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## SCIENTIFIC-METHODICAL APPROACHES OF VALUE THEORY FOR MARKETING POSITIONING OF MEDICAL SERVICES

*The purpose of the study is to clarify the definition of "medical service" from the point of view of the theory of value for the relevant emphasis on the defining characteristics of its quality, which will serve to increase the effectiveness of the marketing positioning of the services of medical institutions in market conditions. The article substantiates the author's position that it is appropriate to take the value theory methodology as the basis of marketing positioning in the market of medical services. Based on a value-oriented approach in management theory, as well as based on the essence and goals of marketing positioning as a tool for influencing consumer behaviour, the article analyses the key characteristics of marketing positioning strategies in relation to market offers of medical services. Priority in this positioning of quality issues is emphasized. Emphasis is placed on the fact that in the medical field the concept of quality has the most subjective dimension of all possible types of services in other areas of human activity, since the quality result from treatment depends not only on the qualification of the doctor and the perfection of treatment protocols, but also on the general state of health. I of a specific patient and his psychological state. Therefore, an important characteristic of the quality of medical services in their marketing positioning should be the quality of service. In the work, on the example of family medicine services, other characteristics of their quality are highlighted, the specificity of which affects their consumer value. It is emphasized that such differences must be taken into account and properly broadcast to the target audience for their positive perception.*

*Keywords: value-oriented approach in management, consumer value, marketing positioning strategy, subjectivity of quality perception, consumer interest.*

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## НАУКОВО-МЕТОДИЧНІ ПІДХОДИ ТЕОРІЇ ЦІННОСТІ ДЛЯ МАРКЕТИНГОВОГО ПОЗИЦІЮВАННЯ МЕДИЧНИХ ПОСЛУГ

*Метою дослідження визначено методологічне уточнення дефініції «медична послуга» з позицій теорії цінності для релевантного акцентування визначальних характеристик її якості, що послужить підвищенню ефективності маркетингового позиціювання послуг медичних закладів в ринкових умовах діяльності. У статті обґрунтовано авторську позицію, що в основу маркетингового позиціювання на ринку медичних послуг доцільно брати методологію теорії цінності. Опіраючись на ціннісно-орієнтований підхід в теорії менеджменту, а також виходячи із сутності та цілей маркетингового позиціювання як інструмента впливу на споживчу поведінку, у статті проаналізовано ключові характеристики стратегій маркетингового позиціювання співвідносно ринкових пропозицій медичних послуг. Підкреслено пріоритетність у цьому позиціюванні питань якості. Акцентовано на тому, що в медичній сфері поняття якості має найбільш суб'єктивний вимір із усіх можливих видів послуг у інших сферах людської діяльності, оскільки якісний результат від лікування залежить не лише від кваліфікації лікаря та досконалості протоколів лікування, а й від загального стану здоров'я конкретного пацієнта і його психологічного стану. Тому важливою характеристикою якості медичних послуг при їх маркетинговому позиціюванні має бути і якість обслуговування. У роботі на прикладі послуг сімейної медицини виокремлено й інші характеристики їх якості, специфіка яких впливає на їх споживчу цінність. Підкреслено, що такі відмінності мають обов'язково враховуватись і належним чином транслюватись на цільову аудиторію для їх позитивного сприйняття.*

*Ключові слова: ціннісно-орієнтований підхід в управлінні, споживча цінність, стратегія маркетингового позиціювання, суб'єктивність сприйняття якості, споживчий інтерес.*

### Introduction

The health sector plays an extremely important role in ensuring the socio-economic development of every country. Employees of the industry, providing medical and sanitary services to the population, on the one hand, realize a social function – they enable people to prolong a period of healthy life, maintain social activity, develop and realize their intellectual potential for a much longer period of time. On the other hand, health care institutions support the standard of living of people necessary for productive life, that is, they create the necessary conditions for economic activity in all other spheres of the national economy.

Both sides of the activity of health care institutions are equally important for every country, as they ensure a sufficient level of the quality of life of the population, creating conditions for its sustainable development and prosperity. Among the indicators that characterize the country's approach to the standards of sustainable development is the indicator that integrally reflects the effectiveness of the efforts of state management bodies and the public of the country, aimed at improving the quality of life of people - "average healthy life expectancy". In the name of this indicator, every word is important – not just an increase in life expectancy, but "healthy life", and not just certain segments of the population (for example, with significant incomes that allow you to maintain your health, using all the assets of civilization), but the average value of the expected duration of a healthy life. Therefore, guaranteeing the right to medical care is accepted as the basis of national health policy in most countries. And the issue of the quality of medical services of a particular health care institution is primarily considered by potential patients when there is a need for their provision. Moreover, the market of medical services in Ukraine is growing, the number and technological capabilities of specialized clinics are increasing. The development of a competitive environment in the industry makes the task of clearly positioning the treatment and preventive health facilities of medical facilities urgent, for which marketing tools can be used.

