

MARKA – SKŁADOWA WIZERUNKU FIRMY SZKOLENIOWEJ NA POLSKIM RYNKU

BRAND – A COMPONENT OF A TRAINING ORGANIZATION ON THE POLISH MARKET

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Streszczenie

Artykuł porusza kwestie kreowania marki firm szkoleniowych. Rozważania rozpoczynają się od przeglądu i charakterystyki definicji pojęć – marka, wizerunek czy tożsamość. Zaprezentowana jest też charakterystyka rynku szkoleniowego w Polsce, jak również czynniki przekładające się na wizerunek firm szkoleniowych.

Słowa kluczowe: marka, rynek, klient

Abstract

The paper raises the issues of creating a brand name of training organizations. The considerations start with overview and characteristic definitions of the terms – brand, image or identity. The characteristics of the training market in Poland are also presented and the factors translated onto the image of training organizations.

Keywords: brand, market, customer

1 INTRODUCTION

Building a brand name and ability to manage is effectively have become one of the conditions of the strategic success of all the organizations, with particular consideration of training organizations. A strong brand name, with stabilized position is a value contributing to the consolidation and development of a company and to attain a beneficial market position.

The organization image itself is the brand name picture, its conception arising in people's minds upon reception and „decoding” of the signals transmitted by the organization through building its identity. The signals so received and encoded in the brand's identity are subject to individual interpretations resulting from human unique characteristics of perception and vision of the environment. It is essential that the training organization image complies with its identity.

A strong, consistent and homogeneous image is used by recognized organizations for building their reputation – the element that decides on their everyday success and provides them with competitive advantage over others. The advantage makes the services of such organizations more attractive to the buyers and, in consequence, their revenues are more stable. The reputation also has an immense influence on the organization's market position. Its shares are

bought and the cooperating partners agree to the terms given to them by such organization with more willingness. Thanks to the friendliness of the clients (environment) in a sector recession situation the organizations with appropriate reputation would cope with recession effects better than other entities. Thus, the paper is to present the said elements in a training organization management.

2 IMAGE AS AN ELEMENT OF A TRAINING ORGANIZATION VALUE

The image of an organization, especially an organization functioning in the training sector, is its picture among the people who meet it – clients, business partners, officials, employees, etc. In other words, it means what people think about an organization¹. The image significantly affects the facilitation of the organization's functioning on the market. The image is affected by the elements that make the organization conspicuous within the environment, make it distinct and easily identifiable.

Image is a complex notion. Image can be understood as pictures in our minds. Walter Lippmann used the definition in his book *Public Opinion* and, although it directly referred to the term „stereotype”, it has also become a familiar term in the studies on building image. However, the picture obtained as a result of observations is only a simplification and the picture we create is far from the quality of a modern digital camera, its definition is rather low².

Rozwadowska B. in her book *Public Relations Teoria Praktyka perspektywy* [Public Relations – Theory, Practice, Perspectives” specifies the following types of images:

1. Ordinary image – external perception of the organization, common opinions on the organization.
2. Mirror image – perception of organization by itself, both by the employees and management.
3. Desired image – an image the organization aims at, the way it wants to be perceived. Also called wishful or expected image. It is often created on the foundation of the organization concept, often idealistic and fairly difficult to perform.
4. Optimum image – an image that is possible to be performed, expresses viable targets and represents motivation for further actions³.

The most beneficial position in the activity of a training organization would be the formation of a “desired image” in the long run, while the “optimum image” is a target to perform within a short time interval.

The optimum image wins and attracts the public opinion towards the brand and the organization, removes anonymity between the service supplier and customer, facilitates the mutual communication or enhances the creation attitude towards the organization and its actions, as well as it impacts the sense of acceptance⁴.

The organization image formation is influenced by the offer, identity, price, reputation, attitude or style. Organizations, by means of various actions, permanently form their image.

