

MARKETING MANAGEMENT AS A KEY ELEMENT FOR IMPLEMENTING CHANGE WITHIN ORGANIZATIONS

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ABSTRACT: *In the contemporary era, dominated by deep interests, an organization will only survive by being creative, based on professionalism, having the ability to decide. And as creativity, renewal and innovation are the pillars of customer satisfaction, this remains a problem, not enough conceptually defined and operationalised. This paper presents the state of knowledge regarding customer orientation as a marketing component, the level of influence of the main factors of change upon marketing management. The paper is based on several concepts from literature, on opinions of well known specialists but also on the reality of international crisis which shows an obvious lack of interest in studying and modeling customer orientation. The investigation is composed of two successive researches: a qualitative explorative research (interviews among specialists, focus-groups) and a quantitative descriptive research. We consider that the results of this research have an innovative character and could be the base for new theoretical and mostly practical study programs or workshops for marketing managers as well as employees. Also, organizations affected by profound changes should realize that only a real orientation towards the needs of clients will ensure their long term success.*

KEY WORDS: *change; customer orientation; marketing management; success, crisis.*

JEL CLASSIFICATION: *M20; M31*

1. GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

Building on international business, strategic management, and marketing literature, this paper advances prior knowledge on change and business by analyzing different effects of globalization on firms. Change the process of increasing social,

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cultural, political, and economic interdependence has resulted in several transformations in business environment. Global market opportunities and threats are major effects of globalization. While the former refers to the increases in market potential, trade and investment potential, and resource accessibility, the latter refers to the increases in number and level of competition, and the level of uncertainty. Conceptual models are developed based on environment - organization literature, transaction cost economics, and market power perspective.

In this study, “change management” refers to the process of increasing social and cultural inter-connectedness, political interdependence, and economic, financial and market integrations that are driven by advances in comarketing managementunication and transportation technologies, and trade liberalization.

People around the globe are more connected to each other than ever before. Information and money flow more quickly than ever. Goods and services produced in one part of the world are increasingly available in all parts of the world. International travel is more frequent. International comarketing managementunication is comarketing managementonplace.

The importance of this study is considerably amplified by changes generated by the actual financial-economical crisis that develops deeply; process spread inevitably worldwide, becoming difficult to control and affecting all areas of business.

2. THE METHODOLOGY OF RESEARCH

By this research study we intend to underline some existing realities in Romanian organizations regarding marketing management and its' key role in change management.

Taking into account the set-up objectives, our investigation has been made up of two consecutive researches: *a qualitative research of an exploratory nature and a quantitative research of a descriptive nature.*

By using the qualitative research of an exploratory nature one had as aim *determining the set of hypothesis which were the object of the quantitative descriptive research that was to follow and setting up the following priorities for the research.*

The methods used in this preliminary research are the following: *the analysis of secondary data*, which requires the usage of the available data coming from different sources with focus on discovering shortcomings, ideas, solutions regarding costs and the prices policy; *interviews with specialists* with the aim of obtaining further pieces of information from those relevant in the fields of marketing management; *group reunions* or *focus groups* that allowed the debates regarding this subject.

The ojectives and hypothesis of the research are presented in table 1.

The descriptive quantitative research, the results of which are presented in the present paper, had as purpose to describe and evaluate the coordinates regarding the knowledge of marketing management by the firms.

Taking into consideration the location of development the research has been made *in the field*, and in what concerns the frequency of development, the research has been made *on occasion*.

Right after setting up the objectives we aimed to define the hypothesis of the selective scientific research presented in table 1, respectively to anticipate the answers to the matter under investigation.

Table 1. Objectives and hypothesis of the research

Q ₁	The actual state of knowledge regarding marketing management	<i>I</i> ₁ – Most managers agree to the importance of marketing management in change management and organizational objectives; <i>I</i> ₂ – Most managers consider that marketing management contributes decisively to the improvement of organizational performance in changing conditions;
Q ₂	The degree in which firms own a marketing management system.	<i>I</i> ₃ – Most firms don't have a marketing management system ; <i>I</i> ₄ – Most often marketing research is evaluated; <i>I</i> ₅ – The most used method SWOT analysis.
Q ₃	The degree in which firms are willing to form human resources in marketing management.	<i>I</i> ₇ – The level of expenses that firms undertake for professional forming is very low; <i>I</i> ₈ – The team involved in marketing management is performing.

One had into consideration when formulating the hypothesis *the pieces of information and conclusions taken from the previous exploratory research*.

In order to set the sample we used the method of *random sampling*, which was based on a *fixed sample with restrictions* (taking into consideration the organizational restrictions, we decided upon a sample of 1100 respondents). We can state that the sampling method consists of a combination between the *multi – stages sampling method* and that of the *non-proportional stratified random sampling*. Thus, for the purpose of our research the following *steps* have been taken:

- The basis for sampling has been defined and constituted using the data obtained from the National Office of the Registry of Comarketing managementerce, having included all the firms and autonomous authorities in Sibiu County. We observed that the main criteria which need to be taken into consideration in selecting the components of the sample are the one related to the category of the firm.
- From the sampling basis we have eliminated all the firms that are no longer active, which have had an interruption in their activity and those which had registered losses in exploitations more than two years consecutively. The remaining firms have been stratified according to the category of he firm.
- The remaining firms for each stratum have been randomly selected until the size of the sample has been reached. In completing the size of the sample we chose the non-proportional option, starting from the hypothesis that certain strata, especially those of the small, medium and large firms present a higher importance for the marketing management activity.