### Literature review

The issue of the development of the medical services market and the ability of health care institutions to be in demand in this market are currently among those that arouse the scientific interest of domestic scientists as well. Many researchers set themselves the task of clearly identifying the content of medical services as an economic category, as well as the factors shaping its quality [1-3]. However, their research is more concerned with internal processes that need to be built more perfectly so that the institution can provide quality services. But it is equally important to ensure proper positioning of its services on the market, for which marketing tools are more suitable. Moreover, modern information technologies provide ample opportunities for this, increasing awareness of the product offer even to geographically distant consumers [4].

Existing technologies of marketing positioning concern both products and the brand with which their manufacturers enter the market. The greatest contribution to the development of these technologies was made by J. Trout and E. Rice, who published their recommendations in the well-known book "Positioning. The battle for recognition" [5], which became a bestseller and went through many editions. Today, these technologies are widely used in various spheres of economic activity, which proves the usefulness of the recommendations presented in it. In Ukraine, this topic has also become the subject of scientific interest of many researchers - and especially as the level of competition in the sectoral or regional aspect increases. For example, in the works of such scientists as S. Kovalchuk and O. Lopatovska [6], the essence, purpose and directions of marketing positioning of goods on the market are analysed in detail, T. Primak [7], as well as O. Tarasenko [8] paid the main attention to identification and systematization of strategies for marketing positioning of goods or brands. O. Zozulyov in his works characterizes the main types of positioning of goods or brands, which are chosen by management taking into account the characteristics of the psychology of the target audience of consumers and their marketing reinforcement [9], and also highlights the criteria for the effectiveness of such positioning on the market [10]. However, these and other scientists formed their recommendations mostly in general and for developed markets. However, in the field of providing medical services in developing markets, the methodology of such positioning is not fully justified and developed. First of all, this concerns the category "quality", which is multifaceted and extremely important in this field, so it must be an element of positioning the services of a medical institution. The author's position is that such a position should be based on the theory of value, which emphasizes those components of the value of medical services that are especially important for potential clients of medical institutions. This determined the purpose of this study.

### The goals of the article

**The purpose of the research** is methodological refinement of the definition of "medical service" from the standpoint of the theory of value for the relevant accentuation of the defining characteristics of its quality, which will serve to increase the effectiveness of the marketing positioning of the services of medical institutions in the market conditions of activity.

### Main part

The practice of marketing support for the activities of the vast majority of organizations operating on a competitive basis is based on forming a positive image of the product or firm among potential consumers (target audience), which become objects of economic exchange or participants in economic relations. The concept of marketing positioning became the subject of scientific discussion in the early 70s of the last century – after the publication of the book "Positioning: The Battle for Your Mind" by E. Rice and J. Trout [5]: It consisted in the fact that when a company brings to the market of a certain trade offer to form a favourable image of it in the mind of the potential target audience, to show its advantages compared to competitors' offers. For this, it is necessary to use certain positioning strategies, based on the characteristics that are most important for the selected market segment.

In the scientific literature, the following main product positioning strategies are highlighted [9]:

- based on excellent quality;
- on the basis of the "price/quality" ratio;
- relative to the competing brand;
- focused on a certain category of consumers;
- based on the profitability of problem solving methods;
- on the basis of a special way of using the product;
- on the basis of a gap with a certain category of goods;
- based on cultural values.

Their analysis shows that almost all of these strategies (with the exception of the last one) can also be applied to the positioning of medical services. However, given the importance of health issues for most people, there is no doubt that the target audience for health services is most interested in their quality. That is, setting before oneself the task of achieving a positive result in attracting the attention of potential clients of a medical institution with the help of marketing positioning of services that can be provided by it, it is necessary not only to list their range, but also to especially emphasize that the clinic can guarantee their quality.

It is obvious that for this it is necessary to determine what characteristics of the medical service are important for their recipients. And this requires a clear understanding of the meaning of the very concept of "medical service". At the same time, this also requires an analysis of the content included in the definition of "service" – as the semantic basis of the entire continuum of spheres of application of this economic category.

Different interpretations are used for the essential definition of the term "service". It is presented from different points of view - as a type of activity, as a result of activity, and also - as activity itself. In particular, in foreign literature, a service is defined as "a type of activity, work, during the performance of which a new, non-existing material product is not created, but the quality of an already existing, created product changes. These are goods that are provided not in the form of things, but in the form of activity, and it is the provision of services that creates the desired result" [11]. In this definition, it is important for our research that the emphasis is on the quality of the final result.