¹ Budzyński W., *Public Relations zarządzanie reputacją firmy*, Wyd. Poltext, Warszawa 1998

² Musiałowska E., *Budowanie wizerunku poprzez wykorzystanie symbolu[w]: Kształtowanie wizerunku*, red. Beata Ociepka, Wyd. Wrocław 2005

³ Rozwadowska B., *Public Relations Teoria Praktyka Perspektywy*, Wyd. Studio EMKA, Warszawa 2002

⁴ Cenker E. M., *Public Relations, Wydawnictwo Wyższej Szkoły Bankowej w Poznaniu*, Poznań 2002

The most frequently used measures include: promotion, advertising campaign, public relations, special events and sponsoring actions. These are rather costly measures and not always effective, therefore additional, alternative and effective means of communication with the environment of a training organization are searched for, for example, appropriate organization name and the use of brands, graphic system influencing the vision of the trademark, letterhead prints, promotion materials, formal statements on the organization's mission, its ethical code, standards, values, advertising slogans, architecture of the corporate buildings, interior arrangement or behavior of the staff in daily contacts with the organization's partners⁵.

The corporate identity is the sum of elements that identify it, distinguishing it among other entrepreneurs. It is expressed in its unique nature in the visual form⁶. These are the elements that create Corporate identity – the overall identification of an organization, i.e. program to define standards and values, designing corporate symbols, standards of behaviors that create a defined conception of the organization, giving it a unique nature. The identification of an organization is just the presentation of details on the direction it tends towards, its identity and targets.

Corporate identity and image are based on the visualization, i.e. visual presentation composed of the organization name, brand, color range, branding proprietary corporate elements. All the elements affecting the organization image should be adapted to its specifics, nature of business, sector it functions in and they should impress the recipient as well. The elements form a consistent visual system affecting the organization image in its environment. The techniques used in creating a corporate identity are within the public relations set of techniques and are often defined as „visual contact techniques”⁷.

The researchers provide a number of solutions effective in designing the visual aspects of a training organization. They include simplicity and explicitness, rightness, i.e. adaptation to the organization's nature, originality and distinguishing in comparison to competitors, „eye-catching”⁸.

3 CORPORATE IMAGE VS. BRAND IMAGE

The brand notion is very complex and brand definition has not been unified by date. According to Ph. Kotler:

„Brand is a specific name, mark, symbol, model or combination of the above, given by the seller or a group of sellers to identify a product or service and distinguish them against the competitors' offer”⁹

H. Mruk and I. Rutkowski present brand as: „Name, notion or combination of both elements created to mark a product (or service) of a specific manufacturer and distinguish it from competitors' offer) however, brand may be composed of brand name (the verbal part of brand, expressed verbally) and from the brand sign (recognizable, but impossible to be expressed verbally part of brand, such as symbol, form of characters, characteristic color range – combination of colors, artwork).¹⁰,

⁵ Wojcik K., *Public relations od A do Z, tom 2*, Agencja Wydawnicza „Placet”, Warszawa 2001

⁶ Budzyński W., *Public Relations zarządzanie reputacją firmy*, Wyd. Poltext, Warszawa 1998

⁷ Budzyński W., *Public Relations zarządzanie reputacją firmy*, Wyd. Poltext, Warszawa 1998

⁸ Laszczak M., *Psychologia przekazu reklamowego*, Wydawnictwo Profesjonalnej Szkoły Biznesu, Kraków 1998

⁹ Kotler P., *Marketing. Analiza, planowanie, wdrażanie i kontrola*, Felberg SJA, Warszawa 1999

¹⁰ Internet, www.promarka.pl, dn. 25 luty 2011

J. Altkorn defines brand as: „Product that provides functional benefits plus value added appreciated by some consumers well enough to make a purchase”. The author emphasizes that in marketing the approach combining three meanings of brand in it (as mark of certain product range item, as a synonym of trademark in legal references and acts and as a mental leap with a clearly evaluating tone, meaning the market image of a product, is of fundamental importance.

According to J. Kall, we shall call „a brand”: „the combination of a physical product, brand name, package, advertising and accompanying actions in the scope of distribution and price, a combination that provides the consumer with distinct functional or symbolic benefits by distinguishing the combination offered by certain marketer against competitors’ offers, thus creating a loyal circle of buyers and at the same time enabling the brand to attain leading market position”¹¹.

