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Article

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Article

The Beneficial Relationship Between Marketing Services and Schools

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Abstract: The modern literature examines the debate concerning the influence of modern marketing services in schools. In this context, the need arises to evaluate how educational marketing finds resonance in secondary schools and how this is beneficial to the school community. This study examined the mediating role of educational marketing in schools, focusing on whether schools adopt its principles with consideration for the needs of students and parents and whether these efforts have been embraced by the entire school community. Data were collected from 350 teachers who work in public schools in Greece. *t*-tests were used to test the hypotheses under review. The results detected a strong relationship between modern marketing services and the educational process.

Keywords: marketing services; educational marketing; educational process; secondary schools

1. Introduction

The term “Marketing” refers to the central activity of organizations aiming to satisfy human needs in an effective way. Marketing encompasses products, services, and ideas and consists of actions aimed at maintaining consumers’ transactional relationships (Armstrong et al., 2009; Harvey, 1996; Robbins et al., 2013/2017). It is an administrative process that includes four functions: planning, organizing, leading, and controlling (Robbins et al., 2013/2017).

Marketing was primarily applied as a necessary function to for-profit organizations and businesses, which produced products satisfying the needs of their consumers (Kotler et al., 1996/2001). According to Kotler et al. (1996/2001), the key to implementing marketing is customer satisfaction. In other words, marketing aims to ensure the cooperation of all departments of a business in order to satisfy consumers. And more specifically, as stated by Brown et al. (1994, p. 36), in internal marketing, satisfied employees mean satisfied customers.

As mentioned in the international bibliography, the term marketing entered the field of education in the early 1980s. It is a very important factor in the strategy implemented by schools around the world on a large scale (Kotler et al., 1996/2001). Davies and Ellison (1991) stated that educational marketing aims to identify students’ needs from schools and meet them by providing quality and effective education.

In this sense, marketing in education is not a new element. However, its implementation in public schools in Greece is an important parameter, as schools operating without action plans and targets carry the risk of offering an education that is not characterized as qualitative and contributes to students’ low school performance (Chukwumah, 2015). Changes in respective policies have therefore prompted school leaders to develop new



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strategies so that the school product is promoted, and effective and quality education is promoted at the same time (Maguire et al., 2001; Foskett, 2012).

The term “Education” refers to the organized action undertaken by the state, society, or individuals in order to provide theoretical knowledge and technical skills to new generations according to a plan. In other words, education is nothing more than a planned process, the aim of which is the professional rehabilitation of today’s students.

In recent years, alterations in Greek education have simulated the needs of educational institutions of the 21st century with those of large organizations. Principals are called upon to face great challenges for their schools, as they must manage the demands of ministries, students, parents and teachers of secondary education in order to achieve distinction, progress, and development in the education they offer to their students. The contribution of the views of both the students’ parents and the students themselves is crucial in this and can be achieved if the principles of modern educational marketing are adopted.

However, unlike what occurs in private schools, principals of Greek public schools are not allowed to take many initiatives. At the same time, there is competition between local schools in terms of funds, financial resources, students, and exam pass rates, causing the school leaders to adopt marketing principles in their strategic planning for enrolling new students in their schools (Oplatka, 2007).

The success of an educational institution depends on whether it will implement its future plans, whether it will offer its services, i.e., the courses offered, and whether it will create a good level of satisfaction among the public (James & Phillips, 1995). The use of marketing, however, differs from institution to institution depending on the problems it faces, the lack of consistency regarding who is responsible for drawing up the marketing plan, and the lack of information regarding the benefits of its implementation.

In addition, teachers, for their part, must accept that their training in educational marketing will not only increase their competitiveness within the school but also increase their motivation to provide a more effective education for their students (Goleman, 1998/1999).

