

BRAND POSITIONING STRATEGY IN THE COMPETITIVE ASPECT

Lidija KRAUJALIENĖ^{1*}, Saulius KROMALCAS²

¹*Faculty of Public Governance and Business, Mykolas Romeris University, Vilnius, Lithuania*

²*SMK University of Applied Social Sciences, Kaunas, Lithuania*

Received 27 June 2022; accepted 2 September 2022

Abstract. A new brand for an organization is inseparable from organizational identity. The aim of the research is to investigate the positioning strategy in terms of competitiveness and visitors of Kaunas District Public Library (KDPL). Research methodology: analysis of scientific literature and statistical data, staff survey, SWOT analysis. Main findings: the flow of visitors of KDPL in the period of 2018–2020 has decreased by a quarter, the user portrait consists of 5 user groups (employed, studying, pre-school children, unemployed persons and others), the number of library users by gender did not change, 70% consists of women, attendance of four user groups decreased or remained virtually unchanged, when the amount of employed users increased by about 16 percent. SWOT analysis has shown the absence of a brand positioning strategy. Qualitative study of the library competitors users' needs and expectations can be analysed further. The local position of KDPLs has shown the potential to grow up in Kaunas city. The originality of the paper covers individualized research on a brand positioning strategy of public sector organization, while the available research has been carried out on private branding. The current research will be useful for KDPL and other public organisations.

Keywords: new, brand, positioning, strategy, competitiveness, library, case.

JEL Classification: D02, D12, D47, M31.

Introduction

The creation of a new brand for an organization is inseparable from aspects of organizational identity and branding.

In the business sector, a brand is a tool effectively connecting the end user with the seller. Until recent days, the public sector has ignored this fact. However, these days, public organizations acting in the non-profit sector have turned to think that without a strong branding strategy it is difficult to stay competitive (Hommerova et al., 2020).

While working with positioning, the main mistakes made by the marketers include (Hommerova et al., 2020):

1. Insufficient positioning – the brand of an organization is insufficiently differentiated from the other competitors;
2. Exaggerated positioning – extreme actions to highlight the brand's benefits. It could lead to the loss of the customers;
3. Confusing positioning – incoherent communication and reckless selection of the channels of distribution.

The novelty of the research. The analysis of the literature review has shown that public brand research is not

abundant in the recent research papers (Li et al., 2021; Mariutti & Giraldi, 2021; Zavattaro et al., 2021). Meanwhile, mostly groups of private brands are analyzed (Wu et al., 2021; Qasemzada, 2021; Gil-Cordero et al., 2021). Most research papers on brand positioning have the focus on specific groups of brands, when there is a lack of individualized positioning research to find out how different audiences perceive and understand the positioning of a particular organization (Zavattaro et al., 2021). Therefore, this research is intended to perform a case study – to investigate the positioning of the new brand of Kaunas District Public Library (KDPL) in relation to the consumer. This library brand was chosen as the research object of a sectoral brand.

Research problem refers to unclear portrait of KDPL user and positioning strategy in the aspect of competitiveness. The aim of the research is to investigate and analyze the positioning strategy of KDPL in terms of competitiveness and the visitors. Research methodology consists of scientific literature analysis, descriptive analysis of statistical data (Petrelli, 2021; Campion & Campion, 2021), staff and customer survey, and SWOT analysis model (Erpurini, 2021; Benzaghta et al., 2021; Cheng et al., 2021).

*Corresponding author. E-mail: lidija.kraujaliene@mruni.eu

Due to the lack of research papers on individualized public sector organizations brand positioning strategies sectorial brands, this research stands out for its relevance and novelty. The research was carried out not only in the aspect of the positioning strategy of the new public brand in Kaunas, but also in the aspect of competitiveness. Thus, the novelty and originality of this article is associated with an individualized study (case study) analyzing a new public brand in Kaunas, not only in terms of brand positioning strategy, but also in assessing competitiveness.

The paper is structured in the following way: the study develops from the introduction, the first part provides the literature review, the second part outlines research methodology, the third part presents the empirical results and discussion, and the paper ends with main conclusions and references.

1. Literature review

In recent decades, one of the most important phenomena in organizations has been the growing importance of brands (own, private, public, store, other brands) due to many factors, including the entry of new brands to the markets, changes in existing business models and the transformation of brands in the supply chain (Witek-Hajduk & Grudecka, 2018; Zavattaro et al., 2021; Florek et al., 2021). The current research focuses on the public brand.

The term “brand” is derived from the old Norwegian word “brandr”, which means “burn”, and was used as a representative symbol over fire to distinguish one cattle from another through a brand. And in classic Rome, pots marked vases, associating them with the quality of the item. A brand is a kind of “name” with the purpose to identify a product of a seller or group of sellers, to distinguish it from competing products (Espinoza et al., 2019). The description of the term of the brand is set out in the 1994 British Trade Marks and Designs Act. This is an act stating that the brand is a figurative graphically represented mark capable of distinguishing the same type of product from similar goods of other manufacturers (Davies, 1994).

