Article

Analysis of the Awareness and Popularity of the Brand of a Selected Education and Research Library in the Czech Republic: A Case Study

Dita Hommerová [1], **Karel Šrédl** [2,]* and **Kristýna Dbalá** [1]

1   Department of Marketing, Trade and Services, Faculty of Economics, University of West Bohemia, Univerzitní 8, 306 14 Pilsen, Czech Republic; hommer@kmo.zcu.cz (D.H.); kristyna.dbala@gmail.com (K.D.)
2   Department of Economic Theories, Faculty of Economics and Management, Czech University of Life Sciences Prague, Kamýcká 129, 165 00 Prague, Czech Republic
*   Correspondence: sredl@pef.czu.cz; Tel.: +420-224-382-339

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Abstract: This article aims to show the significance of branding in achieving set marketing goals and ensuring the sustainable development of a selected education and research library as a non-profit organization. The research is based on available data from foreign research studies concerning the image of a brand and the branding of non-profit organizations, and it expands on them by utilizing other methods of brand image measurement. A survey involving a sample of 220 respondents was conducted at the particular site, taking into account the library's target segments. An analysis of the awareness and favorability of its brand was also utilized to evaluate the library's image. The library has recently undergone a rebranding process and is applying a new visual style. The new visual style of the library resulting from the rebranding was met with a positive response in 69% of cases. Branding and appropriate marketing communication that reflects the latest trends can have a positive influence on the sustainability of libraries. The research results have contributed to the adoption of corrective measures in planning the strategy of the selected library, and the case study results can be applied across the board to other contributory organizations in the Czech Republic.

Keywords: brand; branding; image; library; positioning; strategy; sustainability

1. Introduction

Non-profit organizations have become an integral part not only of the advanced society of the 21st century, but also of a well-functioning market. They are an active intermediary between the public and the for-profit sector. Thus, their role of an independent mediator is entirely indispensable, as it is these organizations that have voluntarily taken upon themselves the responsibility of the sometimes irresponsible behavior of today's society. According to the Satellite Account of Non-profit Institutions of the Czech Statistical Office, at the end of 2015, there were more than 135,000 non-profit organizations registered in the Czech Republic. These include both non-governmental non-profit organizations as well as state-run (public) non-profit organizations [1].

Non-profit organizations play a key role not only in issues regarding the environment, poverty, human rights, and education, but also in many other crucial aspects of our lives. Therefore, their visibility and influence are gaining momentum. This is also evidenced in the rapid increase in the number of such organizations and the strengthening of the position they have reached in the market since their emergence. However, these entities face challenges whose character is identical for all players in the global market.

The growing competition, increasingly demanding customers, development, and innovations force every organization to search for new ways not only to achieve success but also to "merely"

survive. This may be one of the reasons why the non-profit sector has also become interested in effective management tools used in the for-profit sector, such as financial management, marketing management, strategic management tools, and many others. One such "discovered" marketing tool, and undoubtedly a key to achieving success in the non-profit sector is and will continue to be branding. Szondi [2] and Cheregi [3] argue that branding has had an important role in generating a discussion about identities.

The aim of this research article is to present the importance of branding and marketing communication in the non-profit sector, specifically in the library industry. Some of the most important representatives of culture are libraries, which provide irreplaceable services in the provision of learning and cultural needs not only to individuals but also to society as a whole, so their all-round development is an important public interest [4]. The chosen topic is applied, as a case study, to a selected education and research library, which is a public-benefit corporation established by the Pilsen Region. This type of library has its own distinguishing features and differs from university libraries and, in some respects, from other public libraries in its target groups and the related targeting of marketing tools. The differences between the two types of libraries are dealt with in detail in the research and article by Saunders and Jordan [5].

The Education and Research Library of the Pilsen Region has gradually changed its visual style in the course of its rebranding.

Branding currently constitutes an essential part of the marketing activities of most organizations. Having a strong, competitive brand that meets the needs of customers and caters for their wishes is vital to survival in the for-profit as well as the non-profit sectors. However, building a brand and managing it requires a lot of effort, and to ensure its success, one needs to view branding not only as a science, but also as an art form.

The environment in which organizations operate is increasingly competitive; new technologies are created and customers are becoming more and more demanding. Therefore, in recent years, the importance of branding has also started to affect the non-profit sector, which has come to realize that their success and sustainability, if not their outright survival, depend on the acquisition of branding techniques. Developing a suitable business model for a social venture is crucial because the right model with a sustainable value offering at its core can support the venture and direct it toward self-sustainability and competitiveness [6].

As organizations of the public non-profit sector, libraries must also demonstrate a certain ability to manage their brands. However, since this is a relatively new discipline in this field, there are still people who find branding useless for libraries. However, at a time when people are oversaturated with information, it is necessary for libraries to be able to attract their target customers and win their loyalty.

Research Design

The design of this research, including that of all of its stages, was based primarily on the approach by Yin [7]. The research focused on the Education and Research Library of the Pilsen Region (SVK PK) and was conducted utilizing a mixed research method. Applying a holistic approach, the aim was to identify the constitutive components of the case, capture them in a real-life context, and achieve a deeper level of understanding of the context. It can be expected that understanding one case will result in understanding other similar cases. The preparations for the questionnaire survey were preceded by personal, structured individual interviews with a member of library management and an analysis of available data (documents, website), getting acquainted with the communication tools utilized by the selected library and their perception as well as the perception of the library brand, and also with the library's existing customer segmentation, or more precisely segmentation criteria, which the library uses to identify its key segments [8]. The questionnaire was designed based on the outcome of the first stage of data collection. This survey, which was carried out both in the form of face-to-face questioning as well as an online survey, focused on two areas. The goal was to target as wide and demographically varied a sample of prospective clients of the library as possible. Both forms of data collection were

carried out concurrently over a period of two months in the second half of 2018. The first focused on determining the respondents' awareness of SVK PK and their attitudes toward it. The second area focused only on those respondents who are familiar with the library and therefore can evaluate factors related to the library's brand management. The studied case is presented as an integrated system of a single country study, as the study results can be applied to all public libraries in the Czech Republic as well as other contributory organizations. This article displays features of a descriptive methodology research study based on the latest international and domestic literature, and following the conducted case synthesis, it can form a base for future systematic research into the use of brands and brand management in the non-profit sector.

2. Theoretical Background

The aim of the case study presented in this article is to show the use of a brand awareness and popularity analysis in the case of a particular education and research library and to emphasize the general importance of branding (it is possible to consider branding as such or rebranding in the next stage) for non-profit organizations.

The authors have long been engaged in research on the non-profit sector, with marketing management as their main focus. As part of the research into the non-profit sector in the Czech Republic conducted in 2015, which collected data from 313 questionnaires, non-profit organizations were asked about five key areas (strategy, funding, human resources, social entrepreneurship, and public relations). The respondents also expressed their approach to branding see Figure 1.

Figure 1. Approach to branding in non-profit organizations in the Czech Republic.

This case study deals with the perception of the brand of a selected public education and research library, a contributory non-profit organization.

Brands are a fact of everyday life and an omnipresent reality for consumers. Understanding how consumers respond to brands—what they think and feel and how they act toward them—is a critical aspect of consumer research [9].

