

THE SPORT-COMMUNICATION STRATEGY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF DEBRECEN

NAGY ÁGOSTON¹

ABSTRACT. The Operational Sport Programme is the most important element of the programme of the University of Debrecen intending to mend the quality of life. The execution and success of our targets in changing people's approach depends especially on the fact how we can involve professionals concerned in all fields of sports and PE, students, sport organizations, the business sphere, sport- and other kinds of institutions and also other people, and to make them co-operative and let them share interest in execution. That is why the communication of our plans and the passing of messages towards people concerned has such a significant rule. The programme is non-current, so it also requires such way of thinking while shaping up our sport-communication strategy. It is also very important for us to lay down the matter of the message of our sport strategy and to choose the right technique to bring the concrete strategy of communication into effect.

KEYWORDS: sport-communication, sport strategy, communication areas, sport-communication tools, human resource, life quality

The most important strategic messages of the sport- communication of the University of Debrecen

- Regular physical training (minimum twice 30-30 minutes/ week) is the best method to keep the body healthy
- The ethical property and characteristics of sports make them the best device for representing education and sport is the most efficient tool for it as well. Our outstanding sportsmen serve as both examples and ideals and we should lead the attention of people to them. They can become real idols.
- Sports evolve good community cohesion. The sport community is able to reform the everyday life and the quality of it in a positive way.
- Lifelong learning, doing physical activities and getting to know culture (Sport- Education – Culture) is our main goal, and that is what we find most important with respect to personal developments.
- The strategy has the idea of a “Sporting Nation”, which includes keeping our title and place as a “Sporting Nation” and the protection of these values. The state of healthcare of the country urges sweeping changes in the

¹ Sports Directorate of the University of Debrecen; E-mail: si@deac.unideb.hu

attitude towards sports and implies motivation for doing so both systematically and pragmatically speaking. The Sporting University is the leading slogan of this change.

- Sport is a crucial part of culture. It cannot be separated from human sciences; it has to connect closely to education and the knowledge of culture.
- We have to integrate our knowledge into all branches of sports, namely: technical developments, the results of sport science, the acquisitions and researches of sports medicine and the knowledge of sport management.
- Sports serve as vital devices for inspiring free time economics, spare time sport economics and its processes.
- Only the legally and cleanly gained success in sports counts as real value! Being successful in sports as an aim, do not sanctify the use of any forbidden materials.

The mediation of the above mentioned values is our constant task. With forming and balancing the opinions and messages of our strategic partners in University Sports (teachers, coaches, student governments, sport therapist, trainers, tutors and people dealing with sport media) have to come to an end that goes hand in hand with what we already started in the media. In the view of sports and physical education at the University we need crucial changes. Due to this, we created a coherent theoretical background.

The communication strategy is built up of two main parts, described by two main tasks

a.) To pass the basic theories, messages and plans of the Sport Operative Programme to the target group.

b.) The fulfillment of the Sport Operative Programme with the help of original communication projects and campaigns.

During the communication we defined practical ideas aimed at pupils, students and teachers. These creative campaigns reflect social expectations and demands by facilitating the communication on different levels. It is essential that communication takes in the University of Debrecen and the whole region around it. As a consequence the regional sport councils, county sport directors and the small-regional deputies also need to take part in spreading the information about the change of lifestyle and attitude. <http://www.sportolonemzet.hu/php/keret.php?m=2&sm=81> (20.01.2008.)

The communication areas included in the programme

One of the basic elements of the competitiveness of the University is to show from a new angle the everyday life of the University students, their ways, possibilities of entertainment and their values. Within this context the University of Debrecen advanced the following communication programmes:

- ⇒ **An Open Day** in the fall semester
 - Has great importance, since pre- University students are able to meet present students and gain some insight into all the areas of University
- ⇒ **Application into sports programme**
 - Aims to improve the image of the University. This programme introduces by first hand the sport life of the University, the sport centers, championships, the popular branches of sports, the sporting scholarship system and sport ideals to high school students.
- ⇒ **Sport Almanac**
 - Mediates the quality of the University sports. SPORT-EDUCATION- CULTURE. It introduces several sport fields, but you can also read about the most outstanding sport events of the last few years.
- ⇒ **Sport results**
 - Publicity has news value in most cases. It is clearly shown that in the new generation and the professional sportsmen of the University we tend to make the results and programmes of the DEAC more accessible.
- ⇒ The Introduction of the **stars of the University**
 - Those students who are know by the locals, by the nation and in rare cases by the whole world, since they make the University more popular with their activities.
- ⇒ **The communication of free time activities**
 - This is the most regular task. It can move the biggest crowd. Due to this, it is important to give attainable information of our services.
- ⇒ **The requirements of physical education**
 - Its fulfillment dynamically follows the claims, our renewing possibilities and preparedness. The Sport Operative Programme is affected by the means which influence gaining the popularity of sports, serving as the basis for physical activities.
- ⇒ **The winning of successful scholarships**
 - Besides helping the organization and operation of quality sport events, it also leads to the future, since gaining a more global support for continental championships invoke successful tenders and better preparations of background information.