Analyzing the above definitions one may conclude that brand as it is does not exist on the market, but in the consumers’ consciousness. The brand recipients link the symptoms in their consciousness into one picture. Such picture is individually identified by each recipient himself. This is the reason why it is difficult to create a set of criteria explicitly defining a brand and building a brand is complicated as well – it requires imagination, knowledge and power (power meaning having a good idea and vision on which a brand is based)¹².

Brand is frequently perceived as quality assurance or value added received by the client from the organization. The brand itself is formed by a set of six factors, namely:

1. a characteristic when brand is associated with product characteristics searched for by the clients, which is used by organizations as so-called merchant’s arguments in the promotion,
2. functional or emotional benefit arising from possessing a product,
3. value – because it informs on the values supplied by the manufacturer,
4. culture – representing a specific culture of organization or nation,
5. personality – suggesting specific associations with personal characteristics, people, animals or objects,
6. user - suggesting type of client buying and using a product, i.e. purchaser’s profile”¹³.

Brand sometimes is also treated as a picture or image. The scope of the term “image” in relation to an organization is understood in various ways:

1. sector image,
2. corporate image,
3. brand image¹⁴.

We can talk about the widest scope using the term „sector image”, meaning the total image of organizations and institutions functioning within one sector. Generally, the “corporate image” scope is more restricted, however, and limited to the image of a competitor or group of competitive organizations, with a holding structure, for example. The term “brand image” has the lowest reach – comprising a specific product or group of products. We should emphasize that in a situation when the organization’s name represents the brand, the scope of both terms

¹¹ Kall J., *Silna marka. Istota i kreowanie*, PWE, Warszawa 2001

¹² Urbanek G., *Zarządzanie marką*, PWE, Warszawa 2002

¹³ Kall J., *Silna marka. Istota i kreowanie*, PWE, Warszawa 2001

¹⁴ Ali M., *Marketing i public relations w malej firmie*, Helion, Gliwice 2005

can be similar, but never the same / identical.”¹⁵. Among marketing practitioners two separate terms function, defining the mutual relationships between the organization and brand image:

- integrated image,
- isolated image.

The integrated image occurs when an organization deliberately integrates its image with the brand image. The condition is the sales of products or services under the corporate name without marking them with a separate brand. The isolated image, in turn, appears in a situation when the company creates brands or brand for its products, taking up marketing actions directed to creating an image¹⁶.

Brand image, like corporate image, is a significant element of the process of selection of goods or services offered on the market. It is a complicated set of images and concepts existing in human consciousness, expressing information on the brand and principal attitudes towards it. Thus, the image of a specific brand is composed of both objective elements (information on the brand) and subjective (personal feelings of the buyer). The function of image understood in this way is the possibility to assume an attitude towards a brand without the necessity to analyze other product characteristics contained therein. Thus, the brand image contributes to more efficient decision making by the consumers¹⁷.

We may risk a statement that the corporate image – manufacturer of a specific product – is a component of the brand conception. The brand image includes, in addition to the conception of the product characteristics, but also the conception about the people who use it and the situations it is used in. From the client's point of view, the corporate image is one of the elements affecting the brand image and the buyer may frequently have to little information about the organization to have its complete image.

The brand identity remains in close relationship with its image (brand image) Unlike brand identity, however, that concerns brand perception in the long run, it is characterized with higher stability and is subject to long-term actions, brand image is determined by its perception by the recipient at a specific moment. This may lead to disturbances, because the method the clients perceive a brand (its image) may diverge from the conception designed by the brand authors (i.e. brand identity). The most frequent reasons for divergencies between the identity and expected image include: competitors' actions, own and other people's experiences of the environment, no communication consistency, etc. Thus, the image of an organization with specific identity may differ in the consciousness of specific consumer groups, such as: management boards, personnel, shareholders, banks, suppliers or clients¹⁸.