2.1. The Branding of a Library

Branding is considered to be one of the most important branches of marketing. The brand of a company is its most valuable asset. "Brand management (branding) is a strategic and integrated system of analytical, planning, budgeting and implementation activities that are part of the brand management process" [10].

Some may think that branding is a one-off event, but that is not the case. Branding is a continual process that will add certain value to the organization in the future. However, it is a demanding process in terms of its time, personnel, and financial requirements. In the non-profit sector, including libraries, a well-defined branding strategy can significantly improve brand awareness and the brand's

image, keep the organization's existing customers or users, appeal to new target groups, and improve its potential for fundraising [11].

In the commercial sector, a brand is an effective tool connecting the seller and the end user. Until recently, the non-profit sector ignored this fact. However, these days, organizations operating in the non-profit sector are aware of the fact that this market is also becoming saturated and that without a solid branding strategy, the brand will soon face problems staying competitive [12].

Implementing a brand in an organization is demanding not only in terms of time, but also staff and finances, and there is no unified procedure for its implementation.

A brand means a combination of symbols, words, or designs that set the product of a particular company apart from others. A brand evokes various expectations in the minds of customers. Brand equity is determined by how these expectations are met; therefore, rebranding is as important as building a strong brand at the start of the organization's development [13,14].

Khattab [15] states that the key components of the branding process are the brand image and the brand identity. To chart the development of customers and libraries, the authors use a sentiment analysis.

Branding is considered one of the most important marketing disciplines. It is necessary to master this science and also to possess some creativity. Yet the non-profit sector, and therefore libraries, too, may benefit greatly from a well set up branding strategy and the related branding, which contribute to significantly increasing the awareness of a brand, improving its image, keeping existing customers, approaching new target groups, and improving the options for fundraising [11].

Worley [16] looks at why librarians should brand, how they should do this, and what they should brand. The perspective of the user is also taken into account, and the importance of building trust and confidence with clients is identified as a key feature in the approach to branding and promotion.

Rebranding can come in the form of a gradual evolution or a radical changeover to a new name and overall identity. Whether or not the right time for rebranding has come can only be determined by marketing research into the awareness of the brand. The principles of rebranding are the same as when building a strong brand at the start of the organization's development [13].

The Strategy for the Development of Libraries in the Czech Republic for 2017–2020 also emphasizes the need to boost marketing activities aimed at existing as well as prospective end users and other stakeholders [17]. Branding or rebranding is one of the ways of achieving sustainability and success.

2.2. Definition of a Library

The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) defines a public library and its activity as follows: "A public library is an organization established, supported and funded by the community, either through local, regional or national government or through some other form of community organization. It provides access to knowledge, information, and works of the imagination through a range of resources and services and is equally available to all members of the community regardless of race, nationality, age, gender, religion, language, disability, economic and employment status, and educational attainment" [18]. However, the prevalent general opinion is that a library is a place where printed books can be borrowed [19].

According to ČSN ISO 11620, a library is "an organization or its part whose main purpose is to maintain a collection of documents and through its services make it easier to access these documents to meet the information, scientific, educational, and recreational needs of its users". Both definitions agree on libraries being organizations doing good in the community. Libraries provide library and information services.

According to data from the National Information and Consulting Center—NIPOS on Figure 2 [20], there were more than 5330 libraries in the Czech Republic in 2017, but the number of customers has dropped to 35.8% of the population. Upwards of 64 million items are checked out of libraries annually, and interest in library services is definitely not waning [20].
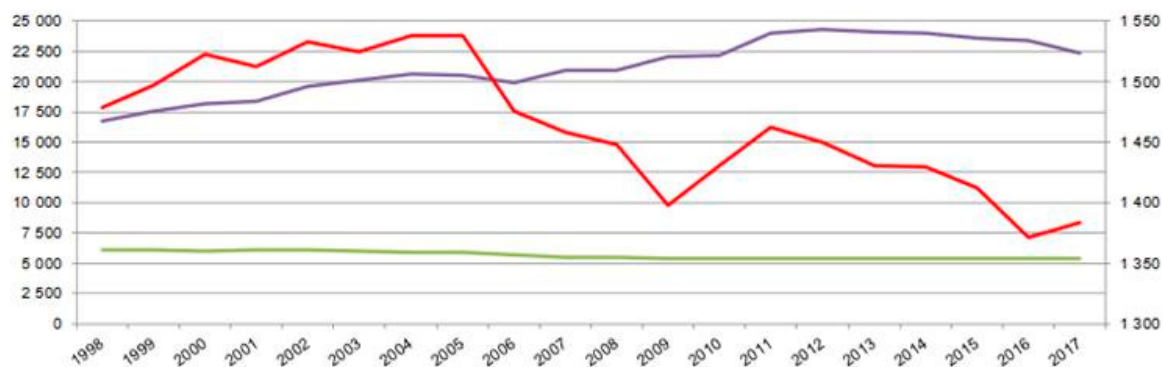
Figure 2. The development of selected library industry indicators in 1998–2017 in the Czech Republic.

2.3. A Library as a Brand

Despite their customer-oriented efforts, compared to theaters and museums, libraries in the Czech Republic are viewed as rather old-fashioned and lack adequate recognition. This fact reflects the situation and perception of libraries in Europe, unlike in the United States of America, where the well-established image of libraries is on a much higher level [21]. The reason is undoubtedly the inadequate image of libraries and also the growing competition in the information and media market. In the Czech Republic, this applies to both public and research libraries.

However, the unavoidable interaction with the environment, which is affected by social, economic, technological, and political factors, requires flexibility, adaptability to new trends, and therefore also a new orientation. In terms of social factors, there is a growing trend to provide leisure activities combining education and entertainment. There is an emerging possibility to market an organization as a modern service provider to the relevant segments (e.g., customers, politicians, sponsors . . .). It can be said that generally, the significance of free time activities and orientation toward experience are growing. As a result of the new trends, libraries are transforming into cultural centers offering services that go beyond the original mission of libraries [22]. The term "edutainment" expresses their current purpose, i.e., institutions where education and entertainment go hand in hand. According to the Concept for the Development of Libraries in the Czech Republic for 2017–2020 Including the Internetization of Libraries, these institutions are transforming into informational, educational, cultural, and community centers [23]. In order to be perceived this way by the general public and all the relevant target groups, it is crucial to intensively resolve the issue of implementing branding and rebranding in Czech libraries.

Prior to contemplating the use of branding for libraries, the key task is to define the optimum target groups in this relatively narrow segment of the non-profit sector for the purpose of relationship marketing. For example, the internal and external target groups include staff, customers, parent institution (e.g., the founding organization), the public, authorities, public administration, friends of the library, journalists, writers, book stores, printing companies, advertising agencies, commercial entities, and others [24].

In some countries, there is a so-called umbrella brand for a particular network of non-profit organizations, e.g., libraries. One such country is the Netherlands, where libraries are marketed in a unified fashion, operate using a unified database, and on the same principle, share data. It is a very well thought-out model that brings readers and users of other library services various advantages; however, upon a more thorough analysis, it also contains certain risks. In the Czech Republic, such a concept is currently unrealistic, and each library fights for itself in the competitive environment and must work on its individual brand [13].

