’s Botanical garden is considered as a possibly socially responsible for our research; as it can be named as an ideal field for interface between society and science. Customers’ attitudes, evaluations, and needs related to Vytautas Magnus University’s Kaunas Botanical garden were determined providing the questionnaire research.

Keywords: association, Botanical garden, positioning, social marketing.  
JEL classification: M390.

Relevance of the research. Nowadays every organization is trying to attract and maintain its customers focusing on strengthening its competitive advantage. Socially responsible organizations can improve its results not only using habitual marketing measures, but encouraging and involving people in the society to contribute to the improvement of the quality of their lives. Such organization’s marketing efforts to improve common society’s welfare is called social marketing. According to Ch. T. Domegan (2008) social marketing is the application of marketing principles and exchange to social issues. There is growing trend of the usage of social marketing in Lithuania. The usage of social marketing tools highlights organization’s care for its image, reputation, and favourable society’s attitude towards it.

Vytautas Magnus University’s Kaunas Botanical garden was considered as possibly socially responsible organization for our research. VMU’s Kaunas Botanical garden is “a structural subdivision of Vytautas Magnus University, where scientific researches, applied activities, plant collections’ accumulation, expositions, and functions of society’s ecological education are provided…” (Vytauto Didžiojo universiteto..., 2006). Accordingly, VMU’s Kaunas Botanical garden can be held as a very complex, miscellaneous organization. VMU’s Kaunas Botanical garden is supposed to provide various benefits for its customers: starting from scientific, educative, cognitive, observational possibilities and opportunities, and concluding with huge leisurely or spare-time spending potential.

Scientific problem – what are the possibilities of usage of social marketing for VMU’s Kaunas Botanical garden?

The object of the research is guidelines for social marketing usage at VMU’s Kaunas Botanical garden. The aim of the research is to determine guidelines for social marketing usage at VMU’s Kaunas Botanical garden. The objectives set for the research are:
• to provide the research on consumers’ perception of VMU’s Kaunas Botanical garden;
• to determine guidelines for social marketing usage.
• on purpose to determine guidelines for social marketing usage, customers’ attitudes, evaluations, and needs related to VMU’s Kaunas Botanical garden were determined providing the questionnaire survey.

**Research organization**

Endeavouring to determine citizens’ perception of VMU’s Kaunas Botanical garden, its’ marketing possibilities, main advantages and disadvantages, the questionnaire survey was provided. Two types of questionnaires were prepared – one for those who have ever visited or even are actively involved in events held at VMU’s Kaunas botanical garden and the other questionnaire for those who have never been there before. Main questions there the same in both questionnaires, however, some specific questions varied. The research was provided at VMU’s Kaunas botanical garden and Kaunas Laisves Avenue on April 2010. At the whole there were 319 respondents of whom 157 have visited VMU’s Kaunas botanical garden at least once and 162 who have never visited the place.

**Research findings**

The first question in both questionnaires aimed to determine respondents’ associations related to the phrase ‘Botanical garden’. Moreover, Vytautas Magnus University was mentioned as one of possibilities, not as an obligatory. As it can be seen in the Figure 1, only 19.7 percent (31 respondents) of those who have ever visited and 4.3 percent (7 respondents) of those who have never visited VMU’s Kaunas Botanical garden, relate ‘Botanical garden’ to Vytautas Magnus University. Association with the other part of the full name of Botanical garden was stronger – accordingly 27.4 and 19.8 percent of respondents related Botanical garden to Kaunas city. Respondents, who have never visited VMU’s Kaunas Botanical garden, mostly identified it with Tadas Ivanauskas (27.8 percent), a prominent Lithuanian zoologist and biologist, one of the founders of Vytautas Magnus University and Kaunas Botanical Garden, as well. Some respondents (7.5 percent) associated the Botanical garden to Lithuanian University of Agriculture. Such association can be named as a negative one, in regard to Vytautas Magnus University. Despite some collaboration, universities can be named as competitors. The research results highlight the possibility for Vytautas Magnus University to shift its marketing efforts for strengthening the association between names.

Despite the fact that the primary purpose of VMU’s Kaunas Botanical garden is related to scientific and exploratory activities, only 6.6 percent of all respondents associate the place to ‘the centre of research and science’. Moreover, among the group of visitors this number was even smaller – 5.1 percent. The assumption could be made here, that target visitors do not come to VMU’s Kaunas Botanical garden for satisfaction of their exploration or self-education needs. The
research results provided in Figure 1 above highlight respondents’ perception of VMU’s Kaunas Botanical garden as ‘a place for leisure spending’ – 15 percent of overall associations. Furthermore, even 10.5 percent of those who have never visited the Botanical garden before relate this place to leisure. The emerging possibility for VMU’s Kaunas Botanical garden’s positioning as a place for leisure spending can be identified.

