

# **The Marketing Communications of the PSG Zlín Ice-hockey Club**

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## **ABSTRAKT**

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá marketingovou komunikací hokejového klubu PSG Zlín. V teoretické části autor popisuje marketingový a komunikační mix, zejména nástroje marketingové komunikace. V praktické části autor aplikuje teoretické poznatky na hokejovém klubu PSG Zlín. Závěrečná část práce je zaměřena na vyhodnocení marketingového výzkumu a následná doporučení.

Klíčová slova: marketing, marketingový mix, komunikační mix, lední hokej, PSG Zlín, marketingový výzkum

## **ABSTRACT**

This bachelor thesis analyses marketing communications of the PSG Zlín ice-hockey club. In the theoretical part, the author describes marketing and communicational mix, particularly marketing communication tools. In the analytical part, the author applies theory on the PSG Zlín ice-hockey club. Final part of this bachelor thesis focuses on marketing research evaluation and subsequent recommendations.

Keywords: marketing, marketing mix, communication mix, ice-hockey, PSG Zlín, marketing research

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## INTRODUCTION

Sport is an integral part of our lives. It serves for relaxation, expressing emotions and in modern era also for making money. Sport could be described as an entertaining activity, but also as a business activity, which is nowadays closely related to sports marketing. Marketing plays a significant role in sport field. It helps to gain publicity, to get closer to fans and to gain financial resources for club's functioning.

Ice-hockey is probably the quickest and most difficult collective sport. The level of ice-hockey has been increasing as well as demands for hockey clubs, whether they are sport or economic. Cradle of ice-hockey is Canada. This country founded this phenomenal sport at the end of 19th century. History of Czech ice-hockey dates to the beginning of the 20th century and since then Czech Republic has become one of the most successful ice-hockey countries in the world. Nowadays ice-hockey belongs to the most popular and successful sports in our country.

The aim of this thesis is to assess the marketing communications of PSG Zlín ice-hockey club. I chose this topic from personal reasons. Since I was born, sport has been very close to me. It is entertaining, it helps me to relax and gain energy too. I decided to write the thesis about PSG Zlín because I am interested in Czech ice-hockey league and since I live in Zlín it was an evident choice.

The thesis is divided into two main parts – theoretical and practical. The first part deals with terms and their explanation such as marketing, marketing mix, marketing communications and marketing research. The practical part analyses marketing activities of PSG Zlín ice-hockey club. Based on the online marketing research the thesis evaluates whether the marketing communications are effective and successful or not. Resulting from the answers in questionnaire and from the expertise of the author, the thesis finally offers recommendations for improving club's marketing strategies.

## **I. THEORY**

# 1 MARKETING

## 1.1 Definition

Marketing is a term with many definitions. According to Chartered Institute of Marketing, the marketing is “the management process responsible for identifying, anticipating and satisfying customer requirements profitably” (Learningmarketing 1998). According to Mr. Kotler, marketing detects customer needs and afterwards tries to satisfy them (Kotler and Keller 2013). Marketing is a key function in business as significant as finances, personal management, logistics or manufacturing. Some managers do major mistake, because they concentrate their marketing primarily on gaining new customers. However, the main function of marketing should be based on building relationships with current, existing customers. Companies build relationship with present customers due to lower expenses. Phillip Kotler argues that expenses spent on new customer are as five times higher as sustaining current customer (Kotler and Keller 2013).

The term marketing started to be used mainly in the second half of the 20th century, but the origins extend to times, when the barter was born. The most significant factors in marketing environment are: customers, competition, distributors and suppliers. These factors belong to a group called Marketing Micro Environment. There is also a second group called Marketing Macro Environment, which contains political, legal, economic, social-cultural, technological and natural factors. The key factor of a marketing environment is competition. The majority of markets show low customer loyalty. That does not fit to company’s strategy. There are five main competitive forces: direct competition, threat of new entrants, threat of substitute products or services, bargaining power of customers and bargaining power of suppliers. (Karlíček 2013)

## 1.2 Sports marketing

Walter Freyer claims sports marketing is a managing concept, which comes out of the market by the sports organizations. This concept requires long-term and conceptual negotiations. The achievement of the sports marketing depends on ability to embrace stated facts from the sports fields and also on process of specific questions (Freyer 2011).

Sport is irreplaceable phenomenon in a modern society. It has a significant position also in Czech Republic. At present the role of management and marketing is increasing also as their application in social and entrepreneurial activities of sport sphere (Čáslavová 2009, 8-9). The importance of marketing in the sport area has been evident in the last years. Marketing is used also by organisations, which are manufacturing sport products such as shoes, textile products, or marketing agencies, which are preparing or evaluating sponsors' projects for companies supporting sport or promoting sports celebrities as well as sports organizations. Sports organizations are vigorously engaging in marketing, because it brings financial resources for running sport activities. Marketing is certainly not just positive, but has also its negatives.

Positives:

- it clarifies, who is the main target of offered products: members, spectators, fans, sponsors
- it determines sports, economic and social goals
- it gains financial resources, which help in sport development

Negatives:

- finances dictate, what sport has to do
- the contract with sponsors restricts free choice

Sports marketing is an area of classic marketing, which is directed at promotion of sports clubs, sports events, but also products connected with sport. Irena Durdová insists that sports marketing enables sports organizations to structure the sports product offer, operate it in compliance with market requirements and to select tools in order to reach given goals. (Durdová 2009, 6)

The influence of sports marketing in Czech Republic has increased within last few years. It was enabled mainly by the existence of new media, that are used as add carriers: sports grounds, clothes, equipment, score indicators, etc. Sport provides entertainment, excitement and delight to vast numbers of fans that are supporting their favourite team. Sport is a part of fans' lifestyle and free time. Sport is connected with positive and negative emotions. Due to that, sport becomes an attractive target to marketers, who use sport as a brand exposition and also for improvement of their image.

### **1.3 Marketing mix**

The marketing mix is a basic marketing strategy, which combines famous 4P – product, price, place, promotion. Mr. Kotler defines this mix as a complex of marketing tools that are used by a company in order to reach their marketing goals at a target market. (Kotler and Armstrong 2004) Marketing mix includes tactical marketing decisions about product, price, distribution and promotion. Marketing mix is nowadays often supplemented with another Ps, such as People, Presentation and Processes. Additionally, the term 4C is used in marketing that represents Customer value, Costs, Convenience and Communication. (Karlíček 2013, 152-153).

#### **1.3.1 Product**

The product is the centre of marketing mix. It includes mainly sports goods, services, thoughts or even people. Eva Čáslavová points out, that sport product is considered as every tangible and intangible goods and services offered in order to satisfy customers' needs and wishes in sport field (Čáslavová 2009, 116).

Sports organizations have various kinds of products. These products have to be valued so that the price can be set. Than the products can be offered and sold. The main service in case of sport could be match, event or competition. The tangible product is a product that customers can take away from an event. (Beech and Chadwick 2007, 38)

A product can be defined as “anything that is capable of satisfying customer's needs” (Jobber 2004, 60). There is a distinction between physical goods and services. A sport product can be tangible. For instance, it is a hockey stick, a tennis racket or a Formula 1 car. Product can be intangible too. That is for instance watching an ice-hockey game.

### 1.3.2 Price

The price is influenced by customers' behaviour during purchase. Sports organizations are engaged in collecting information about demands, expenses and competition prices. Discounts or season tickets play an important role.

Price fulfils many functions within the marketing mix. It tells how much money customers have to pay for a product or service. The price is set after the expenses are considered. It contains costs of materials purchase, manufacturing the product, distribution and other expenses. Famous sports clubs have the chance to set higher price, because the consumer afterwards feels close to the organisation. (Beech and Chadwick 2007, 161) In a non-profit sense, the price can be represented through memberships, entrance fees, equipment, donations, sponsorships, etc.