2.4. Positioning a Brand

New options for branding can be found in the area of brand positioning. Brand positioning represents the particular position that a brand occupies in the minds of consumers. For target customers, this position should be so prominent that they prefer the given brand to the competition.

Nowadays, consumers are flooded with information about products and services. Reassessing and purchasing decisions are too complicated, and so customers assign products certain positions in their minds. They are ranked according to personal feelings, impressions, and perceptions, and they are compared with the competition. This process is done by customers without the help of marketers, although the latter's objective is not to leave this process to chance. [25].

When pressed for time, if a firm gains a certain position with a customer and manages consistently to satisfy their requirements, it is very likely that the conclusion will be drawn that there is no need to look for other brands and they will limit their choices in the individual categories to only a certain number of selected brands.

However, marketers can make several mistakes when working with positioning. According to Pelsmacker et al. [26], there are three types of such mistakes:

- insufficient positioning—the brand is insufficiently differentiated from its competition;
- exaggerated positioning—extreme efforts to stress the brand's benefits, which might lead to the loss of potential customers;
- confusing positioning—inconsistent communication and ill-considered selection of distribution channels.

Even if a firm avoids these mistakes, it might be difficult for a brand to find a place in consumers' minds among all the currently abundant advertising. However, there are various ways of dealing with this. First and foremost, a firm should identify the essential attributes of its brand and the benefits that it can demonstrate to consumers. An effective strategy is to focus on new groups of consumers, link the brand with various activities, or offer opportunities for which the use of the product is appropriate.

Non-profit managers may find that emphasizing specific brand strength dimensions in their marketing activities will depend upon their competitive positioning [27].

2.5. Definition of a Strong Brand and Its Image in the Context of Economic Reality

Creating a strong brand requires a combination of art and science. A strong brand results in customer loyalty, which must be based on a quality product. Despite these fundamental advantages, which can no longer be ignored, the non-profit sector still hesitates in implementing it [28]. Why is that? The general public as well as non-profit organizations themselves often refuse to admit the fact that their market is also becoming saturated, and sooner or later, they will have to face tough competition even in their industry.

All this applies not only to for-profit markets, but in the same measure also to the non-profit sector.

Brand management (branding) means planning, coordination, execution, and reviewing all measures to achieve a defined image with relevant internal and external groups.

Brand strategy is accordingly conceptualized as a social processual phenomenon that is interactively co-created by involved stakeholders, including brand management [29].

The main goals of branding include [10]:

- to add value to the product and thus transform it into a brand (to make the invisible visible),
- to maintain the differentiation advantage of the brand,
- to develop "brand thinking" as opposed to "product thinking".

A brand means a combination of symbols, words, or designs that set the product of a particular company apart from others. A brand evokes various expectations in the minds of customers. The value of this brand is determined by how these expectations are met. Michel and Rieunier [30] say that the brand is also a signifier associated with content in the consumer's mind.

In non-profit organizations, the value of a brand is reflected mainly in fundraising, i.e., a strong brand attracts not only donors, supporters, volunteers, and customers, but also the media, which ensure publicity for both organizations and fundraisers.

The elements of a brand include a name, logo, symbol, representative, slogan, jingle, and packaging.

There are a number of approaches that define what elements a brand should contain or what it should be like. The most concise and yet very apt and comprehensive is the definition by Neumeier [31], which says that a brand must be charismatic.

Figuratively speaking, by a brand, we mean all the product's attributes that leave a lasting emotional impression and a specific idea in the minds of customers.

There is a distinction between the terms brand image (perception of the image from the outside) and brand identity (expression of the state which the brand wants to achieve—this is formed by the name, the product's graphic design, marketing, sales and communication strategy, the perception of the brand from within the company). Brand identity consists of six dimensions: culture, behavior, product, markets and customers, design, and communication.

The image of non-profit organizations is critical for an organization in terms of its ability to attract and retain relationships with its diverse internal and external constituents [32].

To build a strong brand that can ensure sufficient recognition and a position such as that of libraries in the USA, it is necessary to effectively manage the marketing activities of these non-profit organizations.

Wymer et al. [27] present a conceptualization of non-profit brand strength and the development of its scale. Non-profit brand strength may be a leading indicator of change for desired marketing outcomes. The managers would be more likely to achieve brand success by focusing their efforts on increasing brand strength. Michel and Rieunier [30] measured non-profit brand image and built the scale, too.

The 2012 study by Michel and Rieunier was followed by Michaelidou, Micevsku, and Cadogan [33], who added two more studies. The follow-up studies offer an improved conceptualization and measurement of non-profit brand image and validate the scales via the use of two separate datasets. The new measure consists of six dimensions: usefulness, efficiency, effect, dynamism, reliability, and ethicality, which are significantly related to intentions to donate money and time.

Kato and Tsuda [34] in their research state that top brands of quality image were extracted from perceptions of customers and quantitatively evaluate the forming factors.

However, a brand does not necessarily have to be viewed only as a brand whose every aspect a non-profit organization designs and manages itself. A certain given brand (seal, certificate ...) can be, e.g., a certificate issued by institutions whose aim is to build a good name and reputation for non-profit organizations, just as it is the aim of the organization's own brand.

One example is the seal of reliability, e.g., the Reliable Public Benefit Organization, which has been launched on the Czech non-profit market by the Association of Public Benefit Organizations in the Czech Republic.

This seal is given to non-profit organizations that have undergone stringent assessment and meet high standards. The purpose of the seal is to increase their chances of sustainability thanks to the contribution toward building a good name and a guarantee of reliability in the operation of the organization, which is positively reflected in fundraising. The non-profit organization receives more prestige, and potential donors use this seal as a sort of lead in their decision-making as to which good causes to support financially.

The marketing of non-profit organizations has the general goal of increasing the attractiveness for supporters (submitting project application forms—public administration, foundations, campaign execution, special event execution, engagement of donors, fundraisers, and others), attractiveness for volunteers (identification of ways of gaining volunteers, conveying the organization's vision and mission to volunteers, advantages of volunteerism, and others), development of relationships (establishing and maintaining relations with members of management, institutions, volunteers, clients,

donors, providers of grants, public administration, the media, the public, etc.), relationship management, and communication (advertising, publicity, public relations, and others).

Each tool of the basic marketing mix has its own specifics when applied to non-profit organizations. The brand as such lies between the product and promotion. The theory looks at a brand as part of a product, but to ensure the required growth of the given brand's value, a well thought-out setting of the communication mix is key.

The basic marketing mix (the "4P" model), as in other non-profit organizations, must be expanded by another "P": "people". The IFLA Guidelines mention four specific categories of staff: qualified (expert) librarians, library assistants, specialist staff, and support staff [18]. The basic qualities and skills of library staff include a high level of interpersonal and communication skills, knowledge of the material that forms the library's collection and how to access it, organizational skills, skills for teamwork, etc.

The holistic model of brand placement by Schmidt includes [21] culture, communication, behavior, design, products, services, markets, and customers.