This research aimed to investigate the ongoing efforts of contemporary secondary public schools in Greece to adopt customer-oriented and competitor-oriented strategies, with a focus on highlighting the collective nature of educational marketing. Specifically, it investigated how schools address the diverse needs of students and parents, expand their interactions through innovative cooperation, and position themselves within an increasingly competitive educational landscape. Furthermore, this study explored the shift from a principal-centered approach to collective, inter-functional coordination in educational marketing, analyzing the development of new forms of strategic collaboration within school units.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Parents and Students as Customers

Parents and students’ involvement in the management of schools is believed to be a main characteristic of the most democratic schools nowadays, as evidence from various countries suggest. Most educated parents find it hard to accept the old boundaries that kept them outside the school gates in the past. They believe in having the right to express their opinions and to take decisions about the education of their children (Sliwka & Istance, 2006). According to Strom et al. (2011), everyone who is interested in education can be involved in school improvement, especially the students. They point out that if the voices of students are heard, teachers and administrators will improve procedures within their control. Fielding and Bragg (2003) and Macbeath et al. (2003) emphasize the importance and weight of the opinions of parents, but especially those of students in the educational process as they themselves are the recipients of education, with knowledge and judgment about which

methods yield positive results and which do not. That is, parents and children regarded as consumers in the field of educational marketing can actively participate in choices about their education aiming at facilitating the educational process (Blyth & Milner, 1996).

Hypothesis 1 (H1: Customer Orientation—CuO). *Modern schools tend to become more and more customer-oriented in terms of not only focusing on the diverse needs of students and parents, whose concerns, desires, and thoughts are a source of awareness and information for teachers, but also expanding relations with students and parents with innovative forms of cooperation and interaction.*

2.2. Other Schools as Competitors

Research on the influence of school district-level policies on school improvement and student learning outcomes presents a picture where modern schools tend to follow practices that have been implemented successfully.

The actions and strategies of local schools wield significant influence not only on the educational process but also on their broader public perception. In an increasingly interconnected and competitive society, schools are no longer seen solely as places of learning but as institutions that must market themselves to attract students, funding, and public support. This dynamic has transformed many schools into competitor-oriented entities, where their reputation and performance metrics dictate success. According to Ball (2017), the rise in neoliberal policies in education—emphasizing school choice and privatization—has amplified this competition, as schools vie for resources in an environment marked by ranking systems and accountability measures. The focus on standardized test scores, advanced facilities, and extracurricular programs often acts as a signal to parents and stakeholders about a school's quality, creating a self-reinforcing loop where schools prioritize these visible metrics over holistic education.

Moreover, as Gleeson and Knights (2008) argue, this shift has implications for equity and access. Schools in well-resourced areas are better positioned to compete, leaving those in underfunded regions struggling to meet the same standards, thereby widening existing educational inequalities. Public image plays a central role in this dynamic: schools that effectively market their achievements attract higher enrollment and community support, further amplifying their ability to succeed. Such practices underscore how modern schools balance their dual role as educational institutions and competitive players in a market-like landscape. This paradigm not only affects their internal priorities but also redefines community trust, highlighting the need for a thoughtful balance between educational excellence and public accountability.

Hypothesis 2 (H2: Competitor Orientation—CoO). *The actions of local schools have a wide impact on and contribute to the educational process and the public image of schools, causing modern schools to become competitor-oriented.*

2.3. Inter-Functional Coordination of Schools

Educational marketing, serving as a key parameter for promoting the work and image of a school, is increasingly recognized as a collective endeavor rather than a task solely resting on the shoulders of the school principal. This approach aligns with contemporary models of school management that emphasize collaborative leadership and the involvement of multiple stakeholders, including teachers, administrative staff, students, and even parents. Successful educational marketing leverages the combined efforts of a school's community to communicate its vision, achievements, and values effectively. By fostering collective responsibility, schools not only enhance their public image but also strengthen internal cohesion and a shared sense of purpose.

According to [Harvey \(1996\)](#), the aim of marketing is a dialog between an organization and its customers in order to uncover issues related to the improvement of training. Concerning schools, the participation of all the members of the school community and not only the school leader's is necessary. Principals must make the transition from officers to leaders of leaders ([Chrispeels, 2004](#)). Leaders should aim to increase teacher participation in school leadership and lead reforms that will change the education provided for the better ([Seashore Louis et al., 2010](#)). Teamwork, teacher collaboration, and transformational leadership practices can help teachers in terms of self-improvement ([Thoonen et al., 2012](#)). People are sources of important information and influential individuals that through informal networks can positively or negatively influence a decision ([Deal et al., 2009](#)). [Edge and Mylopoulos \(2008\)](#) also argue that networks of collaboration across schools are an important professional development for school leaders in order to share experiences with other teacher leaders.