### 1.3.3 Distribution (Place)

An organization has to ensure the way how to get the product to a customer. A company needs to think about distribution channels and calculate expenses. Each organisation has specific distribution strategies. The locality of sports organization has impact on the accessibility of donations, interest and attendance. (Beech and Chadwick 2007, 39) For sports that are played in stadiums, the location plays very important role. For the name of the "place" clubs often use the name of their town or region they are associated with. (Čáslavová 2009, 162)

### 1.3.4 Promotion

Promotion is a convincing communication, which aims at selling the product to a potential customer. It contains four main activities: advertising (team kits, sports equipment, boards), publicity (interviews with players, coaches), sales promotion (ticket contests, days with players, various discounts) and direct selling. (Čáslavová 2009, 108-112)

Promotion involves persuading and informing potential customers. It is used to assure customers, that there is an offer for a product or service, where they can purchase it and how they can use it afterwards. The main tools are advertising, sales promotion, public relations and personal selling. The goal is to make fans to go home and tell to their families to visit matches. In services, communication is a strong tool that includes recommendation

from somebody, who has the experience with product or service we want to purchase.  
(Beech and Chadwick 2007, 163)

## 2 MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS

“Marketing communications - communications with target audiences on all matters that affect marketing performance” (Pickton and Broderick 2004, 4). Marketing communication could be defined as a form of communication, which is used by some organization to inform, convince or influence customers (Mefert 1986). Sometimes marketing communication is often approached as a synonym for advertising, because advertising is the most visible form of marketing. But there are many communication tools with its features, strengths and weaknesses. (De Pelsmacker, Geuens and Van den Bergh 2003, 26)

All organisations have the same aim – to be successful and to survive. Therefore they have to be engaged in communication. For many reasons, audiences are very difficult to reach, so it is a challenge for organisations to maintain the contact. The communication mix is comprised of five main tools: advertising, personal selling, direct marketing, public relations and sales promotion. It also includes range of different media through which the organisation messages are delivered to the target segment of audience. (Beech and Chadwick 2007, 215)

### 2.1 Marketing communications’ tools

#### 2.1.1 Advertising

Advertising is the most important tool for creating and strengthening the position of a certain brand. The advertisement is a paid form of mass, impersonal communication. It is effective, impressive, but with impersonal character. Advertisement belongs to a group of the oldest marketing tools, which influence purchasing. Marketers have to make sure that the right message reaches the right customers at the right time. Professor Kotler claims that advertisement is a paid form of impersonal presentation and support of thoughts, products or services, which are performed by sponsor (Kotler and Armstrong 2004). Advertisement has several functions. The main is the informative function that informs us about:

- New product
- Price change
- New services

Advertising in ice-hockey is visible mainly during games. Hockey teams have contracts with many sponsors therefore they have to show them to the audience. Main advertisements are on team jerseys, boards, ice or scoreboards:

- Team jerseys: it increases the rate of introducing a potential customer with product, it informs about image changes, etc. The success of this type of advertisement relies on content, font size, logos or symbols.
- Boards and ice: it is similar to jerseys advertising. The success depends on the size and the location of advertisement. (Čáslavová 2009, 168-175) There are mainly logos, slogans and names of the companies, which sponsor particular club.

Sport teams regularly advertise upcoming games. Sport programmes are amongst the most popular on television. It generates the biggest audience all around the world. TV provides a sponsor with minimal cost for exposure, transfer from sport to the product, assumption that the brand is supported by sports superstars who are involved in the event.

#### ***2.1.1.1 Television***

As mass medium, television appeals almost to the whole market. Its advantage is a broad reach and frequent repetition. Its main disadvantage is density of information, which could lead to switching programmes or not paying attention. Other negatives are high expenses, transience of notification or the necessity of planning with advance (Hesková and Štarchoň 2009).

#### ***2.1.1.2 Radios***

The radio advertisement aims at stated segment. Through radio the companies try to approach customers with familiar taste or style. Other important advantages are flexibility, low expenses and possibility of segmentation. The fundamental disadvantage is the fact that people listen to the radio only as a background during other activities. There could be a significant problem with feedback. (Dvořáková 2005)

#### ***2.1.1.3 Newspapers***

Print media is the inclusive term which is used to refer to newspapers, magazines, brochures, posters, programs and other printed forms. The most useful and favourite are

newspapers, because they are published daily. Very influential are magazines, but the disadvantage is that it is published monthly. (Mullin, Hardy and Sutton 2014, 200)

The advantage of newspaper and magazine advertising is that newspapers broadcast more complex information. The disadvantage is the fullness of insertion. Readers then only browse through the advertisements without noticing them.

#### ***2.1.1.4 Outside advertisement***

The major advantages of outdoor advertising are local covering, the possibility of return, flexibility and creativity. The main negative could be a problem with safety. This concerns billboards, light vitrines, posters, means of transport or even heat balloons (Hesková and Štarchoň 2009, 81-84). The impact of this type of advertising on people works twenty-four hours per day.

Outdoor advertisements on billboards, movable billboards, mobile trailers, buses or other promotional platforms can provide a visible message, depending on the location and duration of the placement as well as uniqueness and appearance of the message.

There are also billboards called fixed billboards. They can remain in particular place for a long time. They provide repeating exhibition and thus reinforcement of the message. The fundamental purpose of movable advertisements is to attract attention to the event (Mullin, Hardy and Sutton 2014, 285)

#### ***2.1.1.5 Product placement***

The product placement is a kind of advertisement, which has to be seen, but should not be interruptive. These advertisements of certain brands are incorporated into movies, sitcoms or even music clips.

#### ***2.1.1.6 Online advertising***

Online advertising is more interactive. It includes especially banners on the internet. The fundamental problem is that users have learned how to overlook these advertisements, therefore the online advertisements are no longer effective. (Karlíček 2013, 190-195)

### **2.1.2 Sales promotion**

Sales promotion started to appear in literature during the first half of the twentieth century. It is most effective with customers, who often rotate brands and look for low prices. Sales promotion includes also merchandising. It is an intern advertisement, which contains

materials that are used for sale stimulation. It stimulates customers and often leads to sales increase. Merchandising is a communication tool, which is used by a sport club to sell its brand and logo on a various kinds of products for fans, such as kits replicas, shirts, scarfs, mini jerseys, mascots, flags, bed linens or writing implements. (Daňhelová 2005, 51) Sales promotion is used principally as a mean to increase sales. (Fill 2009, 538) According to Hesková and Štarchoň, sales promotion tools are mainly (Hesková and Štarchoň 2009, 94-98):

- Free product samples
- Discount coupons
- Bonuses
- Rewards for frequent shopping
- Competitions, winning lotteries
- Membership coupons
- Specially designed deals
- Loyalty cards

### **2.1.3 Public relations – PR**

“Public relations is a management activity that attempts to shape the attitudes and opinions held by an organisation’s stakeholders.” (Fill 2009, 564) PR can be used to reach specific audiences that media cannot. (Fill 2009, 565)

Professional sport teams, sport clubs or even colleges try to attract and then maintain consumers. They know that they have to compete with host of rivals, such as malls, movie complexes, internet providers, concerts or museums (Mullin, Hardy and Sutton 2014, 8).

For the purposes of sport marketing, the term PR can be defined as “an interactive marketing communications strategy that seeks to create a variety of media designed to convey the organisational philosophies, goals and objectives to an identified group of publics for the purpose of establishing a relationship built on comprehension, interest and support” (Mullin, Hardy and Sutton 2014, 313).

Public relations is a crucial part of sport marketing strategy and a critical component of effective sport sponsorship activation plans as well. The first objective of the sport marketing strategy is to develop a successful brand association between the teams, league, sponsors and athletes. Marketers and PR should work together to develop creative and effective PR. (Mullin, Hardy and Sutton 2014, 325)

The major purpose of PR is to create good relationship with the public. Public relations is mainly concerned with activities connected with new products establishing, influencing target segments etc. The main base is communication among people.

PR takes into consideration two main groups:

- Internal – employees, management, distributors, team members.
- External – media, customers, partners, investors, state.

PR can be also divided into particular divisions:

- B2B – that is the communication with business public.
- PR branches – those are mainly relationships with producers, suppliers and business partners. (Hesková and Štarchoň 2009, 107-109)

The important part of PR is called Event marketing. Event marketing is the idea of one, fulfilment of many and experience for everyone. (Šindler 2005) Event marketing is used to increase customers' motivation. It is mainly experience planning, organizing and managing. These experiences should evoke psychical and emotional stimulus, which lead to image and product support.

Major aims of Event Marketing:

- to identify target segment
- to increase awareness about the firm or product, strengthening and improvement of image
- to provide the experience
- to entertain key clients or to reward important employees

Event marketing could divide segment into major criteria:

- Content
  - Work oriented events – change of information, experiences. It is established for employees, business partners, etc.
  - Informative events – changing of information via entertaining form.
- Target groups
  - Public events – for external target group such as customers, press, public.
  - Company events – internal target group such as employees.
- Concept
  - Event marketing using opportunities – anniversaries, celebrations.
  - Brand event marketing – for brand support.
  - Image oriented event
- Places
  - Outdoor events, indoor events (Hesková and Štarchoň 2009, 41-43)

Marketing can divide its tools to “above the line” and “under the line”. Above the line function includes any advertisement, which has to pay for space - such as TV, radio, press or cinemas. Under the line function contains sales promotion, PR, merchandising, event marketing, etc. (Hesková and Štarchoň 2009, 49-60).