Both quantitative and qualitative testing methods are applied for discovering and creating brand image. The former are mainly used for determination of certain general principles of perception of various brands by the consumers, while the qualitative methods are mainly used for direct market needs, enabling to test the image of a specific brand.

4 THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE TRAINING MARKET IN POLAND

The training market in Poland is subject to continuous changes and it is in the development phase. In the late 1990's, after a period of fact growth, a stagnation followed (due to the

¹⁵ Budzyński W., *Public Relations zarządzanie reputacją firmy*, Wyd. Poltext, Warszawa 1998

¹⁶ Altkorn J., *Strategie marki w marketingu międzynarodowym*, AE, Kraków 1999

¹⁷ Filipek J., *Marka doskonała bez końca*, „Marketing w Praktyce”, nr 4/2004

¹⁸ De Chernatony L., *Marka. Wizja i tworzenie marki*, Gdańskie Wydawnictwo Psychologiczne, Gdańsk 2003

deteriorating economic situation). Only the organizations with a long-term training plans and funds for performance thereof did not restrict their offer on the market.

The demand on the market is strongly polarized. It is created both by large corporations and medium and small entities. The large organizations usually have funds assigned for training in their budgets. However, medium and small entities use training courses occasionally – usually in situations when certain issues occur . Such entities treat training as cost, instead of an investment.

There are various entities offering training services on the market. We can differentiate the following among them:

- private Polish entities,
- private Polish entities with know-how input from other countries,
- international networks,
- academic centers,
- public (state) training institutions,
- associations, foundations.

Ca. 2.500 training entities operate in Poland at present. Due to the lack of reports from training entities, we cannot precisely define the size of the training market in Poland. The number of employees at most of the training organizations on the Polish market is below 10 people, therefore they are not obliged to report their activity to the Chief Statistical Office (GUS).

In the Mazowieckie Province, among the active entities potentially providing training services, organizations employing up to 9 people represented as much as 97% of all the entities¹⁹. This is due to the fact that training organizations employ third-party trainers under a specific job contract.

In 2001, according to the training demand survey, the size of the training market was estimated as USD 180 mio (the survey was carried out at more than 600 organizations and over 1000 people responded to it²⁰).

The value of the training market estimated by Polish Chamber of Training Organizations in 2009 amounted to PLN 2 billion²¹.

The training organizations have had the opportunity to use the European Social Fund financing for a few years now – the possibilities have changes a lot in the training sector. It significantly affected the change of approach towards improving vocational competence, both in the employers and employees. Thanks to the European Fund co-funding, numerous entities have compensated the overdue aspects of their employee training.

40% organizations attended training courses co-funded from the European Social Fund, which in average is 35% of the training budget planned²².

¹⁹ Budzyński I., *Podstawowe aspekty działalności instytucji szkoleniowych w „Rynek pracy”*, Ministerstwo Gospodarki, Pracy i Polityki Społecznej, grudzień 2003.

²⁰ Continuous Vocational Training Survey (CVTS2), PBS for the Ministry of Economy, Labor and Social Policy, November 2003

²¹ „Rynek Szkoleń 2000 POPYT”, „Rynek Szkoleń 2001 POPYT”; Instytut Zarządzania 2001, 2002

