

MARKETING AND LIFE STYLE

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Abstract. *Starting from the fact that the role of marketing is to insure a higher life standard, it is necessary to analyze the double interference of two concepts, respectively the influence of marketing on the life style but also the influence of the life style on the companies' marketing. This foray is dictated by the new context in which the clients' attitude has changed. Today, the clients are more different, more special than others, more exigent and with more judgment than those before them.*

Due to these changes, more and more companies direct and build their businesses and marketing strategies starting from the exterior to the interior; from the understanding of the clients' real needs and concerns (consumers or intermediaries) and their satisfaction to the clients' involvement in the conception, innovation activity of the new products.

Keywords: consumption models, life style, marketing, responsible marketing.

1. Transparency and responsibility in the marketing area

Nowadays, the life style is less predictable and having hundreds of TV channels, 24 hours a day, it is hard to say who will watch TV, what and when, how the companies can advertise efficiently and when to program the shows.

The attitude towards brands and marketing has also changed. We live in the intelligent consumer's period who has probably studied more products and prices than the seller before involving himself in a transaction. Their motivations and aspirations are complex and have a personal character while their clearing up requires a lot of intelligence. In this context, the companies face difficulties in the consumers' division because, due to the higher and higher complexity of life, they are part of different segments, with different preoccupations.

As the speed of communication, transport and contract of the financial operations has increased, the world diminishes quickly its dimensions; the markets have no boundaries, while the brands symbolize more and more a life style, not a certain product.

The Gucci bags, the Mont Blanc pens, the McDonald's hamburgers, the Chanel suits, the German BMW enjoy of great popularity in other countries as well than their origin ones. Transparency presupposes the fact that the promises must be respected. The consumers choose one brand or another according to the proved social responsibility and the company's attitude towards its own personnel than according to the products' quality. Even the trust in companies and their brands has suffered as a

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consequence of this fact. Little companies manage to have an irreproachable, perfect image.

Although the marketing legislation expands in an alert rhythm as a result of the concerns expressed by citizens and authorities, the marketing specialists have also the obligation to take into account the general consequences of their approaches. The negative reaction to the arrogant, stupid marketing becomes more and more vast. That's the reason why the marketing specialists should pay more attention to the following problems (Peter Fisk, 2008):

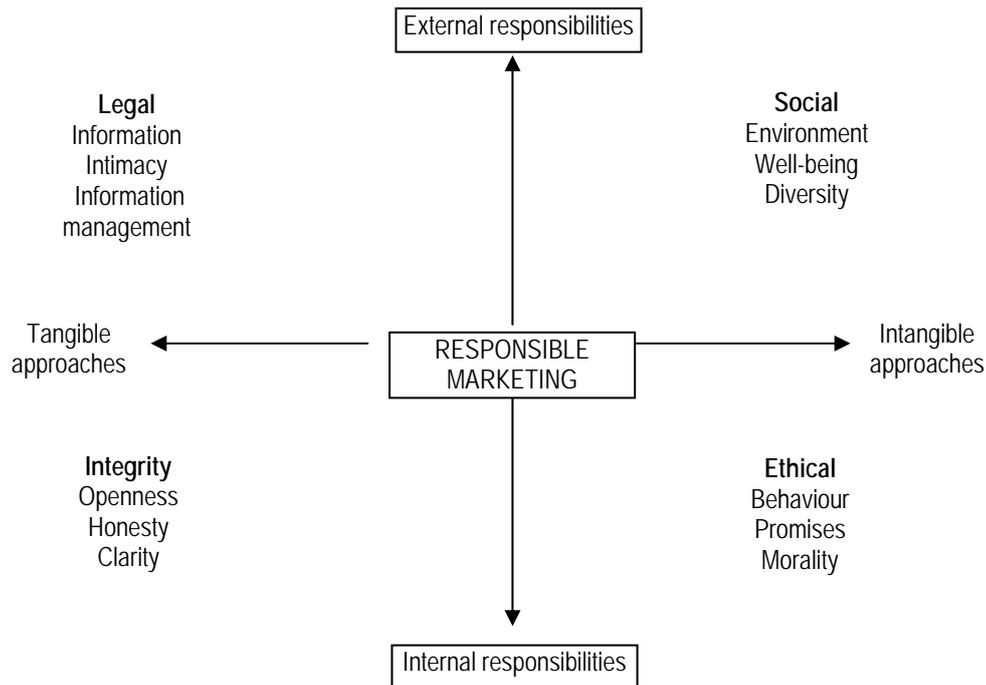
- **Intimacy** – in a world in which we are permanently aggressed by mass-media, telephones, mail, books and electronic mail, we try to protect our own information and existence.
- **Obligation** – we are encouraged, helped, convinced to spend more and more, to buy luxury products having acceptable payment conditions and credits by request.
- **Natural environment** – the huge quantity of waste material from packages, buying products excessively and pollution are a direct consequence of consumerism.
- **Health** – obesity has the proportions of an epidemic because of our weakness to sugar and fats and the companies which have high prices for nutritive food.
- **Children** – the advertising made for a large series of products for children, the irresponsible models offered to them and the uncontrolled desire promoted by them.
- **Integrity** – the need for honesty, morality and respect, ethics and positive models.

