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Original Research

Student's Segmentation and Targeting for Extracurricular Engagement

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Abstract

Self-determination theory links support for autonomy, competence, and relatedness to intrinsic motivation and autonomous forms of extrinsic motivation (Ryan and Deci 2020). Drawing on this perspective, the present study explores student communication needs at Skolkovo International Gymnasium, a private school in Moscow, Russia.

This study examines how student segmentation can inform communication about educational and social activities. An online questionnaire combining 14 closed-ended and 12 open-ended questions was distributed through school chats. Responses from 45 students in Grades 5–11 were analyzed descriptively. Seven grade-based student segments were considered alongside reported interests, awareness, participation, and communication preferences. The findings indicate uneven awareness of school opportunities, recurring time constraints, and demand for business, financial-literacy, and debate activities. Career guidance emerged as a priority because many respondents remained uncertain about their educational direction, while reported awareness of Career Centre opportunities was low. Mentors were an important information source across grades, although Telegram and peer communication became more prominent in some older groups. The study provides an exploratory basis for improving school communication, rather than evidence that a digital platform increases participation. A pilot should test whether consolidated information improves awareness and helps students select feasible activities.

Keywords: student segmentation; targeted communication; extracurricular engagement; school marketing; career guidance; digital platform; SK-Life

1. Introduction

Extracurricular activities can provide contexts for adolescent development, although their implications differ by activity and patterns of involvement (Eccles et al. 2003). Their availability alone, however, does not ensure that students know about them or can fit them into their schedules. At Skolkovo International Gymnasium, the practical problem addressed by this study is how to make information about projects, competitions, courses, and career opportunities more relevant and accessible to students in Grades 5–11.

The study applies marketing segmentation to a school setting. The aim is to identify differences in students' needs and communication preferences and translate them into recommendations for a unified information platform. In this setting, the relevant outcome is informed participation in educational op-

portunities. The school's offering includes academic competitions, volunteering, the Student Council, tutoring, research conferences, internships, elective courses, and career guidance. Self-determination theory distinguishes participation for enjoyment from participation because an activity serves personally valued goals; both can involve autonomous motivation (Ryan and Deci 2020). This distinction helps interpret students' reported enjoyment and future-oriented motives without treating all participation as intrinsically motivated. The questionnaire was not a validated measure of these theoretical constructs.

Career and educational choices also involve more than access to information. Social cognitive career theory highlights self-efficacy, expected outcomes, goals, and contextual supports or barriers (Lent, Brown, and Hackett 1994). This framework makes career guidance relevant to the study while cautioning against assuming that publicity alone resolves uncertainty.

Three questions guide the analysis. How do awareness, interests, and participation differ across grades? Which communication channels do students use and regard as effective? How can the findings inform the structure and functions of a student information platform? The resulting SK-Life prototype illustrates how research findings can guide design. It does not establish the effectiveness of the proposed platform.

2. Segmentation and Targeting

Segmentation groups an audience according to characteristics relevant to its needs and responses. The source research draws on Kotler's marketing approach, which considers demographic, geographic, psychographic, and behavioural characteristics (Kotler 2019a, 2019b). For this study, grade provides an initial demographic grouping, while interests, awareness, previous participation, and willingness to continue supply additional information for communication decisions.

Geographic segmentation offers little practical differentiation because the respondents were all based in Moscow. University preferences and elective-course choices are treated here as educational aspirations and participation variables. They do not, by themselves, establish household income or socio-economic status. Likewise, grade should not be assumed to capture all differences in students' interests.

Behavioural distinctions are particularly useful for school communication. A student who has never heard of an activity may need a short explanation of its purpose and access requirements. A student who knows about an activity but has not tried it may need information about workload or prerequisites. Continuing participants may need schedules and reminders, while students who have stopped participating may need different opportunities or an explanation of changed arrangements. The source project also uses an awareness-ladder approach to organise these stages.