Marketing is the result of management outcome of the image and reputation of every organization. Therefore, the brand as one of the elements of marketing is one of the success factors of competitiveness. It has been studied by a number of authors. Some authors have analyzed in-store brands based on product cost and shelf place availability, or private brands in general (Duan et al., 2018; Wu et al., 2021; Qasemzada, 2021; Gil-Cordero et al., 2021). Other authors have analyzed the impact of income and wealth on the demand for private labels (the empirical analysis was based on a household-level transactions database matching with price data from store-level information and wealth data used on local house value indexes) (Dube et al., 2018). De Vries et al. (2019) have also analyzed private food brands comparing buying impulsivity on a local and global level. In general, many authors have analysed

how to create a brand (Keller, 2014; Geyskens et al., 2018; Jonsen et al., 2021; Zavattaro et al., 2021; Grundey, 2002). Ex., Keller (2014) analyzed a brand architecture strategy of a company determining which elements of brand a company should apply for new or existing products and services to rise the value of a brand. Geyskens et al. (2018) have also analyzed private labels which have become more important for retailers. The authors concluded when brand strategy should be used. They also considered the relation of the environment where the brand is operating and characteristics of the retailer. Jonsen et al. (2021) research was oriented to employer branding. However, there is a clear lack of research analyzing public brands. Zavattaro et al. (2021) in general analysed the marketing paths to develop public brand in theoretical and practical ways. Grundey (2002) has analyzed aspects of brands and formation of branding strategy on the level of private branding. The public brands are analyzed in more rear cases. One example is the publication of Li et al. (2021), where authors investigate China's nation branding and look for interaction between pro-government stakeholders and citizens; Mariutti and Giraldi (2021) research paper analyzed brand equity for places (e. g. countries, regions, or cities)). While, Hommerova et al. (2020) analyzed the awareness and popularity of the library brand in the Czech Republic. The importance of brand positioning strategies is being explored by a number of authors (Keller, 2014; Dahle, 2021; Witek-Hajduk & Grudecka, 2018; Didkovska & Falko, 2020; Chukurna & Nikolaiev, 2021; Tanwar & Kumar, 2019), including the gender diversity aspect (Rzemieniak & Wawer, 2021; Larsen et al., 2021; Banet-Weiser, 2021).

Globally, public brands have a major impact on diplomacy phenomenon, export, public policy, economic investment, immigration, and tourism. Worldwide, public management communication is shifting from providing information to developing a public strategy in which marketing and branding play an important role. This has a direct impact on the public governance, creating effective and efficient prospects for government communication, as well as opening the door to brand and marketing development methods to manipulate society. Branding tries to focus on how in public places (cities, countries, etc.), people and government organizations want to create an identity in order to create a positive public image. This creates a certain emotional connection for customers. In the public sector, branding is a strategic control consisting of elements of communication about a particular place, organization, policy, and other. Regarding the above mentioned, we see that a brand helps to manage the image and reputation of the organisation in the market (Bakanauskas, 2012). Zavattaro et al. (2021) study highlights that an analysis of more than 100 research papers has shown that brands are used to drive an organization's reputation, when a strong organisation's reputation can affect a variety of outcomes and results. On the other hand, the authors emphasize a lack of individualized reputation surveys with the goal to understand how various audiences of the target

customer groups perceive the reputation of the organization. Thus, this fact is opening up the need for public brand research (Zavattaro et al., 2021). The brand of an organization provides added value – an image that the consumer believes in, which has a significant impact on the volume of customer consumption: the stronger brand, the more likely the new brand will be seen in the market for the reason that the buyer tends to use a known product (this reduces time for the customer). The main sources of brand values include: consumer experience, associations with a particular consumer, belief in the effectiveness of the product, brand appearance, name and reputation of the brand (Grundey, 2002).

This research is carried out in order to analyze the user portrait of KDPL, as well as to identify the relationship between the new brand and the consumer, and to provide insights on the development of the brand and consumer relationship, taking into account international good practice and competitiveness aspect, and tailor it to a specific market – Lithuania, Kaunas city (Gao et al., 2018).

The positioning aspect is one of the cornerstones of brand development and management. In marketing, positioning refers to the process of trying to create an image or identity for a particular brand or organization in the minds of a target consumer market through internal associations. Positioning is based on the uniqueness and exclusivity of the certain brand. Positioning is a relative competitive comparison of how the target market perceives a brand. In other words, the positioning defines what place a product or service occupies in customers' minds and how it differs from competitors via comparing particular brand with others. Positioning is what a customer believes in relation to the brand: value, features, and benefits and advantages. These beliefs are usually based on customer experience and evidence rather than the awareness created by advertising or commercials. Marketing specialists manage brand positioning through a positioning strategy. Pricing, advertising, distribution channels are designed to maximize chosen positioning strategy, which needs to be constantly modified as it is an ongoing process. Brand positioning is essential for competitive advantage (Agarwal et al., 2021; Ismail, 2021; Grundey, 2002; Baležentis & Žalimaitė, 2011).

Fayvishenko (2018) has found, that the main principles to form a successful strategy for the development and positioning of a brand are: the main sense is that a positioning of a brand is a process to create unique image, distinctive properties, great associations and values in minds of clients with the goal to bind them to concrete trademark. The main nine stages to form organization's positioning strategy include: 1) deep analysis of the internal and external environment, analysis of services; 2) the design of the brand; 3) identification of the main features of positioning, highlighting the reasons of these features; 4) choosing the positioning method and designing a strategy; 5) defining tactical and strategic targets to reach them; 6) designing positioning strategy plan; 7) the implementation of estimated strategy; 8) evaluation of results and control of the strategy's implementation; 9) implementation of remedial actions. Marketing positioning provides an opportunity for the promotion of various brands, an expansion of the market share, and increase of sales. The implementation of the positioning strategy and qualitative actions become the guarantee to reach the brand success in the market. The brand positioning can not only solve a marketing task, but also an economic and even a social issue for the organization.