- ⇒ **The regular and occasional competitions**
 - Make life more vivid. The notification of dates, places, participants and aims is a vital communication element for our hectic University to make these events more attractive.
- ⇒ **The sport facilities programme**
 - Mainly concentrates on the well working of the sport fields and sport halls. The happenings here have an influence on the citizens. Besides initiating the above mentioned, we also need to emphasize the capacity for hosting more sport events to avoid the negligence of these places.
- ⇒ **The developments of sport facilities**
 - Is crucial since during the last decades the number of students increased and their demands changed as well.
- ⇒ **The University sport marketing**
 - Influences remarkably the standard of free time sports and championships working at the University of Debrecen. The potential profit cannot be neglected if we think of the 35000 citizens of the University.

The sport- communication plan and the attainable resorts

- Modern techniques and the Internet provide possibility for sending multitudinous text messages.
- The weekly sport newsletter enlightens everyone about the present achievements, programmes and possibilities.
 - The electronic newsletter is the fastest way to share information about our work with the media. The recipients live with the given chances which counts as news value to them and with respect to this they publish it.
- For the people of the University we refresh the sport homepage every day. The more significant articles are published in the University paper at the four-page sport section, entitled ELÁN.
- ELÁN is published twice every six month, which is aimed at everyone.
- The University has extensive activities. Web pages appear in different topics. In the menus of these you can find sport too.
- The means of direct marketing are circulating brochures and posters advertising programmes, events and contests. It is mainly centered on campus, but there are other information points arranged logically in town.
- Billboards work systematically. The advertisements are liable for license and they are decorative.
- With the help of students' council we can reach those students who do not think about sports, so not to miss programmes shaped for them.

- Formal letters serve as a major communication tool for reaching those without whom it would be impossible to materialize the Sport Operative Programme
 - We ordered a regular magazine and broadcasting (ELÁN) at the local TV channel. Our media contributor plays a crucial part in editing these programmes.
 - His job is to edit the present and occasional materials of the teletext.
- We can hear “University Sport times” on the radio
- In connection with great sport events we hold press conferences, where you can personally meet the representatives of media.

Free time sports and the media

It is a common fact that Hungary lags behind with respect to free time sports, and the number of people taking part in sports compared to other EU countries. To fix the situation, we have to improve the demand- supply system of spare time sports. The best method of strengthening the demand side is by changing the attitude based on persistent communication. It can be obtained in practice by a conscious and well planned marketing, which helps to inspire the nation for doing sports. During the communication process we have to mediate the following messages:

- Sports are highly important, it helps to keep healthy, and hence we have to make people aware of the advantages of sports and this way of life.
- Doing sports makes you feel better and it also increases your working abilities and helps to keep it on a higher level.
- Sports are entertaining. They give you success, self-confidence and also help to integrate into the community as well as creating public spirit, the feeling of belonging together and they also improve the self-identity.

Just like in the appearance of racing sports on TV, in the communication inciting leisure sports we also need to focus on media portfolios. First we have to decide and separate the social group, which is the target of our ads. Obviously the message is different in case of high school and University students, or pensioners. The latter can be approached in the old-fashioned way, by letter or more conservative programmes and TV channels, dailies emphasizing the preservation of health, good feeling and to keep up hard-working. While younger generations can be reached via new technology like Internet, lifestyle magazines, music channels mainly referring to their integration into society, building up their self confidence flavored by humour.

After defining the target group it is logical to evolve a partnership that covers the whole media business group, which represents a binary commitment. We have to make agreements with a TV channel, lifestyle-magazines, dailies and magazines, Internet suppliers, other companies owning public surfaces, a radio and other organizations representing media. Exclusiveness is advised and it is also advisable to handle the contest sports related media areas in the same manner as media conferences.

After the media-portfolios are set-up, we have to start a campaign centered around University sports, spare time and other sports at least twice every two year. The campaign should operate with the help of a variety of society aimed ads, and discount media area purchase (see under media portfolio). It is needed for the advertisement of the sponsors and proponents dealing with it. It is essential to complement the campaign with conferences, free time sport events, press-conferences and other gatherings for the private sphere. To this work we also have to involve the public health experts, teachers, coaches and famous people, the so called opinion- leaders. The communication programme shall not only be about the promotion of sports, but like in all campaigns it has to have a concrete, practical message, that defines the name and topic of the programme. Such thing can be the finishing of the improvement of facilities, the introduction of sport cards or the cover of pedometers and training-diaries. These elaborate programmes have to appear in the one-year plan of the University dealing with sports. Communication areas serve as tools for the mediation of sports, ideas about them and the inspiration for them.

The questionnaire that was announced in Hajdú- Bihar county among media representatives was answered in a great variety. In the shaping of sport-communication strategies the following answers serve the basis.

1st chart.