Events connected with experience are attractive and energetic tools of marketing, which have great potential in companies’ communication strategies. Its strength is in the possibility to differentiate product, company and brand. Event marketing is a field, whose fundamental scope of business is event organizing. The major aims are connected with entertainment, informal atmosphere, emphasizing new product in form of parties, press conferences, open days, various trips, workshops, seminars, etc.

#### 2.1.4 Direct marketing

Professor Kotler defines direct marketing as a “collection of marketing activities such as products offered to specific market segments via one or more media for the purpose of direct addressing of current or potential customer and gaining immediate response by phone, mail or different media” (Kotler 1997, 718). Direct marketing is a strategy that is used to create a personal and intermediary-free dialogue with customers. It is a measurable activity that is often based on media. Direct marketing is engaged in the management of customers’ behaviour. (Fill 2009, 624)

Direct Marketing tools:

- Direct mail
- Direct mail delivery
- Telemarketing
- Electronic and mobile direct marketing (Hesková and Štarchoň 2009, 125-131)

Direct marketing can be defined as non-personal and personal communication between a marketer and its public. This communication may be oral, mailed or electronic. Professor Kotler argues, that it is “an interactive system that uses one or more advertising media to effect a measurable response or transaction at any location.” (Kotler 2013, 495)

Direct marketing is an integrated approach that uses a range of marketing attributes such as market research, segmentation, evaluation and conjunction with direct response media such as direct mail, telemarketing, interactive TV, print, the internet etc. In a sport context, the direct marketing is strengthened by supporting consumption and communication. (Beech and Chadwick 2007, 240)

#### 2.1.5 Personal selling

Personal selling is the oldest form of communication with market. It is the relationship between two or more subjects in order to sell the product or service simultaneously with creating positive relationships. Personal selling is one of the most effective tools of marketing communication. Due to immediate personal performance, this tool could be more influential than advertising. The advantage of personal selling is a gaining a quick

response. Another advantage is a current customers' development. (Beech and Chadwick 2007, 412)

Personal selling is a form of marketing communication that involves a face-to-face conversation between at least two people or by one person and a group. An important attribute is message flexibility. (Fill 2009, 654)

### **2.1.6 Online marketing**

Online marketing is a new media tool, knowledge media tool and a marketing channel. (Kotler 2013) The internet provides sport organisations and marketers with the information about potential customers such as their gender, marital status, age, hobbies and interests. The main benefit of the internet is the level of content that can carry. (Beech and Chadwick 2007, 244) Online marketing can be simply defined as a promotional activity on the internet (including email). It can have many forms, such as social media, email marketing, online marketing or affiliate marketing.

The internet has been a place for socializing for a long time. In the last few years, social websites connect more people and share more information than ever before. People get notifications and updates on their mobile phones; therefore they can upload the content. More and more people connect with their family, friends and colleagues over the internet. Social network is the term that was coined in the 1950s, when anthropologist J. A. Barnes used this particular phrase to describe different relationships between people in Norway. There people are connected through family, friendships, religion, financial status, education, political beliefs etc. Social websites have become increasingly popular with hundreds of millions of users all around the world. The main part of social networking is a group called Social media. It is a broad term which describes different kind of content that forms social networks, for instance forums, photos, audios, videos, profiles on websites, etc. Simply, the social media is any information we share with our network using websites and services. (Eley and Tilley 2009, 80)

The most popular social website is Facebook. This popular online network was launched by Mark Zuckerberg and his colleagues in 2004. Nowadays this online service has almost one and a half billion active users. Social media group also includes websites such as Twitter, Google+, Instagram, MySpace or LinkedIn. Users create profiles where they can fill up a bibliography, interests, add photos, videos or thoughts and add friends to their profiles. (Eley and Tilley 2009, 81)

## 2.2 Sponsoring

Sports sponsoring is an important device which should secure sufficient amount of financial resources, which are used for realization of cultural, scientific, charity and other activities. It involves sports organizations, clubs, associations as well as individuals. Sponsoring can be defined as a commercial activity, whereby one side allows another an opportunity to take advantage of an association with a target audience in return for funds, services or resources. (Fill 2009, 600) Sponsoring could be defined as a readiness of financial and material tools or services, which are assigned to people and organizations in the sport, cultural and social areas in order to reach marketing and communication goals. (Bruhn 2009) There is a contract between sponsors and clubs, which should contain the right to use logo, name of the brand, the right to use trademarks with product, such as “general sponsor” or “official product”.

“Sponsoring is a common marketing activity, not only a method to increase financial resources. It is about creating of relationship called winning-winning among your organization and sponsor. If the sponsoring is successful, it fulfils marketing goals of both sides.” (Grey and Skildum-Reid 2003)

These days’ financial resources are transferred from advertising to other types of communication. Television broadcasting could reach everyone all around the world. This is the way, how to succeed with placing a logo on clothes, surfaces or stadiums themselves. From the legal point of view, there are two main sides that are tied up to the contract. The first is a sponsor – the person/company, who invests, and receiver – the person/company who uses this investment for a specific purpose. The most common display of sponsoring communication is financing of sports, cultural and social activities.

Sponsoring has two major groups of products:

- 1) Products of the First Level - those products are directly connected with sports performance. It contains sports goods such as shirts, shoes, balls and other equipment.
- 2) Products of the Second Level - this group is not as important as the first group. It includes training machines, sports bags, special nutrition or ionic drinks.

Mr. Lagae describes sponsorship as a “business agreement between two parties, based on reciprocity”. (Lagae 2005, 78) It means that both parties (club and sponsor) get something from the exchange. Sponsor always provides funds, equipment, financial resources to the club in return for making the sponsor visible. Sponsor therefore has a commercial advantage.

### 3 MARKETING RESEARCH

Marketing research is the key marketing function, which helps marketers decrease the rate of uncertainty that emerges from marketing changes. Without a research marketers would have to rely on their intuition, which could have fatal consequences for their companies. Marketing research could be defined as a systematic collection of data, analysis and interpretations of information, which are necessary for marketing decision-making. It is a process which has to gain specific information about marketing environment. (Smith and Albaum 2004, 68)

The main aim of the marketing research is to provide objective information about market situation. The vital information is about target customer. Beside basic information such as who the customer is, how old he/she is, what his/hers occupation is, what he/she buys, it detects if customer is satisfied or not or what customer needs. (Kozel 2005)

Marketing research is mainly used to understand the market evolution. Marketers could detect how significant is market potential, what are enquiry trends, what are opportunities and threats, who are main customers, how these customers perceive the brand and competition brand, which brands and products are preferred. The marketing research helps marketers to verify the effectiveness of their decisions.

Marketing research should consist of: (Foret 2003)

- Determination of research goals
- Determination of information sources
- Determination of research methods
- Data collecting
- Data interpretation and recommendation

The data collected from a marketing research have two main categories: primary and secondary:

- 1) Primary – those are also known as a field data. Those are data, which are collected by the company from the market via questioning, observation or experimenting.

- 2) Secondary – those are also known as desk data. Those are data, which are collected by a different company to a different purpose. It could be databases, yearbooks, magazines, publications, annual reports, blogs, etc. (Kozel 2005)

### **3.1 Quantitative research**

Quantitative research answers the main question “How much?” This type works mainly with large amount of answers (hundreds or even thousands). The result of this study is measurable information, such as amount of customers and their characteristics or consumers percentage. Basic techniques of quantitative research are formed by personal interviews, observations, experimenting or written questions. (Karlíček 2013, 83)

### **3.2 Qualitative research**

Qualitative research answers the question “Why?” This type works with small amount of answers. The main purpose of this research is understanding, why customers purchase certain products or how customers are motivated (Karlíček 2013, 83) Qualitative research tries to find out how people behave, which motives they have. Qualitative research could be divided into three main groups:

- Deep interviews
- Focus groups
- Project techniques (Foret 2003, 80-87)

## **II. ANALYSIS**

## **4 METODOLOGY AND THE GOAL OF THE ANALYSIS**

This chapter analyses marketing activities of the PSG Zlín ice-hockey club, especially the product, advertising, public relations, online marketing and fans' satisfaction with club's communication. In the practical part, the author mainly uses data that are provided by the club's marketing manager. The goal of this thesis is to describe and analyse marketing mix and marketing communication in sport environment especially in ice-hockey. The main objective of the practical part of the thesis is to analyse the functioning of PSG Zlín's marketing communications and to find out whether club's marketing communication is effective or not. It should describe all club's marketing activities and tools with subsequent analysis based on the online questionnaire that was placed on the club's official Facebook page. The final part of the analysis summarizes the marketing research and offers recommendations for improvement and innovations.