This shift toward collective action has catalyzed the development of new forms of inter-functional coordination within schools. From integrating marketing strategies into teaching practices to organizing community engagement events, educational marketing has become a platform for innovation and partnership. According to [Burns and Gottschalk \(2020\)](#), schools that embrace this collective approach experience higher levels of trust and collaboration across their teams, creating a culture of continuous improvement. This shift underscores the importance of schools as interconnected systems where every member's contribution supports broader institutional goals, ultimately enriching the quality of education offered to students.

Hypothesis 3 (H3: Inter-Functional Coordination—IFC). *Educational marketing, being a key parameter for promoting educational work, is a collective activity of the school unit and not, as erroneously understood, primarily the responsibility of the school principal. Thus, there are the strengthening of the inter-functional coordination of school units and the development of its new forms.*

3. Materials and Methods

3.1. Data Collection Procedure

To collect the data, a cross-sectional random approach was adopted. This study utilized a sampling frame based on data collected from secondary schools in Greece. A questionnaire based on that of [Izhar Oplatka and Jane Hemsley-Brown \(Oplatka & Hemsley-Brown, 2007\)](#) was created with Google forms, and a clarifying text was sent to Greek secondary school teachers via email. In total, 350 responses were received between May and July 2024.

3.2. Participants

Most teachers in the sample were women (69.1%), while men represent only 30.9%. In terms of age, the most numerous categories were those over 55 years old (33.0%), which shows that many participants have significant experience, which is reinforced by the fact that almost half (46.5%) had more than 20 years of experience. Regarding the level of education, most teachers (84.7%) had completed studies at universities, while 56.4% had also obtained a postgraduate degree. At the same time, a significant proportion of people lived in county capitals (37.3%), followed by those living in small towns (25.5%).

Professionally, most worked in secondary education, with 41.1% serving in high schools and 28.3% in general lyceums (GELs). Most individuals (76.8%) were permanent employees, while substitutes made up 20.4%. Finally, regarding positions of responsibility, the majority (78.7%) were ordinary teachers, with a smaller percentage holding managerial or sub-managerial positions (6.7% and 5.7%, respectively). Special education or support staff made up a significant 8.0%, giving variety to the professional environment of the group.

3.3. Measures

To measure customer orientation, a 19-item scale was used. Both competitor orientation and inter-functional coordination were measured using 7-item scales. All scales were created by Izhar Oplatka and Jane Hemsley-Brown (Oplatka & Hemsley-Brown, 2007). The items were evaluated on a 7-point Likert scale, with responses ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Cronbach's Alpha for the scales was 0.910, 0.848 and 0.821, respectively, indicating excellent internal consistency for the CuO scale and good for the CoO and IFC scales, as reported in Table 1.

Table 1. Measurement model results (reliability and validity).

Item	Statement	Loadings	Reliability
Customer Orientation			0.910
cuo1	My school understands the needs of children	0.698	
cuo2	My school cares about children's well being	0.676	
cuo3	My school responds to parents' requests effectively	0.668	
cuo4	My school meets, or goes beyond the promises it makes to parents	0.723	
cuo5	My school understands what kind of schooling parents value most	0.678	
cuo6	Parents are given information that helps them in understanding the kind of schooling we have here	0.685	
cuo7	Teachers in this school are eager to help children and go beyond their role definition	0.608	
cuo8	Complaints by parents and students are dealt with quickly	0.727	
cuo9	The complaints procedure is easy for parents and students to understand	0.677	
cuo10	Teachers are regularly provided with information about parents' desires and views of schooling	0.698	
cuo11	Teachers are attentive to students' concerns	0.688	
cuo12	We encourage parents to offer constructive positive comments	0.629	
cuo13	We encourage parents to offer constructive negative feedback	0.481	
cuo14	I feel committed to the school community	0.660	
cuo15	My school measures parents' satisfaction every school year	0.681	
cuo16	My school measures children's satisfaction every school year	0.675	
cuo17	A good teacher is the one whose students are happy and satisfied	0.320	
cuo18	In my school parents' views of education influence the schooling process	0.304	
cuo19	Responding to parents' and children's needs is my major task	0.436	
Competitor Orientation			0.848
coo1	Teachers always look at what's going on in the other schools in the area	0.696	
coo2	The principal often discusses the actions of other schools in our area	0.705	
coo3	Information about what my colleagues in other schools are doing does help me improve my teaching	0.628	
coo4	My school usually responds to other schools' new initiatives/developments	0.803	
coo5	My school understands the needs of students better than other local schools	0.750	
coo6	Our schools understand the needs of parents and students better than other schools in the area	0.785	
coo7	My school compares favorably with other schools in the area	0.692	
Inter-Functional Coordination			0.821
ifc1	All departments contribute to school marketing	0.802	
ifc2	Teachers cooperate to promote the school image	0.724	
ifc3	Marketing should not be the sole responsibility of school management	0.658	
ifc4	In department meetings we discuss information about parents' demands and concerns in order to make improvements	0.809	
ifc5	Marketing information is discussed and shared with teachers	0.875	
ifc6	Teachers are not just paid to teach; they need to also help to attract prospective students	0.888	
ifc7	The guiding light in curriculum development or new initiatives is the demands of the parents and students	0.822	