The answers given to the questionnaire by the HMB media representatives

Do you have any sport programme or bulletin?	100% answered yes
Is University sport news-value to you?	83,33% answered yes
How many times a week do you deal with University sports?	60% said once
How satisfied are you with the popularity of your sport section?	42,86% are moderately satisfied
Are you willing to enlarge your section dealing with sports?	71,43% answered yes
Do you need regular information about University sports?	84,62% answered yes
Do you need regular information about the results of the University sport events?	84,62% answered yes
Does University sport have an outstanding role in your sport bulletin?	30,77% said yes
What marketing value has the University sports at your company?	23,08% fairly valuable
Do you see any connection between the quality of University sports and your marketing about it?	30,77% considers the connection adequate

Communication Aims

1. Community Campaigns

Community campaigns can effectively mobilize students, regardless of ethnicity and social status. According to international experience, effective community campaign can raise the number of those doing physical activities by 5%.

These campaigns have to endeavor to reach wider scale of nation, to have good visibility and to employ a huge variety of media areas, like local TV, radio station, local papers, cinema, posters and other tools of direct marketing.

2. Messages aiming to motivate the doing of sports

Such can be for example signs placed near elevators and escalators, to inspire people to walk the stairs instead of the lift, emphasizing the possibility of losing weight and creating a healthier lifestyle. Based on international research, signs can increase the users of stairs by 54% regardless of where we are. As a consequence their usage is advised at subway stops, in shopping malls, in educational and public institutions and in libraries.

3. Proper physical activities and their effects

It was long put into words by the medical society that Universities should improve the students' knowledge of health culture within a framework of health courses. It would give proper information about correct physical activities and their effects. The teaching of the above mentioned and the teaching of the prepared recommendation of these for medical students. Classes or facilities should be opened where people (especially older generations) can gain information about sports with respect to their age, sex or even their disabilities or disease.

4. University Campaigns

These campaigns have to endeavor to reach wider scale of nation, to have good visibility and to employ a huge variety of media areas, like local TV, radio station, local papers, cinema, posters and other tools of direct marketing.

Sportközlöny 2007.okt. 15.,

www.kozlonykiado.hu/kozlonyok/Kozlonyok/24/PDF/2007/6.pdf (2008. január 20)

The Sport-communication target groups

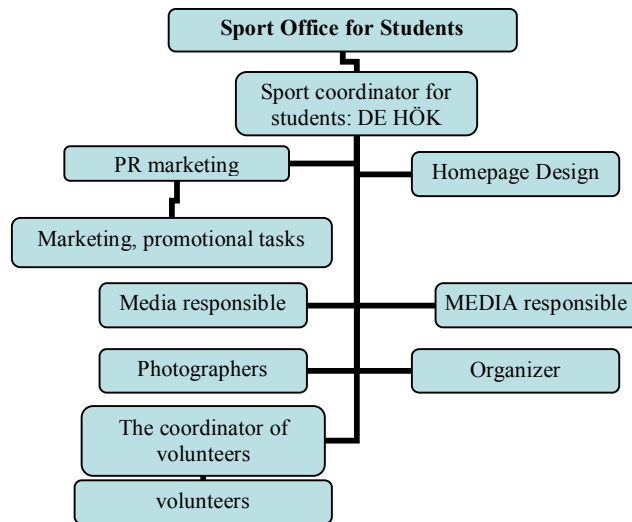
Primer TARGET GROUPS of the sport-communication strategy of the University of Debrecen	Number of participants
For whom physical activity is compulsory	Approx. 7000
All the students	Approx.29000
Teachers	Approx.1500
Workers	Approx.5000
DEAC sportsmen's number	350
DEAC juniors	110
Citizens of Debrecen during school time	Approx.240000
All the students in Debrecen	Approx.60000
Sport unions	Approx.25
Citizens living at housing estates around the University	25000
Number of primer sport branches in Debrecen	Approx. 20
Number of registered sportsman in Debrecen	Approx. 3300
Number of registered sportsman in the county	Approx. 2500
Number of students relieved of physical activities in 2007	120

Human resources in the communication of the University

Sport- communication strategies concentrate on professional task completing. In the operative system of the sport programme the sport directory works hand in hand with the students' council. The volunteers of the Student Sport Office take care of the communication duties. This student job also helps their integration into society later on, since they learn the properties of a modern area and its relation system during their everyday work. The student sport coordinator collects those students who are able to properly and resolutely work on each field. Those volunteers who work at sport fields, help the influx of information, as well as those who take part in the organization and arrangement of prime events. Basically there are assistants and those, who are in charge, and responsible for them. The number of people taking part in the relation system is over 30.

1st figure

The Sport Communication relation system of the University of Debrecen



REFERENCES

The Sport XXI. National Sport-strategy

<http://www.sportolonemzet.hu/php/keret.php?m=2&sm=81> (20.01.2008)

Sport-bulletin 15 october 2007

www.kozlonykiado.hu/kozlonyok/Kozlonyok/24/PDF/2007/6.pdf (20.01.2008.)

Ágoston Nagy: The Sport Operative Programme of the Unoversity of Debrecen 2006.