![Association with Botanical garden](image)

**Figure 1.** Distribution of respondents’ associations related to the phrase ‘Botanical garden’

Some following leisure related statements in questionnaires were blocked into two groups – statements about passive and active leisure. Research results in both groups of respondents highlighted the existence of possibilities for active leisure spending and the need for more passive leisure spending opportunities (average 5-point Likert evaluation for existing passive leisure perception – 3.7 points, and average 5-point Likert evaluation for desired passive leisure spending opportunities – 4.05 points).

Analysing the survey results about the factors that would attract respondents to come to VMU’s Kaunas Botanical garden or visit it more frequently, the passive leisure priority results were proved. Most respondents totally agreed, that their decision to come to VMU’s Kaunas Botanical garden would encourage ‘cosy and tidy environment for walking’ (62.2 percent), ‘concerts and plays organized’ would attract 60.3 percent of respondents, and ‘exposition of other art-related events’ preferred 48.6 percent of all 319 respondents (see Figure 2).

Other interesting research results emerged about VMU’s Kaunas Botanical garden’s working hours. At the moment VMU’s Kaunas Botanical garden is open for visitors from 9 a.m. till 6 p.m. at workdays, and 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. on weekends.
According to research results, 11 percent of respondents agree and 58.8 percent totally agree that longer working hours would be the advantage that would encourage them to come to the Botanical garden or visit it more often. Latter research results highlight the possibilities for combination between such social events as concerts or art-related events and extended visiting hours. E. g. previously organised social project “Researchers’ night 2010” was very successful.

Concerning the possibility of social projects’ organization at VMU’s Kaunas Botanical garden, some social marketing insights have to be considered. The questionnaire research was provided in April-May 2010, to determine consumers’ valuations of social marketing tools used in Lithuania (for more information see also Pilelienė, 2010). 110 respondents (81 women and 29 men) participated in the research.

The research results revealed, that 81 percent of respondents agree with social projects’ positive impact on society’s welfare. Social projects’ providers should consider such results while creating and implementing projects. The assumption can be made here, that the poor communication to the society of the social projects’ and their results leads to misunderstanding and overlook of the beneficial part of social marketing.

Furthermore, while asked to evaluate the importance of some social problems, respondents evaluated ‘Environmental clean-up’ and ‘Environment protection’ as important (average 5-point Likert evaluation – 4 and 4.04 points, respectively). The emerging field for VMU’s Kaunas Botanical garden’s marketing can be envisaged in latter results.

Research results revealed that best medias for social projects’ communication to the society are Television (average 5-point Likert evaluation – 4.06 points), Internet (3.96 points), and Outdoors (3.7 points). However, respondents desiderated concrete, social-projects related information in latter medias.
Summarizing the research insights provided above, social marketing guidelines for VMU’s Kaunas Botanical garden are given in Figure 3.

**Positioning**
Highlight relation with VMU

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**Place for leisure spending**

**Activities**

Environment protection projects
- Environmen-tal clean-up
- Cosy, tidy walking

Passive leisure spending projects
- Concerts/ plays
- Art-related events

**Communication:**
- Television
- Internet
- Out- doors

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Figure 3. Social marketing guidelines for VMU’s Kaunas Botanical garden

There is an emerging field for VMU’s Kaunas Botanical garden to start acting like socially responsible organization. Research results highlighted the guidelines for the start of using social marketing. Definitely, more precise research should be provided after every organization of any social event.

**Conclusions**

1. The research results highlighted the necessity for Vytautas Magnus University to shift its marketing efforts for strengthening the association with Kaunas Botanical garden.
2. The emerging possibility for VMU’s Kaunas Botanical garden’s positioning as a place for leisure spending was identified; the existence of possibilities for active leisure spending, and the need for more passive leisure spending opportunities were determined.
3. As attraction factors to come to VMU’s Kaunas Botanical garden or visit it more frequently were determined ‘cosy and tidy environment for walking’, ‘concerts and plays organized’, and ‘exposition of other art-related events’; longer working hours would be the advantage that would encourage people to come to the
Botanical garden or visit it more often. There could be found a combination between such social events as concerts or art-related events and extended visiting hours.

4. ‘Environmental clean-up’ and ‘Environment protection’ were determined as important social problems, which solving could be incorporated into VMU’s Kaunas Botanical gardens marketing strategy. The best medias for communication to the society were determined Television, Internet, and Outdoors.

References


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Raktiniai žodžiai: asociacijos, botanikos sodas, pozicionavimas, socialinis marketingas.

JEL kodas – M390.