Notes: Reliability is based on Cronbach's Alpha (α) coefficient. All factor loadings reported are statistically significant ($p < 0.001$).

3.4. Data Analysis Procedures

Prior to testing the proposed hypotheses, the dataset underwent an initial screening, which showed no potential issues. Subsequently, the validity and reliability of the measures were assessed and found to be satisfactory. Means and standard deviations of the variables were calculated to determine the level of agreement with the statements under investigation. The hypotheses were tested using a *t*-test (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2016). All the above-mentioned procedures were conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics 26, New York, USA, suitable for social research (Field, 2017).

4. Results

4.1. Reliability and Validity

The measurement model demonstrates acceptable levels of reliability and validity for the constructs evaluated. The composite reliability scores for each construct exceed the recommended threshold of 0.70, with customer orientation (0.910), competitor orientation (0.848), and inter-functional coordination (0.821) all indicating strong internal consistency (Hair et al., 2019).

Most items show loadings above the commonly accepted threshold of 0.50, which supports indicator reliability and contributes to construct validity (Hulland, 1999). A few items under customer orientation (cuo13, cuo17, cuo18, and cuo19) have loadings below 0.50. Although these items display lower loadings than the typical threshold of 0.50, they tap into important dimensions of the construct and are still theoretically significant, contributing to the content validity of the construct and enlightening aspects of the broader concept, such as the involvement of parents in the schooling process or how the school's responsiveness aligns with broader stakeholder satisfaction. The low loadings could be sample-specific and may reflect the unique nature of the dataset. Given that the current sample may have diverse experiences or different levels of engagement with the construct, retaining the items could capture nuances that are crucial for representing diverse perspectives. Despite the low individual loadings, the overall composite reliability of the construct remains high (Customer Orientation CR = 0.910). The remaining items with high loadings provide strong internal consistency, and keeping the low-loading items has a relatively minor impact on overall reliability (Hair et al., 2019).

The high reliability scores, along with sufficient indicator loadings for most items, suggest that the constructs are being measured appropriately and provide meaningful insights into respondents' perceptions (Churchill, 1979). This consistency highlights the robustness of the measurement model and indicates a strong alignment between theoretical constructs and empirical data, thereby enhancing the credibility and applicability of the study's conclusions.

4.2. Descriptive Analysis

Means and standard deviations of the variables are shown in Table 2. Mean values indicate a high level of agreement with the respective statements. Exceptions to this finding are the proposals "In department meetings we discuss information about parents' demands and concerns in order to make improvements", whose mean value indicates neutrality, and "Teachers are not just paid to teach; they need to also help to attract prospective students", whose mean shows disagreement.

Table 2. Means and standard deviations of the variables.