A clear decision to implement an active branding policy in a non-profit organization is a promising start. Starting a brand is not a one-off event, but a continual process that is time-consuming as well as demanding in terms of staff and finances. Non-profit organizations must also apply both external as well as internal branding. External branding focuses on positively affecting the minds of the general public, the target group, partners, donors, supporters, and others, while internal branding should lead to the ultimate identification of the particular organization's employees and volunteers with the brand's mission. In this respect, non-profit organizations have a sort of advantage over commercial companies, as through engagement in non-profit organizations, their employees are strongly motivated and drawn to the brand because of their higher needs being met rather than mere economic security being ensured.

The concept of brand value is based on two aspects, namely the value perceived by the customer and the financial value represented by the future profits generated by the brand and its benefits [26]. In modern marketing, this financial value is expressed in terms of brand equity. This value is a specific financial result that depends on the popularity of the brand. Brand equity is mistakenly used to represent the image, value, character, or personality of a brand. The understanding of the concept of brand value is similar among contemporary authors. It can be defined in the following terms. Keller [35] characterizes brand value from the customer's point of view in terms of high brand awareness, good knowledge of a brand, and strong, favorable, and unique brand associations. A consumer identifies with a brand at the moment when the consumer becomes loyal to the brand. According to Kotler et al. [36], brand value represents a positive difference where a customer's brand knowledge is reflected in his/her response to a product or service. Brands that earn more loyalty become more known, their perceived quality increases, and they have a higher value. One of the core assets on which brand value is built is customer value. Aaker [37] defines brand value as a set of assets (and liabilities) associated with a brand name and symbol that increases (or decreases) the value provided to a business and/or customer by a product or service. Aaker [37] includes the following in the main categories of this value: brand name recognition, brand loyalty, perceived quality, and brand associations. Aaker [37] distinguishes the customer's relationship to value into five types: a customer that changes brands and is not loyal to a particular brand, mainly for price reasons, a satisfied customer with no reason to change brands, a satisfied customer with variable costs who does not want to risk changing brands, a loyal customer who considers the brand as a friend, and a committed customer who is extremely loyal to the brand.

For a brand to become strong and bring benefits to the company, it should have the following characteristics according to Kotler and Keller [25]: the brand stands out in its ability to provide benefits that consumers truly desire, the brand remains relevant, the pricing strategy is based on the consumer's perception of value, the brand has the right positioning, the brand is consistent, the brand portfolio and hierarchy makes sense, the brand uses and coordinates marketing activities to create value.

2.6. Management of the Brand of a Selected Library and the Results of Benchmarking

The brand strategy should be reflected in all the library's marketing activities and be clearly linked to it. In our conditions, libraries are not associated with any umbrella brand, and so each library has to try and promote their brand on the market alone, and in such a way that they win themselves a good position among the competition [11,14].

In the Education and Research Library of the Pilsen Region, all this is the responsibility of the promotion and marketing department. It is responsible for the library's internal and external communication; it creates the communication strategy, prepares press releases and all other documents, communicates with the media, manages social networks, provides fundraising, organizes, implements, and promotes all library events, and does many other things besides that.

It is also important to have a certain brand story. Of course, with its almost 70 years of existence, the library has its own story, which visitors can learn about in guided tours.

In recent years, the library has gradually changed its visual style. The design has changed, from the logo to new colors, a website, and all the marketing tools—all of which are now clearly integrated. This was an important step for the library, as visual elements play one of the most important roles in branding.

Price is also a factor that influences branding. According to library law, basic library services are free. However, also in accordance with this law, libraries can provide paid services. For example, the library charges for registration and handling, late returns, inter-library services, prints and copies, renting of premises, and so on.

Relationships with customers should not be forgotten in the branding, either. These relationships can be influenced by customer experience, hearsay, and also the actual presentation of the library. This is why the library staff meets with various external coaches and participates in training in communication, language skills, and the ability to handle stress and conflict situations, which helps improve communication with customers.

The library determines the readers' needs and requirements by means of various surveys and questionnaires. At the same time, the library also allows the public to propose titles that it should buy for its funds, and the library can be contacted with inquiries via the "Ask the Library" service.

2.7. Points of Parity and Difference in the Implemented Benchmarking

One of the main elements of branding is differentiation. Differences help build a strong and well-known brand that is protected from the competition.

In the case of Education and Research Library of the Pilsen Region, its largest competitor, the Library of the University of West Bohemia, was the benchmark. The results below, given in the form of points of parity and difference, express the qualities these two libraries have in common and the differences that might be reflected in the branding strategy.

POPs, points of parity, are characteristics that the library and its competitor have in common. These might be the actual library and information services—on-site reading and lending services, inter-library services, electronic information sources, search and press services, etc.

PODs, points of difference, are characteristics that cannot be found in the competition. These could be, for example, a long history, a certain tradition, the cultural program, extensive book funds, the wide scope of services, the management of historical funds, a department of foreign collections, an in-house digitization center and, for many users, Saturday and holiday opening hours might be very helpful.

3. Materials and Methods

The subject of this research study was the current use of marketing activities by a selected library and subsequently the analysis of its existing branding. A questionnaire survey was used to analyze the branding of the Education and Research Library of the Pilsen Region (hereafter referred to by its Czech abbreviation, SVK PK). In an article entitled "Consumer Research Insights on Brands and

Branding: A JCR Curation", Keller [9] presents studies in this area listed in the Journal Citation Reports, thus documenting the current state of knowledge. In addition, as one of the leading experts in brands and branding, Keller summarizes the five main topics of research conducted in this area. These include the pleasure and/or pain of brands, brand attachment and loyalty, consumer relevance and distinctiveness in branding, consumer communications about brands, and managerial branding considerations. Similarly, Kashif and Udunuwara [38] conducted and published a systematic literature review and a future research agenda in branding. Oh et al. [39] divide research on brand and branding chronologically into three areas: the information, attribute, and brand equity, assigning dominant research methods to each of these areas. A comparable research proposal and resulting case study is presented by Rahmad et al. [40], who in his article explains the process and context of rebranding a selected public library in Malaysia.

The questionnaire was designed based on the results of individual structured interviews with a member of the library management, which was based on an analysis of available materials (documents, website) and the perception of the use of the library's communication tools, brand perception, and the existing key segments.

"Lastly, for both academics and managers to fully understand the effects of brands and branding, there needs to be deep, rich understanding of how consumers think, feel and act toward brands." Keller [8] provides several examples of specific research studies in the area of branding to present what variables were used to achieve this goal. The selected library's main variable and at the same time the main segmentation criterion affecting consumer behavior is age.

3.1. Research Objectives and the Formulation of a Hypothesis

The aim of the research described below is to analyze the factors associated with the branding of the selected library. These factors concern, in particular, familiarity with and attitudes toward the Education and Research Library of the Pilsen Region, including the library's rebranding and related new visual style, its marketing communication, and the services it provides.

The following analysis will help to confirm or refute the following hypothesis:

- Over 60% of respondents know the Education and Research Library of the Pilsen Region.
- As the library has been operating for over 70 years in the Pilsen Region, awareness of it among the inhabitants of the Pilsen Region (Pl) and its surroundings is assumed.
- The library's new visual style met with at least 50% positive feedback among respondents.
- The library has been changing gradually to the new visual style since 2013, when a new logo and new colors began to appear on its printed documents. In 2016, a new website and an online catalogue were launched. The new visual style is supposed to represent the library as a modern and vibrant institution that also cares about its traditional values.
- Over 20% of respondents who know the library follow it on social media.

