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Analysis of communication strategy of Park Lane International School

Diplomová práce

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Prohlášení

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V Praze dne

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Podpis

Poděkování

Na tomto místě bych ráda poděkovala své vedoucí diplomové práce Ing. Květe Olšanovej, Ph.D. za cenné rady a připomínky. Dále bych chtěla poděkovat osobám, které se zúčastnily mého výzkumu za jejich čas a ochotu.

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INTRODUCTION

International education market in Prague is constantly developing as we can observe new schools emerging on the market. Naturally, those schools need to manage how to attract talented students. The idea of this thesis is to explore how international school can become visible on the education market. It deals with the marketing of educational services with special focus on school communication.

Presented thesis analyses marketing communication of one of the international schools in Prague and aims to find possible ways of improvement. The main aim of the thesis is to determine suitable communication strategy for Park Lane International School to communicate effectively relevant information to specific target group.

Thesis is divided into two main parts. The theoretical part provides essential information background to be applied in the practical part. Education marketing is mainly derived from service marketing. Thus, chapter one focuses specifically on the distinctive characteristics in the field of marketing of educational services. It deals with the school environment characteristics which are followed by SWOT analysis. S-T-P strategy is described as well. Special attention is also paid to education marketing mix in the form of 7Ps. Second chapter focuses on one of the components of education marketing mix, which is promotion. Marketing communication strategy and planning are explained in the third chapter. Communication mix for school is described in detail in chapter four, where significant forms of school communication are assessed for further application in the practical part of the thesis.

The practical part of the thesis focuses on Park Lane International School in Prague. To reach our main aim we firstly uncover what stands behind the concept of international school in chapter five. Data on development of international school market worldwide are provided together with the information on the current situation of international education market in Prague. Park Lane International School is introduced in chapter six with the help of specific education marketing mix defined in the theoretical part of the thesis. Chapter seven provides detailed analysis of Park Lane International School where school communication analysis and analysis of competitors are presented. Moreover, qualitative research has been conducted in the form of interviews with the school target group to

uncover their needs and preferences. The interpretation of research results is presented in chapter seven. Finally, school target group is described and SWOT analysis created. This serves as a vital background for chapter eight which provides our main conclusions and recommendations for effective school communication.

We find it interesting and important to explore education marketing, which has not been much explored yet. However, we can observe it is becoming highly relevant in the current more and more competitive education market. Specifically, international school market is attracting much of the attention these days. Traditionally; however, education is viewed as a field which should not be connected with marketing because of moral reasons as is pointed out in the thesis.

1 Marketing of educational services

1.1 Specific features of services

When dealing with education marketing, it is important to define education as a service. The aim of this chapter is to define service and provide its main characteristics. Based on this, we can further develop main differences in marketing products and services.

Education belongs together with other services such as tourism, banking or health services to the service sector. Kasper, Helsdingen, Gabbott (2006, p. 57) define services as: „...originally intangible and relatively quickly perishable activities whose buying, which does not always lead to material possession, takes place in an interactive process aimed at creating customer satisfaction.“ Gilmore (2003, p. 9) describes service as: „Most frequently, a service has been described as an act, a process and a performance.“ Clearly we can see that services are different in nature when comparing with products.

When defining services in more detail, we can identify their four main characteristics, so called **IHIP characteristics**:

1. Intangibility
2. Heterogeneity
3. Inseparability
4. Perishability

These characteristics are important mainly when designing marketing mix for the service. Therefore, we will look at each of them more closely.

It is true that many services usually include tangible objects as well (for example classroom at school); however, if we think about the benefit we get from the service, or the experience, it is **intangible** in nature. We can observe difference when comparing service with product, where physical characteristics and tangible things are placed in the centre of attention. With services the focus is not on designing the properties, but on the performance. Nevertheless, tangible things do play a role when providing a service. It is important to note that degree of tangibility and intangibility differs in many services.

Providing educational service by teaching is described as essentially intangible service, whereas for example fast food shops combine tangible and intangible components.

Services are also **heterogeneous**, meaning that when people are providing them, they will not be performed in the same way every single time. The reason is that people do not work as machines. Therefore, service performance may vary each time. This makes the quality control more complicated than it is with products.

Another important characteristic of service is **inseparability**. Consumers together with service providers are interacting when service is provided. They need to meet. Thus, consumers can affect the quality of service. Generally speaking, this clearly distinguishes services from products when products are usually made only by a seller, although there are many sellers nowadays who try to engage customers with possibility to design their products.

The last service characteristic of the IHIP model, **perishability**, points out to the fact, that unlike products, services cannot be stored or returned (Gilmore 2003, p. 13-16).

Services truly differ from products in their basic characteristics. The importance of people, customers and employees in connection with service marketing needs to be highlighted. People are placed in the centre of service marketing. If a service organization aims to be successful, the value creation for customers and high quality of service are the most important (Kasper, Helsdingen, Gabbott 2006, p. 54-55).

1.2 Situation analysis: school environment

Every school operates in a certain environment and is inevitably influenced by it. There are many factors which influence school either from the outside or inside the school. These will be described in more detail.

Světlík (2009, p. 32-33) states that it is important for school management to recognise external and internal influences and changes and define how these factors can be managed. Internal factors are the most influenceable, whereas factors from macro environment the least. It is easier for a school director to manage the internal school organisation – such as pedagogical staff or school facilities. On the other hand, it is more complicated to manage school image which requires long term work with the public.

1.2.1 External environment

External environment of school is constantly changing and is poorly influenceable.

External environment is influenced by:

- economic
- demographic
- technical
- political
- sociocultural aspects.

Demographic curve is changing, revolutionary technological innovations are appearing, which change the way people think and their values. The main idea of the analysis of external environment is to recognize these developments and possible future trends. In such a way, the school is better prepared for possible changes and what is most important, it can adapt to them (Světlík 2009, p. 34).

According to Světlík (2009, p. 36-37), demographic environment is by far the most important factor influencing schools. Demographic trends are necessary for school to recognise so it is able to analyse its potential market. Thus, schools should have information about development of demographic curve. It should be also a part of situation analysis, and lastly it serves as a valuable source for the future school planning.

The impossibility of direct control of external factors requires managers to produce a plan which would adapt to and react to possible changes. In fact, firms are required to change together with the external changes. There are basically two possibilities. The changes can bring either new opportunities or new threats (Solomon, Marshall, Stuart 2015, p. 100).

1.2.2 Meso environment

School meso environment is represented by customers, alumni, school partners, public, school competitors, and partner schools. They are all vital for school and represent a place where school operates and by which it is influenced at the same time (Světlík 2009, p. 39).

Competitors' activities always influence school decision making process. Quality and uniqueness of study programme, school reputation, high-quality students and staff

represent the main school activities in the competitive environment. The competition between schools is usually connected with the following:

- attracting high-quality prospective students
- attracting high-quality professional pedagogical staff
- acquiring financial support (grants)
- acquiring goodwill, positive feedback from the public

(Světlík 2009, p. 40-41).

Competitive position of school can be based on following elements:

- the quantity and quality of school demand
- location and facilities of school, high-quality pedagogical staff, know-how of school
- good relationship with the public
- curriculum which is constantly developing

(Světlík 2009, p. 41-42).

By analysing school's competitive position on the school market, school can uncover what stands behind the students' decision making process, what is school's position in contrast to the competitive schools. Factors such as need of commuting to school, accommodation, the amount of fees, quality of school and so on are all the factors which influence prospective customers/students and therefore schools need to think about them (Světlík 2009, p. 43).

Students, parents, future employers of graduates, public, graduates, pedagogical staff are all considered to be **customers of school**. They are part of micro environment but at the same time they co-create meso environment of school (Světlík 2009, p. 49).

1.2.3 Internal environment

Světlík (2009, p. 64) stresses the importance of internal environment of school. In fact, perceived quality of school work is based on the quality of the school microenvironment. For a positive internal environment, a suitable educational environment for students and pupils should be established. It is the environment where students are enjoying themselves and are encouraged to learn and participate in learning process actively.

School facilities, quality of school staff and management, interpersonal relationships and school culture and climate are essential factors of school internal environment.

- **School climate**

Most importantly, it is the quality of school management and interpersonal relationships that matter in connection with school climate. Positive school climate is based on mutual trust, respect, high morals, cohesion and school loyalty. All relationships created throughout the school community should be taken care for. Relationships between teachers and students, relationships between teachers, teachers and other school staff, teacher and parents relationship, relationships between school management and pedagogical staff, and relationships amongst students themselves (Světlík 2009, p. 65).

- **School culture**

Světlík (2009, p. 68) points out, that it is the character or essence of school internal environment that can differentiate one school from another. It should not be only about school facilities, but mainly about people and their norms, beliefs, values and attitudes. Based on that, certain system of values is created which is shared amongst people at school.

Tangible and intangible components create the system of school culture. Shared values and beliefs represent intangible elements. On the other hand, visual or verbal symbols (logo) represent tangible elements. They should work together. School image is then based on these symbols (Světlík 2009, p. 71). School curriculum also partly serves as a representation of school culture for the public. It does not function only as a study plan, but it is also the verbal symbol of school (Světlík 2009, p. 84). The visual symbols are the easiest to be identified as symbols of school culture. School building, school facilities, school logo design all belong to this category (Světlík 2009, p. 86).

1.2.4 SWOT analysis

Situation analysis represents an analysis of internal and external environment. We should be able to identify firm's, or in our case, school's strengths and weaknesses based on the internal analysis. On the other hand, by analysing school's external environment, we should uncover its opportunities and threats. Situation analysis is a vital part of strategic planning (Solomon, Marshall, Stuart 2015, p. 99). The situation analysis should be based

on all the relevant elements of internal and external environments mentioned in the previous subchapter.

The form known as SWOT analysis is used to summarize the main ideas from situation analysis in a way so that it allows to work with acquired information more efficiently. Its idea is to help managers to be better focused on findings from the analysis that matter and find the best possible strategies. The outcome should help the managers to not to miss any opportunity and at the same time be aware of possible external threats and be able to face them (Solomon, Marshall, Stuart 2015, p. 100). Situation analysis should provide us with the answers for important school's decision processes, such as school's position on education market, perceived image of school, tendencies of school micro, macro and meso environment development, or identification of competition on the school market (Světlík 2009, p. 116).

Světlík (2009, p. 119-120) emphasises the importance of the analysis of school competitors since those schools represent the only alternative for parents in the process of school choice. The outcome of good competitor analysis should include information about the aims of other schools and how they plan to achieve them, what are the school facilities, pedagogical staff, school communication with the public and school image.

Mooradian, Matzler, Ring (2014, p. 296) describe SWOT as an analysis based on complete environmental analysis. This analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats should be systematic. However, they do emphasize the common mistake made when the SWOT analysis is done in a way that it is merely just a description of some firm's attributes. In fact, when identifying the firm's strengths or weaknesses, we should always bear our competition in mind. For example, only when we are better at something than our competition, we can consider it as our strength. It is not enough if a firm does something well, but we always need to consider it in the broader concept of the competition. The information from SWOT analysis should guide the managers in building a successful strategy.

1.3 S-T-P Strategy

In terms of education market, it is inevitable for school to understand who represents its target market, how big it is now and will be in the future. The estimations of demand for

educational services should help marketers to identify school market size. Estimations should be based on demographic development, political environment, position of the school on the competitive market, school location, study fees etc. (Světlík 2009, p. 134).

Market can be characterised by word „fragmented“. People who create market vary in their needs and values. Therefore, it is vital for marketers to recognize specific needs and create separate groups consisting of people with different needs. In this way, service or product can be designed and served more appropriately. It is important to understand potential customers in detail. Authors provide the example from the higher education sector which provides potential students with different needs with different options. Potential students can choose whether they want to attend traditional school, public or private, or even online school. Each of these schools is designed for diverse spectrum of needs and obviously might not be the best choice for everyone. Different types of schools serve people with different capabilities, backgrounds and financial resources (Solomon, Marshall, Stuart 2015, p. 218-219).

The advantage resulting from target marketing strategy is that thanks to the focus on specific needs of the segments when creating marketing strategy, superior value for a customer can be established (Mooradian, Matzler, Ring 2014, p. 302).

Target marketing strategy consists of three steps:

1. Segmentation
2. Targeting
3. Positioning

The outcome of segmentation process should be the characteristics of specific segment. Targeting, on the other hand, is the process when marketers are searching for the segment which would be the most appealing for school. School can decide whether to focus on small number of segments or more. Thus, it can choose either concentrated (one segment) or differentiated (2 or more segments) marketing. The aim of positioning of school is to define itself or specifically its study program in the minds of the chosen segment(s). School thus creates its image (Světlík 2009, p. 140).

1.3.1 Importance of positioning and school image

In the process of positioning, whole marketing mix of organisation should be considered. The idea of positioning is to determine special position in the customers' minds. Authors propose that the awareness of the following is inevitable. We should have the insight into the wishes and needs of the target group(s). We should also monitor and identify the positions of our competitors. And lastly, when deciding on the positioning, it is important to identify what competitive advantage and points of differentiation our company possesses. Specific positioning is retained through branding. Specifically speaking, name or logo are means which connect company with its specific positioning (Mooradian, Matzler, Ring 2014, p. 305-306).

Positioning statement is a tool for positioning. The idea of positioning statement is to convey desired specific position of the brand and arouse positive emotions and associations. Simultaneously, it should present unique, distinct characteristics of the brand or company in contrast to the competitors on the market. Statements should focus on characteristics that target groups find essential or relevant. It should always stress and compare distinctive and exceptional aspects or features in relation to the competitors. To put it simply, it should stress what we do better than the competition. Ideally, positioning should be done in such a way that it would be impossible for others to imitate it. In the positioning statements we should be able to identify specific target group, brand, product category, point of differentiation or promise, and some reason to believe (Mooradian, Matzler, Ring 2014, p. 309).

Světlík (2009, p. 146-147) warns that schools usually do not spend enough time for positioning of school, establishment of positive school image and strong school identity. He states that it is necessary that people are informed about the school's best attributes. Position of school in the minds of students, parents, public is also known as school reputation which according to the author attracts high-quality applicants.

We should always remember that positioning is the last step of the strategy. Without previous detailed segmentation and targeting process, positioning will likely end up as a failure. Therefore, the targeted segment(s) and its specific needs should be identified conscientiously and in a precise way. In fact, positioning stands for each individual

element of the marketing mix that marketers create and represent them all (Mooradian, Matzler, Ring 2014, p. 310).

Světlík (2009, p. 147-148) states that in terms of school - image, prestige or school reputation is often more important than the real quality attributes of school. Prestige of school is often considered to be a deciding factor in the school choice. Therefore, today in the more competitive school market, schools should pay more attention to school image. School should inform public about its professional teaching methods, professional teaching staff, how successful its alumni are. Present reputation of school is based on the past successes of school, but it is also shaped by marketing communication. Image can be defined as a group of associations, knowledge, expectations connected with a company, person or subject.

It is helpful to consider the following ideas for successful creation of positive school image:

- professional teaching staff helps to create positive climate of school
- school should inform and stress its distinct points of differentiation and explain in what terms the school or study program is better than that offered by the competitor
- regular communication with school partners and public and creation of relationships is inevitable
- school should use all available types of media to communicate, also own promotional materials can be used. School should be presented in a professional way, the content and the form of presentation should be processed in detail (Světlík 2009, p. 150-151).

Name of school should be considered as a brand in the school marketing process. Process of building a positive school image is not different from that of brand building process of any product. Similar tools should be used. In general, brand serves for a better identification of product via its name, symbol, number, shape, or their combination. The importance of brand lies in its ability to strengthen the customer awareness of product. The same applies in the school environment. We can think of many advantages if we consider the name of school as a specific brand:

- The name of school helps to identify and differentiate school on the school market
- Quality and image of school connect with the school name
- The name of school as an effective tool in school communication with its potential applicants and students
- The name of school is considered to be one of the most important tools for creation of students' loyalty towards their school (Světlík 2009, p. 151).

School image can be built via differentiating its attributes from the competitors. Distinctions, however, should be relevant and attractive to the potential students. School can focus on the wide offering of quality study programmes, or it can differentiate in terms of its size or location, top-class facilities, attractive possibilities of spending free time. The success rate of alumni is an important school differentiation factor as well as teachers' personal approach (Světlík 2009, p. 153).

1.4 Education marketing mix (7Ps)

Based on the specific characteristics of service, we can predict that creation of service marketing mix differs from product marketing mix. In this chapter, specific 7 P's of service marketing are discussed with the focus on educational services. General view on education marketing is presented as well.

When dealing with the first P of services, **product**, it is important to note it is of intangible nature. Course or study programme the school is offering represents a product of school. It serves as an important element when promoting school on the education market (Raj, Raguraman, Veerappan 2013, p. 437).