Responsibility should be the basic principle of the organizations and brands they offer. Marketing specialists should be the guiding force of a more responsible approach towards their own companies and clients and this responsibility should represent the main component of the brand. The four parts of the 'responsibility square' can be seen in the quadrans figure 1, present both the internal challenges and the external ones, involving both physical changes and attitude ones; they should help the companies serve their markets and communities with open, not close 'eyes and ears'.

Even if the marketing specialists' problems are the same: knowing the clients, developing solutions to their needs, setting with them an adequate connection to lead to the clients' satisfaction and profit for the business, things are much more complicated than in the past. The today consumers differ from those of yesterday. But how did the consumers change?

- They pay less attention than ever to the products, loyalty to one brand or another being more important.

- They respect youth more than age, they want to be young at any age instead of admiring the old persons.
- They value life more than money, preferring to work with hard currencies like relatives, friendship or well being instead of cash.



Source: Peter Fisk, „Genius in marketing”, Meteor Press, 2008, p. 191.

Figure 1. „Responsibility square” towards the client

- They want to multiply the things they like or they treasure and reduce as much as possible the things they don't like or which are not important.
- They are ready to pay a higher price for the best car, but they want to pay less for the weekly shopping.
- They are too lazy to change a provider for a better one, but they are ready to cover a double distance for a cheaper plane ticket.

2. From the goods consumption to the brands one – Consumption models in Romania

At the beginning of this millennium, the individuals' consumption behaviour has evolved significantly. As we take part to major changes of the socio-economic environment, new concepts must be taken into consideration in the study of the

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consumer's behaviour: the consumption experience, the sense perception, the social cohesion, etc.

The new consumer is looking for a meaning in everything he does, which is not always compatible with the notion of reason or utility. Thus, the consumption isn't only a result of changing primate information; it's practically a life style.

It is difficult to generalize the consumer's behaviour in every country in the world, for each category of products because the consumption models vary considerably. The incomes share which is spent on strictly necessary goods is an indicator of the market development level and the incomes for other shopping. As the incomes of a family increase, the percentage of the expenses afferent to the food is going down, the percentage of the expenses for the house keeping activities is relatively constant and the percentage for incomes which is saved or spent for other shopping increases.

According to statistics, people spend in Romania about 90% from what they earn and almost all the money goes on consumption and taxes payment. The data published by the National Institute of Statistics show that from 100 lei:

- 71 go for consumption;
- 15 for the taxes, contributions and shares payment;
- 13 for others.

Thus, according to statistics, in the semester of the last year, the monthly average incomes of a family were 2.319 lei. The expenses were 2,081 lei, that is 89,8% from the total incomes. Not less than 71,5% of these expenses were directed to consumption and 15,6 % for the taxes, contributions and shares payment. The expenses for investments represent only 1,8% from the total of expenses. In what concerns the expenses for consumption, most of them (40%) are designed for food and non-alcoholic drinks.

Apart from any statistics and consumption model, we may say that people prefer the brands. The examples are numerous in this direction in order to support the fact that the brands have a significant influence on the investors and consumers (Peter Fisk, 2008).

On the basis of these statistics and studies made by specialists, we try to find answers to the following questions:

1. Why do consumers prefer certain brands?
2. How do connections establish between clients and brand?
3. What determines the clients to be loyal to a brand?

These are questions to which all the marketing specialists in the world try to answer. The companies and their managers are based more on the attributes of their products when looking for some significant differences of the brands.

The way for a continuous relation brand- client begins with the promise of the brand. But the reception and awareness of the respective promise represents only the first step. The consumers are informed about the existence of many brands they simply

don't buy or they don't want to buy. Not all the promises are strong enough to make connections with the clients (William J. Mc Ewen, 2008).

Nevertheless, there are certain categories of promises that showed they can establish emotional connections with the potential clients – when synchronizing is appropriate. They fix a ground that represents something more than a first try. These perspectives appear only when those promises worth to be trusted and are convincing.

At a regional level, Romania is one of the most attractive markets for the top brands of the luxury industry, next to Ukraine because the Romanians' taste for luxury has become unrecognizable in the last 20 years. In Ceausescu's time the supreme labels of luxury were the Bulgarian business bags, the Astrakhan coats, the Cisnadic carpets, the Farmec deodorizer and the Snagov TVs. Today, the Romanians show they luxury by cars that can hardly be found in the European capitals, clothes bought directly from Milan and houses of hundreds of thousands euros. Despite the satisfying financial evolutions, the Romanians still lack the moral and cultural references. Without examples, models, they become victims of the audio- visual industry that considers important only the persons who gain fortunes quickly and become easily the so-called stars.