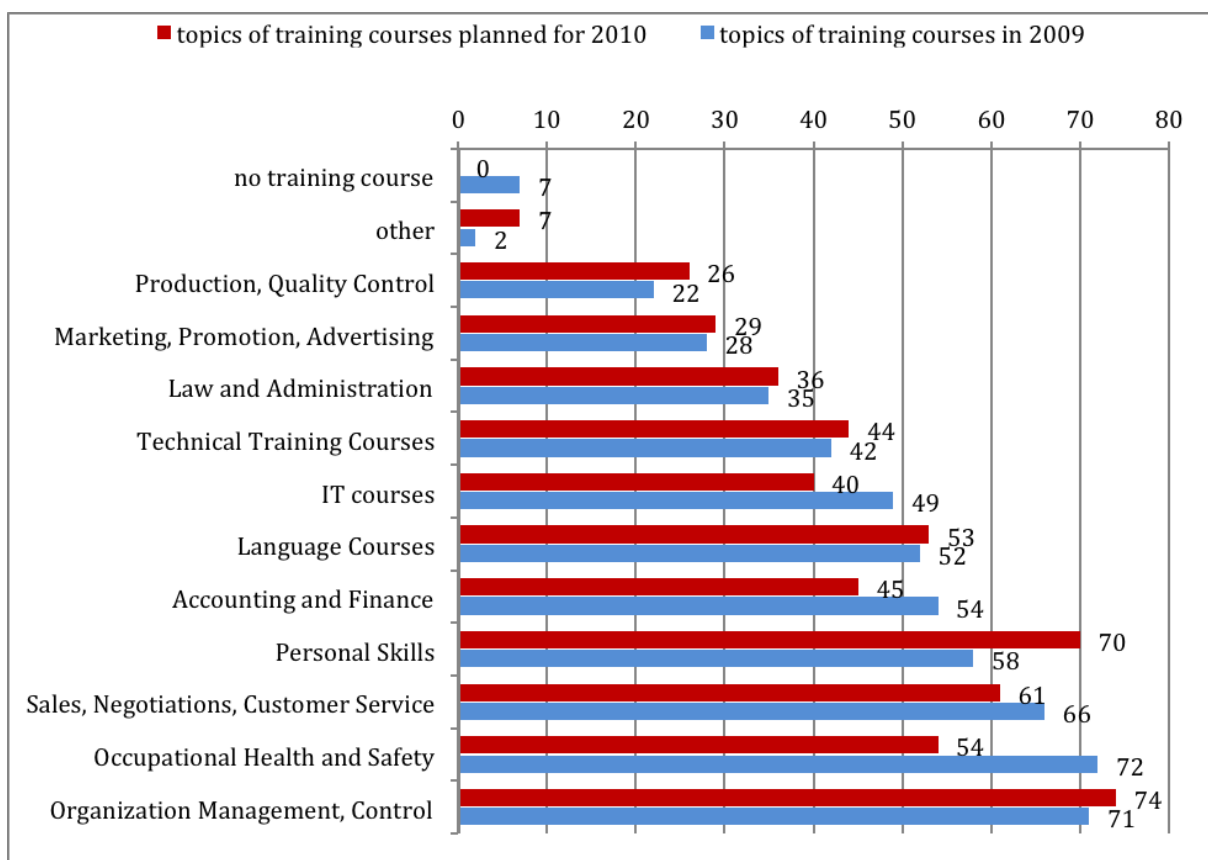
²² Magazyn *Nowoczesna firma*, październik 2010, str. 1

Entities largely use training courses that cover the demand for specialists in a specific area. The largest demand for training is the organization management and control field. Right after that, the companies use training services in the scope of Occupational Health and Safety. Further, entities demand sales, negotiation, finance, banking and languages.

The survey results show that soft training, concerning leadership or customer service aspects dominate among the topics. The topics concerning finance, sales have a great share too.

Analyzing the subject structure, the entity size needs to be considered. Smaller enterprises devote more time to training courses in the field of accounting, finance. One of the reasons is the general cost of training courses – smaller entities incur higher unit costs of training than large ones. Due to the fact that basic training courses (in the scope of technical aspects of production and service provision) are necessary for the correct use of operating measures, small entities spend more time at training courses and incur higher costs.

Diagram 1. Topics of training courses in 2009 and 2010 (%)



Source: "Modern Organization" Magazine, October, 2010, page 8

5 TRAINING FORMS AND METHODS ON THE POLISH MARKET

Among the basic training forms on the Polish market we distinguish the division into:

- external – training courses conducted by a third-party trainer, not employed by the specific organization. The course may take place on the Customer's premises or in the training organization's facility or other place assigned for this purpose.
- internal – training conducted by one of the employees for other people employed by the organization. The course may take place on the entity's premises or other place assigned for this purpose.