Targeting means selecting relevant information and channels for these groups. In a school, this can involve adapting activity descriptions, showing opportunities associated with students' declared interests, and communicating through mentors or established school channels. Segmentation should support access to a broad offering while making navigation easier. Students' preferences should remain revisable because interests and commitments change over time.

3. Methodology

An exploratory questionnaire study was conducted at Skolkovo International Gymnasium in Moscow. Links were distributed through student chats. The achieved sample consisted of 45 students in Grades 5–11. The distribution method represents a convenience sample; the number invited and the response rate were not recorded in the research report.

The student questionnaire contained 14 closed-ended and 12 open-ended questions and took approximately 60 minutes to complete. Depending on the question, respondents could select one or several answers. Google Forms was used to collect and process responses. Closed-ended questions addressed awareness and use of school opportunities, educational aspirations, preferred information channels, and reasons for participation or discontinuation. Open-ended questions explored missing activities, motivation, and opportunities pursued outside school.

Students were grouped into seven segments corresponding to Grades 5–11. Within each group, the analysis considered subject interests, familiarity with activities, repeated participation, willingness to recommend activities, and communication preferences. Descriptive summaries of open-ended answers informed recommendations; no separate interview procedure or formal qualitative coding protocol was documented.

Percentages in the following results reproduce the questionnaire summaries reported in the research project. Respondent counts for individual grades and valid-response counts for individual questions were not supplied. Some percentages may therefore describe shares of selected answers rather than shares of students. Multiple-response questions and rounding can also affect totals. Percentages are presented as exploratory indicators, without reconstructed counts, significance tests, or claims of population representativeness.

4. Results

The findings indicate three recurring issues: uneven awareness of available opportunities, time constraints affecting continued participation, and unmet demand for selected courses. Communication preferences also vary across grades. The following summaries retain the distinctions between awareness, participation, discontinuation, and recommendation. These measures describe different aspects of engagement and should not be treated as interchangeable.

4.1 Overall Demand and Career Guidance

Across the reported student summaries, business courses accounted for 32% of expressed unmet needs, financial-literacy courses for 29%, and debate clubs for 19%. Case competitions were another information priority: 71% were reported as unfamiliar with this activity, while 21% wanted to learn more. These results support explaining unfamiliar formats as well as advertising existing opportunities.

The report states that 32% had not decided on a professional direction and identifies preferences for Russian universities at 41% and international universities at 27%. These categories concern related but distinct decisions; the apparent total should not be taken as proof that career and university preferences were measured by the same question. Reported awareness of Career Centre opportunities was only 4%, with awareness identified in Grade 9. Together, the findings suggest a gap between career-related information needs and the visibility of the school's guidance offering.

Time constraints recur in explanations of discontinuation. Students also report pursuing activities outside the school because equivalent opportunities are unavailable at school. A communication intervention therefore needs to address both information access and the feasibility of participation. Better publicity cannot resolve every timetable conflict or substitute for an activity the school does not offer.

4.2 Grades 5 and 6

In Grade 5, 75% of respondents had not decided where to continue their education, while 25% planned to attend Russian universities. Favourite subjects included Physical Education, Computer Science, Mathematics, and Drama. Students knew about academic competitions, the Student Council, tutoring, and school media. Half would recommend the Student Council, while half were reported as not participating in an ongoing activity for several consecutive years.

Mentors and assemblies each accounted for 23% of reported information sources in Grade 5; classmates, friends, and parents each accounted for 15%. All Grade 5 respondents supported a unified information platform. The source also reports that 62% preferred activity information to be communicated to teachers. These preferences suggest that a platform for younger students should work alongside adult guidance. Financial literacy, business, and economics were among the desired additions, although 37% considered the existing range sufficient.

