

SUMMARY

Building customer loyalty is a complex, long-term process that requires the involvement of diverse resources in the organization. Interactive science centers operating on the Polish market use the entire range of marketing instruments and activities to build the loyalty of institutional clients, i.e. schools, kindergartens, educational and cultural institutions, travel agencies, companies / foundations. Properly selected and integrated marketing activities and instruments create, in its essence, the so-called marketing-mix. The considerations undertaken in this work fit into the five-element marketing-mix composition and cover the following areas: product offer, promotion / communication, price, location / distribution, customer service.

The main objective of the doctoral dissertation is to assess the dependencies between the individual elements of the marketing mix used by interactive science centers operating on the Polish market to build the loyalty of institutional clients and the loyalty behavior of institutional clients.

Three research questions have been asked in this study:

Q1: What activities and marketing instruments are used by interactive science centers operating on the Polish market to build loyalty of institutional clients?

Q2: What activities and marketing instruments used by interactive science centers are of key importance at each stage of building institutional customer loyalty? Two stages have been taken into consideration: the initial stage - creating (initiating) loyalty, and the next stage - strengthening loyalty.

Q3: What is the relationship (strength and direction of this relationship) between the various elements of the marketing-mix used by interactive science centers to build loyalty of institutional clients and the loyalty behavior of institutional clients?

The research shows that interactive science centers use activities and instruments that fit into all areas of the marketing mix to build the loyalty of their customers. The surveyed institutions are definitely the most active in terms of their product offer. This is confirmed by the results of qualitative research, i.e. individual in-depth interviews with representatives of six science centers and the analysis of materials provided by the science centers in terms of good practices that they have applied. Proper communication using various channels to reach institutional buyers and appropriate customer service is also important. As far as building the loyalty of institutional clients is concerned, the area related to distribution has a smaller potential due to the specificity of making the offer available (main offer in the primary location).

An attractive product offer and its appropriate promotion (proper communication) are factors encouraging to visit science centers. They play a particularly important role at the initial stage of the loyalty development process, i.e. in the loyalty creation (initiation) phase. At the next stage - in the phase of strengthening loyalty, in addition to communication and an attractive product offer, appropriate customer service resulting in strengthening relationships based on trust and partnership, become very important.

The results of the survey conducted on a sample of 1076 respondents, who were representatives of institutional clients, and the statistical analysis of these results confirm that there is a positive correlation between all areas including individual instruments and marketing activities used by science centers to build loyalty of institutional clients and their loyalty behaviors. However, the strength of this dependency varies in reliance on the area (an element of the marketing-mix composition). The research shows that there is a high positive relationship between the loyalty behavior of institutional clients and actions taken in the area of customer service and the product offer. This means that in order to build the loyalty of institutional customers interactive science centers should primarily support the area related to institutional customer service and continue to develop the product offer. Communication should be considered an important area of building customer loyalty as well.