The six steps of the brand positioning process are presented in Figure 1. Why is the brand positioning important? Without a clear and robust positioning strategy, a lot of time and organization money is wasted away. If we cannot articulate the position clearly and if it does not have a real, meaningful, exceptional value for the market and the organization itself, this deviates from the goal and reduces the likelihood of the organization success. Developing and following an appropriate and successful positioning strategy is probably one of the most difficult fundamentals of good marketing. It determines not only marketing, but also the prediction of where we choose to go, where to invest in, what is important and what is not. Meanwhile, the positioning relocation strategy involves changing the identity of the brand compared to the identity of competing brands in the collective mindset of the target market (consumer group). The need to change the brand is arising when the market is changing, that means changing of company's competitors (Agarwal et al., 2021).

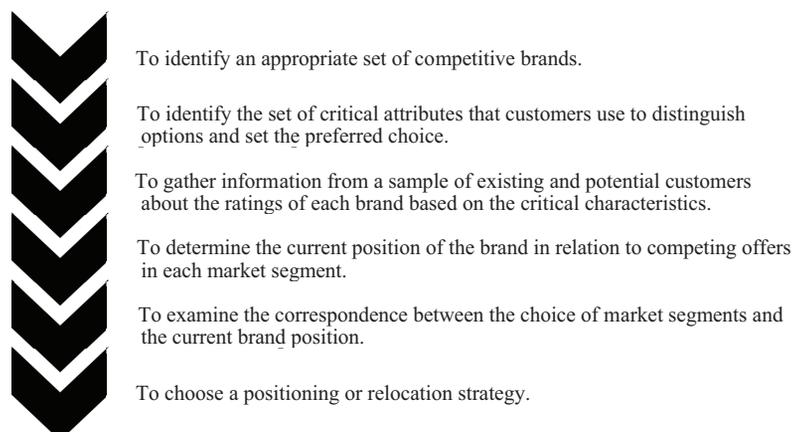


Figure 1. Stages of the brand positioning process (adapted by the authors according to Agarwal et al., 2021)

The aspect of competitiveness plays an important role in formation of the brand positioning strategy. The benefits of marketing can be achieved by increasing the competitiveness of the brand (Shahbaz et al., 2021; Pashkova, 2020; Zufarova, 2020; Klapkiv et al., 2020). Competitiveness and brand research needs to be focused on a consumer perception. Therefore, the SWOT analysis model is widely used to assess competitiveness, and the findings of the investigation can be used to provide brand improvement measures and tools (Erpurini, 2021; Benzaghta et al., 2021; Cheng et al., 2021).

The culture of a country population can determine which consumers have the greatest impact on valuation of an organization's brand. This helps to form an appropriate opinion to a certain brand. It should be noted that consumers in developing countries have specific expectations regarding the quality of services provided, and these expectations may differ due to cultural aspects (differences). In other research studies, it may be advisable to analyze the cultural aspect of a particular brand (Diallo & Seck, 2018).

Before conducting the research, first of all, you need to form a sample and determine how many respondents need to be interviewed. During the survey, the sample size is determined when the population is not large and the researcher can carry out a comprehensive selection – then the sample size will be equal to the number of elements in the population. Representative size of a sample is formed based on probability method and calculated by formulas (Gaižauskaitė & Mikėnė, 2014).

In sampling, there is always some variation between the sample data and population parameters, which is called sampling error, in other words, when selecting a sample from the population, a certain error or inaccuracy occurs. Confidence level is also related with accuracy. The level of confidence in sociological research varies from 64 percent up to 99 percent. A confidence level of 95% is usually used as a compromise between tolerable reliability and optimal sample size. The homogeneity of the population is also important. If the distribution is 50 / 50 percent, it means a heterogeneous population and it represents maximum variation. Researchers usually do not have prior data on the possible distribution of responses, then the maximum expected distribution of results – 50 / 50 percent is entered into the calculations (Gaižauskaitė & Mikėnė, 2014).

In the sampling based on probability, the sample size is like a compromise between the researcher's available resources, the desired level of precision and confidence, considering the expected heterogeneity of the sample and the size of the population. Typically, the sample volume is calculated using the following formula when the population for the research is finite (small) (Gaižauskaitė & Mikėnė, 2014):

$$n = \frac{t^2 N p(1-p)}{\Delta^2 N + t^2 p(1-p)}, \quad (1)$$

where: n – sample volume; N – population size; t – Student's coefficient, expressing the level of confidence; p – expected distribution (i.e. what proportion chose one or another answer); Δ is the error. If we do not know the value of p , we assume that $p = 0.5$. Then $p(1-p)$ takes on a maximum value, and the sample will surely be sufficient. Summarizing the theoretical analysis, it can be stated that the brand is one of the success factors of competitiveness. Among the different sector brands, it has become clear that researchers pay the least attention to public sector brands' research. These brands have effective and efficient communication prospects for consumers to create an image or identity of the organization, which has a significant impact on the volume of consumption.