A limit of the research derives from the choice made in completing the size of the sample, namely our choice for the non-proportional version. Regarding this aspect, we would like to argue that, even if by using the non-proportional alternative the subjects of the sample do not correspond to the statistic realities in what regards their weight on the total of firms in Transilvania, we started from the hypothesis that certain strata, consequently that of the large, medium and small enterprises have a larger importance in the context of research, each of those having its own conceptions and perceptions. One must also specify that the basic objective of the selective scientific research has been to develop and test the instrument of research and not the precision of the estimates.

Considering the purpose of the completed selective scientific research, that of capturing the existing realities at the level of the firms in Transilvania regarding the marketing management, to determine the level of the differences from the point of view of needs, attitudes or opinions between different categories of firms and fields of activity, the distributed questionnaire was anonymous, the researchers assuring the respondents of the confidentiality of the information they have provided. The focus was not on a particular category of firms, as we tried to catch certain realities with the purpose of identifying the causes of the deficiencies declared at the level of the economic activity, as well as to formulate proposals in this field. From this point of view, the researchers based their opinions on the full confidence shown by the respondents who, thus, assured them of their full cooperation.

3. CONCLUSIONS AND PROPOSALS

3.1. The actual state of knowledge regarding marketing management

A first objective of our research was to obtain information that would give us an image of the actual state of knowledge regarding marketing management.

Within the frames of this objective we followed the opinions of managers regarding the importance of marketing management in change handling and reaching organizational objectives. Data processing leads to the conclusion that most of the respondents (42.7%) agree to the fact that marketing management is important and 38.2% express their total agreement towards our affirmation. This situation would make us point out the importance of this system in relation to business environment, in different analysis of activity and results, as well as in strategic planning. Neutral opinion have 14.5% of the respondents, while 14.5% expressed disagreement and only 1 respondent (0.9%) expressed total disagreement towards the upper affirmation.

The average of the obtained responses is 4.14 and is situated in the „agreement” zone, so that the hypothesis advanced before the research (I_1 – Most managers agree to the importance of marketing management in change management and organizational objectives) is confirmed. When a decision is being made, regardless of its type, managers need to know the risks that might appear. Any change generates risks that need to be managed in order to survive. Marketing management is the only one that can offer solid information, influencing the behaviour and decisions of the ones implementing it.

In the same time, within this objective, we followed the attitude of managers regarding the degree in which they consider that marketing management contributes to the improvement of the organizational performance in changing conditioned.

The information obtained revealed the conclusion that most respondents (50.0%) consider the fact that marketing management sustains performance in change, 19.1% appreciate as useful such a system, but not indispensable and many respondents, (over 30%), consider such a system not important. As a conclusion, the hypothesis (I_2 – Most managers consider that marketing management contributes decisively to the improvement of organizational performance in changing conditions) is confirmed.

Still, we consider that this conclusion cannot be generalized, because almost half of the respondents do not consider as indispensable the marketing management system. To be more detailed, we tried to establish the connection that exists between the managers' attitude regarding marketing management and the category of organizations they lead. We have observed the fact that as the dimension of the firm increases, the percent of managers that consider that marketing management sustains performance in conditions of change - 75% in large organizations and only 29.5% in micro and small organizations.

Only 8.3% of large organizations do not use marketing management methods while, in small organizations the percent is over 52%.

As a conclusion, the research proves that most of managers in large organizations consider that a marketing management system contributes to a better activity. Most of those leading small organizations do not use this system and most of those managers either don't use it at all, either considers it good but not indispensable.

In a competitive economy, characterized by permanent changes, the role of marketing management is to forestall permanently the future trends of the company. To plan, to predict the necessity of financing as well as the potential capital sources is essential for the life of an organization. Organizations in developed countries don't make any move economically, technically, financially or any other kind without elaborating a strategy, without establishing the risks that might appear, regardless of their meaning and impact. Many managers lead their business without having a unitary vision upon it. In their strive to survive, they forget a significant aspect – marketing. Have you ever proceeded in a journey without thinking what are you going to need on the way, how will you transport everything, what are the risks that might appear? Definitely, no, well, so is, or it should be in business. We consider that the initial role of marketing management in change is to be regarded as a „compass” that will help the organization to find its right way, to obtain the desired performances and to adapt to changes with efficiency.