#### 4.1 PSG Zlín



Figure 1: *Official logo of the club*

(Source: *official website, hokej.zlin.cz*)

The name of the club: HC PSG Zlín, z. s.

The name of the organization: PSG Zlín, s. r. o.

Address: Zimní stadion Lud'ka Čajky, Březnická 4068, 760 01 Zlín, Czech Republic

Website: [www.hokej.zlin.cz](http://www.hokej.zlin.cz)

Facebook page: [www.facebook.com/hokejzlin](http://www.facebook.com/hokejzlin)

Team's colours: Blue, Yellow

Team's nickname: The Cobblers

President of the presidium: MUDr. Miroslav Adámek

Vice-presidents: Ing. Radomír Zbožínek, Ing. Juraj Surovič

General Manager: Mgr. Karel Adamík

Executive Director: Ing. Patrik Kamas

Head Coach: Rostislav Vlach

In terms of organisational structure PSG Zlín ice-hockey club has two main organs. The first, HC PSG Zlín ZS embodies youth teams and Luděk Čajka ice arena. The second, PSG Zlín s. r. o., incorporates mainly the “A” team.

## 4.2 History of the PSG Zlín ice-hockey club

The first ice-hockey club in Zlín was established in 1929 by Tomas Bata factory's labourers, who named the club SK Baťa Zlín. The first game was played on the 13 January 1929 against Kroměříž. Visitors were more successful and won 7:2. Due to different regimes at that time, the club was often forced to change the name. In 1948 the club was named Sokol Botostroj Zlín and following year the club was renamed to Sokol Svit Gottwaldov. This name was again replaced in 1958 to TJ Gottwaldov. A year 1957 was crucial for the club. The city built a new ice arena with an artificial ice surface.

The name was changed again many times after The Velvet Revolution. In 2002, the club changed the name after a main sponsor – Hamé. But there was a conflict between Hamé and the club. Hamé, the new sponsor, had at that time a Bear as a mascot. Zlín had a Ram. Ram is a typical Wallachian animal, which should represent strength, tenacity and intransigency. Zlín wanted cooperation with Hamé, so they conformed to them. But the collaboration held only five years. The club got a chance to sign a contract with more lucrative sponsor and therefore the club was renamed to HC RI Okna Zlín [due to preceding disagreement over a logo, the city decided to intervene. Nowadays the logo consists of the logo of the city together with a logo of the main sponsor, which is company PSG]. Neither this sponsor lasted long. In 2009, the club signed a deal with a company called PSG and this relationship persists up to now. The main reason, why the club was often forced to change the name was the economic situation in the country. Private subjects started to sponsor sport clubs as a part of its own promotion. This encountered also Zlín ice-hockey club.

### Changes in the name of the club:

- 1945 – SK Baťa Zlín
- 1948 – Sokol Botostroj Zlín
- 1949 – Sokol Svit Gottwaldov
- 1958 – TJ Gottwaldov
- 1990 – TJ Zlín, SK Zlín, AC ZPS Zlín
- 1997 – HC ZPS Zlín – Barum Zlín
- 1999 – HC Barum Continental
- 2000 – HC Continental Zlín

2002 – HC Hamé Zlín

2007 – HC RI Okna Zlín

2009 – PSG Zlín

### 4.3 The Luděk Čajka ice arena



Figure 2: *The Luděk Čajka ice arena in Zlín*

The hockey arena in Zlín opened in 1957. The big step was made in 1962, when the stadium was added a roof construction. At the moment, the capacity of the arena is 7 000 spectators. It includes 4 525 places for sitting, 2 475 places for standing, VIP and journalists spots.

Probably the biggest tragedy in the club's history happened in 1989/1990 season. During the game against Košice Zlín's captain and Czechoslovakia's international defender Luděk Čajka accidentally hit his head against the board. The consequence was a broken cervical vertebra with spinal cord damage – an injury that became fatal. Afterwards the club honoured this amazing player and renamed the ice arena after him. Since the season 1989/1990 the stadium has been called The Luděk Čajka ice arena. The ceiling of the hockey arena is covered by jerseys of famous players, who belonged to famous Zlín ice-hockey teams such as Jiří Králík, Luděk Čajka, Miroslav Okál or Karel Rachůnek.

Zlín nowadays has two hockey stadiums. The second is named PSG arena. It was opened in 2004 and serves mainly for training, youth ice-hockey categories, public skating or figure skating trainings. The capacity is almost 600 spectators.

#### 4.4 The Club's biggest achievements

Ice-hockey in Zlín started to be more popular in 1961, when the local team won the first title and therefore qualified to the highest league in Czechoslovakia. Another success is dated to 1980/1981 season. The team accomplished a significant milestone. The club, at that time called TJ Gottwaldov, had permanently settled in the Czechoslovakia's first league.

The first big success in Czech league came in season 2003/2004. Zlín got through to the finals, where it played against a strong opponent – HC Slavia Praha. Zlín had a better series and after five games won the title. The whole city was amazed and truly satisfied with this accomplishment.

Ten years. This is the time that Zlín had to wait for another glory. In 2012/2013 season Zlín lost a series against Plzeň, but fans knew that this is not the end. A year later, the situation repeated. Zlín clashed in the finals with Plzeň once again. And the Cobblers got their revenge. They won 4:3 in the series and finally got the Masaryk's trophy for the winner of the league.

##### Summary of the club's biggest achievements:

2013/2014 – 1st place in Tipsport Extraliga, winning the Masaryk Trophy for the winner of the league



Figure 3: Club's captain and a legend Petr Čajánek after winning the title  
(Source: [skokplus.com](http://skokplus.com))

2003/2014 – 1st place in Tipsort Extraliga

2012/2013 – 2nd place in Tipsport Extraliga, winning a Presidential trophy for the winner of the regular season

2004/2005 – 2nd place in Extraliga

1998/1999 – 2nd place in Extraliga

1994/1995 – 2nd place in Extraliga

#### **4.5 The Club's goals**

Every season the club sets up the main goals. However, the structure stays the same season after season. The club tries to set up economic, marketing and sport goals. The most important goal is to stay financially stable. The main long-term goal is to be amongst eight best clubs in Czech Extraliga, it means to reach the playoffs. Other aims are to maintain and obtain new fans. That could lead to more attractive games, atmosphere and of course money increase in club's cash box. During last few years, PSG Zlín tried to improve online activities, especially social media activities, such as updating Facebook profiles, official website or developing new YouTube channel.

Before each season, the club processes new strategies via set up goals or just improve strategies from the last season. Before new season, mainly in April and May, the club devises new strategies, promo actions and events or campaigns for fans. But this depends on how the club is successful in current season. It means that club can reach the finals in playoff or do not even qualify for the playoffs. Every situation has its own strategy.

Before new season, PSG Zlín's marketing department firstly sets up new permanent tickets. This happens mainly in April and May. Marketers think about tickets' visual and afterwards create them and sell them. The advantage is on the side of loyal permanent ticket's holders. They have the priority right to receive season tickets also with a discount. The rest of permanent tickets is sold. The second action before the season is official opening of the season. The club opens the stadium for public, gives people the opportunity to meet players or organizes the autograph sessions. After the end of the season, the club organizes farewell party for fans, where people can meet their favourite players and drink, eat or just talk to them. The club also organizes the jersey's auctions.

After these, the club has to actualize jerseys for the following season, websites, sponsors, advertisements, visuals etc. The deadline of these actions is often the end of July. Everything is done with participation of press.

The next step taken by the club is creating new calendar for the following season. This season, the club took advantage of the anniversary. It has already been thirty years from winning the first ice-hockey medal in Zlín. In the season 1984/1985 the club managed to win the bronze medal. Marketers focused on taking photographs with players who made a contribution to the bronze success, namely Jiří Králík, Jiří Vodák or Miloš Říha. But current players also participated, particularly Petr Čajánek, Ondřej Veselý or Roman Vlach. The photographing always takes place during international break, due to which the Czech league is suspended. The exciting calendar called “From the Bronze to the Gold” is available for 250 CZK.

## **4.6 Marketing mix**

The aim of this part is to apply and describe marketing mix on PSG Zlín ice-hockey club.

### **4.6.1 Product**

In the sport field the product is not as obvious as in the other marketing fields. The main product of PSG Zlín represents the “A” team of men, which plays the highest ice-hockey league in Czech Republic called Tipsport Extraliga. The major product are the home games that are played in Zlín in front of the club’s fans. The total amount of home games is 26; the other 26 games are played away from Zlín. If the club is successful and reach the playoffs, than plays more games at home. Playoff is popular for attracting more people to the matches. Also junior’s team can be considered as a product. Juniors play the highest youth league in this country.