2. Research methodology

Research papers mentioned in the literature review cover the methodologies which integrate interviewing national or international participants (surveys involving a number of respondents, taking into account research object's target segments), analysis of literature review (descriptive and content analysis), quantitative research (ex. one database matching with another and with wealth data), and methodologies which apply such principles as induction, comparative analysis, gnoseological interpretation and analysis (analytical, comparison, logical, synthesis), logical definition and theory construction – deductive method.

The method of quantitative research was chosen to achieve the aim of the current study. The object of the research is KDPL.

The research issue focuses on unclear portrait of KDPL user and positioning strategy in the aspect of competitiveness.

Objectives of the research:

1. To perform the analysis of the KDPL flow of visitor's user portrait in the period of 2018–2020, and determine the activity of library visitors by gender;
2. To determine the activity of library visitors in general, and according to user groups and to evaluate the tendencies (positive or negative) of attendance;
3. To analyze library user change by age;
4. To compile a SWOT analysis model of KDPL and to evaluate the competitiveness of the library new brand positioning strategy in Kaunas city.

Research methods. The analysis of scientific literature and descriptive analysis of statistical data are used (Petrelli, 2021; Campion & Campion, 2021) to process research data and describe the phenomenon being analyzed. A structured study is used to perform a quantitative research. A SWOT analysis model has been chosen to assess brand competitiveness aspect (Erpurini, 2021; Benzaghta et al., 2021; Cheng et al., 2021), compiled through a survey of the organization customers. The questionnaire for library employees was designed based on the literature analysis (based on the research papers provided in the literature review) to answer to the questions about familiarity of KDPL brand, its positioning strategy, and competitiveness

environment to prepare information for SWOT analysis. For the research and analysis the authors also referred to available materials (documents, website) and the perception of the use of the library communication tools, brand perception, and the existing key segments.

3. Empirical results and discussion

In Figure 2 below. The first part of the research was performed to identify the main groups, their part visiting the library in the period of three years to evaluate tendencies. The results of the quantitative research evaluating the activity of the visitors of the KDPL are presented in the Figure 2. As can be seen from the Figure 2, in the year of 2018 the distribution of the most active users of KDPL was as follows: the most active was the group of learners, then followed employed and non-employed group of users, and finally the group of children of pre-school age was the least active.

Distribution of visitors of KDPL in 2019 was as follows: the most active users were learners (pupils and students), employed and non-employed persons, the least active visitor group was pre-school children.

The distribution of the visitors of KDPL in 2020 (see Figure 2) was as follows: the largest number of visitors consisted of learners, employed and non-employed persons, and the least number of visitors consisted of pre-school children (as in 2018 and 2019). See the distribution in percent of consumer groups in Figure 2. Thus, the number of employed visitors in 2020 was 39.1%, when the number of learners (45%) and pre-school children (1.8%) increased the most in 2018, and the number of unemployed persons increased the most in 2019 (13.8%).

Figure 2 represents the results of the analysis of quantitative individualized survey of visitors of the Kaunas District Public Library in the period of 2018–2020. Questionnaires were delivered to library visitors with a friendly invitation to participate in the survey, explanation and encouragement by e-mail or life (paper sheet). Answers were returned by mail or immediately after a visit to the library on the paper. The study found that library visitors are divided into five main groups: employed, learners, preschool, non-employed, and all other users. In the period of 2018–2020 the largest share of active users consisted of employed, learners and non-employed persons, and the smallest share consisted of pre-school children. An analysis of the data by individual group shows that although the number of employed visitors increased by about 16%, the activity of learners was decreasing with every year and decreased by about 13%. The global Covid-19 pandemic, which may have a significant increase in the number of users, had no effect on increasing the activity of non-employed visitors, and the activity remained virtually unchanged over a three-year period, as was the case with the activity of pre-school children or activity of all other groups.

Summarizing the results of the survey of the five consumer groups, it can be stated that the lack of a new brand

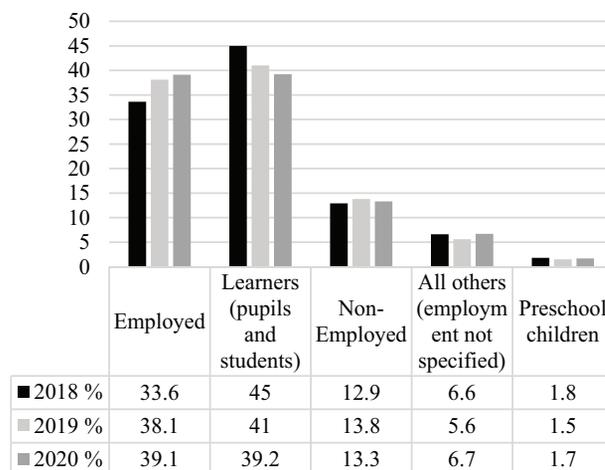


Figure 2. Activity of visitors of the Kaunas District Public Library and identified groups of users (2018–2020, %) (prepared by authors)

positioning strategy has shaped the results of the Kaunas District Public Library. In the period of 2018–2020, the attendance of four (out of five) consumer groups decreased or remained almost unchanged, and the activity of only one employed consumer group increased by 16%.