The library is very active on social media, especially Facebook. The library's main target group is primarily students, who are certainly familiar with social media. This is why 20% viewership on social media is assumed.

3.2. Research Methodology—Survey

The research focused on two areas. The first was to determine people's awareness of SVK PK and the respondents' views of it. The second part focused only on those respondents who know the particular library and thus can evaluate the factors connected with managing the library's brand. These factors deal mostly with the respondents' awareness and opinions of SVK PK, the library's rebranding and the related new visual style, its marketing communication, and the services provided.

The questionnaire was distributed only among randomly selected Pilsen residents and people from areas close to the city, within 30 minutes' commuting distance. The research, including its pilot phase, was carried out in September and October 2018 in an online format (CAWI—computer-assisted

web interview) as well as in person (PAPI—paper and pen interview) with the objective of targeting the widest spectrum of respondents from the general public.

The questionnaire consisted mostly of closed questions, and each item contained the option "other", where respondents could state their own answer or express a different opinion. The questionnaire also included one open question, in the answer to which respondents could put forth suggestions or voice their observations and comments to further improve the activities of SVK PK.

Apart from questions about the library, the respondents were also asked identification questions inquiring about their gender and age. A total of 220 respondents took part in the survey, of whom 159 were women and 61 were men. The respondents were divided into five age categories according to the library's various target groups, i.e., 15–19 years of age, 20–26 years of age, 27–39 years of age, 40–59 years of age, and 60 and older. Respondents below the age of 15 were not included in the survey, as they do not belong to any of the library's target groups. For the purpose of this article, only the most interesting results of the conducted research were chosen.

The Table 1 clearly shows the predominance of women, who were more willing to fill in the form. The number of respondents decreases with higher age, as the questionnaire was first distributed online, which mostly affects the younger generation. It was possible to reach the older generation more in personal interviews. Thus, the sample of respondents was not entirely representative, but it was based on the internal history of the library, and when evaluating with the same target groups defined only by age, it worked in such a way as to maintain the continuity of using marketing activities on these groups. Based on experience, the library already removed gender from the segmentation criteria in the past and did not consider it important.

Table 1. Characteristics of respondents according to age.

	15–19	20–26	27–39	40–59	60 and Over	Total
Men	15 (27.8%)	22 (25.6%)	11 (28.9%)	8 (28.6%)	5 (35.7%)	61 (27.8%)
Women	39 (72.2%)	64 (74.4%)	27 (71.1%)	20 (71.4%)	9 (64.3%)	159 (72.2%)
Total	54 (100%)	86 (100%)	38 (100%)	28 (100%)	14 (100%)	220 (100%)

The first group consists of secondary school students, who visit the library primarily for its specialized literature. At this time, their awareness of the library is formed with the help of various school excursions and tours that the library provides.

The most numerous group is university students, who are respondents in the second age category. This group provided the greatest number of responses. Students use the library to borrow literature for their studies, to look up material in article databases, to process research information for their professional work, and also, for example, to study in the peace and quiet that the general reading room offers.

After graduating, students usually lose interest in the library's services. Upon starting work and a family, there is less free time that could be given over to cultural events in the library. However, this is a general societal problem, and so attracting this group of people is rather difficult.

When people no longer have to look after children, and consequently have more free time, their interest in the library's services grows again. However, work responsibilities still remain, and so their interest in the library is not so great as it once was.

In the library's experience, interest increases pre-retirement and during retirement. This age group is particularly interested in various events in the library, in books in the fiction section, and also in specialized literature that enriches their interest in the given field.

4. Results

4.1. The Analysis of the Brand's Awareness and Favorability

Brand awareness research is usually used in determining the brand's market position or in testing the effectiveness of its communication campaigns. To establish the respondents' awareness of the brand and their opinions of it, it is possible to use the analysis of the awareness and favorability of the brand. This analysis allows one ascertaining the brand's image, i.e., a set of ideas, notions, and impressions that respondents associate with the brand [25,41].

There are only two questions required for this analysis. The first one asks about the respondents' awareness of the particular brand. When answering whether they know the brand, respondents have a choice of five options on a scale from very good knowledge to an absolute lack thereof [25,41].

Answers to the question, "Do you know the Education and Research Library of the Pilsen Region (SVK PK)?", ranged over a five-point scale from very good knowledge to no knowledge whatsoever. The goal of this question was to find out the general awareness among respondents of the selected library. According to the results, approximately 74% of the respondents have a general awareness of the library, which is a very positive result. However, of these 74%, less than 27% said they knew the library very well or knew quite a lot about it. This group consisted mainly of respondents between 20 and 26 years of age, which corresponds with college students. Another 47% of the respondents only replied that they knew the library.

The other part of the analysis deals with the degree of favorability of the given brand. This question was given only to those respondents who said they had certain knowledge of the brand, i.e., respondents who had chosen one of the first three options: "Yes, I know it very well", "I know quite a lot about it", or "I know it."

The second question was, "What is your view of the Education and Research Library of the Pilsen Region (SVK PK)?" It was great news for SVK PK that none of the 163 respondents said they held a negative view of the library. The majority of respondents described their view as "Neutral" or "Rather positive", closely followed by the answer "Very positive". The distribution of the various answers was very similar across the different age groups of respondents. Larger value differences were seen in the 15–19 age group, i.e., mostly secondary school students. Thus, the view of SVK PK is affected more by the respondents' personal experience with the library than their age.

The acquired responses were transferred onto a position map, which shows the image of SVK PK. To be able to display the values graphically, first, it was necessary to assign points to the individual answers. The answers regarding the awareness of the library were assigned, in descending order, from five points to one point as follows:

- Yes, I know it very well: 5 pts
- I know quite a lot about it: 4 pts
- I know it: 3 pts
- I have heard about it: 2 pts
- I have never heard about it: 1 pt

In the same way, points were assigned to answers to the second question dealing with the favorability of the respondents' positions:

- Very positive: 5 pts
- Rather positive: 4 pts
- Neutral: 3 pts
- Rather negative: 2 pts
- Very negative: 1 pt

The weights of the answers were multiplied by the number of respondents who chose the particular answer. The sum of the values was then divided by the total number of responses, i.e., the number

of respondents. The position of the dot on the horizontal axis, expressing the awareness of the organization, was calculated in the following way (see Equation (1)):

$$(5*47) + (4*12) + (3*104) + (2*44) + (1*13)/220 = 3.16. \tag{1}$$

The second dot, expressing the favorability of the respondents' views, was calculated in a similar way. However, the total number of respondents is different, as we had subtracted the responses of those who do not know the library (see Equation (2)).

$$(5*47) + (4*56) + (3*60) + (2*0) + (1*0)/163 = 3.92 \tag{2}$$

The acquired values (see Table 2) were transferred onto a position map see Figure 3, where the resulting dot expresses the image of SVK PK.

Table 2. Values according to age group.