Products are also merchandising, events or popular players such as Petr Čajánek. He started his career in Zlín and then went to USA where he played in the National Hockey League for St. Louis Blues and afterwards came back to Zlín. His personality attracts more people to games and therefore more money to club’s cash box. Zlín is a huge region with many sport teams, which can be considered as a product competition for the local hockey club. But considering the prestige, there is no competition for PSG Zlín ice-hockey club, which plays the highest ice-hockey league in this country. Football team FC Fastav Zlín played the highest football league in the past, but nowadays plays the second highest football league in Czech Republic. That does not attract as many people as hockey. Another sport club in Zlín is handball team HC Zlín, which plays the highest league in Czech Republic, but handball is not as prestigious and popular as ice-hockey in this region.

But all these teams have good relationships with each other. There are no fights amongst them over fans. Sometimes they organize joint events and are willing to cooperate.

#### **4.6.2 Price**

The prices are divided into two main groups – season (permanent) tickets and classic single tickets. Permanent tickets are prepared to be sold before the start of the new season, especially at the end of June. Season tickets are divided into four main subgroups, where the price differs:

1. Club's seats – the cost of these season tickets is 10 900 CZK per season
2. Category A – the cost is 5 500 CZK
3. Category B – the cost is 3 850 CZK
4. Standing – the cost is 2 500 CZK

Fans can use Season tickets for four different matches/competitions:

1. Tipsport Extraliga regular season
2. Tipsport Extraliga playoffs
3. The Champions League
4. Friendly matches

Classic single tickets are prepared to be sold an hour and a half before the start of the game. Fans can also purchase the tickets online. The tickets are also divided into four main subgroups:

1. Club's seats – the value is 450 CZK
2. Category A – the value is 240 CZK
3. Category B – the value is 160 CZK
4. Standing – the value is 110 CZK

#### **4.6.3 Distribution**

The distribution is a different term to a term place in a marketing mix. The place for the club is the Luděk Čajka ice arena, where home matches are held and where the tickets are sold. The stadium is often used for concerts, musicals and other sport events as well.

#### **4.6.4 Promotion**

The fourth “P” of Zlín's marketing mix is promotion. The club is the most popular sport team in Zlín region and therefore lures attention of many people and media. The promotion will be described more in marketing communications section.

## **4.7 Marketing communications**

Marketing communications represent the most important topic in this bachelor thesis and also in the sport team. Primarily it concerns advertising, sales promotion, public relations, direct marketing, personal selling and online marketing.

### **4.7.1 Advertising**

Advertising belongs to the most useful tools of PSG Zlín's marketing communications. The club uses advertisements in ice arena, television, radios, newspapers, outside and also online.

#### ***4.7.1.1 Advertising during the game***

During the game, the spectators should notice the advertisements placed on boards, ice itself, ice cube placed above the ice and also on player's jerseys, where names of the most influential sponsors are displayed. The patron of the Czech hockey advertising is the company BPA. It is an agency that watches over many subsidiaries, many hockey sponsors, such as Tipsport, Radegast or Česká pojišťovna.

The club divides stadium advertising into "television wave" and "nontelelevision wave". The television wave could be described as an advertisement, which is visible during TV matches. In the Luděk Čajka ice arena it is situated on the left stands. There are more famous sponsors such as Tipsport, Radegast, BPA agency or Střída Sport. The non-television wave is situated on the right stands; there are less known advertisements that are not seen on TV but primarily by spectators.

The club designs and afterwards creates bulletins, which are sold before every home match. BPA agency owns around 30% of the cover of bulletins, the rest 70% is held by the club. The bulletin also offers different information that are not on the official website or Facebook profile. There are information about both teams, their squads, last matches and some added information.

#### ***4.7.1.2 Television***

Tipsport Extraliga has the long-term contract with Česká Televize. It is a Czech public television that broadcasts all over of Czech Republic. Česká Televize offers to sport's fans many games of different sports during the year. It is the most significant and popular sport television in our country.

PSG Zlín ice-hockey club cooperates also with regional television, TV Slovácko or RTA Zlín. Each of these TV stations informs fans about upcoming matches, various events, players or board changes.

#### **4.7.1.3 Radio**

PSG Zlín has developed a successful cooperation with two radios in Zlín - radio Rockmax and radio Zlín. Radio Zlín is the most listened and popular radio in region Zlín. The priority of this radio is the quick news service and high-quality music. Both radio stations mentioned above have the same owner; therefore PSG Zlín can reach bigger audience. Fans are able to hear the most recent information about the club, players or matches. During the match, moderators are trying to describe the game progress to fans, who did not manage to get to the stadium.

#### **4.7.1.4 Newspapers**

As a successful club, Zlín has to cooperate with newspapers. Probably most famous newspapers in Czech hockey is called Deník Sport. Before each season, the club has to shoot the photos with actual players and actual jerseys for the Deník's purposes. The photos are used in official Extraliga website and also in Fantasy Hockey league on the internet.

The club uses services of regional partners such as Mladá Fronta. According to marketing manager Tomáš Melzer, the cooperation with Mladá Fronta is very exclusive and honest. PSG Zlín ice-hockey club is also presented in other newspapers, such as Zlínský deník or Noviny Zlínska. Fans can find there information about current situation of the season, match summaries and interviews with players.

#### **4.7.1.5 Outside advertising**

Posters on bus stations, billboards, city lights, large format posters and primarily mega board above the Cinema in Zlín. Those are the main outside advertisements used by PSG Zlín. Especially the mega board above the cinema attracts people's attention. The club had to choose players from the squad, who would be displayed on the mega posters. The turn was on goalkeeper Libor Kašík, the league's best rookie of the last season and one of the club's best players Zdeněk Okál. The mega board also includes the team's most significant sponsors such as PSG, RI Okna, WSM and a logo with a ram as a team's symbol.



Figure 4: *Mega board above the cinema in Zlín*

#### 4.7.1.6 *Online advertising*

Online advertisements are situated mainly on club's official website, Facebook or even permanent tickets banner on iDnes.

#### 4.7.2 **Sales promotion**

Fans come to the matches because they like hockey, they support their team, they want to entertain themselves, want to forget about ordinary lives and to experience something special. But the entertainment is not only the game itself. Marketers try to create entertaining program also during breaks between periods. During the last few years, club started to do a shooting competition. After the first period, assistants throw three tennis balls into the crowd and lucky fans that catch the ball go after the second game period on ice and compete with others. The aim is to score a goal from the blue line. The winner wins coupon to the Barty's food where can order anything to eat for free.

Important part of sales promotion is merchandising. During last few years club renovated its fan shops. Fan shops are situated in the Luděk Čajka ice arena and PSG

Arena too. Fans find in fan shops products such as jerseys' replicas, clothes, scarves, hats, pucks, flags and other goods. Fans can also find the fan shop online on [zlinskyfanshop.cz](http://zlinskyfanshop.cz).

Another part of the sales promotion is a possibility to download the club's anthem, wallpapers with popular players, logo or club's symbol, which is a ram. At the end of each season, PSG Zlín organizes jersey's auctions. Auction concerns every person who is interested in the club and in the club's jerseys. The auction is arranged by eSports company. It is a Czech company that provides sport services especially on the internet.

Probably every team has its own fan club. PSG Zlín is not an exception. The fan club is called HFC Zlín. Between the club and fan club there is an evolved partnership. The club often gives members discounts on travelling, tens of season tickets for standing and other privileges. Club often arranges an expedition by bus for fans, who can therefore go and support their team even in away matches.

#### **4.7.3 PR – Public relations**

PR is the part of the club's marketing communications which plays the most important role. During the regular season, the "A" team participates in many events whether beneficial or aimed at fans. The whole club also has to communicate and cooperate with media. The club has to show that it is not always about ice-hockey, but also about gaining new supporters.

After the end of each season, club organizes a party for fans in order to appreciate their support during the season. Club always prepares autograph and photographing session where fans can meet their idols. Especially the party after winning the Masaryk's trophy last season was successful. Fans who participated were satisfied with meeting their favourite players and with refreshments for free prepared by the sponsor Radegast and the club was satisfied with bounteous participation.

A week before Christmas PSG Zlín created event for fans called "Christmas skating with players". Fans got a chance to skate with teams' players, for instance Petr Leška, Jiří Marušák, Ondřej Veselý, Roman Vlach or Zdeněk Okál. Supporters could try a penalties competition with team's goalkeepers Tomáš Štůrala and Luboš Horčíčka.