Item	Statement	Mean	SD
Customer Orientation		5.19	0.86
cuo1	My school understands the needs of children	5.21	1.31
cuo2	My school cares about children's well being	5.71	1.27
cuo3	My school responds to parents' requests effectively	5.34	1.16
cuo4	My school meets, or goes beyond the promises it makes to parents	5.62	1.14
cuo5	My school understands what kind of schooling parents value most	5.12	1.24
cuo6	Parents are given information that helps them in understanding the kind of schooling we have here	5.19	1.36
cuo7	Teachers in this school are eager to help children and go beyond their role definition	5.65	1.29
cuo8	Complaints by parents and students are dealt with quickly	5.71	1.22
cuo9	The complaints procedure is easy for parents and students to understand	5.41	1.32
cuo10	Teachers are regularly provided with information about parents' desires and views of schooling	4.82	1.57
cuo11	Teachers are attentive to students' concerns	5.74	1.13
cuo12	We encourage parents to offer constructive positive comments	5.13	1.29
cuo13	We encourage parents to offer constructive negative feedback	4.58	1.41
cuo14	I feel committed to the school community	5.96	1.12
cuo15	My school measures parents' satisfaction every school year	4.46	1.68
cuo16	My school measures children's satisfaction every school year	4.89	1.61
cuo17	A good teacher is the one whose students are happy and satisfied	5.43	1.48
cuo18	In my school parents' views of education influence the schooling process	4.33	1.56
cuo19	Responding to parents' and children's needs is my major task	5.04	1.42
Competitor Orientation		4.94	0.93
coo1	Teachers always look at what's going on in the other schools in the area	4.72	1.34
coo2	The principal often discusses the actions of other schools in our area	5.02	1.33
coo3	Information about what my colleagues in other schools are doing does help me improve my teaching	5.08	1.29
coo4	My school usually responds to other schools' new initiatives/developments	5.17	1.27
coo5	My school understands the needs of students better than other local schools	4.72	1.30
coo6	Our schools understand the needs of parents and students better than other schools in the area	4.61	1.27
coo7	My school compares favorably with other schools in the area	5.24	1.29
Inter-Functional Coordination		4.44	1.18
ifc1	All departments contribute to school marketing	4.55	1.56
ifc2	Teachers cooperate to promote the school image	5.17	1.31
ifc3	Marketing should not be the sole responsibility of school management	5.26	1.50
ifc4	In department meetings we discuss information about parents' demands and concerns in order to make improvements	4.01	1.65
ifc5	Marketing information is discussed and shared with teachers	4.19	1.63
ifc6	Teachers are not just paid to teach; they need to also help to attract prospective students	3.50	1.72
ifc7	The guiding light in curriculum development or new initiatives is the demands of the parents and students	4.34	1.69

Notes: SD stands for standard deviation.

4.3. Hypothesis Tests

As mentioned above, most mean values indicate a differentiation of teachers' view from neutrality toward corresponding proposals. In order to assess whether these variations are statistically significant, *t*-tests were performed with a control value of 4, which in this scale coincides with neutrality. The tests were carried out at a significance level of 0.05.

The *t*-test results (Table 3) highlight the critical dimensions of customer orientation, competitor orientation, and inter-functional coordination in fostering effective school opera-

tions and community engagement. The findings underscore the profound importance of aligning educational practices with the needs and expectations of both parents and students.

Table 3. *t*-test results.