	15–19	20–26	27–39	40–59	60 and Over
Awareness	2.85	3.44	3.21	3.11	2.64
Level of favorable attitude	3.50	4.04	4.07	4.06	4.29
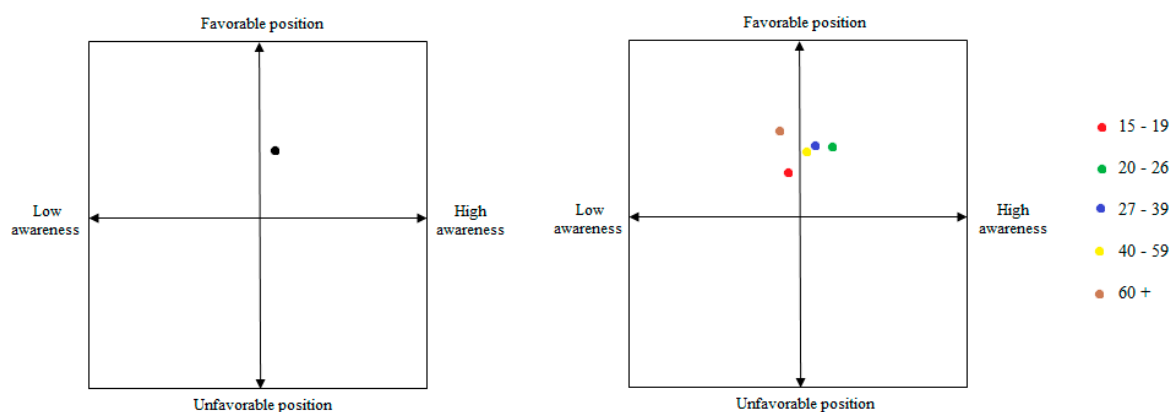
Figure 3. The overall image of the Education and Research Library of the Pilsen Region (SVK PK) and its image in the various age groups.

According to the position map, the dot representing the image of SVK PK is located in the first quadrant, which means both good awareness and a favorable position of the library. Although this is a positive fact, the values are near the borderline between the first and second quadrants. Thus, the library should work on enhancing people's awareness of its existence and activities to avoid ending up in the second quadrant. In practice, this means boosting the organization's communication activities to improve the perception of the brand.

4.2. Managing the Brand of a Selected Library and Its Communication

The second part of the questionnaire dealt with the library itself, so only those respondents who know the library took part in it. Only 163 respondents filled out this part of the questionnaire, and for the majority of the questions, they could choose either one or multiple answers. For this reason, the answers were evaluated based on their absolute frequency.

To its users, the library appears to be quite modern, yet it maintains its traditional values, and the majority of respondents consider it to be active in terms of cultural and social events. That is exactly the result the library wanted to achieve by its rebranding—to be a modern, living institution which at the same time continues to maintain its traditional values.

In 2012, the library started to gradually prepare for the transition to its new visual style. In 2013, in an open tender, the library chose its new logo, which was then incorporated into the graphic style of all of the library's printed and visual materials. In 2016, the library changed its website and also its online catalog.

In this part of the research, the objective was to determine how users of the library's services perceive the changes in its visual style see Figure 4.
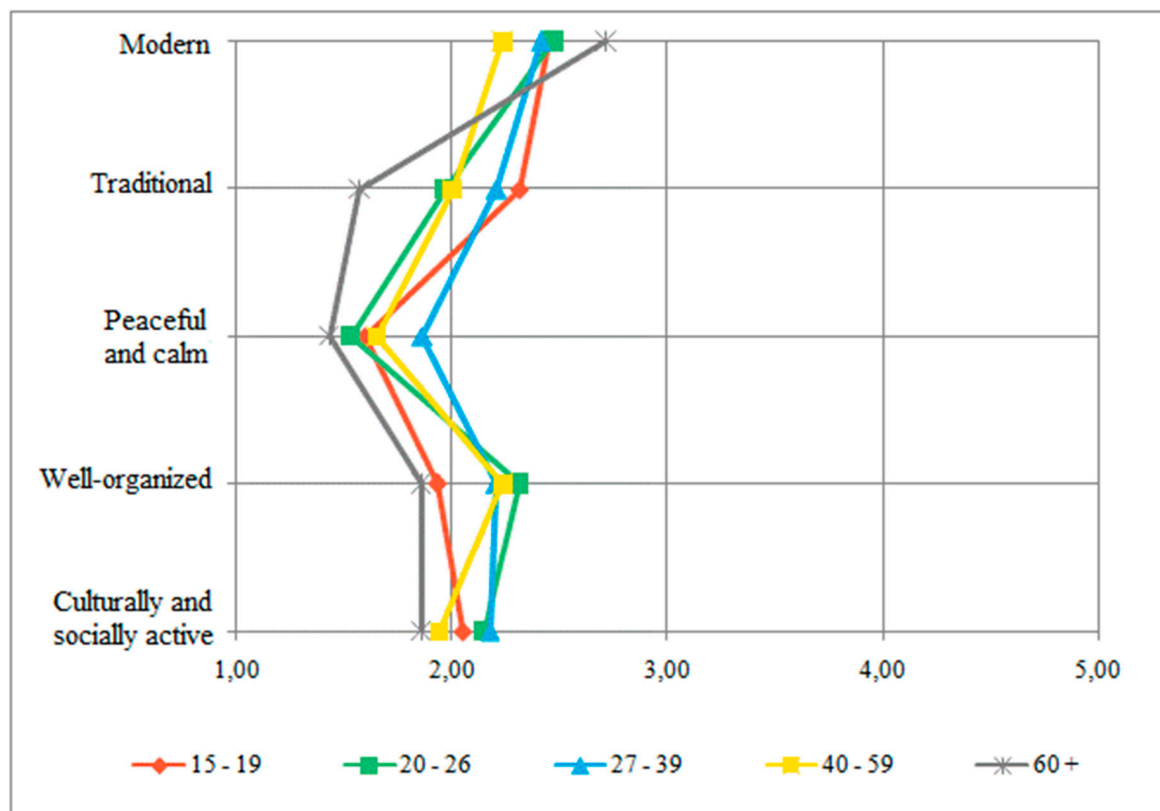

Figure 4. The characteristics of SVK PK according to the various age groups.

The library's new visual style was met mostly with positive reactions. The website was evaluated positively by 58% of the respondents; its online catalogue had 77% positive reactions, and the library's logo was well perceived by 72% of the respondents.

SVK PK utilizes several ways of letting people know of its brand. It is also very active on social media sites, and apart from the library services, it also engages in many interesting projects.