It has been almost two years since the club started to support Korunka Luhačovice's campaign for donating the bone marrow. Players tried to encourage people to throw away the fear and barriers in order to help people who need the bone marrow.

During this year's playoffs quarterfinals against Kometa Brno, marketing department arranged the action for fans. They had opportunity to send messages to the "A" team's dressing room, for instance while wearing club's jersey. The most original messages won ice-hockey products such as signed shirts, jerseys and other nice things.

During the regular season PSG Zlín created a competition for fans called "Win a FABIA car". Supporters had to guess the average attendance on the home matches. The person who had the most accurate tip won a brand new car Fabia sponsored by Samohýl Motor a. s.

The essential component of club's public relations is its slogan. It has been almost three years, since the club changed the slogan. Marketers wanted to connect the team more with fans and therefore created this slogan: "One Faith, One Team, One Goal." The club created new pictures and posters, where are displayed players, coaches, management and fans. It should show that all of them belong to one team. PSG Zlín proves through these annual activities that field of public relations is on very high level.

Each season the club has to adjust its PR to current situation. For instance, last season, the club had the position of the winner of the league. The whole league expected Zlín to be the favourite in the playoffs, but PSG Zlín started the season badly. Players did not have form and a team struggled on the last 14. place of the Czech Extraliga table. The question was: Should main coach Rostislav Vlach resign, or not? Almost all newspapers, magazines and TV channels discussed the bad form of the club and responsibility on Vlach's shoulders. But the club's representatives decided to keep Vlach in the team, to give him another chance. The club acquired a new impulse and managed to reach the playoffs.

#### **4.7.4 Personal selling**

Personal selling does not belong to club's most important marketing communication tools. PSG Zlín uses personal selling mainly when negotiating with partners and sponsors.

#### **4.7.5 Online marketing**

The whole world is turning around internet and social media and sport is not an exception. If the club wants to be successful, it has to keep up with the times. During the last few years, the club improved social media activity almost enormously. Club has the Facebook page called PSG Zlín, official website [hokej.zlin.cz](http://hokej.zlin.cz), Instagram and recently created YouTube channel. But each of these has to offer different information about the club. Official website offers the newest information about the team, players and matches. The

most popular these days is Facebook page. Current amount of profile's followers is 38 010. Profile advertises important articles and events that should drag more attention. Lastly, club's YouTube channel offers completely different things. There are interviews with players, invitations by players to following matches or newly bloopers from the spots shooting. Club also decided to create Instagram profile, where it provides photos from matches, marketing actions or from the dressing room. The marketers try to close the social media gap created by ex-marketers during the last few years. The club now tries to draw other clubs level. Some fans complain that the club does not owe Twitter account. The marketing manager of PSG Zlín, Tomáš Melzer, insists that the club is not obliged to have every type of social media. He argues that club's Facebook profile, YouTube channel and Instagram provide as many information as necessary. Therefore there is no Twitter account creation in sight.

## **4.8 Sponsoring**

The year 2009 was crucial for the club due to signing the contract with company called PSG. PSG is a modern and dynamic company, which was founded in 1924. It realizes projects in more than twenty countries in four continents. PSG is a general supplier in particular fields such as civil engineering, energetics and petrochemistry. The company mainly concentrates on industrial constructions, civil and residential buildings and steel constructions. Thanks to the PSG, the Zlín ice-hockey club is more financially stabilized.

The club mainly collaborates with a company called Střída sport. It is a specialized hockey company, which offers hockey equipment. This sponsor helps the team to create jerseys, to decorate the club's bus that goes with the club during the whole season. The visual of the bus comes out the mega board placed above the local Cinema in Zlín. The club has to decide, which players will be displayed there and in what position. Střída sport works mainly with brands such as CCM and Reebok therefore provides the club with clothes and accessories that players, coach stuff and representatives are obliged to wear.

The club has the partnership with company WSM. Those two sides have the contract about screening on the bus and jerseys. Afterwards, marketers have to decide where to put the logo, because the logo has to be seen at first sight. This is the main requirement set by sponsor – the name of the company has to be seen directly.

The powerful and important partner of the whole hockey league is Radegast. This brewery belongs to the most popular breweries in Czech Republic. The contract says every

club in Czech Extraliga has the responsibility to offer and tap Radegast beer at their home matches. In order to stay among the elite breweries and to attract more fans and attention, Radegast devises many new actions and competitions, such as winning tickets to some sport venues, winning free beers etc. PSG Zlín uses Radegast's activities during the season, but also at the end, when the club has the farewell party with autograph session. Radegast provides beer, food and the program for the fans for free. Each of three participating sides is satisfied. The club invites the fans, who are happy to be close to their favourite players and the brewery is promoted too.

The club cooperates with a firm called Avonet. It is an internet supplier, which supplies internet to the stadium and also provides free Wi-Fi. Therefore fans can browse the internet if they want to know the results of other matches or do their business during breaks between periods.

PSG Zlín divides sponsors into three fundamental groups: general sponsor, head sponsors and other partners. As mentioned higher, the general sponsor of the club is the company PSG. Head sponsors are Město Zlín, Zlínský kraj, Zaremba, WSM Bohemia, RI Okna and BPA Sport marketing a. s. Other sponsors are Tipsport, Porr, Samohýl Motor Holding a. s., MM reality or Alpine Logistik.

## **4.9 Questionnaire**

The author applied an online marketing research with quantitative method for the purpose of ascertaining whether the marketing communication of the PSG Zlín ice-hockey club is effective and successful or not. The research was placed on PSG Zlín's official Facebook profile. The questionnaire contains thirteen questions. First three are focused on gender, age and residence, other questions concern club's marketing communications in detail. The amount of respondents is 361 in total, which provides enough data for research processing.

## 4.10 Questionnaire summarization and subsequent suggestions for improvement

### 4.10.1 Questionnaire summarization

As the author mentioned above, the research was answered by 361 respondents. It is evident that sport is more popular amongst men, because 61.5% of respondents were men, and the rest 38.5% were women. According to the questionnaire, almost every respondent is PSG Zlín's fan (98.5%). The first graph shows that ice-hockey in Zlín attracts primarily people between 16 and 25 years of age (57%).

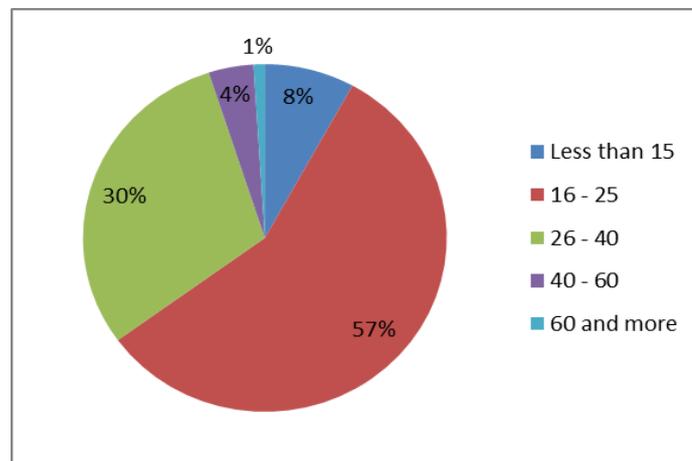


Chart 1: *Age of Respondents* (Source: the author)

The 31% of respondents are directly from Zlín, but the majority of respondents (48.5%) come from other cities in region Zlín. Significant question was number 4, where the author asks how often fans attend club's matches. It is necessary to know because the main goal of the club is to attract more and more fans but primarily make them to come back. If the club secures that fans are satisfied and entertained, they will come back again and perhaps with other family members or friends. The most respondents answered that they attend home matches often (46%), only 24% of respondents visit matches on a regular basis.

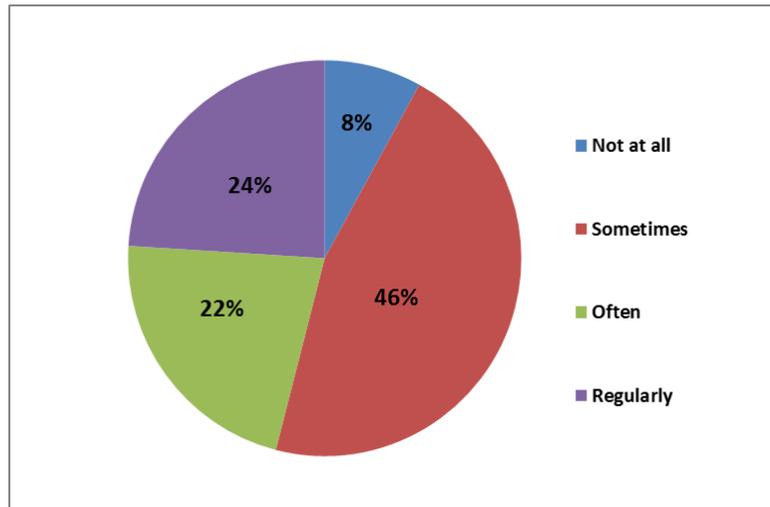


Chart 2: *Fans' attendance (Source: the author)*

Another important question was a question number 6, concerning tickets' prices. The majority, 69.5% stated, that tickets' prices are set adequately. This is a good sign for the club. Fans are mainly satisfied with prices, some of them do not even mind if prices increase in the future.