The groups of visitors were also analysed by gender. The number of users of the new library in 2018 consisted of 13 924 customers, when in 2019 – 13194, and in 2020 there were 10 782. Therefore, the total number of users dropped by about 23%. The results of the visitor analysis showed that in 2018–2020 the biggest part of visitors consisted of women (around 70%).

In this study, the confidence level is 95 percent, which ensures tolerable limit and optimal sample size. In the formulas, the reliability level is expressed by the size of the coefficient of student distribution tables (usually marked as *t*), where $t = 1.96$ when confidence is 95 percent. The surveys were implemented considering all ethics and GDPR requirements. The calculations of the sample volume by the 1st formula were prepared for 2018–2020 period: $n(2018) = 374$, $n(2019) = 374$, $n(2020) = 372$. Accuracy was set as 5 percent, so $\Delta = 0.05$ (the error), population *N* of the library visitors were: 2018 – 14 620, 2019 – 13 854, 2020 – 11 321. Due to the fact, that the answers to surveys were collected from more visitors that is was calculated (2018 – 13 924, 2019 – 13 194, 2020 – 10 782) we can state, that the research results are reliable.

For the quantitative research the following visitor groups by age were identified: 0–7; 8–14; 15–16; 17–19; 20–24; 25–29; 30–45; 46–55; 56–63; 64–69; 70–99. Hereinafter, the analysis of the new library visitors by age was performed in the period 2018–2020. The research showed that the youth audience has been declining: the group of age from 17 to 19 years old – decreased by about 31%; the group from 20 to 24 years old – by about 29%; the group from 25 to 29 years old – by about 20%. The number of children and adolescents under the age of 16 also decreased (from 0 to 7 years old – 11%; from 8 to 14 years old – by 14%; from 15 to 16 years old – by 16%). The

Table 1. SWOT analysis of the new brand positioning of the Kaunas District Public Library from the aspect of competitiveness (source: compiled by authors, 2021)

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>A versatile and relevant foundation in the city. Professional competencies of employees. Availability and quality of non-formal adult education services. Good location of the library. Basic services are provided free of charge. Partially managed and unique e-content: information resources and access to them.</p>	<p>Weak communication with the user. There is no gathered sustainable community. Unable to respond to consumer needs. No attracted new users in the region. There is no common concept and vision for communication. Communication is not tailored to individual target groups. Unattractive spaces - the library is not perceived as a leisure space or workplace. The physical environment is not adapted to the needs of modern consumers. Lack of funds to implement activities.</p>
Opportunities	Threats
<p>Review the values and set the steps for installing them. Purify the brand and position it. Formulate the KDPL slogan and communication message. Involve users in service and identity both creation activities. Develop a new portfolio of services. To enable users to offer / create services. Clearly define consumer segments. Monitor and respond to changes of consumer segments. Develop customer loyalty programs. Carry out a comprehensive study of the needs of library users and potential users (residents of the region who do not use library services). Identify new potential segments to attract them. To identify the potential of existing segments. Perform periodic analysis of competitors. View and evaluate the service package for individual segments. Customize services for individual segment groups. Activate customer-oriented communication.</p>	<p>There is only one publication in the library, one copy. Consumers find other ways to meet their information needs. Increased access to e-books lead to decrease of attractiveness of the physical fund. Trainings are relevant only for certain segments of visitors. Huge competitive environment. The consumers associate the library with free service which is not qualitative. There are such visitors as associates and homeless people. The library is losing appeal to some consumers. There are not enough parking spaces.</p>

number of visitors in the middle-aged (employed) group also decreased: from 30 to 45 years old – by 10%; from 46 to 55 years old – by 15%; from 56 to 63 years old – by 15%. The results of the seniority visitor group has shown that the number of visitors aged between 64 to 69 dropped by 20%, and the number of visitors aged between 70 to 99 years old – by 18%.

During the analysis period, on average, young persons aged 15 to 29 make a part of 40% of all visitors, children and adolescents (under 14 years old) make a part of 14%, and middle-aged persons (30 to 63 years old) make around 37% part of all visitors (the biggest part of this group consists of the visitors aged 30–45 year old, making the part of 24%), and seniority visitors make 9%.

The brand is situated between the product and promotion. An extended SWOT analysis (the second part of the research) has been performed to evaluate the competitiveness aspect of the new brand of Kaunas library, the results of which can be seen in the Table 1. The SWOT analysis model was developed together with the Kaunas District Public Library staff (managers and administrative staff) internally, and a customer survey was conducted externally. On average, 190 employees were working in the KDPL during 3 years of the research. The questionnaire (individual structured interviews) for the 55% of employees-experts was designed and provided for members of the library management and working staff. The open questions were raised to clarify the library strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, perception of the use of the library communication tools, brand and branding strategy perception, key segments, competitive environment in the city. Questions: 1) Which communication tools with users are used? Are they efficient and do they reach the target audience? 2) Why did not the library attract new users? 3) How about the library environment, does it fulfil the user need and why? 4) What are the main strengths of the KDPL? 5) Describe the library branding strategy. 6) Key segments of the library. 7) Describe the competitive environment and the library in this context. 8) Which opportunities does the library have? 9) What are the main treats for the KDPL? Experts were chosen by these criteria: position (heads, managers, specialists), university degree, the experience of work at the KDPL at least 1.5 year. The data was aggregated and SWOT table was prepared.