Item	Statement	<i>t</i> -Test
Customer Orientation		$p < 0.001$
cuo1	My school understands the needs of children	$p < 0.001$
cuo2	My school cares about children's well being	$p < 0.001$
cuo3	My school responds to parents' requests effectively	$p < 0.001$
cuo4	My school meets, or goes beyond the promises it makes to parents	$p < 0.001$
cuo5	My school understands what kind of schooling parents value most	$p < 0.001$
cuo6	Parents are given information that helps them in understanding the kind of schooling we have here	$p < 0.001$
cuo7	Teachers in this school are eager to help children and go beyond their role definition	$p < 0.001$
cuo8	Complaints by parents and students are dealt with quickly	$p < 0.001$
cuo9	The complaints procedure is easy for parents and students to understand	$p < 0.001$
cuo10	Teachers are regularly provided with information about parents' desires and views of schooling	$p < 0.001$
cuo11	Teachers are attentive to students' concerns	$p < 0.001$
cuo12	We encourage parents to offer constructive positive comments	$p < 0.001$
cuo13	We encourage parents to offer constructive negative feedback	$p < 0.001$
cuo14	I feel committed to the school community	$p < 0.001$
cuo15	My school measures parents' satisfaction every school year	$p < 0.001$
cuo16	My school measures children's satisfaction every school year	$p < 0.001$
cuo17	A good teacher is the one whose students are happy and satisfied	$p < 0.001$
cuo18	In my school parents' views of education influence the schooling process	$p < 0.001$
cuo19	Responding to parents' and children's needs is my major task	$p < 0.001$
Competitor Orientation		$p < 0.001$
coo1	Teachers always look at what's going on in the other schools in the area	$p < 0.001$
coo2	The principal often discusses the actions of other schools in our area	$p < 0.001$
coo3	Information about what my colleagues in other schools are doing does help me improve my teaching	$p < 0.001$
coo4	My school usually responds to other schools' new initiatives/developments	$p < 0.001$
coo5	My school understands the needs of students better than other local schools	$p < 0.001$
coo6	Our schools understand the needs of parents and students better than other schools in the area	$p < 0.001$
coo7	My school compares favorably with other schools in the area	$p < 0.001$
Inter-Functional Coordination		$p < 0.001$
ifc1	All departments contribute to school marketing	$p < 0.001$
ifc2	Teachers cooperate to promote the school image	$p < 0.001$
ifc3	Marketing should not be the sole responsibility of school management	$p < 0.001$
ifc4	In department meetings we discuss information about parents' demands and concerns in order to make improvements	$p = 0.945$
ifc5	Marketing information is discussed and shared with teachers	$p = 0.041$
ifc6	Teachers are not just paid to teach; they need to also help to attract prospective students	$p < 0.001$
ifc7	The guiding light in curriculum development or new initiatives is the demands of the parents and students	$p < 0.001$

Notes: *t*-test control value = 4.

4.3.1. Customer Orientation

The statistically significant results for all items within the customer orientation category ($p < 0.001$) suggest that schools are highly attuned to the needs, concerns, and satisfaction of parents and children. Notably, statements like cuo6 ("Parents are given information that helps them understand the kind of schooling we have here") and cuo18 ("In my school, parents' views of education influence the schooling process") reflect a

concerted effort to integrate stakeholder feedback into the educational strategy. This aligns with the broader literature on parental involvement, which demonstrates that transparent communication and stakeholder integration are pivotal in enhancing school–community relationships (Epstein, 2001). Moreover, the proactive responsiveness of schools to parents’ and children’s needs (cuo8, cuo19) affirms their commitment to building trust, as suggested by Hattie (2009) in his meta-analysis on educational effectiveness.

4.3.2. Competitor Orientation

The findings reveal that schools also emphasize understanding their positioning relative to other institutions. For instance, statements such as coo3 (“Information about what my colleagues in other schools are doing does help me improve my teaching”) and coo7 (“My school compares favorably with other schools in the area”) highlight a culture of competitive benchmarking. This is consistent with the growing marketization of education globally, as explored by Ball (2003), who argues that competition can drive innovation in school practices. While such an orientation provides schools with valuable insights, it also requires balancing internal resources and external awareness to avoid overburdening staff.

4.3.3. Inter-Functional Coordination

The role of inter-functional coordination emerges strongly from the results, with items like ifc2 (“Teachers cooperate to promote the school image”) and ifc7 (“The guiding light in curriculum development or new initiatives is the demands of parents and students”) demonstrating significant alignment with stakeholder expectations ($p < 0.001$). However, the non-significant result for ifc4 (“In department meetings, we discuss information about parents’ demands and concerns”) suggests that internal communication regarding parental input might be less emphasized in some schools. The literature highlights the importance of shared decision making in educational settings to bridge such gaps (Fullan, 2016). Moreover, item ifc6, which redefines the role of teachers as marketers, supports evolving trends in school governance that call for more diversified teacher responsibilities (Grissom et al., 2021).

Table 4 highlights that all proposed hypotheses are uniformly supported.

Table 4. Accepted and rejected hypotheses based on *t*-test results.