The shooting competition mentioned above is very popular among the spectators, 71% of them approve it and like it. Marketing department of the club sometimes think about changing this competition in order not to lose appeal, but almost every other idea is more dangerous for competing fans, so the marketing department decided to remain break program static. The safety of fans/competitors is the most important for the club.

Especially revealing is the question number 9 – where fans find out new information about the club. The second chart shows that fans watch primarily Facebook and Instagram and after that the official website. The disappointment is the YouTube channel, which is quite new in the club. Only 14.2% fans are watching the team on YouTube.

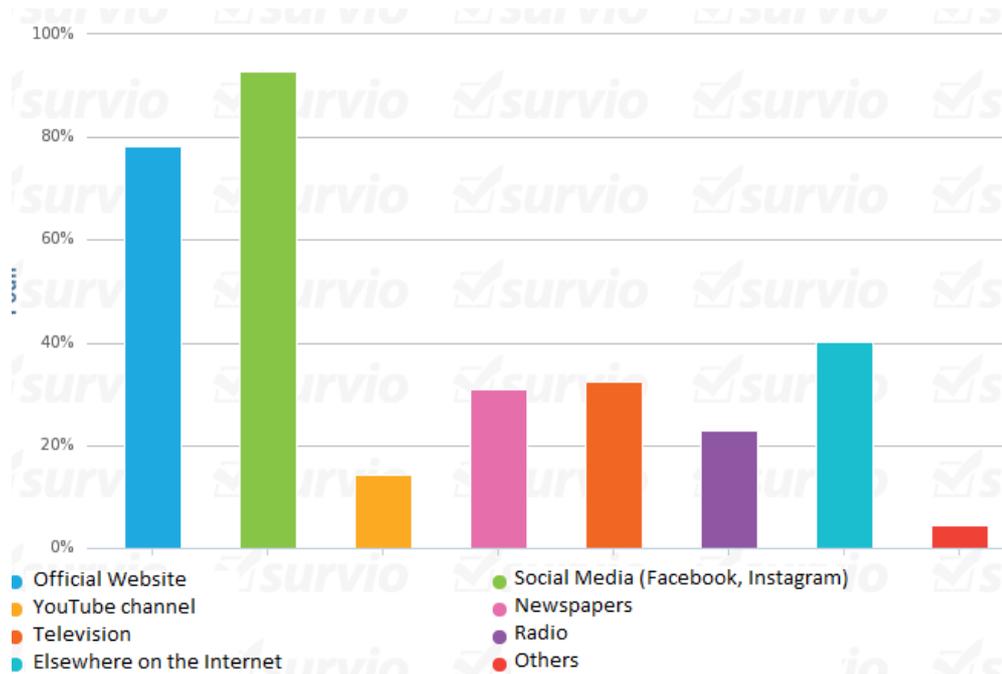


Chart 3: Sources where fans look for new information about PSG Zlín  
(Source: the author)

Question number 10 contains answers whether and where fans noticed club’s advertisements. Respondents could check more answers. Most of respondents chose the first option, which were advertisements outside, mainly mega board above the local Cinema and other posters.

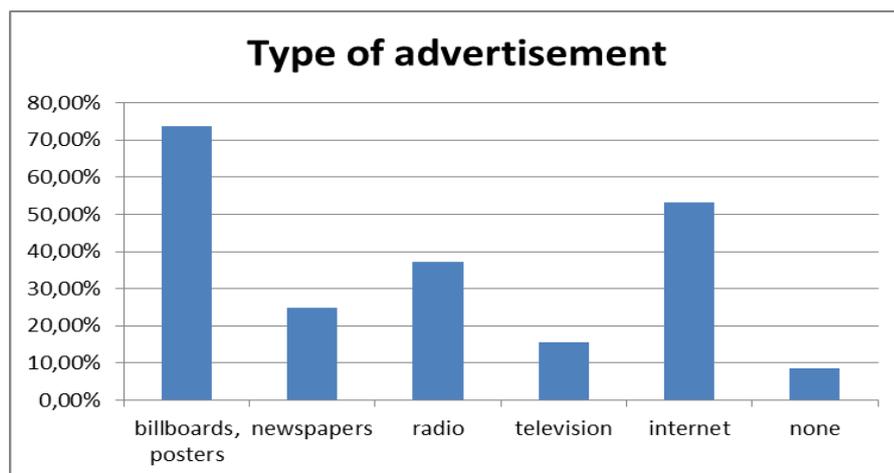


Chart 4: Where fans noticed the club’s advertisement (Source: the author)

The last important question focused on events that are organized by the PSG Zlín. The summary of the research discovered that the most popular event amongst fans is valedictory party with players and club's partners and public skating with players. Fans are always happy when they are able to meet their popular players, idols.

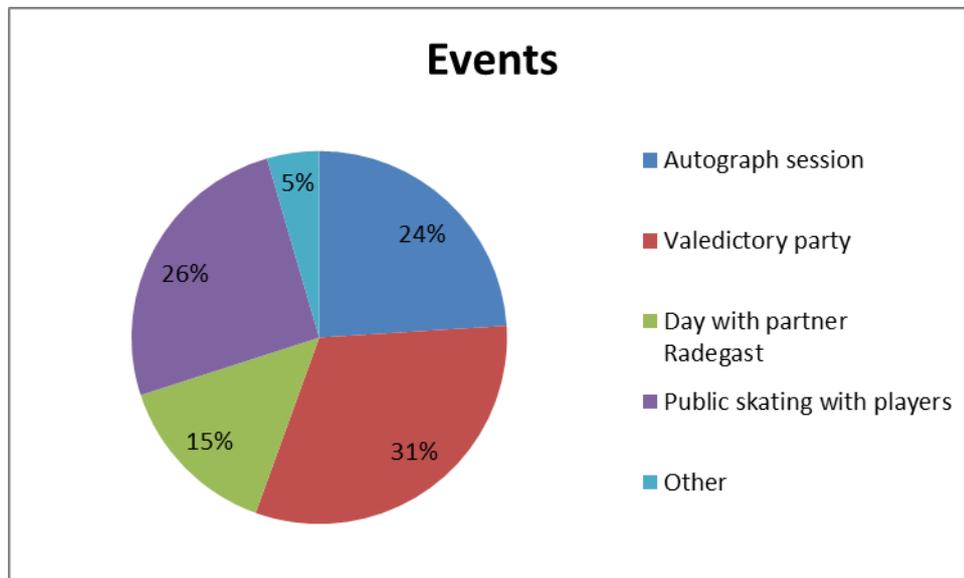


Chart 5: *Events organized by the club*

(Source: the author)

#### 4.10.2 Suggestions for improvement

This section of bachelor thesis provides the reader with suggestions and recommendations for marketing communications' improvement of PSG Zlín ice-hockey club. It is based on the marketing research, where questions were answered especially by team's fans. Recommendations are provided by the author and also by fans.

##### 4.10.2.1 Club's symbol

In 1990 club started to engage an animal symbol, mascot – the ram. It is a Wallachian symbol of pride, strength and intransigence. Club included this animal into a logo and afterwards obtained a nickname Rams. Now it is an inherent part of PSG Zlín's character. Nowadays fans feel the lack of using this animal symbol, they want a ram to be seen more. They want club to produce more products with a logo of this animal, add it to an official logo or add it to the official jersey.

#### ***4.10.2.2 Wi-Fi***

One of the questions of marketing research concerned the Wi-Fi connection in the Luděk Čajka ice arena. The most respondents answered that they often use it during the game, but some of them commented, that they are not satisfied with this service. According to some supporters, there is a weak signal on the stadium therefore they are not able to use Wi-Fi or even internet data. Wi-Fi and its connection is slow and the fans are annoyed, because they are not able to watch other matches played at the same time online or arrange personal issues. Sometimes the connection is overloaded, because many fans use it simultaneously. According to a marketing manager Tomáš Melzer, the club is aware of this inconvenience with Wi-Fi connection. Club is trying to fix it, but it is difficult due to large iron constructions that disturb the signal. Important is, that club is aware of this problem and wants to solve it as soon as possible. Perhaps the resolution of this problem arrives with stadium reconstruction, which is on a list.