Grade 6 students particularly favoured Mathematics and Russian. The Student Council, volunteering, academic competitions, and school media were familiar activities. Academic competitions and tutoring each attracted recommendations in the reported summary, at 30%. Mentors remained the principal

channel, with assemblies and the Student Council also contributing. All respondents supported a single information platform and generally preferred information to reach teachers.

Motives in Grade 6 were varied: 40% chose activities to learn something new, while future relevance, enjoyment, and friends' participation each accounted for 20%. Lack of time and timetable clashes were reported as reasons for discontinuation. Some students continued foreign-language and music activities while others stopped them, illustrating variation within a grade. A useful response is to present a broad range of opportunities with clear schedules rather than assigning one presumed interest to every younger student.

4.3 Grades 7 and 8

Grade 7 students expressed interest in Social Studies, Algebra, Geometry, Drama, and English; 50% identified Social Studies as a favourite subject. The report states that 67% had not decided where to continue their education. Mentors remained the preferred source of information, although assemblies and the Gymnasium's Telegram channel broadened the communication mix.

Volunteering illustrates the distinction between discontinuation and recommendation: some Grade 7 students had stopped participating, yet 60% would recommend it to friends. Academic competitions, tutoring, and the SkolStart research and practice conference were recurring activities. Commitments outside school and lack of time contributed to discontinuation. Eighty percent were reported as preferring outside activities because equivalent opportunities were unavailable at the Gymnasium. The source gives separate low-awareness figures of 13% and 8% in different Grade 7 passages; without the underlying question definitions, these cannot be combined into one measure.

Grade 8 was selected for the platform prototype. In this group, 71% planned to continue their education at universities abroad. Favourite subjects included Social Studies (37%), History (25%), Mathematics or Algebra (26%), and English (13%). These reported shares suggest themes for content discovery, while the university preference supports making application-related opportunities visible.

Telegram was the leading reported information source in Grade 8 at 23%, followed by mentors and assemblies at 22% each. Ninety percent preferred information to be directed to students, and 60% supported a unified student platform. These findings suggest a more direct student communication approach than in the younger grades, while retaining mentor support.

In Grade 8, enjoyment and relevance to the future each accounted for 43% of reported motives, compared with 14% for learning something new. Students requested business, financial-literacy, creative, and case-competition opportunities. Heavy academic workload and lack of time were common reasons for stopping courses; loss of interest and a change of teacher were also mentioned. Thirty-seven percent did not continue activities attended in the previous year. These responses informed the proposed calendar and preference filters.

4.4 Grades 9 to 11

In Grade 9, 67% had not decided on a university. Students reported familiarity with the Student Council, volunteering, tutoring, academic competitions, and internships. All respondents preferred activity information to be directed to students. Other students and classmates each accounted for 29% of reported information sources, although mentors were still regarded as the simplest and most effective way to obtain information. This difference between actual sources and preferred sources suggests that peer circulation should be complemented by reliable mentor explanations.

Grade 9 respondents requested an English-language club, sports teams for competitions, case competitions, debate, financial literacy, and business courses. Lack of free time contributed to discontinuation, and some students sought outside courses or internships when equivalent school opportunities were unavailable. A platform for this grade should combine career exploration with practical information about commitments and access.

Half of Grade 10 respondents had not decided between Russian and international universities. The group reported broad awareness of school projects but no awareness of Career Centre opportunities. Visits to innovative companies attracted interest, and respondents requested clearer information about

case competitions. Mentors and assemblies remained important channels. All Grade 10 respondents wanted the opportunity to study selected subjects at an advanced level.

Grade 11 students reported a mixture of university plans: 40% were undecided between Russian and international universities, 40% intended to apply in Russia, and 20% abroad. Research and technology projects at Skolkovo Institute of Science and Technology were of particular interest. Mentors accounted for 29% of reported information sources and assemblies for 22%; 40% regarded mentors as the simplest and most effective source.