Additionally, available materials (documents) and website information (attendance statistics) was used. SWOT model helps the organization to focus on strategic development directions, aids in the achievement of the intended goals, benefits in getting out how competitive the organization is, and what the key advantages and disadvantages are.

The positioning of the new brand of the KDPL in terms of competitiveness was analysed in Table 1. From the SWOT analysis we can see that although the library has a diverse and relevant source fund in the city and has the good location, a weak relationship with the user is identified. The user needs are not responded properly, the library

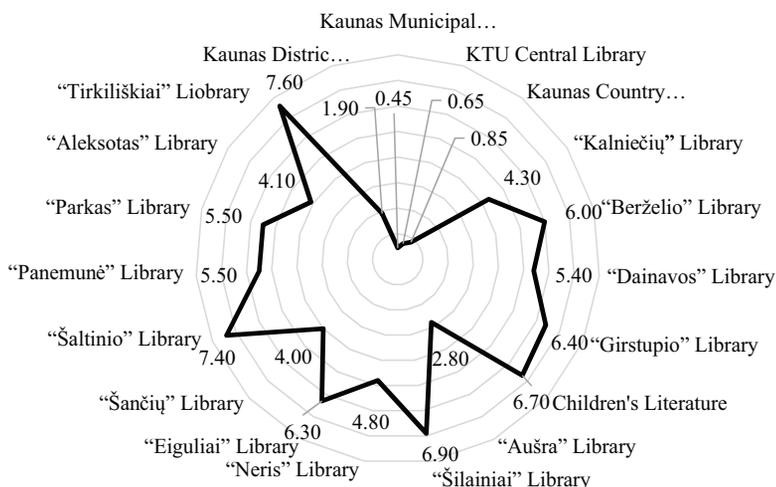


Figure 3. The distance of KDPL in Kaunas city to the centre of Kaunas (km) in the context of other major libraries (prepared by authors)

is almost unattractive, there is no common communication concept and vision, communication is not suitable for separate target groups, and additionally, Kaunas has a huge competitive environment in the library sector.

Thus, it can be stated that the new Kaunas District Public Library does not have its own positioning strategy, the new brand is not fully refined, appropriate means of communication are not formed, and users are not involved in the general activities of forming library services and identifying individualizing needs. SWOT analysis has revealed that the library is not competitive and is inferior to other libraries in Kaunas. Therefore, it is recommended to perform consumer analysis, provide a new brand positioning strategy (goal, tools and action plan), distinguish the library identity, and the main communication message to consumer target groups. The need has been identified to crystallize the main free and commercial services of the library, to provide monitoring of service provision and continuous improvement in ensuring the quality of services to the user.

The Figure 3 was designed to show the KDPL and its local position in the context of other major Libraries in Kaunas city. On the top of the picture we see Kaunas District Public Library distance from the city centre (1.9 km), so this distance is bigger than that of other Libraries in the Kaunas city centre including Kaunas Municipal Vincas Kudirka Public Library (0.45 km), KTU Central Library (0.65 km), or Kaunas Country Public Library (0.85 km). Therefore, it is quite difficult to compete with at least three Libraries which are located in a more convenient places for the citizens of the Kaunas city. Other Libraries are located farther from the city centre but still are in the area of public view and, thus act as competitors. However, KDPL is in quite good location area, not far from the city centre and this means that the library has the potential to grow up in the public view. This conclusion and the results of the first and the second part of the research will contribute information to form future positioning strategy for the KDPL and develop its competitiveness.

Conclusions

The literature analysis highlighted the lack of research on individualized brand positioning strategies of public sector organizations. Previous research papers mostly analysed groups of private brands. Most of the previous research was performed on brand positioning with the focus on specific groups of brands. However, there is a lack of individualized positioning research. Therefore, the analysis of the visitor portrait of Kaunas District Public Library as the original new public brand in Kaunas city has been performed. The user portrait was identified, it consisted 5 main groups of library visitors: employed, learners (pupils and students), pre-school children, unemployed and all others. Assessing the distribution of the library users by gender, the research findings showed that it did not change as the library visitor profile consisted and still consists of about 70% of women.

The analysis revealed that the lack of a new brand positioning strategy led to the results that Kaunas District Public Library has been losing visitors quite rapidly and the attendance trends are negative. The total number of visitors decreased by 23%; even four user groups dropped or remained virtually unchanged, and the activity of the only one employed user group increased by 16%.

Analysing the change of library users by age, it can be stated that the number of users in all age groups has been decreasing. The decrease is the highest in the group of youth (up to 31%), in the decent age group (up to 20%), in the middle age (employed) group – up to 15%, and in the children and adolescents group – up to 16%. Meanwhile, young people (aged 15 to 29) make a part of 40% within all visitors, children and adolescents (under 14 years old) – 14%, and middle-aged people (aged 30 to 63 years old) – 37% (the biggest part consists from the visitors aged 30–45 years old and count even 24%), when old aged consumers form 9% of the library visitors.

After conducting a survey of internal users (employees, managers) and external customers, and after the

analysis of SWOT model, it became clear that the new public brand of Kaunas District Public Library is inferior to other Kaunas libraries in terms of its competitiveness. The lack of a brand positioning strategy has led to a low level of competitiveness, as well as the inefficient performance of activities, which has resulted in a decrease of the number of visitors and the inability to attract new users and to inspire interest in library services.