Another dimension, **pricing**, is usually based on how consumers perceive the quality or value of service. Since value perception is highly subjective, price determination is a hard task for the managers (Gilmore 2003, p.16). School fees should be mainly based on the quality of educational institution. Fees also depend on the competition, school reputation, school facilities, location and so on (Raj, Raguraman, Veerappan 2013, p. 437).

In the centre of **promotion** of services lies the 'image' promotion, since there is no central tangible object to promote (Gilmore 2003, p. 16). As to the promotion of school,

PR, WOM and online marketing are vital. Positive WOM is the most effective tool for communication of educational institutions. We will deal with the promotion of school in separate chapter 4.2.

When dealing with **place**, services do not have a physical distribution system as products do. With services, the environment where service is performed is important. Place also represents a promotional tool. It stands for the school location. With regard to school, place is considered to play an important role when choosing the school (Raj, Raguraman, Veerappan 2013, p. 437). Parents usually ask the question how children will travel to and from school. The availability, school location and consequently travel opportunities do play a role when choosing a particular school.

When dealing with services, we need to add another 3P's which are physical evidence, process and people. As to the **physical evidence**, building or lighting influence customers' service evaluation and influence the image of service in the customers' minds. Parents and students will usually evaluate facilities of school such as a library, availability of swimming pool, computer laboratory, or canteen.

Another component of service marketing mix, **process**, deals with how services are provided to students. It focuses on the quality and efficiency. Actually, this can create a competitive advantage for school. Treatment of students at school by staff is considered to be important (Raj, Raguraman, Veerappan 2013, p. 438).

The last dimension of service marketing mix is **people** and their management. People are essential when dealing with services, because a lot of people are involved in the interaction – customers, staff, or management. Interactions and communication between these people on different levels have impact on quality of service delivery (Gilmore 2003, p. 17). Teaching as well as non-teaching staff are the people of educational services. Those are all the people that interact with students or parents when delivering a service. Teachers are providing the service. The importance of this factor needs to be highlighted in the context of educational services since it is the most active dimension of the education marketing mix (Raj, Raguraman, Veerappan 2013, p. 437). We can claim that having skilled, professional teachers is vital for success of the school as this will result to parents' and students' satisfaction.

Generally speaking, the connection between education and marketing is still considered quite controversial. According to the results of research among English principals, connecting marketing and school still brings a negative connotation among school principals and staff. The main argument is that school is not a business and should not be treated and marketed as products or services do. Its most important mission is to educate society not to gain profits (Oplatka, Hemsley-Brown 2004, p. 7-8).

Also, Světlík (2009, p. 15-16) acknowledges this negative view on school marketing by people who perceive it as immoral as schools and firms are not the same. However, he also points out there are similarities between schools and firms operating on the market. Some firms and schools are successful, while others may have difficulties in getting new customers or students. For those unsuccessful, marketing provides an option how to compete with others on the market.

Nevertheless, it is argued that importance of marketing for school is vital because even if school is of a high quality, but this image is not presented to the parents and public, the school may have problems on the competitive market. Therefore, the image communication of school should not be underestimated by schools. It is also argued that marketing education should not be about selling but rather about focusing on what parents and students need and expect. Building a positive relationship between school and community is of a big value (Oplatka, Hemsley-Brown 2004, p. 3).

Světlík (2009, p. 19) also highlights the importance of managing marketing on all levels of school. Marketing management of school is presented already in the curriculum creation. We can find it in the methods of teaching, in the way of treating the students daily, in communication with public, in the internal school culture as well as in climate of school. As to the people, all of them contribute to marketing, school principal as well as administrator and teachers who interact with students, parents and public and thus form the perception of school.

It is important to note that literature dealing specifically with education marketing is relatively scarce. However, we can observe a tendency of rising number of scholars dealing with this topic as it becomes more and more relevant.

2 Marketing communication as a part of marketing mix

In the following chapters we will closely focus on the one element of marketing mix, which is promotion. Marketing communication is one of the most important elements of school marketing. Therefore, this chapter introduces essential theory about what marketing communication represents, what its aim is and how it is formed.

2.1 Describing marketing communication

Fill (2009, p. 15-16) describes marketing communication as a management process or activity, when message is created for target group and presented to get their attention. This activity should always focus on its audience. Thus, it is important to know the audience. The author stresses the fact, that we cannot understand it just as a pure communication of information about product or service. Marketing communication should be about engaging. Through marketing communication, organisation creates a relationship with its audience. It is also important to note that when creating marketing communication, we are in fact increasing the value of offering.

Pelsmacker (2007, p. 3) describes marketing communication as the element of marketing mix which is most noticeable. Marketing communication attracts the attention of target group on product, service or whole organisation. In the centre of his understanding of marketing communication is representation.

Mooradian, Matzler and Ring (2014, p. 375) propose definition of integrated marketing communication. They describe it as an activity when organisation communicates its product/service and value to customers with the aim to bring them to the action and purchase. They stress the word integrated, because they understand that customer today usually perceives the organisation via different media channels. They also emphasize the role of designing effective communication of value proposition for the organisation.

Solomon, Marshall and Stuart (2015, p. 422) describe marketing communication as an important activity which aims to shape customers' behaviour and opinions. Moreover, they admit that basically by any activity that organisation does, it is communicating something to people. Not only the advertisement communicates, but also the appearance

of employees, place where it is sold or even the price represents marketing communication.

We can recognise two types of marketing communication: planned and unplanned communication. Planned marketing communication is created with the help of tools, media and message creation and its aim is to communicate efficiently with the target group. Advertising, sales promotion, or public relations can be used to perform planned communication. However, organisations cannot ignore the unplanned marketing communication, which has also impact on the audience, and cannot be predicted. Its impact can be positive or negative. For example, word-of-mouth communication, different opinions provided by experts belong to this category. It is vital for the organisation to manage the unplanned communication and respond to such communication, since it shapes the image of organisation together with the planned communication (Fill 2009, p. 6-8).

We can observe slightly different views on what marketing communication should focus on. What should not be forgotten is that marketing communication is not only planned and is often part of the several organisations' activities. Sometimes organisations are not aware that they are in fact communicating something. Moreover, especially the communication represented by word of mouth should be managed. Nowadays without a doubt, we need to stress that marketing communication should be integrated, given the variety of different channels marketers can use to communicate with people.

2.2 Roles and tasks of marketing communication

To understand the nature of marketing communication even more, we will look more closely on its role and tasks.

Fill (2009, p. 18) differentiates between two concepts: task and role of marketing communication. According to him, the main role of marketing communication is to engage with the audience. On the other hand, he recognises four main tasks of marketing communication. One of its tasks is to **inform** about offering and create awareness. Another task is to **persuade** target group to a desired action – usually purchase. **Reinforce**, as another task, stands for evoking the feeling of “unknown need” in target group. The last task of marketing communication is to help to **differentiate** product or

service on the market. Author highlights this role especially in connection with such services or products, where it is almost impossible to differentiate in terms of specific features. Here, the brand image is created largely by marketing communication and it affects customers when choosing among variety of products or services on the market. These products or services differ mainly thanks to their distinct communication and positioning (Fill 2009, p. 9).

On the advanced level, marketing communication offers value in itself. It is even more than the previous mentioned four tasks. Communication can bring satisfaction to the audience either by bringing entertainment or education. This kind of satisfaction from communication is also common for educational institutions. As author puts it, these organisations “perceive value in being seen to be ‘of value’ to their customers” (Fill 2009, p. 11).

Solomon, Marshall, Stuart (2015, p. 422) on the other hand, describe four main roles of marketing communication in a slightly different way. The first is to provide audience with **information** about product or service. The second one is to **recall** the presence of brands. The purpose of another role is to **convince** people to select specific brand when choosing product or service. And the last role is focused on customers and **establishment of relationship** with them.

There are two perceptions of the purpose of marketing communication. The purpose of marketing communication can be to evoke positive emotions about the brand or organisation presented. So, in the centre of communication are feelings of target group. The second perception, which is more common today, centres marketing communication on the behaviour of target group, which should be affected by the communication. However, when creating communication, we can also focus on both, shaping the feelings and behaviour simultaneously (Fill 2009, p. 13).

2.3 Process of marketing communication: model of communication

Broadly speaking, any kind of communication is about sharing ideas among the participants. To create a successful communication, we need to get the idea to the participant in such a way and form, that he/she is able to understand its meaning and

respond. This is important for any kind of interactivity (Fill 2009, p. 41). For a better understanding of how the process of communication works, the communication model was created. This model describes in detail the process when a message created by marketers gets to target group. But again, it can be basically applied to any kind of communication. For the communication to occur there needs to be someone who creates the message, someone to whom the communication is for, message and medium. Very important aspect of communication is that a receiver of message can interpret what marketer tries to convey in a correct way (Solomon, Marshall, Stuart 2015, p. 424).

Basic linear model of communication, which was originally presented by Wilbur Schramm, contains 7 main elements. For a marketing communication to start, a **source**, or organisation needs to begin with **encoding**. This process stands for creating desired idea by using the combination of such words, images or music, so that the receiver can interpret the message in a correct way. When encoding, it is vital to consider for whom the message is created. Knowledge of target group is important so as to avoid misunderstanding and ineffective communication.

The task of another element of the model, **signal**, is to transform the message to target audience by the means of certain media type. Marketers can choose from personal and non-personal forms of media channels.

In the next part of model, finally the process of **decoding** of message by receiver starts. It is very important part of model. Decoding depends largely on the knowledge of receiver, his previous experience and his views. Effectivity of the whole communication depends largely on how the receiver interprets received idea.

Even more important is **feedback** and how receiver responds to the message received. Response can be perceived in a form of contacting the sender, choosing the sender's product or service, or just keeping the idea in head. This element is also important for marketers to assess whether the communication was effective or not.

Marketers should also consider **noise** which can occur in the process when the message is transmitted to the receiver, resulting that receiver might not get the whole message or the idea (Fill 2009, p. 42-46).

We can observe that process of marketing communication can be based on the process of any kind of communication. This process helps us understand how the message is created, transferred, understood, what its effect is and what should be avoided. It is something we should keep in mind when creating effective communication strategy.

Mooradian, Matzler and Ring (2014, p. 379-382) present the effective management of communication process as a set of five steps. Firstly, marketers should **identify and describe target group**. Secondly, the **attitude of customers to brand** should be defined. Next the **objectives** and **budget** for communication should be determined. Lastly, **implementation and evaluation** of communication process should be established.

Fill (2009, p. 29) proposes following main tasks for effective management of marketing communication. Creators of marketing communication should **define who is the receiver** of message and **communication purpose** of message. Also, the **image which should be created** by marketing communication should be determined. The **expenses** on such communication should not be forgotten. Then **media** and the way of transforming the message effectively need to be decided. It is also important to understand and define in what way exactly we expect **customer behaviour to be shaped** by the communication. Lastly, the **way of controlling the process** and the way of defining the success or effectivity of communication should be defined.

3 Marketing communication strategy and planning

3.1 Process of developing a communication strategy and plan

In general, we can claim that concept of integrated marketing communication is strategy itself. Fill (2009, p. 288) argues that communication strategy is wrongly interpreted as only a process of combining the tools which form communication mix. He points out that this activity relates to tactic, not to strategy. He believes that when dealing with communication strategy we need to consider the broad context of marketing of whole organisation. The whole corporate marketing strategy needs to be considered as well as the brand positioning and general aims of organisation. It is not only about communication mix. Usually when speaking about strategy, we mean the process when decisions are made, actions are taken and implemented. When designing a strategy, we deal with the goals of organisation and its aim.

Target group and positioning are essential for communication strategy. Firstly, when creating strategy, marketers need to understand target group and their needs. Only then they can deal with the message creation and choice of media. This approach is so-called outside-in approach. Secondly, the concept of positioning is important, which is the core of strategy when speaking about brand communication. The aim of strategy should be creating desired brand image in the minds of target group. Strategy should help the audience to understand brand, its values and what it stands for. It is especially important in relation to identification on a competitive market. Positioning is considered to lie at the heart of marketing communication strategy. We can also claim it is vital part of the whole marketing strategy (Fill 2009, p. 294).

The 3 Ps of communication strategy were developed and are defined below. All of them focus on the positioning but in different ways.

1. Pull-positioning strategy
2. Push-positioning strategy
3. Profile positioning strategy

Pull-positioning strategy focuses on final users of products or services. On the other hand, push-positioning strategy deals with channel buyers or intermediaries. The aim of the last one, profile positioning strategy, is to represent the whole organisation to the large group of various stakeholders by creating a certain profile. So, it is not only about customers and channel buyers. We should not forget about the other stakeholders too. Profile positioning strategy keeps those in mind (Fill 2009, p. 295). Other stakeholders are identified as employees or trade unions, government, local communities, who also have impact on the organisation. This kind of communication is also called corporate communication while it primarily focuses on the communication of identity of the organisation, not its specific services or products (Fill 2009, p. 302). To put it simply, when creating profile positioning strategy, we focus on the creation of connections with different types of stakeholders and the overall image of organisation and its reputation. When choosing communication mix, we focus on public relations and sponsorship. It is important to note that these strategies may be and usually are combined and used simultaneously (Fill 2009, p. 304).

We can distinguish three concepts: communication strategy, tactics and planning, although they work together. As was stated above, strategy is dealing mainly with the positioning of products or services. Tactics represent a specific way of creating the positioning. Planning is coined with strategy and tactics, as it describes in specific steps how the strategy will be accomplished (Fill 2009, p. 296-297).

Now we will describe communication plan in more detail. Solomon, Marshall, Stuart (2015, p. 429-432) identify the creation of promotional plan as an organised process of certain steps. It starts with the identification of target group, continuing with objectives which can deal with the awareness of brand, knowledge of brand, creation of desire, purchase or development of customers' loyalty. Determination of budget should be the next step. As the following step he proposes the communication mix setting, which he describes as potentially most demanding step in the planning. It is when marketers need to decide which tools will be used, what should message contain and what ideas to represent, as well as the media channels to be used to connect with the targeted audience. The last step is to determine how successful communication was.

Fill (2009, p. 308) understands the importance of creating communication plan as it

makes the whole process of designing marketing communication more effective and flawless. He describes the concept of marketing communication planning framework which helps to coordinate the large number of activities connected with creation of marketing communication in an organised and logic way.

When creating a communication plan, certain main steps should be followed. They represent the **main elements of communication plan**:

- a) Firstly, it is good to start with the analysis of contexts. It means, we need to know and analyse what is likely to affect brand or organisation, main market drivers and communication drivers. Unlike situational analysis, this analysis focuses on more narrow factors. This analysis provides us with rational background and important information for communication such as the information about target group or brand awareness.
- b) Creation of communication objectives is the next step of communication plan. Defining specific objectives is important as it identifies possible problems with positioning, they deal with the balance of communication mix, also they tackle the issue of timing. When creating marketing communication objectives, we should understand the present context of brand as well as its expected or desired future position. As organisation's objective could be regarded the change of awareness level or attitudes towards the brand. Objectives can be connected with preserving current positioning or the entire repositioning.
- c) The next step is marketing communication strategy. Strategy was defined in detail at the beginning of this chapter.
- d) Coordinated communication mix is another element of communication plan. In this part of communication plan, specific choices of media should be defined and accompanied with argumentation.
- e) Another element of the plan is resources, which is often underestimated. Here, the financial resources and time options should be considered.
- f) Scheduling and implementation represent another important step.
- g) Then we need to evaluate and control the usage of chosen tools and media. Evaluation is based on the comparison of objectives which were set and their actual realization.

h) The last component is feedback which helps with the planning of campaigns in the future (Fill 2009, p. 310-314).

We will conclude this chapter by proposing how effective marketing communication can be determined. Foret (2011, p. 20-21) proposes main principles to focus on when we want communication to be effective and successful. Establishing trustworthiness in the communication is one of them. It is very important because generally people tend to not trust what marketers say in the marketing communication. We should not underestimate the power of correct choice of timing and situation context of the communication. As was stressed before, author also recognises the importance of meaning of message for the receiver for whom the message should make some sense. It is not enough if message makes sense only to the sender of message. Clarity and continuity are other important elements of successful communication. Author also points out that it is a good idea to use already proven channels for the communication which are viewed by people as respected and credible channels. It is not a good idea to change channels very often. And lastly, a core for building the successful marketing communication is the knowledge of audience, their habits, values, desires, education level. Based on this, we can build communication which is specifically adapted to the understanding of specific group of people thus making the whole communication more effective. However, Fill (2009, p. 29) points out that we need to understand that there is usually not just one target group or only one message. Therefore, organisation should understand that they should be able to communicate with variety of audiences via different types of messages and ideas. According to author, understanding this is vital for the successful marketing communication.