According to G. Sharkova, in addition to the most important - "useful result for the recipient", it is worth paying attention to other features of services - their intangible nature and direct connection with the person of the performer in the process of performing certain actions [12]. The latter is also very important for medical services. After all, the interaction of the recipient of the service and its provider is quite a significant factor that affects the perception of its quality first. Emphasis on the perception of service quality as an element of service usefulness is also made by other scientists, in particular, O. Golina [13], who emphasizes the inseparability of the service result from the conditions of its provision – and it is in their combination that the quality of receiving a service is perceived as a public good.

At the same time, adhering to the conclusion of the theory of value that the consumer prefers those alternative models of public goods that better satisfy his needs, it is important to take into account the interpretation of the term "service" given by T. Danylyuk in his work – as "an economic category that characterizes activities aimed at satisfying someone's needs" [14]. It should be added that the service is perceived by the consumer as a value when it satisfies the consumer's need at a specific time and in a specific place. This is very important precisely for the marketing positioning of medical services – because the time, place, and content of the service are important here – and all this generates the value that is important for a specific consumer.

At the same time, it is clear that the perception of the value of the service is subjective. And what is important to one consumer may be of little importance to another. Therefore, it is necessary to focus more attention on what is a priori important for a larger target audience. And this is what forms the market value of the service (the price that is acceptable for a specific category of consumers). Each service has its own price – the parties providing and receiving the service enter into economic relations.

Yu. Tyshchenko emphasized in his work that it is the economic relations formed in the sphere of providing/receiving services that are an important element in the processes of implementing agreements on their provision [15]. In the field of medical services, economic relations have become the basis of medical insurance, in which a clear definition of the rights and obligations of the parties entering into economic relations prevails. In view of the requirements for such clarity in the scientific literature, medical service is considered "a type of professional activity of medical institutions (organizations) or individual entrepreneurs who are engaged in private medical practice in accordance with existing medical standards, which includes the application of special health measures in the form of medical intervention, the potential result of which is the improvement of the general condition or functioning of individual organs or systems of the human body, as well as (or) the achievement of certain aesthetic changes in appearance. Medical services belong to intangible, non-guaranteed services" [16, p. 4–5]. Although this definition was developed by the authors primarily for private medical services, it is universal in its basic essence. In addition, the market of medical services is the environment in which private medical institutions operate. At the same time, the state guarantees only a part of medical services free of charge. The price of the rest is also formed taking into account consumer requests and the saturation of the market with offers. That is, it has consumer value.

In the service sector, as mentioned earlier, the perception of the value of the obtained result is personalized. And although a significant part of the cost of providing the service consists of tangible costs, which are distributed over the entire volume of services provided by the medical institution, an equally significant part of the costs refers to the remuneration of medical personnel who work with each patient individually according to their specialization. That is, the consumer value of a medical service is formed in its functional and technological part (for example, diagnostic procedures, surgical intervention in the treatment of certain diseases, preventive actions, etc.), and in the part that reflects the peculiarities of its perception by patients. And here the individual features of such perception come to the fore - taking into account both the patient's history and his emotional state at the time of interaction with the medical worker. The most tangible subjective feelings that affect the level of consumer value of a medical service are shown in fig. 1.

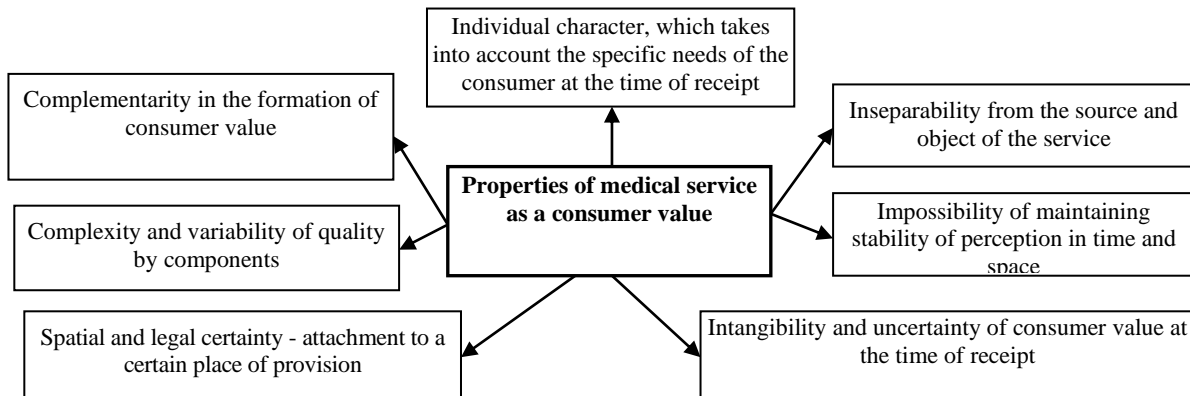


Fig.1 Characteristics of a medical service as a consumer value

Source: adapted from [17, p.56]

Therefore, medical assistance in the field of health care is provided in the process of providing medical services. A person receiving a health service expects that it will benefit his health, so the health service has consumer value. The level of consumer value depends on the extent to which the service satisfies the consumer's needs - as a result of treatment. However, the very process of providing a medical service takes place in an emotionally unbalanced state of the patient, because he is worried about his health. That is why it is so important when providing a medical service to ensure the proper level of service, which also (albeit subjectively) affects the perception of the service as valuable, useful, and high-quality.