The library communicates its activities in several ways (Figure 5). As the results show, despite the library's efforts, the majority of respondents have not encountered any form of the library's communication (61 respondents—37.4%). Most frequently, the public encounters the library's direct presentation of its services (49 respondents—30.1%), which takes place in the form of various excursions or school visits. Respondents also come into contact with the library on the Internet (29 respondents—17.8%) and social media (40 respondents—24.5%). The library's communication through posters, leaflets, and monthly programs of the library's activities is also effective (47 respondents—28.8%). Although communication by means of television, the radio, and the press is considered to be the most effective, only a small number of respondents had encountered the library's communication through those channels.
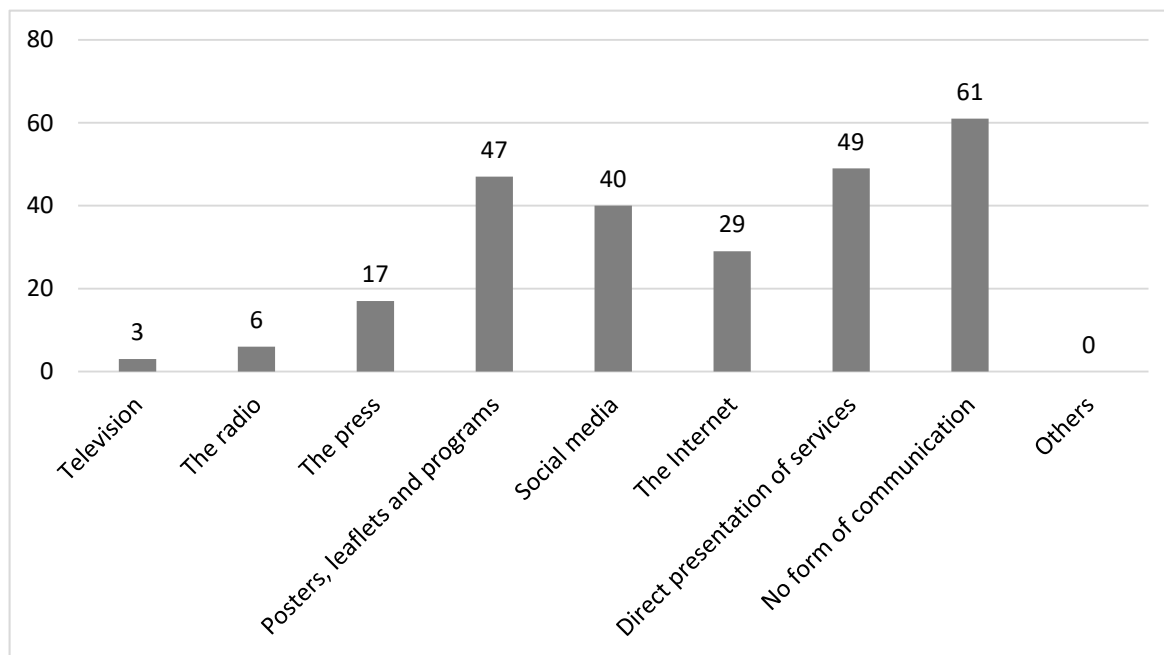
Figure 5. Forms of communication by SVK PK and their reach among respondents.

Nowadays, social media is a very effective communication tool for organizations. In the non-profit sector, whose resources for paid advertising are often insufficient, it could be said that this form of communication is the most effective. The results of responses to this question (Figure 6) indicate that 82.2% of respondents do not follow the library on any social media site. Only 29 (17.8%) respondents follow the library on Facebook, while 6 users (3.7%) follow the library on Instagram, and the library's Twitter and YouTube channels are followed by one user each.
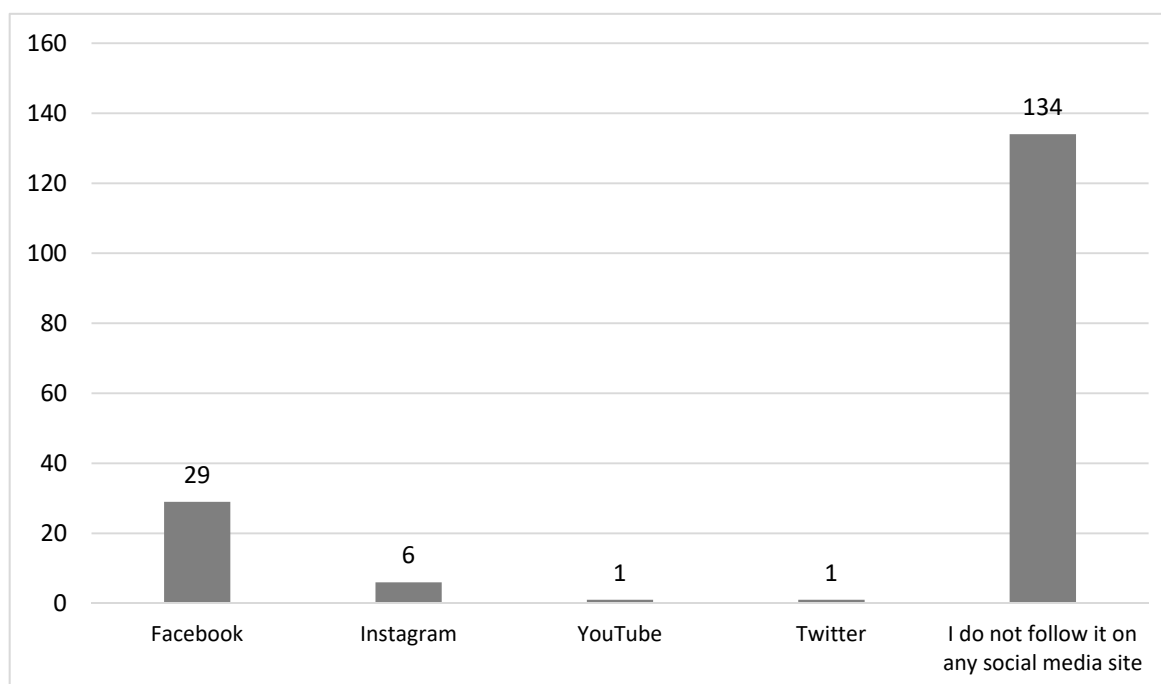
Figure 6. SVK PK social media traffic.

SVK PK is very active both culturally and socially. This is confirmed by the fact that in 2017, a total of 137 cultural and educational events were held at the library. The respondents mostly knew

that the library organized various author's reading events (80 respondents—49.1%) and lectures on various topics and conferences (54 respondents—33.1%). The Literature Night was also well-known (66 respondents—40.5%), which the library hosts. Forty-nine respondents (30.1%) did not respond to this question, as they are not social network users.