The research limitations. The information collected in the study and the opinion of the library respondents provided during this research reflects only the situation of the Kaunas District Public Library. In case of the economic and demographic situation change, the results of the research may change due to other external factors. The findings are not applicable to other libraries in other districts. However, the methodology presented in this paper is recommended to implement for other public brand analysis in terms of competitiveness.

For the further research it would be useful to conduct qualitative study of library users to get deeper to user needs and expectations, to offer new services. This would lead to the improvement of the library position and strengthen the brand of the library, to get it more visible within other competitors in the city of Kaunas. For the future study it would be useful to conduct the research to compare the library with other players and their services, users, strength of brands, positioning strategies, vision, and goals. The design of the positioning map would be also a suggestion for the future research. It could show what people think of different services of the libraries (brands) in relation to each other.

References

- Agarwal, P. K., Kumar, M. P., & Gupta, M. S. (2021). *Right brand positioning: A road to success at market place*. ResearchGate. https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Pk-Agarwal-2/publication/344099819_RIGHT_BRAND_POSITIONING_A_ROAD_TO_SUCCESS_AT_MARKET_PLACE/links/60b4b59a299bf1f6d588b16c/RIGHT-BRAND-POSITIONING-A-ROAD-TO-SUCCESS-AT-MARKET-PLACE.pdf
- Bakanauskas, A. P. (2012). *Integratosios marketingo komunikacijos: mokomoji knyga*. Vytauto Didžiojo universiteto leidykla. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12259/201>
- Banet-Weiser, S. (2021). Gender, social media, and the labor of authenticity. *American Quarterly*, 73(1), 141–144. <https://doi.org/10.1353/aq.2021.0008>
- Baležentis, A., & Žalimaitė, M. (2011). Ekspertinių vertinimų taikymas inovacijų plėtros veiksnių analizėje: Lietuvos inovatyvių įmonių vertinimas. *Vadybos mokslas ir studijos – kaimo verslų ir jų infrastruktūros plėtrai*, (3), 23–31.
- Benzaghta, M. A., Elwalda, A., Mousa, M. M., Erkan, I., & Rahman, M. (2021). SWOT analysis applications: An integrative literature review. *Journal of Global Business Insights*, 6(1), 54–72. <https://doi.org/10.5038/2640-6489.6.1.1148>
- Campion, E. D., & Champion, M. A. (2021). Descriptive statistics and advanced text analytics: A dual extension. *Industrial and Organizational Psychology*, 14(4), 489–492. <https://doi.org/10.1017/iop.2021.112>
- Cheng, L. C., Chen, K., Lee, M. C., & Li, K. M. (2021). User-Defined SWOT analysis – A change mining perspective on user-generated content. *Information Processing & Management*, 58(5), 102613. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ipm.2021.102613>
- Chukurna, O., & Nikolaiev, D. (2021). Marketing strategy of territorial branding in the context of sustainable development. *VUZF Review*, 6(1), 65–78. <https://doi.org/10.38188/2534-9228.21.6.07>
- Dahle, D. Y. (2021). Brand on the run? Marketization, market position, and branding in upper secondary schools. In *Public branding and marketing* (pp. 175–195). Springer. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-70505-3>
- Davies, I. (1994). Legal update: Review of the trade marks act 1994. *Journal of Brand Management*, 2(2), 125–132. <https://doi.org/10.1057/bm.1994.41>
- De Vries, E. L., & Fennis, B. M. (2019). Go local or go global: How local brands promote buying impulsivity. *International Marketing Review*, 37(1), 1–28. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IMR-10-2018-0292>
- Diallo, M. F., & Seck, A. M. (2018). How store service quality affects attitude toward store brands in emerging countries: Effects of brand cues and the cultural context. *Journal of Business Research*, 86, 311–320. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2017.08.017>
- Didkovska, V., & Falko, Y. (2020). Successful territorial brand formation (on the example of Singapore). *VUZF Review*, 5(4), 3–8. <https://doi.org/10.38188/2534-9228.20.4.01>
- Dube, J. P., Hitsch, G. J., & Rossi, P. E. (2018). Income and wealth effects on private-label demand: Evidence from the great recession. *Marketing Science*, 37(1), 22–53. <https://doi.org/10.1287/mksc.2017.1047>
- Duan, Y., Mao, Z., & Huo, J. (2018). Introduction of store brands considering product cost and shelf space opportunity cost. *Mathematical Problems in Engineering*, 2018. <https://doi.org/10.1155/2018/2324043>
- Espinoza, A. D. D. P., & de la Torre, F. R. V. (2019). Contribution of sectorial brands to the competitiveness of the regions and the emerging brands. *Marketing and Branding Research*, 6(1), 1. <https://doi.org/10.33844/mbr.2019.60321>
- Erpurini, W. (2021). SWOT analysis as a strategy to improve competitiveness in PT Trans Antar Nusabird (Cititrans Travel). *Jurnal Mantik*, 4(4), 2416–2426.
- Fayvishenko, D. (2018). Formation of brand positioning strategy. *Baltic Journal of Economic Studies*, 4(2), 245–248. <https://doi.org/10.30525/2256-0742/2018-4-2-245-248>
- Florek, M., Hereźniak, M., & Augustyn, A. (2021). Measuring the effectiveness of city brand strategy. In search for a universal evaluative framework. *Cities*, 110, 103079. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2020.103079>
- Gaižauskaitė, I., & Mikėnė, S. (2014). *Socialinių tyrimų metodai: apklausa*. Mykolo Romerio universitetas. <https://repository.mruni.eu/bitstream/handle/007/16910/9789955196426.pdf?sequence>
- Gao, H., Tate, M., Zhang, H., Chen, S., & Liang, B. (2018). Social media ties strategy in international branding: An application of resource-based theory. *Journal of International Marketing*, 26(3), 45–69. <https://doi.org/10.1509/jim.17.0014>
- Geyskens, I., Keller, K. O., Dekimpe, M. G., & de Jong, K. (2018). How to brand your private labels. *Business Horizons*, 61(3), 487–496. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2018.01.015>
- Gil-Cordero, E., Rondan-Cataluña, F. J., & Rey-Moreno, M. (2021). Premium private label strategies: Social networks and traditional perspectives. *Journal of Innovation & Knowledge*, 6(2), 78–91. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jik.2020.06.003>