3.2. The degree in which organizations have implemented a marketing management system

The second major objective of our research refers to certain realities in Romanian organizations regarding marketing management. In order to reach this objective, we have placed in our questionnaire three questions. For starters, we intended to identify the degree in which organizations have a marketing management system. The

information obtained has shocked us. Most of the organizations included in sample (70%) do not have implemented such a system, only 20% of them declare they have one, and 10% consider they cannot state whether they have or not such a system. The hypothesis is in this way confirmed. Based on the combined analysis "marketing management"/ "firm category" following statements could be concluded: the percent of the companies that have a marketing management system rises along with company's dimension. So, if over 80% of the large companies have a marketing management, most of the small companies don't have one. The general conclusion could be that most of the forms that have a marketing management system are large (over 58%), they being more willing to support the costs for implementation, in order to obtain benefits in the future.

Another aspect of the research is the typology or the function evaluated. Even though they are not able to evaluate every type of function is more important within their organizations, most of them consider the comarketing management on ones: financial, human resource.

Only 20% of the organizations evaluate comarketing managementercial function, 31.8% evaluate financial function, 10.9% evaluate production and 9.1% mention they evaluate human resource function. We have identified that over 50% of the organizations in research don't evaluate any function. As a consequence, the hypothesis we have formulated before our research (I_4 – Most often marketing research is evaluated) is not confirmed. We can see though that from those types of functions we have mentioned most organizations that do actually an evaluation, are really interested in marketing.

Another fundamental aspect of our research was to identify the methods the organizations use. Due to the restriction of space we only present a few of the methods that could be used in order to conduct marketing research: SWOT analysis, Internal diagnosis, interview, Customer Relationship Management. By data processing, we can conclude that in order to evaluate the markets, 5.5% of the organization use SWOT analysis, 21.8% use global diagnosis, 38.2% use other methods and 34.5 % don't use any methods at all. As a conclusion, we can state that most of the organizations use as main methods the internal diagnosis analysis and the hypothesis advanced at the beginning of research (I_5 – The most used method SWOT) is not confirmed.

We can also see the high percentage, taking into account the complexity of the method as well as the lack of interest in marketing management of those organizations that use global diagnosis. We negatively appreciate this lack of interest in managers for modern evaluation methods, fact that relates to the low preparation of those involved in marketing management.

As a general conclusion, we can state the fact that changes in business environment and competition generate different types of attitudes towards marketing management. Any decision regarding a new objective, developments, reengineering, generate a risk in obtaining results initially estimated due to the influence of changes in economical, financial social-political technical, internal and external environment. We simply don't know what future brings. What could be done is an analysis of the risky situations and their potential effects upon organizations.

The general conclusion of our scientific, selective research is that most of the questioned organizations don't have a marketing management system. The reasons

could be various but, most probably is resides in their incompetence to involve in deeper analysis. In this situation, we wonder: do Romanian organizations have such a „good” evolution? We don't think that an answer is needed, this being already presented in our upper paragraphs. A healthy marketing management process and its continuous improvement is the distinctive sign of international companies in a competitive environment.

Marketing management in XXIst century should be an integrant part of general management, promoting operational efficiency and not bureaucracy, permanently analyzing costs/benefits generated by their reaction to change.

3.3. The degree in which organizations are willing to improve and prepare the personnel involved in marketing

As we stated before, a major request of adaptation of human resources to the performances of marketing management, refers to training of professional that will be able to bring knowledge and abilities to the task of their positions. So, we have intended to follow the degree in which the organizations are willing to undertake the expenses of personnel training. By data processing, we noticed that most of the organizations (38.2%) are not willing to support those expenses, statement that actually doesn't wonder us considering the low percent of those organizations that have a marketing management system.

Only 15.5% of organizations offer access to training programs, also undertaking the expenses and only 5.5% are aware of the importance of life long learning and continuous training but taking over the costs in very low percent.

As a conclusion, the hypothesis advanced before the research is confirmed. Regarding the degree in which the organizations have a performing team, we could state that most of these (55.5%) appreciate that they have a performing team and 20% have very performing team. Only 2.7 % declare that they have unprofessional in their team.

Professional development of the personnel involved in marketing management is considered a insecure investment due to reasons such as confuse objectives of training, lack of strategy in human resource. On the other hand, we are aware of the fact that these courses are expensive, prices being ranged between 1000 and 3000 Euro. We consider though that the existence of detailed training programs, according to t requests of change characterize the organizations that are successful.

The imarketing managementinence and inescapability of change are well known. Thousands and thousands of possible combinations of human errors, changes, failures of technique or external influences are threats that lead to the appearance of failure. Within this context, we consider that the members of executive management should continuously reevaluate and consolidate management policies in order to approach complex danger they face nowadays. In spite of the continuous decline of this financial crisis that we are facing, it seems that few institutions actually plan to bring fundamental changes in their marketing structures.

We consider that, in order to face the importance of marketing management in handling change, mentality must be changed first. Such change could begin by introducing as compulsory in university curricula and not only a discipline regarding

marketing management. We could that try o develop comarketing managementunicational and analytic abilities, practice of marketing research and coexistence with this life characteristics, development of managerial abilities in order to correctly act towards change exposure, strategic and operational behavior, a integrated marketing management system within organization, adapting methods and techniques for marketing control in changing situations and their management.

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