Hypotheses	Status
H1: Modern schools tend to become more and more customer-oriented in terms of not only focusing on the diverse needs of students and parents, whose concerns, desires, and thoughts are a source of awareness and information for teachers, but also expanding relations with students and parents with innovative forms of cooperation and interaction.	Supported
H2: The actions of local schools have a wide impact on and contribute to the educational process and the public image of schools, causing modern schools to become competitor-oriented.	Supported
H3: Educational marketing, being a key parameter for promoting educational work, is a collective activity of the school unit and not, as erroneously understood, primarily the responsibility of the school principal. Thus, there are a strengthening of the inter-functional coordination of school units and the development of its new forms.	Supported

Notes: All hypotheses were accepted.

5. Discussion

This study’s findings shed light on the operational dynamics of schools, emphasizing the importance of customer orientation, competitor orientation, and inter-functional coordination as foundational pillars of modern educational management. The *t*-test results show strong statistical significance for most items, particularly within the dimensions of customer orientation and competitor orientation ($p < 0.001$). These results reflect the align-

ment of school practices with the expectations of parents, students, and the competitive educational landscape.

Breaking down broader concepts (e.g., customer orientation) into individual items provides actionable insights. For instance, items like *cuo10* (teacher awareness of parents' views) and *cuo8* (efficiency in handling complaints) point to specific practices contributing to overall effectiveness.

One of this study's notable contributions is the detailed exploration of customer-oriented practices. Highly significant results, such as *cuo6* ("Parents are given information that helps them understand the kind of schooling we have here") and *cuo18* ("Parents' views of education influence the schooling process"), highlight how schools value transparency and stakeholder involvement in decision making. These findings are consistent with Epstein's (2001) framework for parental engagement, which underscores the positive outcomes of involving parents in educational decisions. Similarly, the consistent significance in items under competitor orientation (*coo5*, *coo6*) demonstrates the importance of benchmarking and strategic awareness in maintaining a competitive edge (Ball, 2003).

The dimension of inter-functional coordination also reveals encouraging trends. Items such as *ifc2* ("Teachers cooperate to promote the school image") and *ifc7* ("Curriculum development is guided by parent and student demands") confirm that cross-departmental collaboration fosters both operational efficiency and responsiveness to stakeholder needs. This supports Grissom et al.'s (2021) findings on the evolving role of educators as key contributors to broader organizational goals.

Despite its strengths, this study presents some limitations. The non-significant finding for *ifc4* ("In department meetings, we discuss information about parents' demands and concerns") suggests variability in schools' internal communication practices. Schools might lack standardized approaches to integrating stakeholder feedback across departments, as suggested by Fullan (2016), potentially leading to missed opportunities for improvement. Similarly, *ifc5* ("Marketing information is discussed and shared with teachers") shows marginal significance ($p = 0.041$), indicating an area where schools could better align marketing efforts with teacher input.

Another limitation is that survey-based methodologies, while insightful, introduce subjectivity that could influence responses, especially for interpretative terms like "effective" or "satisfied". Future studies might benefit from triangulating these findings with qualitative interviews or observational data.

The results of this study offer practical recommendations for public schools in Greece. Strengthening inter-departmental communication by institutionalizing regular discussions about stakeholder feedback could address inconsistencies like those seen in *ifc4*. Moreover, fostering a culture where marketing information is openly shared with staff (*ifc5*) may improve alignment between school management and teachers, enhancing overall operational coherence.

Future research should examine the relationships between the three dimensions explored in this study. For instance, determining how competitor orientation influences inter-functional coordination might yield deeper insights into effective school management strategies. Longitudinal studies could also be employed to track whether these practices lead to sustained improvements in parent and student satisfaction.

6. Conclusions

In conclusion, this study reinforces the importance of integrating customer orientation, competitor awareness, and inter-functional collaboration into school operations. However, addressing communication gaps and incorporating measures of practical significance remain critical to maximizing their potential. Schools that adopt a more systematic ap-

proach to stakeholder engagement and strategic benchmarking are likely to thrive in an increasingly complex educational landscape.

More research in the future would be beneficial in order to better understand the mechanisms of service marketing in secondary schools in Greece in order to reduce any weaknesses and strengthen its positive elements, which make the education provided more effective. However, this study attempted to fill a much-needed gap in the existing literature regarding educational marketing in our country.

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