4 Communication mix focused on educational services

The aim of this chapter is to provide detailed overview of the ways and strategies for schools when creating communication mix.

4.1 Elements of communication mix

All the tools, media and messages create elements of marketing communication mix and need to be combined in an efficient way. There are five main marketing communication tools, namely: advertising, sales promotion, personal selling, public relations, and direct marketing. Moreover, certain types of media are chosen to communicate the message to target group, such as internet. Today, social media are perceived as important type of media for marketers, since people are more interested in active participation. It is also important to notice the radical changes of media development in recent years. For example, we need to consider how the consumption of TV or newspaper has changed. The habits of people have changed.

Nowadays, direct way of approaching people is very popular, and it is below the line communication or through the line communication rather than above the line communication that is vital. Development of internet and new digital technologies since 1990s has brought major changes in communication. It can be mainly described by rising degree of interactivity in the communication. Communication has also become more personal (Fill 2009, p. 19-20).

As was mentioned before, we recognise five main marketing communication tools. Now we will describe each of them in more detail.

a) The first tool is **advertising**. This tool is effective and used if masses of people are to be reached by communication. One of the downsides of this tool is its lack of trustworthiness. Although the usage of this tool requires relatively high expenses, if we consider how many people are going to be reached, we can conclude that cost of reaching a single person is relatively low.

b) Another tool, **sales promotion**, is effective when reaching small groups of people. Its

role is to increase sales and collect market data. It is a non-personal tool.

c) **Personal selling**, on the other hand, involves personal interaction of salesperson and thus immediate reaction or feedback of the targeted person.

d) For the purpose of establishing a good name and position of the organisation in relation to its stakeholders a tool called **public relation** is used. The core advantage of this tool is high trustworthiness.

e) For the last of the main tools, **direct marketing**, individualisation and personalisation is typical. This tool is very common today as was stated before. For that, internet is used. Besides of personalisation, it allows to engage with customers in a form of dialogue. This feature represents a major development when comparing with traditional way of communication (Fill 2009, p. 21-23).

Pelsmacker (2007, p. 5) proposes extended version of traditional communication mix by adding the following: sponsorship, point of purchase communication, exhibitions, trade fairs and E-communications. It is not uncommon that schools are sponsored. Sponsor supplies sponsee with goods or services, and he in turn helps with the promotion of brand of the sponsor. As to the point-of purchase communication, it includes the communication in the place where purchase is occurring. Important for B2B especially are exhibitions and trade fairs which play vital role in approaching new clients. The last element, E-communication, is new and allow interactive communication. It can be done by usage of internet, mobile, or even digital television. All of them offer new ways of communicating between organisation and customers.

Mooradian, Matzler and Ring (2014, p. 378) added another element to traditional communication mix which is inter-customer communication. It is the communication which occurs between customers themselves in the form of advice or criticism. This element represents the least manageable element. However, its trustworthiness is high among people when comparing with paid marketing communication.

Choosing the composition of communication mix should not be random, but at least main criteria should be considered. Four main criteria are the following: control, financial resources, credibility and dispersion of target group. Firstly, we should consider how to

manage that the message reaches the target group. Secondly, the available budget for communication needs to be taken into consideration. Then credibility needs to be assessed so that people trust the content of communicated message. And lastly, choosing the communication tool according to the size of target group and its geographic dispersion. In this context, it is important to consider whether target audience is national or international, small group or individual (Fill 2009, p. 26). Without a doubt, another vital thing worth paying attention to when creating communication mix is integration. Different tools should be combined and integrated in such a way that they support each other in presenting desired message in truly effective way so it does not result in the confusion of the whole perception of the company or product (Mooradian, Matzler, Ring 2014, p. 378).

Based on the reading we can observe that traditional communication mix has evolved over the years mainly thanks to the development of internet and digital technology. Foret (2011, p. 28-29) states that current trend of development and usage of digital communication tools allows us to use them easily as they do not require high financial expenses and they can be easily used in a fast and convenient way.

4.2 Significant forms of school communication

The following forms of school communication were chosen to tailor the current trends of internet usage. Traditional ways of school communication with the public were covered as well.

4.2.1 Word of mouth communication

There are many definitions of Word of mouth communication (WOM). One of them which specifies it and differentiates it from other forms of communication (such as mass communication) in a clear way is the following: „Oral, person-to-person communication between a receiver and a communicator whom the receiver perceives as non-commercial, concerning a brand, a product or a service. “ (Nyilasy 2006, p. 164). Word of mouth communication is specific in a way that the receiver of communication identifies the communicator as someone who is impartial or neutral. The communicator does not share the information because he is paid for it, but just because he wants to. Therefore, this communication is perceived as more trustworthy (Nyilasy 2006, p. 164). However, it is

important to note that WOM is not always about sharing positive experience and customer satisfaction. Danger lies in sharing the negative information about a product or service. It is the case when the communicator complains about the service or product and expresses his dissatisfaction (Nyilasy 2006, p. 166). One of the ways of how to influence WOM is to control the so-called Opinion leaders. They are people who have a long presence and experience in the specific category of product or service and this is the reason why they like to talk about it. Their power lies in the fact that they can easily influence others (Nyilasy 2006, p. 176).

Newberry (2012) perceives WOM communication as the most important channel for the creation of awareness about school. He supports his argument by stating that the results from many focused groups conducted with parents with the aim to find out how parents have first heard about the school, always show that it is the case that someone told them about the particular school. Among the sources of WOM usually belong friends, neighbours or people from the community. What is important to state is that they all represent a credible source for parents. In fact, positive WOM represents the most essential background especially in the connection with student enrolment. Therefore, it is essential that people talk positively about school (Newberry 2015).

According to the researches, WOM has more powerful effects on the customer when compared to paid communication. Its effect is especially high in the connection to brand awareness and changing the attitudes toward brand (Nyilasy 2006, p. 169).

Only after prospective parents or students find out about the school, they look for more information about the school on the internet. Thus, the web is the first place where parents would look for detailed information about the potential school. They would search Google, school website, school Facebook page and the reviews. Therefore, web represents important channel via which school can present itself to prospective students or parents. It is important to note that WOM and web are connected. Stories and pictures of school created on the web are shared via WOM (Newberry 2012).

4.2.2 School website

Nowadays internet is a widespread phenomenon. It is widely accessible by schools as well as by people in general. Therefore, we can connect this fact with the importance of

school website for school presentation.

When it comes to school website, the informative value of website is fundamental. It is important to note that parents expect larger amount of information when compared to traditional materials such as brochure or leaflet. Schools should pay attention to the quality of website content. Also, it is important to bear in mind that the presentation of school on website should be based on facts rather than on texts resembling promotional materials. Thus, the word choice is particularly important (Eger 2010, p. 22). Website graphic design is also important. Its significance lies in its aim which is to catch the attention of visitor and evoke interest in the school offering. Thus, it should persuade the school website visitor to read about what particular school can offer (Eger 2010, p. 26).

Researches claim that success of school website can be based on the following:

- the way how it is structured
- how it performs its function
- aesthetical aspect of the website
- sufficiency of information in the content
- helpfulness and utility of the website
- simplicity of browsing and using the page for user

(Tubin, Klein 2007, p. 192).

School website can serve different purposes. It should mainly provide introduction to school, present a platform where school can share its achievements, it can also provide a space for e-learning or for communication between school, its teachers and students, parents. It should also serve as a tool which supports positioning, image and reputation of school. Authors points out to the problem with schools' websites, when schools do not present sufficient amount of information about school work, so the visitor of website does not get a proper idea about the school learning environment, which is the basic idea of this tool (Tubin, Klein 2007, p. 192-193).

Eger (2010, p. 24) warns that school website should no more serve only for its informative purpose. He states it should also provide website visitors with the space for interaction where parents can ask questions or contribute to surveys. Moreover, the interaction with website visitors is considered to be a way how to shape the image of

school. However, it is important to note that school needs to be responsive.

As to the content, it is important to create it around people and show how students can be positively influenced by school life. Newberry (2012) proposes the following ideas about the content: communication should include stories about students, parents or alumni. It is a good idea to specify what makes school so special, and especially, how school can influence lives of its students. Educational and parenting topics should also be included.

Newberry (2012) highlights the importance of sharing stories in the communication. The idea of story is to bring school to life. It is vital that school creates and presents an appealing picture or image of the school so that parents can imagine their children in the story of school, in its environment and atmosphere.

Specific strategies for telling stories proposed by Newberry (2012) are the following:

1. **Stories about alumni** – showing their achievements, stories about their life after they graduated, where they can be found around the world, communicate what influence being a part of school has on their life.
2. **Students' stories** – telling about different experience of different students at specific school. The idea is to imagine being a part of school and school life in a more vivid way. Or as Newberry puts it: “school comes to life”.
3. **Stories about the programs** – it is a good idea to be creative about this part and not just provide basic information about the program and list its features. Again, the idea is to tell stories behind different projects and their value to present learning activities in a vivid way.

It is interesting to note that with regard to current importance and wide usage of internet, the literature dealing with educational marketing does not deal with the school website in much extent. However, there are many advantages of the website as a school platform. School can be presented easily by the usage of texts, images, videos or music. It provides school with relatively quick and easy way of content updates and thanks to the internet, it is globally accessible. However, it is important to note that “the less is more” applies in the context of school website. It is a good idea to have only well-made sections of content published on the website. Having more sections with poor, old or unfinished content does not contribute to a good impression (Tubin, Klein 2007, p. 202).

Tubin and Klein (2007, p. 202-203) propose ideas for school to run school website successfully. Firstly, school should recognise the school website as one of the tools of marketing mix. Thus, it can better control its positioning, WOM and school reputation. Another way of how effectively use the website for school purposes is to use it as one of the channels for school communication with parents and students. Discussion groups can be used for example. It is also a good idea to adapt the page for different audiences, for example section written in several language varieties when minorities are taken into consideration. School should also bear in mind that there is a need of webmaster, content contributors as well as attractive content.

4.2.3 Social media

The usage of social media for school communication is becoming very popular. The idea of social media is to contribute to the communication which is easily accessible either via smartphones or other devices anywhere and anytime. What is important, social media represent a media by which people can easily and quickly share their opinions or experiences about an organization or a company (Cox, McLeod 2014, p. 850-851).

Cox, McLeod (2014, p. 852) see the usage of social media as a powerful tool of school communication. The positive characteristics are according to them the speed of sharing or engagement possibilities it offers. Schools can easily create their blogs, use tweets on Twitter or share different videos. In this way, frequent social media communication can contribute to the brand image of school. According to Cox, McLeod (2014, p. 858) communication of school via social media is something public expects nowadays. Therefore, it should not be viewed as a choice but more or less as a must.

Cox, McLeod (2014, p. 863-864) mainly propose for school usage of Blogs and Twitter. Blogs are effective tool for content sharing. Schools usually publish newsletters or bulletins. This content can be also shared online and thus be more accessible. The advantage of Twitter is the simplicity of usage as well as that there are no costs added. School can use it for sharing information about school events and different activities.

Schools cannot ignore places where their stakeholders are present. And today, they can be definitely found on different types of social media. Among the most popular social media used by public belong the following: Facebook, Twitter and Blogs.

Facebook represents a social media which allows people with related interests to connect and communicate. It is a very popular social media with more than 800 millions of users. School can simply create its profile and share whatever it needs. It also provides people with a space where they can comment and discuss different issues. Facebook is important tool for school communication since there is a tendency among people to heavily rely on this tool as a way of being connected with other people or institutions.

The second important media is **Twitter**. Schools can use it as a channel for sharing short messages accounting to approximately 140 characters to inform about their activities. Usually it is used when people or institutions are in the middle of important event and want to report on it.

The third most important tool is **blog** which is an interactive platform with regularly updated content (Porterfield, Carnes 2012, p. 25-26).

Specific strategies dealing with social media proposed by Newberry (2012) are the following:

1. **Usage of blog** – blog is helpful if school wants to produce more content and it can increase number of visitors of the website according to researches. School can also use the photo blog with engaging photos.
2. **Usage of Facebook to share stories and photos** – Facebook is useful for posting images and videos with stories about school life
3. **Asking parents to be active on Facebook** – school can also ask questions or even ask for likes, sharing and engagement. The idea is to motivate and get parents involved.
4. **Usage of videos** – videos should be rather short and again tell stories about the school. They can be shared at YouTube, Vimeo or directly on the school website.
5. **Posting photo of the day**

However, even when we are talking about the importance of new ways of school communication thanks to the internet and technology, it is important to note that traditional ways of communication should not be abandoned by schools at all. The tool of social media tailors development of the era we live in, but it should work alongside traditional ways of communication, not on its own. However, social media is basically

one of the first tool which general public would use in order to find information (Cox, McLeod 2014, p. 852).

4.2.4 Public Relations

The main idea of Public relations is to develop a positive relationship of public towards school which is a long-term process. This form of communication uses media but unlike advertisement, it is not based on paying for the time to be for example on the radio or in the newspaper. The idea is to attract the attention of those who create the media so as to persuade them to spread positive information about school. The main advantage of this form of communication is its trustworthiness when compared to advertising. Another advantage can be its relatively low costs.

PR as a form of school communication can be used effectively by schools especially when creating awareness of school or its study programme. It is helpful in case of introducing new study programme or when arousing the interest in school among the public. This tool also supports development of credibility of school.

There are several tools available for this kind of school communication such as press conference, special events or promotional materials of school. As to the **press conference**, there needs to be a significant news about school and it needs to be organised effectively. When creating **school brochures**, school staff should bear in mind that it should be made in a professional way, ideally in the cooperation with marketer (Světlík 2009, p. 220-223). During the **school Open day**, school has a possibility to show pupil's work, use it for a school decoration so that visitors can feel good in the school premises. Also, teachers play important role in this case, since they can connect and communicate with parents and provide them with necessary information (Ediger 2001, p. 747).

5 International education market

The main aim of this chapter is to define international school as well as international school market worldwide and in Prague.

5.1 Defining international school

Tate (2015) argues that it is not easy to define international school. Different schools call themselves international according to different criteria. So is it about having students from different nationalities? International school can also be one which provides its students with opportunity to study international education programme, such as IB Diploma. There are even schools which call themselves international just to appeal to students. Hill (2015, p. 65) points out there are international schools which identify themselves as international to connect their image with some kind of noble status which international schools usually have. Then there are international schools which truly promote the idea of understanding different cultures globally and cultural connectivity.

Hayden, Thompson (2013, p. 3-4) argue that general public sometimes do not even know about the presence of international schools. The reason for this is that education is predominantly connected to national state. However, this is changing. We can connect it with the era of globalisation. Education is becoming more international. They also agree on the impossibility to clearly define what international school is. Many sources agree on this. However, they do describe one main characteristic of international schools. According to them, distinctive feature of international schools is the teaching according to the foreign curriculum, not the national curriculum of country where the school is operating. And this is the understanding of international school we will build on in this thesis.

Three groups of international schools were identified as A, B and C type based on the following characteristics.

- **Type A: “traditional”** – in this sense, the idea of international school is to provide education for children of expatriate families.
- **Type B: “ideological”** – the idea of international school is to develop intercultural understanding among people from different cultural backgrounds.

- **Type C: “non-traditional”** – the idea of international school is to provide education for children of local families, who prefer this type of education to local national education. This type of school is the youngest. Non-traditional international schools were established in the late 20th century. They are popular especially in developing countries among the middle class. When we are talking about the rise of new international schools globally, we are talking mainly about the rise of this type of international school (Hayden, Thompson 2013, p. 5-7).

5.1.1 K-12 English Medium international school

As we could see in the previous chapter, defining international school is not an easy task. However, there is a certain type of international school which is a common type. It is English Medium K-12 School. We will focus on this type of international school since it attracts much of the attention these days. Also, it is the case of Park Lane International School which is the school thesis focuses on. This type of international school, English-medium K-12 school, stands largely behind the rise of international school market. Those schools are very popular nowadays. British and American schools belong to this category (Morrison 2016).

The meaning of K-12 school can be easily derived from its name. Macmillan Dictionary defines K-12 as: “kindergarten through twelfth: used for talking about the 13 years of school before your university education” (Macmillan 2017). Basically, it stands for a school which offers total education starting from kindergarten following up to 12th/13th grade (or key stage 5) which is the last grade before going to university. For the explanation of English national curriculum divided into 5 Key stages see Table 1.