All Grade 11 respondents supported a unified information platform and advanced elective courses. Half wanted more information about case competitions. Enjoyment accounted for 50% of activity-choice motives, while learning something new and future relevance each accounted for 25%. Approximately 20% no longer participated in Gymnasium activities. Communication for the oldest students should therefore foreground university pathways, advanced courses, research projects, and deadlines without assuming that all students already participate.

4.5 Teacher Perspectives

Teachers and students agreed that enjoyment of an activity was an important driver of participation. Teachers suggested financial-literacy courses, preparation for academic competitions and assessments, creative and developmental activities, organisational and time-management skills, graphic-design software, and neuropsychology-related courses.

These suggestions broaden the practical implications of the student findings. Time-management support could accompany a calendar, while financial-literacy and creative courses respond to expressed demand. The project also recommends improving teachers' access to information about postgraduate study and related qualifications. Because the teacher sample is small and not segmented, these suggestions are best treated as planning inputs rather than estimates of staff-wide preferences.

5. Discussion

Within this exploratory sample, Grade 5 and Grade 6 summaries identify mentors and assemblies as important information channels. Direct digital and peer communication is more prominent in some older groups, while mentors remain important across grades. These are local descriptive observations, not evidence of a general developmental progression. Wentzel (1998) found associations between perceived teacher support and interest in school and class among sixth-grade students. That study provides context for retaining adult support, but it did not test the information channels examined here. A unified platform is therefore proposed as a shared resource that mentors and existing school channels can use, rather than as a replacement for those relationships.

The career-guidance findings are especially relevant to content priorities. Several groups report uncertainty about university choices, yet the Career Centre has low reported visibility. The appropriate response is to clarify what guidance is available, who can use it, and how to book or participate. Information should cover both Russian and international pathways and remain useful to students who have not chosen a destination. In social cognitive career theory, contextual support operates alongside students' beliefs about their capabilities and anticipated outcomes (Lent, Brown, and Hackett 1994). Accessible guidance is therefore a reasonable design priority, but this survey cannot establish whether it changes career decisions.

Discontinuation should not automatically be interpreted as disinterest or disloyalty. A student may recommend an activity while being unable to attend it because of workload or competing commitments. Similarly, continuing attendance and willingness to recommend are different outcomes. Future analysis should link these measures at the activity level before concluding why students leave. Research on extracurricular involvement also distinguishes different activities and participation patterns when examining adolescent development (Eccles et al. 2003). In this study, reported enjoyment may suggest intrinsic interest, whereas future relevance may reflect personally valued goals; neither response alone establishes the quality of motivation (Ryan and Deci 2020).

The results also point to a distinction between communication gaps and offering gaps. Clearer descriptions may help students understand case competitions or career guidance. Requests for unavailable courses, however, require curriculum or programme decisions. The school should assess demand and delivery capacity before introducing new activities. The survey provides priorities for that assessment.

6. The SK Life Platform Prototype

The research findings were applied in a prototype for Grade 8. The proposed interface organises school information around news, a calendar, and activity cards. A prominent news area can highlight opportunities with low awareness, including career guidance. Content can also reflect popular subjects and educational aspirations. The calendar addresses the reported difficulty of fitting activities around schoolwork.

Activity cards present projects, courses, volunteering, and competitions with actions for viewing details or applying. Filters allow users to select grade, activity format, interests, and available time. These functions translate segmentation into user-controlled navigation. The prototype also includes indicators of activity popularity and sharing options. Counts displayed in the mock-up are interface examples, not additional survey findings.

The prototype demonstrates a proposed information structure, rather than a deployed service or tested recommendation system. Its effectiveness, usability, and accessibility were not evaluated in the survey. The initial application to Grade 8 should therefore be followed by testing with students from other grades before school-wide implementation.

