

The contemporary Romanian paradigm of marketing promotion

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Abstract: *Contemporary marketing takes place in the field of permanent interconnection, of instant information and immediate rewards. Communication through marketing promotion will take these characteristics into account or will be just an inefficient spending. The Romanian market is no different from the global one. Marketing promotion currently has new tools that lead to new challenges in that it makes use of traditional, yet powerful forms, but also absolute ways of communication. The Romanian promotion is helped today by these tools, but its task is more complex than it was a decade ago.*

Key-words: *marketing, promotion, Romania, research*

1. Introduction

The proposition of permanent communication is unanimously accepted, even when it is not consciously led: and if it is stopped, a refusal to communicate is actually transmitted (Coombs 2010, p. 20). Proper study and management of marketing promotion are essential criteria for the survival of a company in any competitive environment - and sometimes even outside it, as long-term success in monopoly or oligopoly is based, at least in part, on fair promotion (Kreps 1990, p. 326). Marketing can be defined by processes of creation, supply and exchange between individuals or groups of individuals, based on the attribution of equal values (Kotler 1997, p. 35). Marketing promotion is the way in which the product, service or idea offered to the target market is exposed by a company, organization or institution, precisely in the middle of the debate about balance or growth (Dinga 2009, p. 43). The exact way this offer fits into the market by completing or extending the range of options is specified in the promotion through specific tools; there is also the theory according to which marketing is the necessary element for balancing macroeconomics (Kotler 2010, p. 11). An inappropriate marketing approach or total lack of marketing can turn all other components of the marketing mix into inefficient actions with far less mediocre results. In addition, the importance of

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promotion is directly proportional to the size of the assortment available on a particular market.

2. Research characteristics

The qualitative research (Manic 2017) was carried out through the method of individualized depth interview, in which discussions were held with representatives of Romanian companies that are currently conducting promotional activities. The theme of the research was the identification of the promotion strategies used by the economic agents on the current Romanian market. The interviews took place between September and October 2015, with an average duration of about 45 minutes each, being performed face-to-face with each subject. Due to financial and time constraints, the main criterion taken into account in sampling was the availability of the representatives.

As a trend, marketing in small and medium-sized firms is practical, linear, lacking “sophistication”, but it is also aimed at thorough planning or rigorous pursuit of results. There was even a very direct response, namely, “we do not measure the results”, which suggested the idea that marketing was a quasi-obligatory activity, imposed by a general tendency, and not just some theory verified by practical studies. Specialized language is only used sporadically, and people who manage this activity sometimes have experience, but in the majority of cases no studies in the field.

3. Results and discussions

This paper aims at assessing the penetration rate of the complex, professional methods in the current national business environment. The purpose of the study was to create an overview of the promotional activity in contemporary Romania. The results were as follows.

3.1. Frequency and destination

Companies use sporadic promotion, mostly according to their needs. In general, marketing meets specific company needs and tends to focus less on strategic expansion plans (1-3 years). The answers given by the interviewees were mostly concerned with difficulties of long-term planning of the activity in general, due to the sustained dynamics of the economy, as well as frequent changes in the technological, legal and financial norms, or imposed economic changes and the need to align with some international bodies. On the other hand, the benefit generated by

a general marketing framework, which can establish an approximate developmental path of the company in the strict field of marketing, is lost. Even though the details of such master plan may change depending on the specific aspects of the market, the main strategy is to generate a direction and, above all, a sense of progress within the marketing-sales team. In the majority of cases, promotion campaigns need more consistency.

The target market for promotion is, for the most part, formed by current and potential consumers. A particular aspect of promotion in the Romanian economy is the lack of approach to a significant segment of potential consumers/ customers of companies whose market is the vast mass of end-users. So far, there have been no campaigns targeting unsuspecting consumers who are traditionally the easiest target for marketing actions. Thanks to the economic growth in the last two decades, a fairly significant percentage of the already earned customers is loyal to the chosen brand/ system. Thus, efforts to persuade these potential clients to change their preferences are laborious and, above all, time and money consuming. Additionally, if these customers are not selected a priori as appropriate, the entire promotional effort in their direction may be useless. As a result, the segment of undecided consumers (or non-consumers at a certain point) is more likely to develop economically efficient marketing programs. Appropriate identification and approach of this segment should be an important part of the company's marketing activity.

3.2. Tools and forms

In order to develop the communication platform, companies mainly use direct observations (in stores, warehouses, etc.) and previous statistics. The information collection systems are simple and they most often use data collected by other departments of the company. For the most part, there are no specific marketing systems for collecting data, information, events that will then be used to generate detailed statistics and then to substantiate promotional decisions. Loyalty programs are insufficiently used as generators of current customer characterization - an opportunity whose failure affects the amount of descriptive data of the serviced customer segment. Thus, an important aspect of promotion, namely identifying the recipients, their needs and their consumption habits, is achieved to a small extent, affecting the possibility of planning the marketing strategy in detail.