Table 1: Overview of 5 Key Stages of English National Curriculum

	Age	School year group	Stage of education
Early Years Foundation stage	3-5	Nursery & Reception years	Pre-school education
Key stage 1	5-7	Years 1 - 2	Primary education
Key stage 2	7-11	Years 3 - 6	Primary education
Key stage 3	11-14	Years 7 - 9	Secondary education
Key stage 4	14-16	Years 10 - 11	Secondary education
Key stage 5	16-18	Years 12 - 13	Secondary education

Source: Teach In 2018 (author's own work)

Park Lane International School can be classified as K-12 school as it provides full education starting from kindergarten up to 12th grade resulting in IB Diploma. International school is seen in the thesis as a school which provides education based on different curriculum than national (Czech), in our case, the English national curriculum.

5.2 Development of international school market

Firstly, it is important to look how the idea of international school was developed. Originally, international schools were developed to provide children of expatriates moving around the world with education. It should mainly provide education for children of professional international elite. Demand for those schools derived from the rising number of international establishments around the world. However, today there are plenty of local elite parents who desire English education for their children, especially in developing world. One of the reasons is the rise of middle class in developing countries. They see new opportunities and advantages of such education in terms of further prestigious higher education where these schools are fully recognised. It is interesting that it is them who create high demand for international schools and consequently further development and growth of international schools nowadays. Data from International Schools Consultancy Group (ISC) state that in fact out of 3,5 million students studying at international schools, as much as 2,5 million are children of locals, not expatriates (Tate 2015).

5.2.1 International schools worldwide

Based on the data from International Schools Consultancy Group from 2014, Tate (2015) points out to enormous growth of international education sector worldwide. In 2014 there were as much as 7000 international schools, whereas the prediction was 4000 international schools. The main language of these international schools is English. Total number of students receiving international education was 3,5 million people. Income from the fees represented £21.4 billion. The majority of international schools can be found in Asia (3766). Europe has the second largest amount of international schools – 1497, and there are 836 international schools in America.

Report provided by International Schools Consultancy Group in 2016 stated there were more than 8000 international schools with about 4.3 million students. The majority of

students are studying in Asia where we can observe tendencies to rather pay fees for the international education than to send children to national local school (ISC 2016). It is predicted by International Schools Consultancy Group that by 2024 about 6,9 million students will be educated at 12 000 international schools (ISC 2014).

5.2.2 International schools in Prague

One of the biggest competition on international school market can be found in Prague. First international schools were established as a reaction to high growth of international establishments after Velvet Revolution in 1989. As a result, high demand was created because of a need of education for expatriates' children (Litster n.d.).

Currently, there are 15 international schools in Prague. The language of instruction of most of them is English. There is one school with French language as a language of instruction and one with German language.

The youngest of the international schools is American Academy in Prague which was opened in September 2017. The oldest school is International school of Prague (ISP) founded in 1948. ISP provides a special curriculum in a sense that it offers a combination of curriculums of more than one country - American and British. The completed list of international schools in Prague is provided in Table 2.

Table 2: International school market in Prague

1. THE PRAGUE BRITISH SCHOOL (PBS)
2. THE ENGLISH INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL PRAGUE (EISP)
3. INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF PRAGUE (ISP)
4. RIVERSIDE SCHOOL PRAGUE
5. THE ENGLISH COLLEGE IN PRAGUE
6. CHRISTIAN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF PRAGUE
7. INTERNATIONAL MONTESSORI SCHOOL OF PRAGUE
8. BEEHIVE INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL
9. PARK LANE INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL
10. MERIDIAN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL
11. CENTRAL POINT INTERNATIONAL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
12. SUNNY CANADIAN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL
13. AMERICAN ACADEMY IN PRAGUE
14. FRENCH INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL(Lycée français de Prague)
15. GERMAN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL (Deutsche Schule Prag)

Source: International Schools in Prague 2017 (Author's own work)

However, if we focus on English K-12 international schools which are following English National Curriculum (or sometimes combination of English and American curriculum), the list is much shorter. Not all international schools offer Key stage 5 in the form of IB Diploma or have kindergarten.

Following are **K-12 international schools in Prague**:

1. PARK LANE INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL
2. THE PRAGUE BRITISH SCHOOL (PBS)
3. THE ENGLISH INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL PRAGUE (EISP)
4. INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF PRAGUE (ISP)
5. RIVERSIDE SCHOOL PRAGUE

The K-12 international school market in Prague is going to change starting from September 2018, when EISP and PBS are joining together under the name of EISP forming one school. The idea is to create wider community and benefit from strengths of both schools (English International School Prague 2017).

6 Presenting Park Lane International School

Presented chapter provides detailed information about Park Lane's mission as well as its education mix (7Ps) introduced in chapter 1.4 of this thesis. In this way, the whole picture of school should be created.

6.1 School mission

The mission of Park Lane is to prepare students for the future by following challenging study programme and supporting them in the learning process. In its communication of school mission, Park Lane acknowledges that real world is quickly evolving and changing. The idea is that it is hard to predict the world that children are growing up to. As school states on its website: *"We realise that in today's ever-evolving world, the future that our young people are working towards is entirely unpredictable. We understand that when our students reach adulthood, they are likely to be engaged in occupations and tasks that do not currently exist; utilising technology which has yet to be invented."* (Park Lane International School 2018g).

School motto is created around this idea as well. Motto of Park Lane is the following: *"Preparing the young people of today for the unknown occupations of tomorrow."* Thus, unlike other schools, Park Lane explicitly describes the world children need to be prepared for. It also sends a signal that school's approach is modern and adaptive to the external changes and it is where school creates its positioning around (Park Lane International School 2018g).

6.2 Education marketing mix of Park Lane

In this part, we would like to assess Park Lane's 7Ps presented by its product, pricing, promotion, place, physical evidence, process and people. By creating specific offering of education mix in the form of 7Ps, school should connect with its target group according to their needs and preferences.

1. Product

In order to succeed on education market, school needs to primarily create the value in its study programme. Beginning as a small school, Park Lane has become a school which is

now offering full education for children aged 3 up to 18 years old. Park Lane has recently expanded its offering by introducing International Baccalaureate Diploma (IB Diploma) which should create additional value for its students. Thus, since school year 2018-2019, students can finish their secondary education at Park Lane by taking the IB Diploma which is widely recognised by universities worldwide. Moreover, the school is offering special Czech programme for Czech children to follow. However, Park Lane decided that it will not be preparing its students for the Czech Maturita alongside with IB Diploma. Park Lane justifies its decision with its priority of preparing students for universities abroad, where IB Diploma serves very well. Moreover, the IB Diploma is accepted by the Czech universities and students can still choose the subject of Czech language as a part of their IB Diploma courses.

At Park Lane, the enlargement of curriculum with many extra-curricular activities is supported. This comes in form of school trips, sport or music activities. Pupils can take part in sport tournaments and meet pupils from other international schools in the Czech Republic. Musical education is highly supported at school. There are rock bands, choirs and vocal ensemble. Moreover, Park Lane students aged over 14 can participate in **Model United Nations** which is a conference specifically designed for teenagers to discuss world issues such as human rights. Students can also take part in **the Duke of Edinburgh's International Award**, which is a youth award programme testing various skills and practical experiences highly valued by employers as a part of non-academic qualification. Park Lane also provides its students interested in film making with the opportunity to showcase their work at the **Park Lane International Film Festival**. It is visible that school is supportive of its various students' interests and is trying to create opportunities according to their needs.

2. Pricing

Generally speaking, the fees of school should not be perceived as either too high or too low. The price setting should be done in a careful way, because also very low fees could signal the low quality of school. It is important to note that fees at Park Lane vary according to different age of child and stage of education. When compared to the competitor schools, the prices are set somewhere in the middle, making the school affordable. Further details are provided in the analysis of school competitors (7.2). School

is also offering scholarships for children with outstanding academic results as well as various discounts for siblings attending Park Lane.

3. Promotion

Park Lane is promoting school via various channels making its communication rich. Communication on the school website as well as via certain social media is developed. Various articles about Park Lane can be also found. Moreover, the school communicates on foreign portals which approach expatriates coming to Prague. Deep analysis of school promotion is provided in chapter 7.1.

4. Place

As to the school location, Park Lane boasts with its central location near Prague Castle unlike other international schools which are usually located on the outskirts. Therefore, the availability of school is really good. The school comprises of more campuses. The main campuses are the following: pre-school is located at Betramka, children up to 10 years old attend Park Lane in the neighbourhood of Střešovice. The campus of Park Lane for older pupils, 11-18 years old, is situated near Prague Castle in the district of Malá Strana (Valdštejnská). The location of school is something that clearly sets the school apart and it belongs to its big advantages.

5. Physical evidence

Physical evidence of a school is represented by its facilities. Park Lane is offering wide offering of its facilities. There is a library, playground, sports pitch or school hall available at every campus. Moreover, school focuses on the usage of technology in the learning process, thus computers, SmartBoards, Visualisers or datashow projectors are available at schools. We can observe that Park Lane focuses on the investments into IT equipment for the learning process to support their motto and mission of preparing the children for the future where information technology will play an important role.

6. Process

Park Lane, as a small school, is specific with its family-like atmosphere and a small number of children in one class. The school places great attention on its ways of teaching, promoting up-to-date teaching styles. It focuses on the development of skills, usage of

information technology and especially tries that children enjoy while learning.

7. People

People play the major role in the context of providing services. As to the schools, high-quality staff can create an opportunity for competitive advantage. As to the Park Lane staff, pupils are taken care for by native English language speakers who gained their teaching qualification in the UK and have experience in teaching at international schools worldwide. What is important, they are constantly continuing their development and acquiring new educational practices. Park Lane's interest in quality teaching and learning is demonstrated by its partnership with Centre for Professional Learning Prague (CPLP) which focuses on improving teaching and learning (Park Lane International School 2018h).

7 Analysis of Park Lane International School

Chapter seven focuses on the analysis of Park Lane's communication, followed by the analysis of distinctive features of school competitors' activities. Finally, the interpretation of own qualitative research is provided together with the description of school target group and SWOT analysis.

7.1 Analysis of school communication

This analysis is based on the observable information from the internet. It focuses on the most significant forms of school communication, namely communication via school website, social media and public relations.

One of the important features of school communication is the usage of school logo. In fact, Park Lane school logo is visible throughout the communication via various channels. We can claim it helps quickly identify school thanks to its special graphic form. Specific colours used in logo are also applied in the school website design.

Figure 1: Park Lane International School Logo



Source: Park Lane International School 2018h

7.1.1 School website analysis

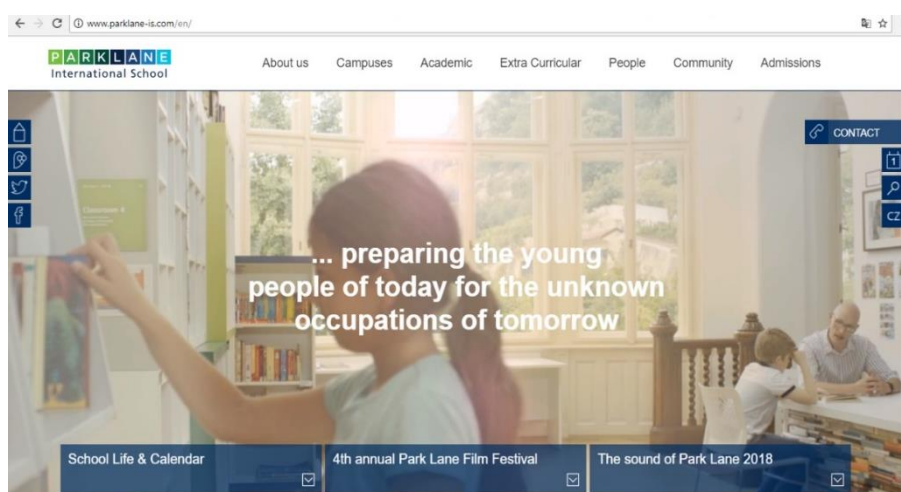
We will start our analysis with **the front page of school website**. We can observe it is designed in such a way that it succeeds in showing the atmosphere of Park Lane and where the school is aiming right from the beginning. This is achieved by the following features:

- The **school motto**, which describes the main mission of school, is displayed in such a way so it is impossible for the page visitor to overlook it.
- Another interesting feature is the **animation**, where school life is presented. Visitor can see the school premises and teachers working with children at school. In this way, the visitor is more absorbed into what school life at Park Lane may

look like. Children are displayed often together with teachers inside and outside the classroom and calm atmosphere is presented.

- Presentation of school life is also supported with **reports from school events** accompanied with short text descriptions and photos.

Figure 2: Front page of Park Lane School Website



Source: Park Lane International School 2018h

The school website is informative, providing a vast array of information. Nevertheless, it is very well arranged. We can observe it is clearly structured into following **7 logical sections**:

1. About us
2. Campuses
3. Academic
4. Extra Curricular
5. People
6. Community
7. Admissions

All the relevant information about the curriculum, extra-curricular activities, fees, admission process, location, facilities needed by parents can be found here. It is important to note that every section is supported with **images** or sometimes **videos** which creates an aesthetical appeal.

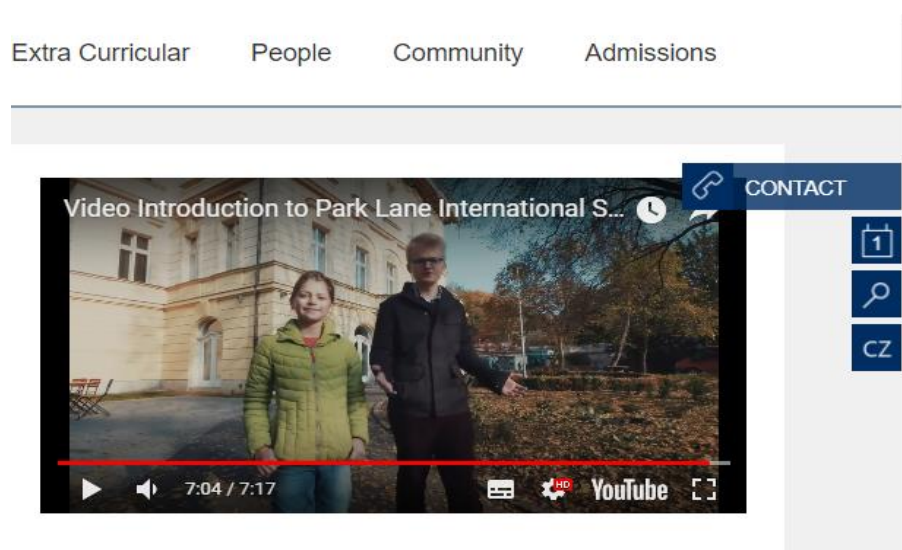
Information about **study programme** belong among the most important for the prospective parents. On the website, the study programme is described in the way that it connects with the mission of school and again stresses the idea of looking forward. *“...prospective parents and students will be reassured to discover that our study programmes and all-round approach to teaching and learning are thoroughly modern and forward-looking!”* (Park Lane International School 2018e). School has also prepared a very detailed section about IB Diploma, the school’s new programme, trying to cover all the possible information needed by parents and students.

School staff play an important role at every school. Visitor of the school website can easily find contacts on each member of **staff at Park Lane**. All of them have their profile supported with photo as well as short message from each of them. In this way, prospective parents can get to know staff at Park Lane in more depth which is a nice way how to connect more closely to a prospective parent. Also, it creates the image of staff that is approachable.

School website is also trying to approach parents by different sub-sections. Interesting sub-section is called **What parents say**. This sub-section provides some citation made by parents about what they value about Park Lane. By communicating this, prospective parents can relate more easily to those parents and to the school as a whole. There is also sub-section called **Parents-Essential** where information about school bus, lunch and caterer are provided.

We can observe, that **students’ involvement** in school work is highly supported at Park Lane and stressed via school communication. This could be observed in the case of school magazine, Open Day or school introduction video. School stresses that Park Lane students are involved in the creation of school magazine called Park Lane Press which can be downloaded from the school website. Moreover, the involvement of Park Lane students is supported during the Open Day. In fact, it is them who lead the tour during Park Lane Open Day, but staff is present as well. The introduction video created for Park Lane can be found on the school website and we can again observe that it is Park Lane students themselves who present the school. It is clearly something which distinguishes school and shows that school is supportive of its students and their involvement.

Figure 3: Students presenting Park Lane in Video Introduction



Source: Park Lane International School 2018a

At its website, school also justifies **why parents should choose Park Lane**. School is emphasising its main advantages:

1. Central location
2. School buildings and excellent facilities
3. Experienced staff
4. Broad curriculum

We can conclude that Park Lane school website attains a good outcome in the most important aim of the website – to provide abundance of information necessary for the informed decision about the school choice, yet in a very clear way. The website is customized also for the Czech audience, providing opportunity for the visitor to browse it either in English or the Czech language.

As to the content, we can observe that the strength of the website lies in a constant consistency of information with the school mission and forward-looking approach. For example, study programme is described as a forward-looking. In the section dealing with facilities, school emphasises its investments into information technology - all to support its mission stated at the beginning.