Another division of the training companies comprises:

- open training – most frequently organized on the premises rented for this purpose for a large number of attendees. Anybody who paid the fee required may attend the course. The subject matter of the training courses concerns the areas some individuals from various entities are interested in, not whole groups. In case of the training entities organizing such training courses, it is frequently risky. First the training entity must prepare the training course, promote it on the market and finally it either gains profit or bears loss related to the performance (depending on the interest in the training course subject).
- closed training – organized for a specific company, selected group of attendees. In case of closed training, the training entity pays for “temporary rental” of a trainer for the organization wishing to have the course conducted for its employees. Closed training courses mean that the risk of insufficient interest of the market does not exist in this case. The courses also enable the reduction of unit employee training costs.
- correspondence training – are prepared by a third-party organization. The form of such training course can be distributed to any distance and does not require the presence of a trainer during the course. All the people interested may use this training form in any place or time. The knowledge acquired after the course is examined by means of tests sent to a verifier, the trainee also makes a self-assessment.
- studies – this form of training comprises university, post-graduation, doctoral studies as well as MBA. This is a specific form of training. Tertiary schools only may carry out such forms of training. This form of training is available to anybody who meet the conditions required, such as: secondary school leaving examination, [entrance] examinations as well as payment of fee required.
- e-learning – this is a correspondence form using all the electronic media available (including the Internet, intranet, extranet). Due to the fact that the computer is the training and examining “party”, this form of training has been called ‘distance learning’. E-learning enables the adaptation of the content, pace and form of training to the knowledge and predisposition of the trainee.
- seminars – a form of didactic activities for a small group of people. During the meeting the attendees discuss a specific issue. Seminars are most frequently free of charge.
- conferences – a meeting of a large number of attendees. Conferences are organized in a place and time designated for this purpose (they last one or a few days) in order to discuss a specific subject. They are most often paid for and relatively early announced by a promoting action directed to the potential recipients ²³.

We distinguish the following types of training:

- workshops – during workshops, the attendees acquire theoretical knowledge, however, more stress is put on the skills of its use in practice. Workshops are most frequently carried out in the areas of management, sales or topics related to production/service provision. The attendees solve the problems given to them, most often in the way suggested by the trainer.

²³ Budzyński I., *Podstawowe aspekty działalności instytucji szkoleniowych w „Rynek pracy”*, Ministerstwo Gospodarki, Pracy i Polityki Społecznej, grudzień 2003

- lectures – the simplest training method. it consists in informing on certain aspects of knowledge by the lecturer, without the necessity for any activity on the part of the attendees. Lectures are conducted in large groups, the attendees do not acquire any practical skills, theoretical knowledge only is provided.
- case studies – this type of training is most often carried out in the scope of management. During the course the attendees must analyze the situation and suggest solutions of the issued presented in authentic / hypothetical situations concerning the activity of various organizations.
- simulations – are mini-roles played as described in earlier prepared scenario. This method is often used in training of negotiations, sales.²⁴
- computer programs – used in case of e-learning. This method also applies to training of computer and Internet skills.
- outdoor – training consisting in playing roles prepared for the trainees , possibility to prove oneself in a collective performance of tasks given to the trainees. They include integration training, enabling the consolidation of teamwork; most frequently organized outdoors in a special place.

According to the recipients' opinion, workshops are the most effective training method. As for other forms – the recipients' opinions are diversified, depending on the entity size (larger entities are able to verify better the training efficiency due to higher experience and more extensive use of training efficiency assessment tools, “small entities do not appreciate the efficiency of some tools, overestimating the efficiency of other”²⁵).

6 TRAINING SECTOR DEVELOPMENT PERSPECTIVES IN POLAND

Before Poland's accession to the European Union, the development of the training market used to be dependent on domestic funds (assigned from corporate budgets). At present the situation has changed, because there is an entity on the market - Polish Agency for Enterprise Development having at its disposal funds received from the EU and it decides which projects would be co-funded.

The off-school education market in Poland is developed and we see its permanent growth. In 2009 – in consequence of the economic recession, the organizations reduced their spending on training by ca. 30%, compared to 2008, however, since mid-2010, a growing tendency has been noted again.