However, a large number of respondents had never heard about any of these projects before (50 respondents—30.7%). Of the remaining 113 responses (69.3%), only 36 respondents (22.1%) replied that they had taken part in an event organized by the library. That means that there are merely 36 people (22.1%) who not only know about the projects, but also actively participate in them see Figure 7.
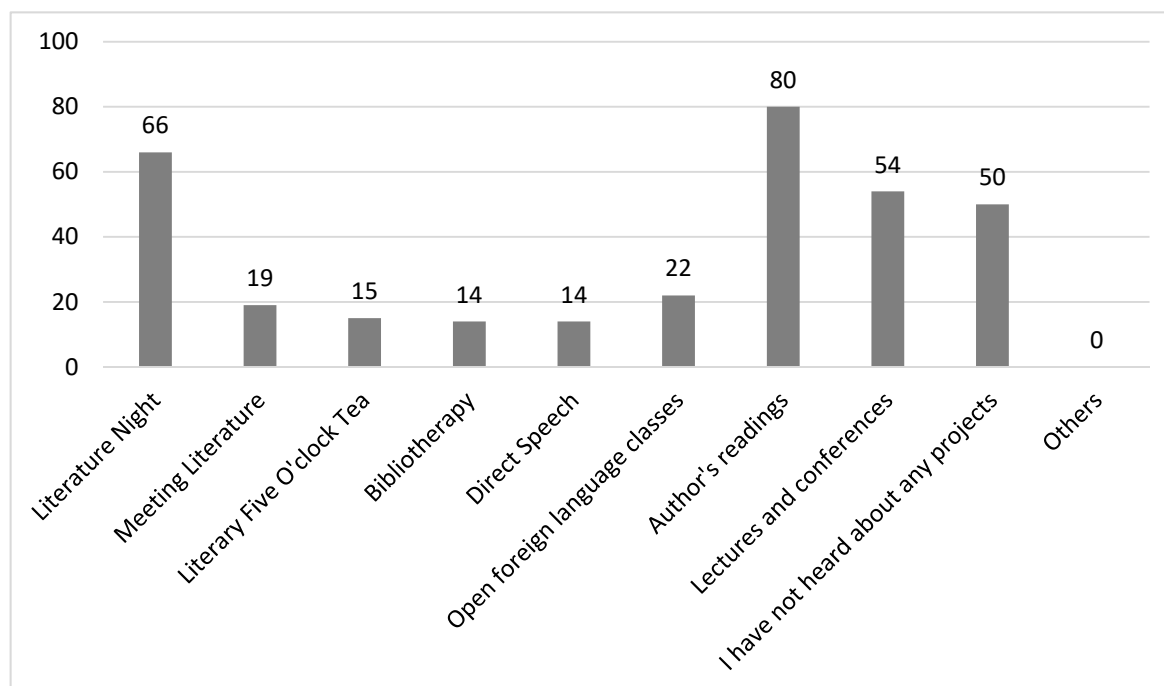

Figure 7. Awareness of SVK PK projects.

Before the investigation, three hypotheses were formed (described in the Research methods). The evaluation of the research results either confirmed or refuted these hypotheses. The final summary is as follows:

- Over 60% of respondents know the Education and Research Library of the Pilsen Region. The hypothesis was confirmed. A total of 74% of respondents know about the Study and Research Library of the Pilsen Region, which means that awareness of it in Pilsen and the surroundings is very good. However, the disadvantage is that only 27% of respondents confirmed a deeper familiarity with the library, and these were especially university students. A further 47% of respondents know of the library, but do not know much about it.
- The library's new visual style received positive feedback from at least 50% of respondents. The hypothesis was confirmed. The library's new visual style received positive feedback in 69% of cases on average. However, there were also negative reactions, primarily concerning the lack of clarity of the library's website and online catalogue and the uninteresting and unoriginal look of the library's logo.
- Over 20% of respondents who know the library follow it on social media. The hypothesis was refuted. Only 17.8% of respondents follow the library on social media. This low number occurs despite the fact that the majority of respondents are young people who are in the largest group of social media users. Facebook was the most popular among the respondents; several respondents follow the library on Instagram, while one follows the library on YouTube, and another follows the library on Twitter.

One research limitation was the fact that the parallel data collection effort involving personal interviews and an online survey aimed to acquire responses from all age groups regardless of how representative the sample was. A limiting factor was the fact that the respondents had to be residents living within 30 minutes' driving distance. Another barrier to the conducted research was that the selected library is situated in the city center, where in the immediate vicinity, there is the Library of the City of Pilsen, the Library of the Museum of West Bohemia, and the university library, i.e., a number of competitors in the area of services offered by the Education and Research Library of the Pilsen Region.

5. Discussion

The Education and Research Library of the Pilsen Region has a long history and a lot of experience. The library is continually interested in all kinds of trends and innovations in the area of brand management, innovates its brand, pays attention to and cares about its values, maintains good relations with all its stakeholders, and engages multiple communication tools in communicating with the public. The institution currently puts a lot of emphasis on communication. Using a variety of communication tools, particularly social media, it informs its members as well as the general public about what is new at the library and any upcoming events [42]. The library also pays attention to its employees, who are a sort of reflection of the organization. Therefore, the organization also focuses on internal branding, including a wide range of activities aimed at the development of its staff.

In recent years, the library has devoted attention to rebranding its image. With its new logo, colors, and website, the organization took on a brand new identity. Its new visual style has been met mostly with positive reactions and meets the library's requirement: to be a modern institution that also sticks to its traditional values [43].

The significance of changing a selected library's brand is presented in the example of a university library in Great Britain by Wynne, Dixon, Donohue, and Rowlands [44]. The authors explain the entire process of brand building and rebranding.

According to the conducted analysis, the library's image is very good. It is fairly well-known among the general public; however, the analysis puts it at the borderline of quadrants, so the organization must definitely not ease up in its communication activities. The respondents' views of the library are also positive and they have not had a single negative experience with the organization.

Measuring the library's image each year would enable the organization to identify the influence of its communication campaigns and track the evolution in its image over time [30].

Although the library is a well-known institution, there is a large number of people among the general public who hardly use its services. The overall lack of interest on the part of these people is a problem affecting all of society. Upon completion of people's studies, their interest in research libraries diminishes and reappears only later in life when they have more free time, which they can devote to the library and its projects. Last but not least, there are also groups of people whom the library and its services will just not interest, no matter how good its branding.

The survey results revealed that a large section of the public as well as a large number of the library's members do not have a clue what the library has to offer—from a wide variety of services provided to cultural and educational projects. The library needs to let these people know and show them that it offers much more than just lending books. Therefore, it should continue to work on communicating its brand. Branding is not a one-off event, but a continual process which requires that the people in the organization responsible for branding continue to educate themselves and follow the latest trends.

The findings of Wymer et al. [27] emphasize the need for managers of non-profit organizations to look to innovative ways to make their brand objects truly excellent, exceptional, and exemplary— that is, remarkable—and then find effective ways of communicating that remarkableness to important audiences.

Libraries as well as other non-profit organizations are recommended to forge partnerships and thus strengthen their position in more areas. Through a series of focus groups with librarians and a

range of potential community partners, the research of Saunders [45] identified barriers to collaboration and factors that enable successful partnerships, resulting in a general framework that could act as a guide to planning and developing deep collaborations.

6. Conclusions

The findings and the methodological procedures of the presented case study on a selected public library are applicable across the board to all public libraries in the Czech Republic. It can be said that this is a so-called single country study. As all public libraries in the Czech Republic are contributory (i.e., state-owned non-profit) organizations, the applicability of the research results can be expanded to other similar non-profit organizations (e.g., theaters, museums, galleries, etc.), but also non-governmental non-profit organizations, for which the topic of brand and branding is a key success factor (positioning tied in with fundraising and competitiveness).

A contributory organization is funded from financial resources generated by its own (main) activity and finances from other sources, mainly the budget of its founder. The founder provides the contributory organization with a contribution toward its operation contingent on its performance or other criteria for its needs. Particularly with respect to the revenue from the organization's own activity, it is crucial for the organization to ensure optimum branding and to build up a strong brand.

Apart from the existing five summarizing topics of research conducted in the area of brand and branding, Keller [9] suggests other future research directions, which include brand emotions and feelings, brand intangibles, brand positioning, brand purpose, storytelling and narratives, and brand measurement. Thus, the results of this case study form an important foundation for possible future research.

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