The weakness of school website can be seen in the section dealing with academic

achievements which is rather undeveloped. We can predict this section will be developed in the future as the school does not have graduates yet. Nevertheless, it is important to state that school should develop the section with current successes of students since this information is highly relevant to parents (Park Lane International School 2018h)

7.1.2 Social media analysis

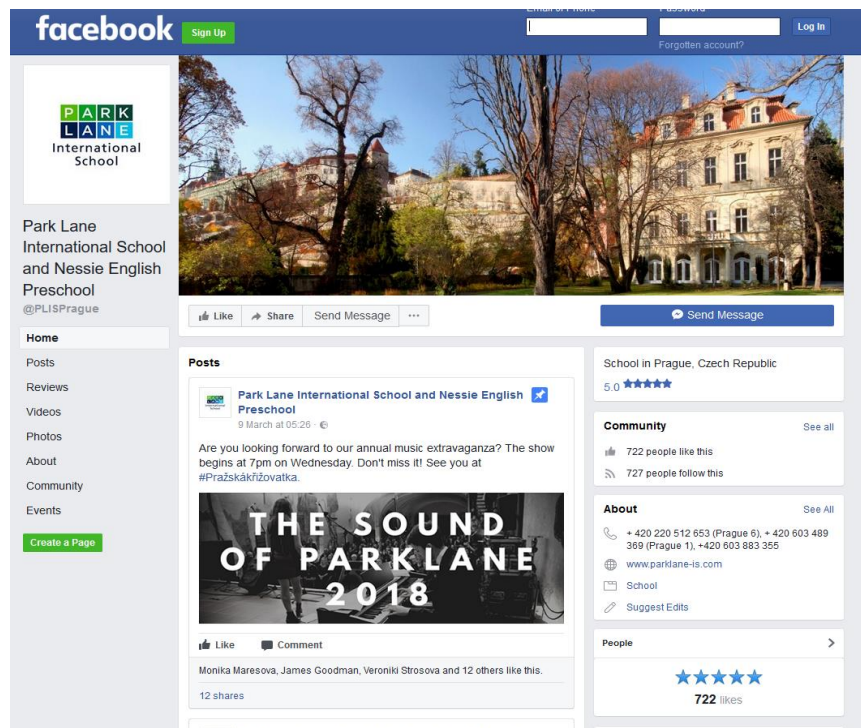
Nowadays, social media represent a popular way of communication by various organisations and people in general. We will have a closer look on the way Park Lane communicates via its accounts on different social media, particularly via Facebook, Twitter and YouTube.

FACEBOOK

On the Facebook, Park Lane is introduced under the name - **Park Lane International School and Nessie English Preschool** (Nessie is the name of Park Lane's preschool). Throughout its communication, Park Lane reports on its events and successes, basically informing about upcoming events or reports on the past events. It mainly serves for an informative purpose. Interactivity is rather small on the school Facebook page and could be bigger since that is what Facebook is for.

It is important to state that when considering social media, the biggest community of Park Lane followers can be found on Facebook. The Facebook page states there are 722 people liking the page and 727 people following it (Park Lane International School 2018b). Thus, Park Lane should try to strengthen its communication on Facebook since the largest community of followers can be found here when compared to other social media (see Twitter analysis).

Figure 4: Park Lane Facebook Account



Source: Park Lane International School 2018b

TWITTER

Park Lane is also active user of Twitter. Twitter serves as a good medium for sharing short stories about events, achievements and learning process. We can observe that especially the communication of learning process at Park Lane is supported via Twitter.

What is interesting, principal of Park Lane has his own Twitter account where he shares information of different departments as well as his own. This account has the biggest number of followers – 215 (Ingarfield 2018). In fact, it is his Twitter account where the visitor of school website is redirected when clicking on the icon of Twitter published on the school website. Moreover, different departments have its own Twitter accounts and share information of their own, so people can specifically choose in what information from which department they are interested in. There is also a separate account for Park Lane Trips. Twitter for Park Lane educational trips has 97 followers making it the most popular Twitter account of Park Lane after principal's Twitter account. (Park Lane International School 2018d). We can observe that school departments have more space to

describe the work of students in detail when comparing with the school website. In the Figure 5, we can see that Twitter posts are for example showing children “in action” during history class (Humanities Department 2018). So unlike Facebook which is similar to school website, communication via Twitter accounts of different departments is clearly different and brings Park Lane to life.

Figure 5: Park Lane Twitter account



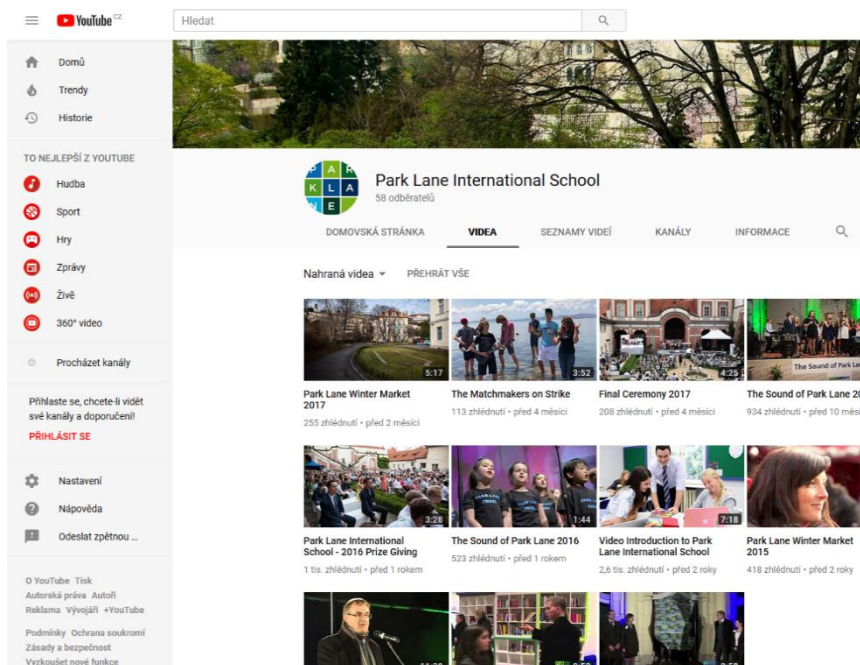
Source: Humanities Department 2018

YOUTUBE

The YouTube account of Park Lane can also be found, but it is not largely used. Park Lane Introduction video can be found here and a few of the videos. No information about the school can be found on this page which makes the account incomplete and may send the wrong kind of message (Park Lane International School 2018c). Therefore, if the account already exists, it should provide at least basic information so it does not appear incomplete. Nevertheless, Park Lane uses videos in its communication in a way that it

shares them directly either on its website or on the social media without the support of YouTube account.

Figure 6: Park Lane YouTube Account



Source: Park Lane International School 2018c

We can conclude that it is important that people are aware of the existence of school presence on social media. Although with the content of high quality, Park Lane Twitter accounts have still considerably small number of followers. It is important to attract parents to follow its accounts so that the message reaches its target group. School can attract more parents to follow their accounts by providing visible direct links on its school website and asking them directly to follow. In this way, it can enlarge its social media community and make the communication more effective.

7.1.3 PR analysis

As to the PR analysis, we focused on the analysis of articles. Many articles about Park Lane can be found on the internet. They can be divided into two main categories, addressing school's two main target groups: locals and expatriates.

a) locals

When reaching the Czech people, school is focusing its communication on the following websites: iDnes.cz, luxus.cz, ceskaskola.cz, deti.mensa.cz. For the Czech audience, the strengths of international school as oppose to local school are highlighted. The advantages such as language of instruction, better chances for quality university education abroad are emphasised. Park Lane is also communicating its scholarship programme for gifted children. As to the iDNES.cz website, following titles were found: *Mezinárodní škola vašemu dítěti zajistí budoucnost u nás i v zahraničí* (International school will ensure your child's future in our country and abroad – own translation) (iDNES.cz 2015) or *Park Lane International School nabízí atraktivní stipendijní program* (Park Lane International School offers an attractive scholarship program – own translation) (iDNES.cz 2017). The main target group of deti.mensa.cz website are gifted, talented children and their parents. Therefore, school communicates mainly its scholarship programme with the article: *Park Lane International School: Stipendijní program 2013/2014 pro talentované studenty* (Park Lane International School: 2013/2014 scholarship programme for talented students – own translation) (deti.mensa.cz 2013).

Moreover, Park Lane also participates on education fair in Prague focusing on the communication with Czech parents and strengthening English as a language of instruction in the article called: *Proč zvolit mezinárodní školu Park Lane International School?* (Why choose Park Lane International School? - own translation) (Incheba Expo Praha 2014).

b) expatriates

To communicate specifically with expatriates, Park Lane is concentrating on the communication via business portals such as PragueConnect.cz or czechmarketplace.cz, targeting business professionals living in Prague. Articles come mainly in form of interviews with the school principal such as: *Interview with Paul Ingarfield – Principal of Park Lane International School - Prague Connect* (Matthew n.d.) or *Park Lane International School has a new Principal Mr Paul Ingarfield* (Czech Market Place 2012).

Park Lane communication is also visible on the foreign portals addressing expatriate families thinking about moving to Prague. Their aim is to provide support for expatriates and inform them so they can better settle in. It is for example PragueStay.com portal or

Expats.cz. We can claim that especially communication on Expats.cz is important since it is probably the most well-known English-speaking website in the Czech Republic.

- **PragueStay.com profile of Park Lane**

At this portal, Park Lane strengthens the following information in its short presentation text: location, what stages of education it offers, relationship of teachers to students, school facilities, emphasis on Czech language and culture, extra-curricular activities. However, we can observe the school motto and logo are not used (Prague Stay.com n.d.a).

Figure 7: PragueStay.com profile of Park Lane



Source: Prague Stay.com n.d.a

- **Expats.cz profile of Park Lane**

The school profile at Expats.cz is more developed when compared with the previous portal. The strong point is, that school has managed to introduce itself by using small amount of words successfully. By using bullet points, the profile sums up nicely all the relevant information about Park Lane in a coherent way. It clearly provides information about the following: location, mission, aims, programme, school campuses and facilities, staff. School also uses its strong identifiers - the school logo and motto. The strongest part of the profile comes in the end when school directly invites prospective parents together with their children to visit Park Lane (Expats.cz n.d.b).

Figure 8: Expats.cz profile of Park Lane



Source: Expats.cz n.d.b

Based on the detailed analysis of school communication, we can conclude that Park Lane's communication is truly rich as it tries to reach its target group by various channels as we have proved in this chapter.

7.2 Analysis of school competitors

When dealing with the school analysis, competitors' activities need to be included since they are always important in the context of school planning. The aim of this chapter is not to describe all competitor's activities. Rather, we will focus predominantly on distinctive features of Park Lane's competitors. We aim to analyse the competitors' mission, study programme, extra-curricular activities, location, facilities, size, fees and most importantly, how these schools communicate with the public. The choice was made in accord with the theoretical part of thesis and understanding that those are the activities schools use to differentiate themselves from others on the market. Moreover, they can contribute to the creation of specific school image.

When dealing with the activities of competitors we focused on two main competitors:

1. THE ENGLISH COLLEGE in PRAGUE (ECP) (secondary school only)
2. RIVERSIDE SCHOOL, PRAGUE (K-12 school)

It is important to note that Park Lane faces competition not only from schools falling into the same category of K-12 schools, but also the secondary school types only, which is the case of the English College in Prague. This means that these schools are competing for secondary school students. Both schools are using various tools to promote themselves and attract prospective students which will be evident from the following analysis.

7.2.1 The English College in Prague (ECP)

Presented information are dealing with the English College in Prague which offers secondary education only.

School mission:

As is stated on the school website, the mission of the English college is to provide education to the Czech students mainly, focusing on the development of their potential and preparing them for challenges they will face in the globalised world. We can observe that already in its mission, school focuses and approaches predominantly Czech students. However, the mission still lacks a clear point of differentiation.

Study programme:

The English College clearly distinguishes itself by providing its students not only with IB Diploma, but also with the Czech Maturita. Moreover, this college specializes in IB Diploma for 24 years, being the first school in the Czech Republic offering the programme. The college also proves success of the programme with its Alumni studying at prestigious universities around the world.

Extra-curricular activities:

College acknowledges the importance of extra-curricular activities when applying for the university. It introduced special programme called "*The :more programme*" which focuses on the development of students in various areas in the form of following activities: educational trips, sports days, charity work and volunteering, concerts, drama performances.

Location:

The school is located at Sokolovská street at Praha 9. Its location is favourable next to metro station Vysočanská.

Facilities:

The college does not emphasise its facilities since no information about them can be found on its official school website.

Size:

The school has about 370 students, the vast majority of them being Czech nationals (The English College in Prague 2018a).

Fees:

When comparing the fees of Park Lane and the English College in table 3 and 4, we can observe that fees of English College are comparatively lower. This may represent a positive factor for parents when choosing a prospective school.

Table 3: Park Lane Secondary School Fees

Park Lane Secondary school Fees	Annual Tuition Fee
Year 7	364 700 CZK
Year 8	364 700 CZK
Year 9	364 700 CZK
Year 10	387 000 CZK
Year 11	387 000 CZK
Year 12	419 400 CZK
Year 13	419 400 CZK

Source: Park Lane International School 2018f (author's own work)

Table 4: The English College Prague Fees

The English College Prague Fees	Annual Tuition Fee
Year 1-4	295 218 CZK
Year 5-6 IB and Maturita	306 606 CZK
Year 5-6 IB-only	344 898 CZK

Source: The English College in Prague 2018d (author's own work)

Communication:

We will start our communication analysis with the **school website** of the English College. **Structure** is an important feature of the website. Although being divided into different sections, we found the pages loaded on the website being ineffective since the visitor has to scroll down long pages. As a result, the website does not offer a user-friendly

experience. As to the **content** of communication, things that matter the most to prospective parents have clear separate sections in Park Lane's case. However, the information about school facilities could not be even found on the English College website even though it is an important characteristic of school.

Distinctive feature of the English College communication is the **usage of two prominent figures**. School boasts with its two founders, former Czech president Vaclav Havel and The Prince of Wales (Prince Charles). Being a school with the majority of Czech students, it is especially the power of connotations with Mr Havel which can work very well for the school. There is also a video attached to the website where Mr Havel is talking about the strengths of school. Without a doubt, the communication like this can have a positive impact on prospective parents' perceptions.

On its website, school also communicates its strengths and explains **why parents should choose the English College** by the following:

1. Expertise in IB Diploma in the Czech Republic
2. Prestigious universities the Alumni are attending
3. Active and independent learning
4. Native English staff
5. Recommendations of parents

School also provides facts and exact results of the students' successes in IB Diploma.

An interesting feature of school communication is the **ECP e-Newsletter** available at school website. It is graphically developed and provides texts in both English and Czech language. It informs about school activities and successes with lots of pictures and information. E-newsletter cannot be accessible on the websites of other schools, so it distinguishes the school communication of ECP from its competitors (The English College in Prague 2018a).

As to the communication on **social media**, school is directly asking whether the school website visitor wants more information and provides links to the school accounts on Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and Newsletter. ECP primarily communicates via its Twitter and Facebook account. Similarly as Park Lane, it has more followers on Facebook account (2160) than on Twitter (298). Via social media it communicates about school

events mostly (The English College in Prague 2018b, The English College in Prague 2018c).

The English College is also communicating via its profiles on both PragueStay.com and Expats.cz. On its **PragueStay.com profile**, the school is directly labelled as prestigious and of the highest quality. It emphasises its main strengths, which are the study opportunities it offers in the form of IB programme and the Czech Maturita. Again, it boasts with its two founders, President Havel and Prince of Wales (Prague Stay n.d.c). On its **Expats.cz profile**, school again stresses the selective nature of school. Moreover, it provides information about the year of establishment and exact number of students. Not surprisingly, it again mentions its patron Prince Charles, who should appeal to expatriate parents. It also boasts with its graduates who enter the world-class universities. The strong part of profile is definitely the review made by parent, stating that school is of exceptional quality (Expats.cz n.d.a).

7.2.2 Riverside School, Prague

Riverside school is a K-12 school, providing education for children leading to IB Diploma. What distinguishes this school is that it is a non-profit Christian organisation. Thus, all income of school is used for school facilities, programmes and teaching staff.

School mission:

In its mission statement, the school emphasises individual approach. It claims to ensure high quality of education with accordance to Christian ethos. The school is aiming to raise skilful citizens within a global society.

Study programme:

Riverside School provides full K-12 education leading to IB Diploma. However, IB Diploma is not a new programme as is the case of Park Lane. On the website the school emphasises that school curriculum is designed in a way that students are thirsty for knowledge and love learning.