- Grundey, D. (2002). Prekės ženklų formavimas ir prekės identifikavimas: strategijų parinkimas ir vertinimas. *Ekonomika*, 57, 30–52. <https://doi.org/10.15388/Ekon.2002.16972>
- Hommerova, D., Šredl, K., & Dbala, K. (2020). Analysis of the awareness and popularity of the brand of a selected education and research library in the Czech Republic: A case study. *Information*, 11(8), 373. <https://doi.org/10.3390/info11080373>
- Ismail, M. (2021). Influence of positioning strategy and relationship marketing towards brand imaging. *International Journal of Applied Management Theory and Research (IJAMTR)*, 3(1), 32–52. <https://doi.org/10.4018/IJAMTR.2021010103>
- Jonsen, K., Point, S., Kelan, E. K., & Griebel, A. (2021). Diversity and inclusion branding: A five-country comparison of corporate websites. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 32(3), 616–649. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2018.1496125>
- Keller, K. L. (2014). Designing and implementing brand architecture strategies. *Journal of Brand Management*, 21(9), 702–715. <https://doi.org/10.1057/bm.2014.38>
- Klapkiv, Y., Vovk, V., & Klapkiv, L. (2020). Comparative analysis of the health care institutions' competitiveness level. *Montenegrin Journal of Economics*, 16(3), 69–82. <https://doi.org/10.14254/1800-5845/2020.16-3.6>
- Larsen, E., Moss, S. M., & Skjelsbæk, I. (2021). *Gender equality and nation branding in the Nordic region*. Taylor & Francis. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003017134>
- Li, X. L., & Feng, J. (2021). Empowerment or disempowerment: Exploring stakeholder engagement in nation branding through a mixed method approach to social network analysis. *Public Relations Review*, 47(3), 102024. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2021.102024>
- Mariutti, F. G., & Giraldi, J. D. M. E. (2021). Branding cities, regions and countries: The roadmap of place brand equity. *RAUSP Management Journal*, 56(2), 202–216. <https://doi.org/10.1108/RAUSP-06-2020-0131>
- Pashkova, H. (2020). Municipal branding as an innovate instrument of increasing the competitiveness of the city. *Public Administration and Local Government*, 46(3), 168–176.
- Petrelli, M. (2021). Descriptive statistics 1: Univariate analysis. In *Introduction to Python in earth science data analysis* (pp. 67–82). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-78055-5_5
- Qasemzada, I. (2021). Ways to increase the competitiveness of service enterprises based on marketing strategies. *International Journal of Business, Management and Accounting*, 1(2). <https://www.ejournals.id/index.php/IJBMA/article/view/188/174>
- Rzemieniak, M., & Wawer, M. (2021). Employer branding in the context of the company's sustainable development strategy from the perspective of gender diversity of generation Z. *Sustainability*, 13(2), 828. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13020828>
- Shahbaz, M. S., Javaid, M., Kazmi, S. H. A., & Abbas, Q. (2021). Marketing advantages and sustainable competitiveness through branding for the supply chain of Islamic country. *Journal of Islamic Marketing*, 13(7). <https://doi.org/10.1108/JIMA-04-2020-0094>
- Tanwar, K., & Kumar, A. (2019). Employer brand, person-organisation fit and employer of choice: Investigating the moderating effect of social media. *Personnel Review*, 48(3). <https://doi.org/10.1108/PR-10-2017-0299>
- Witek-Hajduk, M. K., & Grudecka, A. (2018). Positioning strategies of retailers' brands in the emerging market – a cluster analysis. *International Journal of Emerging Markets*, 13(5). <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJoEM-06-2017-0224>
- Wu, L., Yang, W., & Wu, J. (2021). Private label management: A literature review. *Journal of Business Research*, 125, 368–384. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2020.12.032>
- Zavattaro, S. M., Marland, A., & Eshuis, J. (2021). Public Branding and marketing: Theoretical and practical developments. *Public Administration Review*, 81(4). <https://doi.org/10.1111/puar.13372>
- Zufarova, N. (2020). Influence of internalization to the competitiveness of higher education in The Republic of Uzbekistan. *Asian Journal of Technology & Management Research*, 10(01). http://www.ajtmr.com/papers/Vol10Issue1/Vol10Iss1_P19.pdf