Quality medical care is ensured by many factors. These are the presence of qualified workers, a well-equipped laboratory-diagnostic and treatment base, and treatment conditions provided in the equipped premises of hospitals, dispensaries and other medical institutions. According to the definition of the WHO, "quality medical care is one in which resources are organized in such a way as to meet the medical and sanitary needs of those who need appropriate assistance with maximum efficiency and safety, to carry out prevention and treatment without unnecessary costs and in accordance with the requirements of the highest level." [18]. High-quality medical care makes it possible to get rid of the disease faster and return to the usual way of life, filled with other concerns, and not fear for the possible consequences of improper treatment. That is, it prolongs a person's healthy life, makes it more qualitative [19]. And this gives reason to believe that the quality of service of a particular medical institution should be at the center of its positioning on the market by means of marketing. Modern medical institutions can be both multidisciplinary and specialize in a limited range of services for a narrow range of target audiences (for example, services for highly specific diagnosis of diseases or performing operations that require unique equipment), their quality. And, for example, for primary health care (family medicine), these factors also have some specificity (Table 1).

Today, national research programs on family medicine problems are supported at the WONCA level, which determines priority areas of research, forms an international evidence base for general practice and primary care, and develops recommendations for improving the organizational and economic conditions for the functioning of family medicine. The main goal of such research is to improve the quality of medical care for patients at the primary stages. However, the quality of medical services is a multi-component concept, and for their improvement, a contextual multi-factor evidence base is needed, which covers not only the field of medicine, but also sociology, anthropology, psychology, etc. Proper financial support for the functioning of the field of family medicine is necessary to conduct relevant research in Ukraine as well [19]. Its reasonableness in terms of directions and volumes makes it possible to improve the quality of the provision of medical services, which means to preserve the human capital of Ukraine.

Table 1

<b>Specific factors of medical services affecting their quality</b>	
Factors	Explanation of the influence of the factor
The patient's state of health	The patient cannot know in advance the moment and amount of medical services he may need
Duration of the need for medical services in time	Medical services are needed by a person at different intervals of his life, and medical workers of various profiles are involved in their provision. The family doctor must ensure the continuity of the assessment of the patient's state of health, the result of treatment, assess the need for additional research and specialized treatment
Individuality of perception	Subjectivity of combining and matching patients' expectations with their perception of the real result. Providing the same medical service can cause different effects in different people
Complexity of service provision	Medical services can have a complex structure, include several simpler ones, be the result of the work of several categories of medical workers
Public nature of the services	They are provided to all persons applying for them
Standardization of service delivery protocols	The requirement for standardization must be combined with individual characteristics of the patient's health (age, duration of illness, etc.)
Increased requirements from the state and the subject of their provision	Compliance of medical workers with uniform qualification requirements, having a license to engage in medical practice, passing accreditation, etc.

Source: systematized based on: [20]

### Conclusions

Marketing positioning of goods or a manufacturer's brand is a mandatory attribute of its activity in the competitive space. In case of unsuccessful positioning, potential consumers of goods or services may either not understand at all what advantages they can get from a certain market offer, or at all ignore the information as such, which does not make it possible to consider the given information as objective. Therefore, every participant in competitive competitions for loyalty consumers must clearly understand what strategy must be followed when developing marketing positioning measures and what main characteristics of activity should be highlighted as those that are important for the target audience.

In the set of marketing positioning strategies, a prominent place belongs to the issue of the quality of goods or services. This is of the greatest importance for positioning the services of a medical institution. However, in the medical field, the concept of quality has the most subjective dimension of all possible types of services in other areas of human activity, since the quality result from treatment depends not only on the doctor's qualifications and the perfection of treatment protocols, but also on the general state of health of a particular patient and his psychological state. Therefore, an important characteristic of the quality of medical services in their marketing positioning should be the quality of service. carries In the work, on the example of family medicine services, other characteristics of their quality are highlighted, the specificity of which affects their consumer value. Only if they are justified in terms of content and form in the events and releases of the marketing positioning of the services of a specific medical institution, it is possible to form the interest of potential clients in their activities and achieve success in implementing the plans and ideas of the management. The concretization of the strategy, content and form of information promotion of the services of a multidisciplinary medical institution with a wide range of specific medical services will be the subject of the next stage of research.

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