Extra-curricular activities:

The school's strength lies in its extra-curricular activities. The offering of extra-curricular activities suggests that this school is "more than a school". Just to name a few: water

skiing, cookery, surfing, cheerleading, horse riding, canoeing or golf. Without a doubt, the extra-curricular activities are outstanding at Riverside. School also introduced programme called “Skills for life” which aim is to help pupils learn for real life.

Location:

Although being located outside of city centre, the school uses its wide environmental possibilities wisely for extra-curricular activities, such as the river. This can be viewed as a limitation of Park Lane since the city centre does not offer enough space for large playgrounds. Thus, we can observe that city centre location and outskirt location, both have its advantages and disadvantages.

Facilities:

The large campus with many playgrounds and possibilities are available. Riverside also provides accommodation for its students. Classes are spacious and modern with interactive white boards. Riverside provides many pictures and virtual tours showing its facilities rather than writing about them.

Size:

This school has more than 500 students of different nationalities.

Fees:

Just as Park Lane, Riverside offers discounts for siblings studying at the school. Moreover, it provides possibility of reduced tuition scholarships in certain cases (Riverside International School 2018b).

Table 5: Comparison of fees: Riverside School and Park Lane

Annual Tuition Fees	Riverside School Fees	Park Lane Fees
Year 1	351 000 CZK	313 600 CZK
Year 2	351 000 CZK	348 200 CZK
Year 3	416 000 CZK	348 200 CZK
Year 4	416 000 CZK	348 200 CZK
Year 5	416 000 CZK	348 200 CZK
Year 6	416 000 CZK	348 200 CZK
Year 7	428 000 CZK	364 700 CZK
Year 8	428 000 CZK	364 700 CZK
Year 9	428 000 CZK	364 700 CZK

Table 5 (continued)

Year 10	459 000 CZK	387 000 CZK
Year 11	459 000 CZK	387 000 CZK
Year 12	476 000 CZK	419 400 CZK
Year 13	476 000 CZK	419 400 CZK

Source: Park Lane International School 2018f, Riverside International School 2018d
(Author's own work)

From the overview in table 5 we can observe that fees at Park Lane are lower than at Riverside which can be a positive information for parents. On the other hand, Riverside is a non-profit organisation, so parents know the fees are used for the purpose of school facilities or pedagogical staff.

Communication:

When observing Riverside **school website**, the visitor can see an extensive amount of information. It is questionable whether it is **structured** well and serves its target group. On the other hand, it sends the message there is so much going on at school.

As to the **content** presentation, we found interesting the presentation of school with the use of citations from the inspection report. It is definitely a good idea how to promote school since it creates the sense of impartial, more credible information. School also places great attention on communication of students' achievements in two sub-sections, focusing separately on academic achievements and other students' successes. Such communication creates a feeling that its students are successful people and school is proud of them.

Another distinctive feature of the website is its section of news. We can observe this school used to present briefly its news in the form of **Bulletin**, however stopped using it. There was only one bulletin published in 2017. Therefore, it is questionable whether this section should have its place on the website. More successful way of regularly reporting on school events is in the form of photo gallery which can be found on the school website. The photo gallery is regularly updated as the events are taking place at school (Riverside International School 2018b).

On the website, there are also links for school **social media accounts** such as Instagram, YouTube, Facebook and Twitter. Riverside also directly asks visitors to follow Riverside

on Facebook and Twitter, which is a good idea also for other schools. However, school is not active user of **Twitter** or **Instagram**. It is interesting that school stopped using Twitter. On the other hand, the **YouTube** channel is used as a platform where school is sharing the videos of students as musicians which is a part of school program “Musicians for life”. We can see that school uses it smartly for a specific purpose and their YouTube channel has more than 400 followers (Riverside International School 2018c). **Facebook** is the second social media which Riverside is focusing on. Already the name of its Facebook page is striking. It is called *Friends of Riverside School, Prague*, which creates an emotional appeal. Also, a lot of positive reviews by parents can be found on the Facebook website, leaving kind messages to school (Riverside International School 2018a).

Riverside School also managed to develop its school profiles on PragueStay.com as well as Expats.cz, however, they are not very well developed. On its **PragueStay profile**, Riverside promotes its location as being romantic near Vltava River. School emphasises its Christian and non-profit nature. It promotes its UK and US staff, school curriculum and extracurricular activities. Moreover, it lists its memberships to different associations (Prague Stay n.d.b). **School’s profile on Expats.cz** is distinctive with its focus on community – local and international. Moreover, the Christian and non-profit nature of school is presented (Expats.cz n.d.c).

7.3 Research analysis

Presented subchapter deals with the analysis of qualitative data acquired during the interviews with parents. The aim of the research was to acquire their communication needs and preferences.

In the school context we can distinguish between two main waves of communication:

- attracting parents of potential students
- informing parents of enrolled students

In fact, the second wave of communication also serves as a source for prospective parents as it influences the WOM communication. Therefore, in our research we interviewed prospective as well as current parent. Both parents interviewed are over 40 years old, hold university degree and work in the positions that require higher educational degree. **First**

interviewee was represented by current Czech parent with children at Park Lane. This parent was interviewed face-to-face. On the other hand, **second person interviewed** was a prospective expatriate parent looking for international school in Prague for his child. Due to the distance, this parent was kindly asked to fill in the questions we had prepared. In this way we have managed to approach two people representing main target group of international schools in Prague – Czech parents preferring international schools and expatriates. We find this source valuable since it represents an authentic information obtained from the school target group. Shortened transcripts of interviews can be found in the appendix.

When dealing with communication strategy, we need to consider how and what to communicate to present certain image of school. The communication strategy is not only about media types but also about the content. The insights behind the decision-making process are also considered to be valuable to determine the right communication strategy for school. Following areas were covered in the research and will be discussed in detail. Firstly, we will discuss how Park Lane was discovered by parents, then media types used and content. Frequency of school communication as well as overall satisfaction will be discussed as well. Finally, decision making process will be studied in depth. In each part we will consult views of prospective and current parent simultaneously since they complement each other.

a) The way Park Lane was discovered by parents

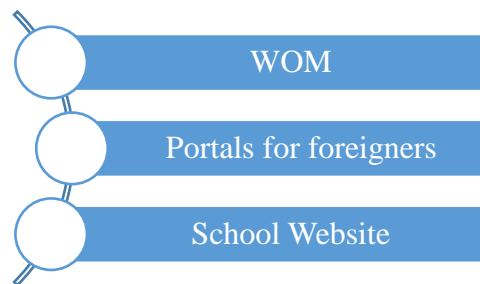
Prospective parent who is searching for international school in Prague stated two important sources introducing him to Park Lane. *“One of my colleagues told me that Park Lane was one of the best schools in Prague”*. This statement proves that WOM does play an important role when presenting school. Moreover, we can observe that positive experience was shared. Another source was still not the school website but portal for foreign people planning to move to Prague. He stated: *“... I came across the school profile on the Expats.cz website.”*. The advantage of such portal is the way how it lists all international schools available in Prague in one place. As prospective parent added: *“...I used expats.cz website, which proved very useful when researching different school options.”*

In the case of current parent, Park Lane was found on the internet. As was stated during

the interview, children of this parent started attending Park Lane already at pre-school and continued attending the school until now. At those times, the school was new, so there was no one to recommend it. This parent proved that presentation of school on the internet via its website plays vital role for discovering that school exists.

In fact, we found three main options how Park Lane was or can be introduced to prospective parents looking for an international school in Prague:

Figure 9: The way Park Lane was discovered by parents



Source: Author's own work

These three ways of communication should not be underestimated by school. On the way it is presented there depends whether a parent will consider a school further. Since they belong to the first sources with which parents will deal with, it is also where the first impressions and associations about schools are created in the minds of prospective parents. We also discovered it is important for Park Lane to pay attention to portals for foreigners to suit specific needs of expatriates. For them the process of searching for school is more demanding since they need to look for all the general information about the new country they are moving to. Therefore, it is important to try to make this process as smooth as possible for them.

b) Media types

When designing communication strategy, we need to deal with the choice and effective usage of media types. Therefore, we considered important to evaluate the opinions of parents on different types of media Park Lane currently uses.

Firstly, we focused on the school website. We identified that Park Lane **school website** is perceived positively by prospective parent and was described in the following way: “I

have found their website to be full of relevant information, which has helped me to determine whether this school meets my expectations or not.” What we found helpful is that prospective parent also compared the website to the websites of other international schools and stated the following: *“I have found their website to be very informative and user-friendly, as well as very well structured, which has saved me a lot of time when comparing Park Lane to other schools in Prague.”* This parent stated about competitors websites that he perceives that some information presented on them is rather redundant. Our competitor analysis also proved that school websites can sometimes comprise plenty of information to present as much as possible. However, we can observe that it can lead to confusion and is not suitable for our target group. Nevertheless, Park Lane school website proved to serve its purpose of informing and presenting the school in a way prospective parent finds helpful. It seems that the key for successful school website is to structure it appropriately as well as decide beforehand which information is relevant to parents.

Current parent admitted he does not use website very often since he perceives it as a source of general information not directed to him. He stated he uses website only occasionally to look at the school calendar and contacts for teachers. Thus, we can observe the website as a media type is more useful for presentation of school to prospective parents.

Social media are popular media, which are usually used on daily basis, unlike the school website which is not a media type which people would monitor every day. When dealing with additional information, perhaps mainly about daily school life, social media can serve the role perfectly. In this way, school can reach its target group with the message more successfully. Also, our prospective parent confirmed: *“Yes, I use Facebook and Twitter on a daily basis.”* Prospective parent, using mainly Twitter, emphasized Park Lane’s communication via Twitter, he stated: *“...I really like the fact that many departments use twitter to display the students’ work and celebrate their successes. As a prospective parent, I find it useful to see what sort of activities and events the Park Lane students participate in, both inside and outside of the classroom.”* We can observe parents are interested in different activities children can experience at school. Social media provide additional space where school can present these activities. As we have spotted already, communication of all information via one media type (typically school

website) can lead to inefficient, time-consuming presentation of school and confusion. It seems that by focusing different contents on different media types school can communicate more effectively.

Unlike prospective parent, current parent stated he does not use social media and does not need interaction because of additional time needed: “...it is an extra time I would have to spent on the internet, which is not something I am looking for.” It is important to note that our target group is represented by successful, busy people having preference of saving time as we have found during the interviews. Communication via social media may not suit everyone needs but it is good that it is there for those who are looking for such kind of communication. Also, our competitor analysis proved various schools are using social media for communication, although it needs to be stated that active participation varies among schools. We could also observe certain social media types may serve different specific roles.

The importance of traditional way of school communication via **brochures** seem to be falling with the presence of online communication. Prospective parent stated the following: “I did not consult any brochures, since I found all the information about the school on their website.” People seem to prefer finding information about potential school on the internet rather than via traditional channels because it is more convenient. Moreover, school website can already offer more information than a brochure or leaflet, thus it can be more informative and valuable to potential parent.

Despite the rise of online communication, the role of personal communication is irreplaceable in the process of school choice. Both parents interviewed perceive personal visit at school as influential and having a massive impact on their school choice. Prospective parents have two options – they can either visit official school **Open Day** or arrange school visit independently. Prospective parent stated that school visit has always played a vital part in his school decision making process. He also emphasised: “The visit as such, definitely influenced my decision, as not only could I see for myself what the school offers, but I was also given the opportunity to talk to teachers and other members of staff.” On the question whether he considers school visit to be important he also added: “Absolutely, I think every parent together with their child should visit the school they are considering, as sometimes the brochures and websites can be rather misleading or

deceptive.”. We can notice that school image perceived during school visit is viewed as reliable since parents can see “for themselves” the reality of school. This might not be the case of website presentation which can be misleading as our prospective parent observed.

When talking about school visit with the current parent, its importance in the final step in decision making process was proved. The current parent of Park Lane stated about his school visit: “...*I liked the atmosphere, I liked the people, I liked the place better than the other ones and that was how I made the decision.*” Clearly, it is real atmosphere experienced at school premises that influences parents’ decision. Therefore, schools should pay a special attention to Open days and independent school visits since they have a powerful effect on the final school choice.

Additionally, it is important for schools to distinguish between the communication needs of prospective and current parents. Prospective parents will usually look for general information, at least at the first stage of school choice, whereas current parents are in the position of searching for specific information. Therefore, their media types preferences can differ. Both parents were asked to state their **preferred way the school approaches them**. For the current parent following three ways of communication stated in Figure 10 are most preferred. Other ways of communication are considered irrelevant.

Figure 10: Current parent: preferred communication

Most preferred	1. Email communication
	2. Telephone communication
	3. School website

Source: Author’s own work

We can observe that specifically first two most preferred ways are very personalised ways of communication. This parent also stressed several times the importance of personal communication: “...*Electronic way is fine. But sometimes personal. You know some things concerning the academic content really need to be explained, it’s a British curriculum, it’s different from the Czech and parents need to understand, what and why the school does and how and..it’s got to be explained in person.*” Therefore, it is important to realise that some things need a dialogue rather than just one-way

communication.

Prospective parent ordered preferred types of communication in the way presented in Figure 11.

Figure 11: Prospective parent: preferred communication

Most preferred	1. E-newsletter
	2. Online portal for parents
	3. Social media (Facebook, Twitter..etc)
	4. Email
	5. Printed newsletter
	6. School website
	7. Telephone
	8. Newspaper

Source: Author's own work

We can see that preferences may vary considerably among parents. What we found these two parents have in common, is the preference of usage of email and E-newsletter. Current parent stated about the newsletter: “...*They sent weekly newsletter about what’s going on. It’s cool, by email, which I like..*” E-newsletter proved to be popular among both parents interviewed. It may be a good idea to share newsletter at the school website, so it would be available for every visitor interested in the school as we found in the case of English College in Prague.

We also tried to uncover the view on school presentation via school website as oppose to presentation of school by public in general and got the following reaction from the prospective parent: “*I would say that general public’s opinions about the school might be less biased and thus more credible, however I like to take into account both sources of information.*” Although WOM is presented as more trusted, we can see the sources complement each other.

c) Content

When dealing with communication strategy, content is as much important as media types. We asked both prospective and current parent to rate specific information about potential

school as very important, important or less important. Results obtained are presented in Figure 12 and 13.

Figure 12: Prospective parent preferences: content

Very important	1. Information about overall school performance, school reputation
	2. Curriculum information
	3. Information about school fees
Important	4. Information about pedagogical staff
	5. Information about student achievements and alumni
	6. Information about school culture
Less important	7. Information about school events and activities
	8. Extra-curricular activities
	9. Information about school lunch

Source: Author's own work

Figure 13: Current parent preferences: content

Very important	1. Information about overall school performance, school reputation
	2. Information about student achievements and alumni
Important	3. Information about school events and activities
	4. Information about pedagogical staff
	5. Information about school lunch
Less important	6. Curriculum information
	7. Extra-curricular activities
	8. Information about school fees
	9. Information about school culture

Source: Author's own work

We can observe that school reputation belongs among most important factors for parents. Thus, every school should try to cultivate its reputation and inform about the school

performance. Current parent also added: "...it's very important for me - the school performance....Reputation is important for me because it is interconnected to the academic content." Information about school achievements and alumni play a vital role for parents. For a prospective parent naturally also general information about curriculum, fees and pedagogical staff were rated among the most important. As to the current parent, sharing information about school curriculum or fees is less important to him since this parent is already familiar with this kind of information. It is interesting to see, that information about extra-curricular activities were rated as less important. Therefore, it is questionable whether rich offering of extra-curricular activities at Riverside school is that relevant to parents.

We can conclude that school reputation is very important for both current and prospective parent and thus proved what was stated in theoretical part. Reputation influences what associations are created with certain school. It is an important factor which places the school among other competitive schools since it is highly relevant to parents.