#### ***4.10.2.3 Ticket prices and stadium renovation***

Marketing research showed that supporters are primarily satisfied with tickets' prices. Most of them think that prices are set adequately. This is a good sign for the club. Fans are reconciled that prices stay the same and if the club reach playoff, they will rise up. This is a common progress. But some supporters insist that considering the conditions of the stadium prices are absolutely inadequate. The interior, mainly hygiene of toilets is in poor state. This is another thing that can be solved in future by stadium reconstruction. But a reconstruction is expensive therefore prices could be set higher in order to reach relative financial stability. The research shows that most fans are in middle age, therefore I would create discount for students and for elderly people in order to lure them to the stadium. Mainly older people are happy if someone offers them a discount, so they would be more likely to visit Zlín's matches.

Reconstruction of the stadium is an absolute necessity. The Luděk Čajka ice arena, build it 1957, is the second oldest arena in Czech ice-hockey league. Both the exterior and interior of the stadium are very old and decrepit. PSG Zlín is willing to modernize this arena, but it will be expensive. The club itself is not able to afford it, because the financial situation is not at a great level. According to estimates, the planned reconstruction which should start as soon as possible should come to 500 million CZK – that is price which is

unreal for the club to finance from own sources, therefore the club hopes for the financial aid from the city.

The stadium is a tradition, there is always a good atmosphere, but on the other hand it is in disrepair, the temperature there is very low, which makes it very difficult mainly during winter. Modernisation will concern the whole stands, enlargement of the corridor, complete renovation of toilets or building sky boxes. The modernisation will probably be divided into three main stages. The first goal is to connect both stadiums, increase parking spots in front of the stadium, restore dressing rooms and stadium's restaurant, there will be better access to ice rink etc. The second phase will focus on toilets, complete modernisation of the whole premises and improvement of fan's facilities. The third stage ensures better access to the stadium and checkout.

#### ***4.10.2.4 Events***

Club organizes and participates in many events, but is it enough? Every season, the club takes part in public skating, autograph session, day with general partner or valedictory party at the end of the season.

I think that club could try to be engaged more, to be more close to fans, to make fans feel that team cares. The club could try to organize event where players would spend some time with supporters and show them, how the regular player's day looks like. Players could show supporters how they practice every day, how they exercise in a gym, how they train physical fitness, stamina. They could make a competition, for instance in a gym – who lifts more on the bench will win a price, for instance one ticket to another Zlín's home match.

PSG Zlín could organize an action, where supporters could make a team of 20 players, which would play against Zlín's "A" team. That could be an event that would be held at the end of the season as the end party. At the end of the game, players would offer their autographs, photos and afterwards everybody would go to the city dancing party, which could be held for example in a local club Star Club Flip.

Petr Čajánek, a legend and a captain, ended his career after this season, where PSG Zlín was eliminated from playoffs. Club should organize a farewell party for him that would attract fans from the whole region Zlín. This party could be held as a football party, where fans and players would meet on a football pitch against each other and play a friendly match. After the game all participants would celebrate and enjoy the time with players and rich refreshments. The club should keep up the parties for retiring players,

because when another legend Martin Hamrlík ended his career, the club did not organize a party for him, which was a huge disappointment for club's supporters.

Another event that could be organized by the club is a trip to ZOO in Lešná. ZOO in Lešná is near to Zlín and offers many animals that could attract supporters, especially families with children. Club would choose couple of players who take part in this event. This could be very exciting experience for fans, which can enjoy a day with their idols away from a hockey stadium.

#### ***4.10.2.5 Communication with fans***

The communication between club and supporters is during the last few years on a poor level. Club practically does not communicate with them. There should be a communicational, discussion club, where supporters would ask questions and club management would afterwards answer them. Fans often do not know, what is happening inside the club, what players are coming in and out of the club, what organisational changes are planned etc. Very obsolete is the club's forum situated on the official website. Fans ask their questions, but no one answers them. The last answer is dated to 2012. The lack of communication is evident. This should be improved. I would employ one person, who would be responsible for the communication with fans on the forum, where he would answer the questions. It would reduce fan's dissatisfaction.

Club should improve Facebook activity. I think that PSG Zlín does not take advantage of this powerful social network. The club should include more interesting information about players, teams. There should be more things that will engage fans such as opinion surveys, competitions for free tickets to "A" team matches, providing supporters with hidden, secret information about players, polls for fans who was the best player of the last game etc. Fans have to feel that they are part of the unit. They should feel engaged.

Some fans insist that club should create a Twitter and Google+ account. Each of these social networks is different, they offer various options to attract and entertain people. But marketing manager thinks having all of these social pages would be counterproductive. If PSG Zlín improves activities on Facebook and official website, fans will not demand creating Twitter and Google+ accounts.

What has to be improved is also Instagram and YouTube channel. Official Instagram offers only pictures from particular matches and that is not so attractive. Fans would appreciate photos from dressing rooms, from collective lunches, trips or from parties.

Players should take modern photos known as “selfies” from time to time and put it on club’s Instagram. YouTube channel is quite new. It was created seven months ago, but the content is not very good. There are interviews with players after matches and some promos and invitations for upcoming games. That is not enough. Clubs should involve videos from backstage, record a video from the training, where one of the players put a camera on his helmet, make interviews with players about their personal lives and their crazy experience etc.

#### **4.10.2.6 Fan club**

Every team has its own fan club. The selection of supporters that cheers up the team every time. The fan club should represent the club and club’s colours. But Zlín’s fan club is different. It is an organisation called HFC Zlín. This fan club has its own jerseys and sign, which is not very representative. It looks like they are fans of completely different team. Yes, they support the team, they sing team’s chants and anthems, but I think that they should wear club’s jerseys with club’s colours and symbol and not their own.

#### **4.10.2.7 Other ideas**

The club should improve a section of merchandising. I think fan shops are not very popular in Zlín. Perhaps it is due to lack of offered products both in fan shops on stadiums and the online fan shop. There is a lack of flags, stickers, scarves, jerseys, clothes, hats, hockey cards for children or small souvenirs. Products should be bluer and more yellow, which are club’s colours, also club’s symbol ram should be engaged more. The assortment of goods is very bad. Goods should be refilled. Club could make a survey on a Facebook profile where should ask questions about goods fans are willing to buy.

Moreover I would also set up a “children’s corner” especially for small kids that do not manage to be on stands for the whole match. There should be at least two social workers who would take care about those kids, which would be playing there.

A lot of fans are not satisfied with refreshment that is offered during home matches. Some of them think beer and sausages does not have the quality. This section should be improved, because fans like to have something to eat during breaks, therefore food and beverages should be perfect. Stand with refreshments should offer more food, more kinds of sausages, not only simple hot dogs. I would suggest small pizzas, hamburgers, kebabs and other popular meals.

## CONCLUSION

This bachelor thesis focused on marketing communications of Czech ice-hockey club PSG Zlín. It had two main goals. First was to define theoretical terms marketing mix and marketing communications and to apply them on club's marketing activities. Second was to analyse whether club's marketing strategies and communication with fans are effective or not. Through the quantitative online marketing research, which was placed on official Facebook profile PSG Zlín, it was discovered, that some marketing activities are neglected, especially fan shop, ice arena and forum on website. It was also discovered, that club should improve social media activities, especially on Facebook, Instagram and YouTube channel. On the other hand club's PR is done almost perfectly. On the basis of the research and own ideas I suggested certain improvements, that could serve to the club in future.

Generally club's marketing is not on a bad level. Few years ago this field was very neglected, but with arrival of new marketing team the marketing has improved significantly. Team works on organizing new events for fans which are very important for the club. However, in my opinion, there is still space for improvement. I hope this thesis will help to improve club's marketing strategies at least a little.

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## APPENDICES

P I      Questions from the research

## **APPENDIX P I: QUESTIONS FROM THE RESEARCH**

- 1) How old are you?
- 2) What is your gender?
- 3) Where are you from?
- 4) Are you a fan of PSG Zlín ice-hockey club?
- 5) How often do you visit matches?
- 6) What do you think about ticket's prices?
- 7) Do you like the competition during the break between periods?
- 8) Are you satisfied with Wi-Fi on the stadium?
- 9) Where do you look for information about the club?
- 10) Did you register any advertisement of the club?
- 11) How would you evaluate club's communication with supporters?
- 12) Which of mentioned events you would like to attend?
- 13) Do you have any comment on club's marketing activities?