The average annual growth of training entity revenues is 15-20 per cent – which should be considered a good result, considering the fact that employers spend the average of PLN 25 on one employee per year.

Numerous factors shall influence the market. They include the growth of demand for training due to the permanently growing competition, which demands continuous qualification improvement, as well as the growing awareness of the “human factor” meaning.

The economic recession brought about a situation that only the strongest enterprises have remained on the market, which is related to gaining advantage and distinction against others. Each organization tends to become distinct offering other value added or the same value at

²⁴ „Rynek Szkoleń 2000 POPYT”, „Rynek Szkoleń 2001 POPYT”; Instytut Zarządzania 2001, 2002

²⁵ Ekspertyza – *Rynek usług szkoleniowych dla przedsiębiorstw w Polsce*, Instytut Zarządzania, Warszawa 2004

a reduced price²⁶. More and more frequently the entities realize that the value added can be the training entity brand.

According to the respondents, the greatest importance in the formation of the corporate image is in the trainers of recognized reputation, competent and competitive personnel as well as recommendations and opinions of the clients.

The lowest importance, in turn, is the position in sector ranking and prizes, sector rewards gained by the organization.

The surveys also suggest that professionalism, good staff, friendly service and individual approach to the client are immensely important for the clients while assessing the brand of a training entity. It also appears that training organizations who care about good brand are forced to permanent market monitoring and analysis of their clients' need. The organizations who care about their image emphasize that significant changes can be observed in the scope of the subject structure. Since Poland accessed the EU, higher interest is seen among the entrepreneurs in the European legislation related topics and principles of functioning on the European market. The introduction of modern information technologies, in turn, makes the entrepreneurs to expand their knowledge in the scope of IT and computer operation.

However, the highest influence on the market development is made by co-funding of the training courses out of the EU funds, because numerous entities broke through the cost barriers while benefitting from training. This may also influence the offer (development of modern training forms and methods). In 2011 and 2012 the last training projects will be performed, those that have won competitions in 2010, what will happen during the following years is difficult to be projected. Thus it will be another difficult challenge for the training sector entities. However, surveys indicate the fact that recognized organizations of recognizable brand and positive image by far more frequently win such competitions and the later recruitment of the attendees for the training projects goes on very efficiently and effectively.

7 SUMMARY

Image is a way of perceiving an organization by others. We should remember that it is characterized with variability and instability. It may be consolidated, but it may also be easily destroyed.

In the conditions of strong competition, it is the image that may decide on the trust towards the entity. An organization, while working on its image, becomes conspicuous and most frequently recognized. This applies in particular small and medium enterprises that due to high costs of advertising campaigns must base on PR actions. Regular communication among the staff and outside the environment is not costly to the entity while it enables to create a reliable identity. The entity must remember about a significant fact that it is PR that builds own opinions and views of the information recipient. Such actions are not prompt, however, they are very long-lasting and strong.

The formation of the proper brand image is a long-term action spread in time. The conclusions from the surveys and tests carried out indicate that the image is an important factor representing an element directly deciding on the selection of a training organization.

Due to the fact that the market permanently grows the buyers' needs also grow. Training organizations should regularly carry out marketing surveys concerning the changes taking

²⁶ Ekspertyza – *Rynek usług szkoleniowych dla przedsiębiorstw w Polsce*, Instytut Zarządzania, Warszawa 2004

place on the market. This will enable a company to be more flexible in relation to the competitors' activity.

Strategic actions should be matched to the new challenges that appear. The entities should consider the existing significant restrictions appearing as a result of sticking to the traditional methods of action. It is significant that the entity management board should set the targets and visions for the future, thus creating long-term action strategies.

A thorough analysis of the development issues so far shall allow the entities to orientate their strategies onto attaining the right targets.

In the time of strong market development, the entities will have to pay attention to searching for a discriminant that may include without limitation the brand image that, with substantially consistent offer and similar scope of services, mabe become factor number one.

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