As to the content of school communication, both parents also stressed the importance of sharing students' achievements. Prospective parent appreciates the way Park Lane communicates students' achievements and told us: "*I think the school does a great job when celebrating its students' achievements and I always like to read stories about what these students have accomplished.*" Current parent stressed that by doing so, the support of school is presented which is again relevant information for parents: "*...and I think school should present the achievements of its students. It should be there. But again, for me as a parent, it's good to know that the school can support students in various activities. That's the information I like.*"

In our analysis of Park Lane communication, we emphasised its communication of noticeable school motto "*...preparing the young people of today for the unknown occupations of tomorrow*". Therefore, we decided to study what parents think about it. Our research proved success of the school motto. Prospective parent even stated that this motto sets Park Lane apart from other international school. He said: "*It is very relevant to current globalised world and I think it distinguishes Park Lane straight away from other more traditional and academically oriented schools in Prague.*" Current parent stated about the school motto: "*This is nice one. And they try to develop all source of skills of*

children so that's good." We believe it is important to acknowledge the success of the school motto. We proved that message of school presented in its motto is relevant to target group.

d) Frequency of communication

During the interview, we also dealt with the frequency of school communication, which is the issue schools need to deal with when designing their communication strategy. Current parent provided an insightful view stating that perhaps parents of smaller children require more frequent communication. He also explained: *"It's an emotional thing. If you have a small child, you want to know everything."* Thus, we can recommend that, perhaps, the communication towards parents with children at pre-school or lower stages should be more frequent when compared to the communication to parents of older children who are more independent. Also in the connection with frequency of communication, current parent stated: *"I really, after all those years, I trust the school and I believe that if they need something, they contact me and if I need something I contact them."* This statement is important because it proves that right communication creates trust and is connected with loyalty to school.

e) Overall satisfaction

The overall satisfaction with school communication was discussed with current parent. We found he perceives the school communication as satisfying, however, he also pointed to some gaps in communication: *"Most of the time, I am well informed. Sometimes I could use more information, especially when it comes to the curriculum for the future. Because the school is still in the process of implementing the IGCSE and the IB programme, so there I could definitely use much more information and I would also appreciate if the school much more communicated not only with me, but more importantly with children, about, you know, about their potential future, future jobs, professions, because based on that they have to decide on their subjects for this programme. So, I think in that area, there should be much more information, especially for the children."* Being a developing school, Park Lane's task is to always inform about its plans and strategies for the future. Moreover, as this parent stressed, the communication of school with children is also significant. Thus, we can observe that school communication is viewed not only as a communication via different media types but also as every day communication with

children at school premises.

f) Decision making process

Without a doubt, the insights from decision making process can be valuable for creation of school communication strategy. They can serve well for the school to determine what information are relevant for parents. Therefore, we consulted with both parents the criteria when choosing a school.

Figure 14: Prospective parent: criteria in decision making process

Most important criteria	1. School culture
	2. School reputation
	3. Academic content
Source: Author's own work	

Figure 15: Current parent: criteria in decision making process

Most important criteria	1. Academic content
	2. Language of instruction
	3. School culture
Source: Author's own work	

Based on the results presented in Figure 14 and 15, we can observe that academic content and school culture were mentioned by both parents as most important. Thus, we can recommend that school should focus on the communication of these since they are important for parents when deciding. To attract new students, school should present its academic content in a comprehensible way so that parents understand, especially Czech parents, as our interviewee observed, might have problems with understanding of foreign curriculum. Also, values and school culture should be presented in an attractive way so that certain distinguishable character of school is created. We have dealt with school reputation as an important factor already, and again can see its significance. As to the language of instruction as an important criterion for Czech parent, we can state it is

something that communication specifically toward Czech parents can be focused on. As we have proved in the PR analysis, Park Lane is already emphasising this criterion specifically when approaching Czech parents. When dealing with other criteria, it is important to note that K-12 type of international school proved to be irrelevant criterion for both parents interviewed which also explains why the English College as a secondary school represents a potential competitor for Park Lane.

When it comes to decision making process, **needs and values** of parents need to be assessed. We find the statement made by current parent being important. He emphasised about Park Lane the following: “... *when it comes to values..is that the school..I think that children achieve from my perspective good academic results while enjoying it. They don't put unnecessary pressure on kids, and even if they have tests, somehow we've never, I think most of time, never had any big stress around it, which I know from many of my friends who have children at Czech schools. So somehow they manage to achieve these results..somehow..friendly.*” What is also important for him is that children enjoy themselves while learning: “...*kids enjoy the school, they enjoy the learning process, and at the same time, from our perspective, they have good knowledge.*” We can see that it is important for parents to see that children are happy at school and have good results at the same time.

Both parents stressed in the interviews that they prefer when school is developing various skills. It seems to be a valuable insight into their needs and thus should be supported via communication. Current parent continued with uncovering his values with the following: “... *the school teaches them different skills, not just knowledge, they teach them skills.*” He also stated that he perceives that when comparing with Czech schools, school does a better job when preparing children for real life. Prospective parent said about his needs: “*I think students should be actively involved in their learning and their teachers should support them in doing so. The focus should not be exclusively on high academic achievement, but also, and perhaps more importantly, on the development of students' skills and abilities. Students should also be able to apply the learned knowledge to real-life situations.*” We can observe for this parent academic achievement is not the only important factor. He also stressed active participation, support of academic staff in the learning process and development of skills.

We also asked our interviewees about **advantages of Park Lane**. Prospective parent mentioned mainly the city centre location of Park Lane as well as its staff and tuition fees which he is finding appropriate. Also, current parent stressed the significance of location of Park Lane when compared to other larger international schools. In fact, location was one of the reasons why those were never considered by him: *“From the perspective of location, we never considered them.”* And added: *...you know...much traveling..two hours to school...But they are comparable. Our kids have classmates from other schools..and I think there are not big differences in the results.”* Location really proved to be an important factor for parents. Parents interviewed confirmed the city centre location of Park Lane can be considered as its significant strength.

Without a doubt, pedagogical staff play an important role when choosing school. Teachers as providers of education at Park Lane are perceived positively by current parent: *“The big, big, big majority of them are enthusiastic people who like their job and like teaching children and have good results in it. So yes, good teaching staff.”* The important thing is that high quality of teachers is reflected on the students and parents can acknowledge that. Also, prospective parent mentioned UK-trained staff as being advantage of Park Lane.

Our research tried to uncover some of the insights of our target group. We also tried to consult our theoretical part of thesis and mostly proved its validity. We hope the information obtained can be helpful for the future school planning.

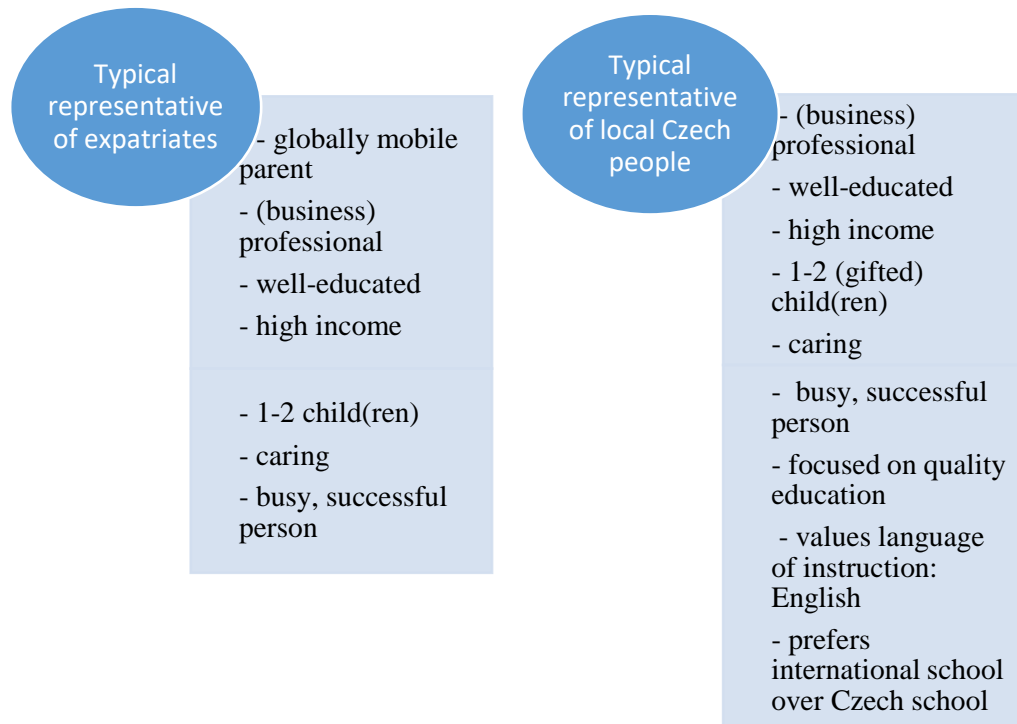
7.4 Defining target group

Without a doubt, one of the most important steps when creating successful communication strategy is to define who represents school target group(s). In this way, school can establish connection with parents which functions both ways. International schools in Prague provide a specific type of education that serves children of two main target groups: **expatriate professionals & local Czech people**. Furthermore, these target groups can be characterised more specifically as parents seeking education either at nursery, primary or secondary school.

School needs to manage communication with its target groups and create overall school identity. Therefore, we decided to create a profile of Park Lane target group in a coherent

way in a form of Figure 16 with the help of the profiles of our interviewees. In Figure 16, we can see that those two main target groups are very similar. However, we found it easier to describe segment presented by Czech parents.

Figure 16: Park Lane Target Group Characteristics



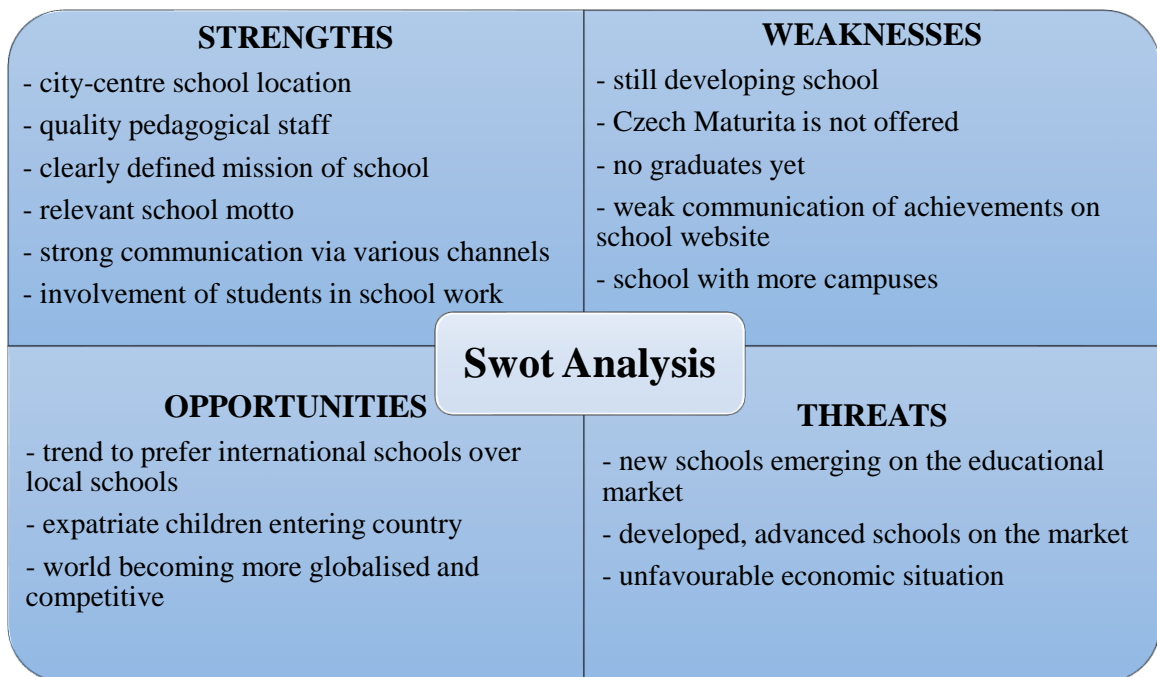
Source: Author's own work

When trying to describe these parents as one group in more detail, we can state these parents are demanding when making a school choice for their child. They are concerned with their child's education and are interested in detailed information about the school reputation, academic content, pedagogical staff and learning process itself. They like to assess all the information carefully. They want to see their children are growing up becoming knowledgeable citizens who can apply what they have learnt at school in real life. Our research also proved they value if school can develop various skills and abilities of their children. However, the simple fact that child is happy and can enjoy learning process is not of less value. They also expect school can create supportive, happy environment where children can use their potential fully.

7.5 SWOT analysis

Presented Swot analysis is based on the main findings from our analyses of Park Lane's marketing mix and communication, competitors analysis and information obtained via qualitative research. The aim of the analysis is to provide a reader with a comprehensible summary of school position on the international education market in Prague. Moreover, it can serve as a good source for communication strategy.

Figure 17: SWOT Analysis of Park Lane



Source: Author's own work

STRENGTHS

Our analyses proved that Park Lane is a school with many strengths, which are also communicated to its target group. **City-centre location** of Park Lane was identified as one of its biggest advantages. Both parents emphasised they value the specific location of Park Lane. Clearly, it is significant and relevant feature which also distinguishes the school from other international schools which are mainly located on the outskirts. It is also a feature that school communicates successfully and we can see that it has a vital place in its communication strategy.

Another strength of Park Lane is its **quality pedagogical staff** trained in the UK and their constant development. Pedagogical staff is important for creation of competitive

advantage. What we find important is that school is supporting the quality of pedagogical staff by communicating its partnership with Centre for Professional Learning in Prague (CPLP). It is the information which could not be found in the case of competitors and can again distinguish Park Lane if communicated widely.

We also found Park Lane **school mission** as clearly defined and supported by relevant **school motto**. In its mission, school focuses on preparing children for the rapidly developing world. The strength in this communication is that Park Lane is clearly defining for what it is preparing children unlike the other schools. Moreover, we found the school motto being relevant to its target group.

The **communication of school** proved to be strong, covering all the significant channels relevant to target group. Moreover, our research proved that Park Lane communication is perceived positively by parents.

Another thing which distinguishes Park Lane is the **involvement of students** in school communication and school activities as such. Students' involvement is communicated in creation of Park Lane Press, during school Open Days where students present their school, or in the school introductory video. Moreover, students' needs are taken into consideration when creating extra-curricular activities at Park Lane.

WEAKNESSES

One of the weaknesses of Park Lane is that school is still in **development stage**. The IB Diploma programme has only been introduced at Park Lane. There are still **no graduates yet**. This can be connected with uncertainty among parents. Especially with connection to this, we would emphasise significance of school communication. Parents can have many questions. Therefore, school needs to provide enough information in a way that it is comprehensible to target group. The gap was also identified in our research where the interviewee stated he feels that there could be more information about school development plans in connection with curriculum. It is a very sensitive thing because academic content belongs among the most important for parents and requires more than one-way communication.

Another weakness, especially to Czech parents and students, is the fact that school

decided to **not offer Czech Maturita**. It is important to note that Czech Maturita can be still highly important for some Czech parents and thus this decision can lead parents to reconsider their school choice. Again, communication with parents is extremely important in this case and justified reasons need to be provided in a way so that school can persuade parents about the right choice of strategy made by Park Lane.

Specifically in the communication on school website, we could observe **weak presentation of students' achievements** which is striking especially when comparing with school competitors communication. We will deal with this issue in more detail in our Conclusions and recommendations section.

When assessing organisational structure of Park Lane, we informed about separate **school campuses** for children studying at different stages where certain distances need to be covered. This can be viewed as a weakness when comparing with international schools with one large campus and large school community.

OPPORTUNITIES

There are still opportunities for Park Lane to grow and communication strategy is important in this case. As to the Czech target group, more and more parents tend to **prefer other than national school**. We found that parents perceive international schools as being able to better prepare children for real life as oppose to national schools. Therefore, communicating with Czech parents and highlighting contrasts with local national schools can be helpful.

Also, when considering the nationalities of pupils at Park Lane, we can observe that majority are of Czech nationality. Therefore, school can focus more on the **segment of expatriates** coming to country as well.

Another opportunity is represented by the fact that world is becoming **more globalised and competitive**. Therefore, more parents acknowledge the importance of quality international education for their children, so they can become successful people within globalised society. Also, the quality education represents valid competitive advantage.

THREATS

Park Lane, as any other international school in Prague, is facing threat in a form of new **international schools emerging** on the market, thus creating more options for prospective parents to choose from. However, it always takes some time until school proves its credibility and quality.

The biggest threat Park Lane faces today are already **developed, advanced schools** with strong proved positions on the market. In the case of Park Lane, it is especially schools which are taking away secondary school students. They are attracting them either on the offering of already developed IB Diploma programme and successful alumni or the opportunity to take Czech Maturita.

Another threat for school represents **unfavourable economic situation** in the country, meaning expatriates leaving the country and new ones not entering. Bad economic situation is also connected with inability of Czech parents to pay the fees.

It is visible from our research just how important is communication in school context. Without a doubt, every school has its strengths and weaknesses. How to deal with both, is to communicate in the right way.

8 Conclusions and recommendations

The aim of this chapter is to provide a summary of main findings of our research and analyses which will lead to our recommendations. We will support our proposals with the findings from our analyses. Thus, we should reach our main aim of the thesis and define suitable communication strategy for Park Lane International School. Since target group represents essential feature when creating communication strategy, we will consult our findings and recommendations with the insights from our research analysis.