Except for the money, the Romanians' strongest values are the traditional ones, connected to family, home and health. 'Romania has a very strong rural tradition and the citizens' fundamental values are connected to house, family and health' explains the anthropologist Alexandru Balasescu.

The structural evolution and transformations of the modern and postmodern societies are reflected immediately and directly on marketing, a domain which is sensitive to the influences of the economic, cultural and social environment etc.

In the post-modern type consumption societies, the most important characteristic is represented by the unparalleled development of technology. The markets and audiences are more and more divided; the individuals are isolated and at the same time, interconnected to the entire world by means of the computer and Internet.

In this context, the studies concerning the life styles from marketing perspective have as a purpose the determination of the influence they have within the process of buying, consumption or abandon of the products or brands. Identifying the consumers' styles of life, the specialists can make correct predictions on the consumers' behavior and their preferences.

The analysis of the influence frame on the Romanians' life style and consumption behavior allowed the formulation of the following conclusions:

- The Romanians have a positive attitude to work which is specific to the post –modern societies, but unlike these societies, in which the population is oriented to saving money and fortune, the Romanians are not willing to save money. As it is revealed by this research and also other surveys, the Romanians are inclined to consumption rather than saving money. The

main reasons that prevent the Romanians from saving money are related to the fact that they cannot afford it, their credits are too big, and they don't trust the financial products they are offered or they would prefer to spend the money than save it in a useful way.

- In what concerns the future, the most optimistic are the younger persons, with ages between 20 – 35 years who think the situation will change in good, their living standard will increase and they will have the possibility to save money for unpredictable situations.
- The attitude towards free time and the free time schedule differs according to the age, occupation and environment in which the interviewed persons live. In general, the intellectuals distinguish between the working program and the free time, they schedule the shopping and the house work, actions specific to the modern *and traditional* behavior. On the other hand, the office workers, the medium staff, the workers make a weak distinction between the working program and the free time, *they make activities that aren't scheduled, actions specific to the postmodern* behavior. Unlike the people who live in villages, those from the cities don't appreciate free time, they have a more disorganized life style, the young people, in particular, prefer the computer and TV instead of going out with friends or practicing sport. The percentage of the persons who prefer to go to the cinema or theatre in their free time is reduced, except for the big cities where the tickets for the famous shows sell very quickly. The anthropologists' explanation is that: 'these types of shows have been replaced with the public show of the consumption'.
- The preference for the Romanians' information environment differs according to occupation, education, age. The intellectuals prefer the scientific books, specialized newspapers and reviews, TV news, internet; while for the other categories, the favorite information environment is television, radio, they usually read less or nothing at all. Although it is the 'crocodile' that occupies most of the Romanians' time, television is the postmodern typical channel that broadcasts information, news, films and advertising in an occidental manner and technique. We also don't have to forget the role television has in forming opinions and tastes in a postmodern manner, the changes it can produce in the consumption traditional taste in villages.
- According to these researches, the Romanians are faithful people. Their attitude towards religion, belief and church is almost completely a positive one. In this direction, the results of a GALLUP survey, made in February 2009, mentions our country as the center of belief in Europe. The percentage obtained by Romania is extremely close to the one of some Muslim countries, such as Iraq and Iran. Other European countries with

faithful citizens are Italy, Portugal, Greece and Poland. The GALLUP analysts have tried to find an explanation; they consider that: *'the religious level of the population is closely connected to the living standard'*. The percentage of the faithful persons in the developed countries is a relatively reduced one, except for USA, the most faithful country from the ones considered to be rich. We can assert that religion and church represent an important part in the Romanian people's life, no matter what standard of living they have.

- Most of the Romanians are fascinated by shopping which is also emphasized by the success the malls and hypermarkets have in Romania. As the Romanians' incomes increase, they choose to go shopping and spend most of their time in the commercial centers. Another aspect is represented by the Romanians' preference for the foreign brands, from clothes to cars of luxury. The Romanians' behaviour is, most of the times, an ostentatious one; they want to prove in front of their fellows an over the average state of well-being. The specialists consider that this ostentatious behavior derives from *'the incapacity of being happy'*. The orientation towards a post-modern typical consumption is mostly manifested in the urban environment than in the rural one, due to the *'attractions'* the big cities offer, the young people representing a very receptive segment to such a life style.

3. Conclusions

Finally, we can assert that the introduction of the occidental values in our country has influenced in a certain measure the Romanians' life style, the occidental life style becoming a model which the Romanians dream about.

On the other hand, we can also observe the orientation towards post-modern consumption in Romania, which is specific to the countries developed from an economic point of view. In this context, the marketing of the life style has an important role in the development process of the post-modern request.

Although the tendencies of the life style in the west European countries are also present in Romania, not all of them manifest themselves and not necessarily in the same way, due to the Romanian cultural peculiarity, its vitality and subjectivism. Actually, the characteristics and culture specific to each country interfere with the present tendencies in a unique way, generating life styles and behavioural attitudes specific to the respective country.

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