

BOOK REVIEWS

Tomasz Barańkiewicz, Małgorzata Michalik, Henryk Mruk, 2013, *Marketingowe zarządzanie apteką [Managing a Pharmacy through Marketing]*, ABC Wolters Kluwer Polska, Warszawa, pp. 260, ISBN 978-83-2644-114-1

The second edition of „Marketingowe zarządzanie apteką”, edited by Henryk Mruk, published by ABC Wolters Kluwer, reflects the needs of a unique sector of Poland’s economy: the pharmacy market. The unique nature of Poland’s retail pharmacy market results from specific legal regulations which created a sector responding to customer needs. Traditions of Polish households, customer attitudes and the product-mix offered in Polish pharmacies led to the establishment of an economically and socially important sector and, in response to its needs, the authors have updated the second edition taking into account the 2012 regulations and their implications. The changing regulations demand pharmacy management adjustment to maintain a competitive edge. The number of pharmacies in an average town in Poland would surprise anybody. However, given the aging population whose physical mobility is expected to be increasingly limited, restricting them in exercising their preferences and thus threatening an independent choice, the access to a pharmacy and its services permits individual consumers to continue making decisions regarding health care, disease prevention and treatment. Because the ownership structure of pharmacies in Poland is dominated by individually owned retail outlets, the updated and revised edition of the book is likely to receive a lot of attention from pharmacy owners and managers. The book presents practical advice that can be implemented when the decision making chain is short.

The large number of pharmacies and, therefore, keen competition amongst them justify the general subject matter stressing “management through marketing.” The book is organized in chapters which encompass the institutional environment, in-

teraction with the wholesale market, negotiations, organization, activities inside the pharmacy (on premises), interaction with customers and actions directed to the outside world. Readers' attention would have been even more focused if the chapters were grouped into uniform sub-sections, even if some of these only consisted of a single chapter, such as Chapter I, which presents the changes in the regulations. The sequence of chapters seems inconsistent, although with the exception of one, each chapter lists several sub-headings clearly informing the reader about the sequence of the topics discussed. A helpful introduction opens almost every chapter. Detailing the content of a chapter is essential for practitioners, who can treat the book as a reference source and reach for it to solve both current and long term problems associated with pharmacy management, as well as in training employees.

In light of the new regulations the distinctiveness of Polish pharmacies becomes an increasingly important topic. Personal service differentiates independently-owned pharmacies from network pharmacies in other countries. Flexibility in reacting to customer needs, the adjustment of service style and the format of shared information, as well as the readiness to collaborate with a customer given their needs and purchasing power are the subjects of two sizable chapters (VI and VII). Connected with those subjects are topics of managing the pharmacy shelves and the self-service portion of the outlet space (chapters XI and XII), with the key topics of customer advice in-between (chapter VIII). The downside of the latter chapter is the absence of detailed section headings, not only because it differs from other chapters, but also because pharmacy managers will require an increasing amount of support to effectively compete in the ever denser marketplace. Covering this issue are studies that extend the topics included in the current book to issues linking the advice, which increasingly includes the interaction with the physician prescribing treatment, to meet the needs for therapy of a specific patient. It also includes a mention of the possible interaction with other medications which the customer uses. Perhaps this is a topic that can be expanded in a future edition. Issues discussed in chapters XI and XII have arisen because of an increase in chain pharmacies (a frequent phenomenon in mid-size and large cities), the size and interior design of sales space and the need to differentiate one's own pharmacy in anticipation of customer expectations. Chapter XIII deals with a potentially important form of pharmacy ownership – the franchise. It is possible that the inability to create a brand for an independently-owned pharmacy will mean growth opportunities for fewer entrepreneurs. The authors list several popular domestic brands and consider the potential of a franchise sub-sector without hiding the potential disadvantages of this type of business. The discussion of franchising establishes a link to literature available in English-published studies as it shifts the focus to the pharmacy supply chain. It is the supply chain that has a strong influence on the available drugs and other items as well as pricing. In terms of pricing, however, studies between countries differ because of the strong influence of regulation.

The book is written in simple language which does not require special or professional expertise. This is important for effective communication with the reader whose

training or experience may have never even included a basic marketing course. That particular fact clearly distinguishes the book amongst the many studies published in Poland in recent years in which the authors seem to prefer the jargon of a particular scientific discipline. Another virtue of the book is its concise presentation of issues, necessary from the perspective of a diverse readership which seeks information regarding a specific topic and is not interested in broad knowledge about all aspects of marketing or management. The authors should be congratulated for preferring succinct presentation over the length of presentation (which translates into the honoraria).

In summary, an experienced team of authors effectively implemented the task of preparing „the most practical” study as stated in the Introduction. The book can be expected to attract many readers given the number of pharmacies in Poland. Moreover, because of the specificity of Poland’s pharmacy market resulting from regulations and consumer attitude towards the pharmacy product-mix, it is difficult to enrich the domestic literature on this subject by direct translations of foreign studies. „Marketingowe zarządzanie apteką” (“Managing Pharmacy through Marketing”) fills a unique niche amongst practical studies needed for an economically important employer, distributor of many domestic products and a supplier of services highly desired by all segments of the population.

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