8.1 Communication strategy: main findings and recommendations

Our research and analyses proved that communication strategy of Park Lane is very well developed. In this section we will emphasise strong points of communication as well as uncover some weak points and propose recommendations for the improvement. We have decided to create separate Table 6 focused on the school communication only (unlike SWOT analysis) in order to summarise school communication in more detail.

Table 6: Park Lane communication: strong and weak points

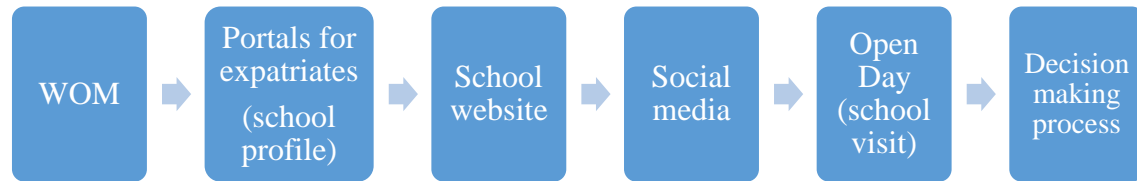
STRONG POINTS	WEAK POINTS
consistent content communication	weak communication of achievements on school website
efficient communication via significant communication channels	one-way communication of school mainly
relevant, clear, user-friendly school website	small number of followers and interactions on social media
strong communication of school life via Twitter	
involvement of students in communication	
communication of relevant motto	

Source: Author's own work

We will deal with the strong points and especially weak points in the further part where we will connect our conclusions with specific recommendations. Our research helped us identify common route of the process of searching for school which usually follows the steps described in Figure 18. Naturally, not all of these steps are covered in every case but may vary. We will base our conclusions and recommendations on these steps. Finally, we

will provide recommendations specifically to school content strategy.

Figure 18: Process of searching for prospective school



Source: Author's own work

a) WOM

WOM is especially important for the creation of awareness. Our qualitative data from the research proved what was stated in the theoretical part of the thesis, that WOM is a very common way how people discover certain school exists. Moreover, as our interviewee stated, positive or negative reviews are associated with WOM. In his case, Park Lane was associated with positive recommendation.

We would like to emphasise it is the current parents who create either positive or negative WOM by telling other parents about qualities of school. Their influence on decision making process of prospective parents is strong. Therefore, we can conclude that the communication with current parents and their satisfaction is interconnected with WOM communication and thus prospective parents.

WOM belongs to unplanned marketing communication, therefore it is not easily manageable. However, one of the ways how to manage it, is to control current parents and their satisfaction, especially those whose child(ren) are attending school for a longer time. According to researches, these people, so-called Opinion Leaders, like to talk about their experience more.

b) Portals for expatriates (school profile)

Our research uncovered that one of the popular ways for expatriates how to find potential international school is to search information on the websites specifically designed for expatriates moving to Prague. These websites are useful for expatriates when finding

information about potential new home, including school for their child. What they find helpful is the way how it is listing all school options at one place in a form of school profile.

Our analyses proved that all schools analysed are presenting their school profile on the most popular websites for expatriates Expats.cz as well as PragueStay.com. Therefore, school profile should be created in such a way that it is appealing to expatriates and can persuade them to follow to next stage of information searching which is the school website.

Segment of expatriates coming to Prague was defined as an opportunity for Park Lane, since nowadays there is a larger number of Czech students attending the school. Therefore, we propose stronger communication on these portals where school should differentiate itself as well as engage the prospective parents' attention. Our recommendation for Park Lane would be to not underestimate its profile creation. Profile at Expats.cz proved to be sufficient, informative and accompanied with the school motto and logo. However, we would recommend adjusting school profile at PragueStay.com which is lacking strong school identifiers - school logo and motto. We propose to identify school with its logo and motto wherever possible, since it stands for a short and very accurate way of communication and can help easily remember and distinguish the school.

c) School website

We found school website being a key channel for general school presentation. Park Lane school website is created in such a way that it is perceived as **user-friendly and containing relevant information** for target group. Moreover, when comparing Park Lane school website with the websites of its competitors, we discovered it does not contain common weaknesses such as need to scroll long pages or presentation of too many unnecessary information.

Nevertheless, we identified a **lack of communication of students' achievements** on the school website as its weak point. The section of academic achievements is in progress as school has no graduates yet. However, we would recommend communication of students' achievements also other than academic. As our research proved, parents are interested in all kinds of students' successes, not exclusively academic. During the analysis of

Riverside school website, we could also observe it contains two subsections dealing with achievements - one dealing with academic achievements and second with students' successes. When dealing with academic achievements, we identified the communication of competitors who communicate about their alumni as being their advantage, since they can already prove successes and results of their educational programme. In fact, presentation of successful students creates competitive advantage. Reputation is also built on this and as our research showed, reputation is one of the most relevant factors for our target group. Park Lane is still developing school and it will take some time until it builds its own successful alumni. However, we would recommend creating communication of its current successes as well. Although school is communicating students' achievements via social media, we believe it would be helpful for a prospective parent to see it in one section at the school website.

Another weak point was identified as a school **one-way communication**. In our theoretical part we showed that school website should no longer serve only for the informative purpose but also provide some space for interaction. Also, the parent interviewed stated he prefers personal communication because of some need of interaction. Therefore, we would propose setting of discussion groups on the school website. In this way, school can also get some valuable feedback. However, schools need to pay attention to be responsive.

We also prepared some small recommendations for Park Lane school website. In our qualitative research we identified that both parents prefer usage of newsletter as a form of school communication. In the case of the English College we could observe they publish their newsletter on their website with both English and Czech texts. In this way the content is accessible to wider audience. We would also recommend making newsletter accessible for prospective parents on the school website. As to the school introductory video, we would recommend placing it on the visible place of school website, preferably on the front page.

d) Social Media

Based on our research we could identify the advantage of social media in contrast to school website. Social media represent a useful tool for everyday school presentation since the usage of social media is established on a daily basis. By communicating via

social media, school can co-create its image together with the website. In this way, school will not cause confusion and dissatisfaction of parents when too much unnecessary information are presented on the website. This was identified in the case of Riverside school, which stopped using communication on Twitter and focused predominantly on the communication via school website. As to Park Lane, we identified an outstanding communication especially via Twitter, where school is presenting everyday life in a vivid way. Also, our prospective parent's opinion is that truly communication of different departments on Twitter is outstanding.

Nevertheless, we identified **small advertisement for school social media accounts** on the school website. This can be connected with rather small number of followers on Park Lane social media accounts. Thus, we would recommend asking directly parents on a visible place on school website to follow Park Lane on social media, where as was stated, quality content especially on Twitter is created. It is important that message can reach the target group. For example, the Riverside school, directly asks website's visitors to follow school on Facebook and Twitter. In fact, by enlarging school community on social media, the communication can become more effective.

As we identified the issue with **one way communication** on the school website, we also identified the problem of small interactivity on school social media accounts. To compare with school competitors, in their cases we could find numerous positive reviews on Facebook accounts. Thus, we would recommend for Park Lane to try to engage its followers on Facebook and perhaps invite them directly to leave reviews and comments. Also, the creation of engagement possibilities could be helpful in making school communication more interactive.

In our view, Park Lane should try to strengthen its communication on **Facebook** since there is the largest community of followers when compared to other social media, namely Twitter. In this way, the message could reach the large amount of people of school target group. As to the Facebook account, an interesting idea was presented by Riverside communication on Facebook where school changed the name of its profile account to *Friends of Riverside School* which instantly creates a sense of community.

As to the school **YouTube** channel, we found it rather incomplete with just few videos

and lack of information about school. We would recommend to complete the information about school since an incomplete look may not send an appropriate message. As to the competitors' youtube accounts, we found Riverside School's idea about using YouTube interesting. School is using its channel for presenting its pupils as a part of their programme Musicians of Riverside. This is definitely a good idea how to use the channel and adapt it specifically for the purposes of school. For Park Lane we would recommend to use Youtube for video sharing, as this website is the most popular website for videosharing and playing.

e) Open day/School visit

When talking about significant forms of school communication, online communication was mainly stressed. And those forms are important since certain impressions are created in the mind of target group. In fact, online and personal communication complement each other. Nevertheless, our qualitative research proved that personal communication during school visit is extremely important especially in the connection with a final step in decision making process. From what our interviewee stated we could say, that perhaps, personal visit represents the most reliable source for parents since they can observe personally the qualities of school. Therefore, we would recommend for Park Lane to pay special attention to personal visits. School should be able to answer all the questions of parents and present its premises and people in a presentable way so as to support what school communicates online. Perhaps, school should focus more importantly on presentation of people, since it is mainly their role that is significant when dealing with services. Moreover, the focus should be also on the atmosphere created at school, since decisions are based not only on facts but also largely on feelings as we have found.

f) Decision making process

We identified our target group as people who are quite demanding when making a school choice. Therefore, we consulted important things concerning the school choice with them. We found that information such as academic content, school reputation, distinct school culture and information about staff represent the most relevant information for parents. These are the information we would recommend for Park Lane to emphasise in its communication. At the same time, it can serve as something school can differentiate itself from competitors and thus create competitive advantage.

Our research proved that parents value if school can offer good knowledge as well as enjoyment for its pupils. Also, the support of school proved to be important. Parents mentioned they value if their children can develop various skills at school. They recognise and value the full development of child. Therefore, we would recommend for Park Lane to support these information in its communication since they are the most relevant for parents when deciding on particular school. We would also like to draw school's attention on the communication of school curriculum to Czech parents. As our Czech parent observed, understanding of many specific attributes of curriculum can be more demanding for Czech people, since the curriculum and study programme of international school is foreign to them. Also, since Park Lane is still developing, school needs to constantly inform about future strategies and plans.

When dealing with the content, we found Park Lane content communication being very consistent, supporting its school mission constantly. Involvement of students in school communication definitely distinguishes school. In the competitors analysis we discovered specific **content strategies** schools are using. For example, the English College is using strong figures in its presentation. It boasts with its founders – former President Havel and Prince Charles, which are both highly relevant figures to school target group. Interesting feature was identified also in the case of Riverside School, which is using citations from inspection report to present school. This can help school communication to create feeling of credibility and impartiality. Based on the theoretical part and researches, we would like to propose content strategy for Park Lane specifically based on stories of students and people at Park Lane in general. Stories could show what impact school has on students' life. Thus, the communication would be created around people and it would distinguish school communication from the others. To support this, we can claim that in general, stories represent a trend in the field of marketing nowadays and prove to be effective. Still bearing in mind school target group, we would propose strategy of sharing brief short stories. For this, perhaps special section called *School stories* could be created on the school website and shared via social media.

CONCLUSION

Presented diploma thesis dealt with communication strategy of international school. Our main aim was to determine suitable communication strategy for Park Lane International School to communicate effectively relevant information to specific target group.

In the theoretical part of the thesis we dealt with the essential theory related to marketing of educational services and marketing communication to support the practical part of the thesis. When creating communication strategy, schools need to take their whole mission and marketing mix into consideration. Not only certain media types are important for communication, but also the content provided. Moreover, all of this should be connected to specific school target group and certain school positioning and image should be created.

To be able to study international school market, we needed to define international school. We could observe there is in fact no single definition of this concept. We also found that some schools label themselves as international just to appeal to its target group as it can suggest better quality. Nevertheless, we defined one main common characteristic of international schools which is the usage of curriculum other than national (foreign). This view was applied further in the thesis when we were assessing international education market in Prague. We also dealt with the statistics which uncovered the rising number of international schools worldwide, especially in Asia. As to the international school market in Prague, we also discovered a growing tendency of this type of school. In Prague, there are fifteen international schools offering either primary or secondary education, or both primary and secondary education, and usually kindergarten as well. The newest one was opened in September 2017. This proved the importance of our work as we can observe the significance of school communication since parents are presented with wider option choices.

We showed that communication of international school is quite specific in its target group represented by expatriates and locals. Although originally designed for expatriate families, data are showing that nowadays international schools worldwide serve mainly locals, not expatriates. This is also visible in case of Park Lane. We would like to stress that school target group is quite demanding when choosing a school, therefore requires

demanding communication and school offering. We also found that school target group is rather busy, since it is represented mainly by successful professionals. Throughout school communication, content as well as media types need to be adjusted in some cases. As to the content, communication towards locals is specific as it should mainly communicate international school advantages as oppose to local schools. When dealing with expatriates, school needs to monitor places where expatriates can be found. In our case, we discovered that school communication can be useful on the websites where expatriates can find all the helpful information when moving to foreign countries, such as Expats.cz website. They find it helpful, since on these pages they can find all international schools listed.

Our SWOT analysis of Park Lane uncovered some of the main school's strengths and weaknesses. One of its main advantages is its city-centre location and quality pedagogical staff. Its quality is supported by school partnership with the centre which provides support in quality teaching and learning. We also found Park Lane's school mission to be clearly defined, focusing on rapid development of the world in the current context of digital revolution, or Industry 4.0. Moreover, our research proved that school motto created around this idea is perceived positively and is relevant to school target group. Overall, we found Park Lane communication to be very successful as plenty of significant channels are used and relevant information are provided in a clear, coherent and consistent way. Moreover, what distinguishes school communication from the others is the involvement of students in its communication either during Open Days or in school introductory video. Those strengths should be supported by school communication. One of the school weaknesses is the fact that Park Lane is still developing school and does not have graduates yet. Thus, proving its reputation and creating certain image can be rather demanding when comparing to the competitors who have already managed to create their successful alumni and communicate their successes. This is also connected with school weak communication of students' achievements on school website, where we would propose communicating successes also other than academic. With regard to the segment of local Czech people, one of the weaknesses is that the school offering is lacking the Czech Maturita. We can conclude that as the world is constantly developing globally, becoming more competitive, we can expect trend of rising number of international schools and demand, since the quality education can represent a valuable competitive

advantage. Emerging international schools, as well as already developed schools represent the main threat for Park Lane and other schools on the international education market.

We also dealt with the analysis of significant forms of school communication. Our research showed that WOM communication is a relevant channel for creation of awareness of school as well as a channel for sharing positive or negative experience. We found school online communication being relevant to parents nowadays. School website proved to be the main channel for presentation of general facts about school. On the other hand, social media represent a useful tool for school everyday life presentation. Its role is to complement the presentation on school website, so as to make the whole communication more structured. However, we would like to point out especially to the personal communication during the school visit. As our research proved, this can have the biggest impact on final decision of parents on school.

To communicate effectively, we would recommend communicating in a well-structured and coherent way relevant information as Park Lane has been doing successfully so far. Our advice would be to apply the principle “less is more” as communicating plenty of information can appear as rather chaotic, especially on the school website. We would rather recommend combining school website communication with communication via social media which provide an additional space for school communication. However, we want to point out that school needs to inform in a visible way, or even ask parents directly to follow school on social media so that the message can reach its target group. Moreover, we identified one-way communication as a weak point of Park Lane. In comparison with the school competitors, we identified weak interactivity and small number of reviews. Therefore, we recommended to focus on making the school communication more interactive and engaging. We also found the usage of school logo and motto in communication as a good way how to quickly distinguish school and would recommend using it throughout different channels of communication.

As to the issue of relevant information, we found that schools should focus mainly on the communication of academic content, school culture, reputation and students’ achievements as it can shape the school image in the way that is relevant to target group. Especially with communication of students’ achievements, school can create reputation

and position itself by creating a certain image. School image is significant as it is interconnected with reputation and this, as we have proved, can be deciding factor. School should communicate in such a way that it creates image which is connected with positive associations. In fact, in the context of the promotion of services we always speak about image promotion since services are intangible. One of the ways how to co-create the image is to focus on distinctive and differentiating attributes from the competitors – distinction can be made in terms of study programme, facilities, pedagogical staff, size, location and so on. As we have found, Park Lane city-centre location or small family-like atmosphere create certain image. Also, representation of quality pedagogical staff sets school apart and creates quality image.

We can conclude that decision making process about school is based on both – facts and feelings. School website should predominantly provide parents with relevant facts about school. As we could observe, communication via social media is more connected with feelings as everyday life of pupils can be presented. Personal school visit is definitely associated with feelings as we have noted. Atmosphere experienced at school premises has a massive impact on decision making process. To connect with parents through feelings, we recommended specific content strategy based on school stories which can provide a vivid and touching perspective on school life.

Ideally, successful school communication should lead to rising number of quality enrolled students. This is perhaps one of the main indicators which determines whether the communication strategy was successful or not. We hope our conclusions and recommendations could be helpful for this aim.

Although connecting marketing to education sector is still quite controversial, we can see that it is becoming inevitable. We believe effective school communication is important not only for schools to attract best students, but also for students and their parents to find suitable school which can meet their expectations and needs.

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