In promotion, companies reach all areas of interest: product advertising, sales promotions, personal sales, public relations, and direct marketing. The range of effective actions is broad and in line with current trends in other markets, more advanced in this respect. In general, techniques with a high degree of novelty are proposed by multinational advertising agencies. The Romanian spectrum of users of modern methods and techniques is broad and possibly complete: there are companies actively seeking new ways to promote new and with superior effects in terms of market penetration and effectiveness. There are also marketers sensitive to

innovative proposals from the point of view of the implementation technique, but who are not particularly looking for novelty when marketing planning is being carried out; and there are companies that use constant methods, techniques, and platforms that have proven their effectiveness in previous campaigns, avoiding the introduction of novelty of any kind as much as possible.

3.3. Actions and evolution

Promotion is mainly used in the following activities: product launches and consumer loyalty. The emphasis is on informing the (current or potential) customer about the current offer of the company and its advantages compared to the competition. As a result, the market approach from the point of view of promotion appears to be very conservative, with the desire to inform the community about product launches, new or improved features of products, and, simultaneously or separately, to maintain customer loyalty. Of course, these goals are particularly important, even crucial to the marketing of any company, but when they are proliferated across the competitive market, they are transformed from motivational factors into hygienic factors of marketing activity. Thus, the final outcome of the proposed strategy will be the use of other methods, techniques, and promotional opportunities, which will be added to the basic ones, enhancing their efficiency in a synergistic system. In the short term, using just a few basic methods in company marketing will provide supremacy in the competitive environment. In the long run, however, they are no longer sufficient and their exclusive use will gradually erode the market image even among loyal consumers.

In the recent years, in marketing budget:

- e-mail, social media, YouTube: appeared;
- presence in printed press, TV quota: decreased;
- electronic tools: increased;
- mailing catalogues, outdoor panels; disappeared.

The changes in the promotion techniques of the Romanian landscape are consistent with the global evolution of the field. Electronic communication methods have increased as a share in the marketing arsenal due to ease of use, speed of delivery, low price and, finally, yet importantly, the ability to define the target audience with greater precision. All this has helped to strengthen corporate communication with brand customers, the whole of the target market, and even the vast mass of consumers.

On the other hand, the weight of the print media and television decreased as a result of the less frequent use of these media by the population: the print media was almost completely replaced by electronic news feeds at a much higher rate and with the ability to locate the service (both as the recipient's personal preferences and geographic location); and television was gradually shadowed by on-demand information systems or by alternative electronic media, without the constraints of an

editorial plan. Also, the printed catalogue system, so developed in the past and virtually indispensable in the homes of serious consumers, has slowly become obsolete, being forgotten by the electronic sites of the trading portals, with their many advantages: easy updating and in some instantaneous instances of the product portfolio, fair pricing; extensive customer service (compare features, video or even 3D viewing, queues/ wishes, historical orders, etc.); quick operation of orders and deliveries; multiple shopping opportunities, and so on. Similarly, classical billboard has also lost its importance, its place being taken by modern, electronic methods, as well as OOH (out of home) digital display systems, both inside and outside (commercial, transit or waiting).

3.4. Methods and differences

According to the collected data, the preferred methods of promotion are direct communication with the potential clients, sales promotions and the diffusion of messages in the virtual media. The sought advantages are again the easiness of the implementation and the reduced costs. The approach is generally traditional, with little change from one implementation to another: same target market, same method, same message. All data collecting systems are simple and easy to use.

One important trend is the increased level of proficiency, in view of both the team members and the used technique.

3.5. Trend and accountability

The obvious future development of promotional science will be in the online sector. This trend is welcomed by both the marketers and the general public, happy to use an instrument which makes connections fluently and constantly.

In almost all cases the promotion plans are developed by the internal department, with or without external support or guidance. This form of organisation comes from limited funds, especially in the small firms, and from a highly guarded professional secret (although in most situations there are really no such secrets). Of course, multinational companies usually come with know-how and even with the ad agency from the primary market.

3.6. Time and budget

Most frequently, a promotional action tends to stretch along 3-4 weeks. The lack of months-long plans is tied to the difficulty of long term planning and the insufficient development of the data collecting systems.

The annual marketing budget for the companies in the panel is between 25 and 1000 thousand euros.

The size of the market sample, based mainly on a spatial proximity, did not lead to results which could be representative for the entire market.

3.7. Measurements and competition

The promotion campaign efficiency is measured through the impact on sales and brand recognition. Most frequently, data are collected in other departments of the firm.

For the responding companies, the main threat is the sharp competition on the market, followed by the limited resources of the potential buyers.

From the collected answers, a general need for development is certain for the marketing department, both in efficiency and marketing competencies. A reluctant approach to the market will not lead to great results.

4. Conclusion

Marketing promotion is changing and online development, mobile applications and video content are the main contemporary tools. Technology comes with advantages – for those who know how to employ it – and challenges for everyone.

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