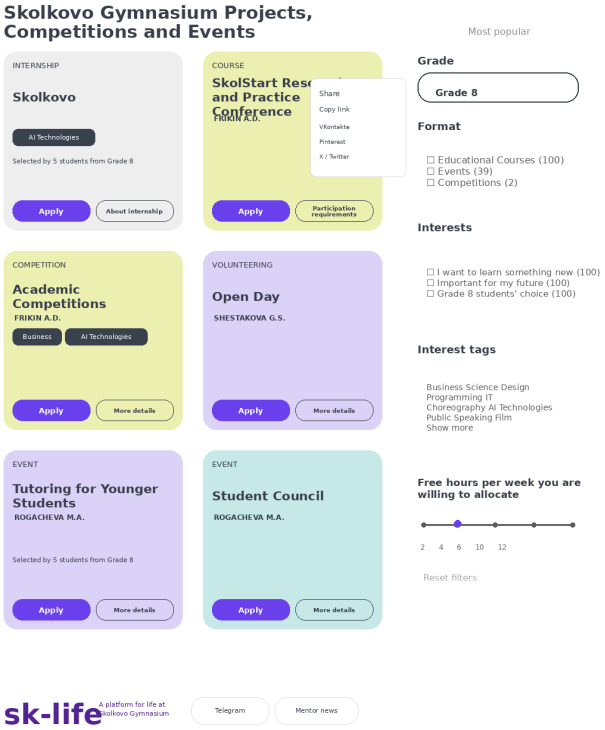

Figure 1. Activity cards and preference filters in the Grade 8 SK-Life prototype. Polina Timofeeva. Displayed counts are illustrative interface content.

7. Implementation and Evaluation

An initial pilot could use a maintained activity catalogue with explicit grade eligibility, dates, duration, prerequisites, contact details, and application steps. Interest filters and a calendar can be tested before

adding behaviour-based recommendations. Mentors and existing school channels can introduce the catalogue and help students understand unfamiliar opportunities.

A subsequent evaluation should distinguish awareness from participation. Relevant measures include whether students can identify suitable activities, find deadlines, understand requirements, and judge whether participation fits their schedules. Registrations, attendance, and continued participation should be monitored separately. Brief usability sessions can reveal whether students can complete typical information-search tasks. Davis (1989) identified perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use as factors associated with technology acceptance. These constructs offer a starting point for evaluating the proposed platform, rather than evidence that school students will adopt it. Any evaluation questions should be adapted for the students' age and the school context; acceptance and actual participation should be assessed separately.

If personalised recommendations are later introduced, they should complement explicit preferences. Students should be able to change interests, see the full catalogue, and understand why an opportunity is suggested. Recommendations should be reviewed with school staff and students. These are proposed design conditions; the present study does not supply evidence about artificial-intelligence performance or the benefits of automated targeting.

8. Limitations

The available report contains aggregated summaries rather than respondent-level data. Denominators are unspecified for several percentages, and some awareness statements may refer to different activity categories. No inferential comparisons across grades are justified. The reported grade differences should be used to generate hypotheses and guide interviews or a larger survey.

The survey records self-reported awareness, preferences, and participation. It does not establish causal relationships between communication channels, motivation, and attendance. The SK-Life prototype was produced after the survey and was not evaluated as an intervention. Claims that it will increase motivation, loyalty, or participation therefore remain hypotheses for future testing.

9. Conclusion

The Skolkovo International Gymnasium study identifies practical opportunities to improve communication about extracurricular and developmental activities. The strongest recurring priorities are clearer career guidance, explanations of unfamiliar activity formats, attention to time constraints, and consideration of demand for business, financial-literacy, and debate courses. Grade-based summaries also show why communication should combine a common information resource with channels appropriate to students' needs.

SK-Life illustrates how these findings can inform a platform with activity information, preference filters, and a calendar. The study's contribution is the connection between exploratory audience research and a concrete design proposal. A maintained catalogue and a pilot evaluation are the next steps for determining whether the proposed structure improves awareness and supports feasible participation. The current evidence supports these steps while leaving the platform's effect on engagement open to empirical testing.

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Conflicts of Interest
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