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și Gestiunea Afacerilor

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# **Investigating the Role of Brand Awareness in Reducing the Perceived Risk Associated to Online Buying of Tourism Services**

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**ABSTRACT** Online travel shopping has increased significantly over the years and the number of Internet travelers has been rapidly growing, while the traditional travel agencies face greater competition every day from the Internet. Still, although consumers recognize the benefits of the Internet, several perceived risks make them reluctant to online purchases. Nevertheless, these risks can be reduced by aspects among which brand awareness is essential. Therefore, we considered that a study investigating the role of brand awareness in reducing the perceived risk associated to online buying of tourism services is extremely relevant to nowadays literature, the purpose of this paper being to conceptualize and project an appropriate research methodology. The main idea of the proposed methodology is based on an experimental design in which the independent variables consisting in brand awareness and relative price generate several scenarios and experimental groups, the perceived risk being assessed and evaluated through depicting it into five facets: financial, performance, social, privacy/security, technical, and, respectively, overall risk.

## **1. Introduction**

Online travel shopping has increased significantly over the years. Nowadays, the Internet has become a distribution channel that allows cutting costs and selling travel services more rapidly and more efficiently. Customers have without doubt the possibility to analyze offers, to compare prices and to choose the best travel package with less effort and increased convenience.

The number of Internet travelers has been rapidly growing, especially during the 90s and the first five years of the millennium. By 1998, almost all Internet users were also travelers, while half of them got information on travel products via the Internet (Travel Industry Association, 1999). Even if the proportion of online travelers who use the Internet to both research and buy travel fell 9% between 2005 and 2007, online leisure travel spending increased 41% over the same period (Travel Industry Association of America, 2007). Still, in 2001, only about 1 in 6 Americans and about 4 in 10 Europeans were purchasing travel products online (Travel Industry Association of America, 2001). Researchers like Tan (1999) or Miyazaki and Fernandez (2001) explain it due to the fact that although consumers recognize the benefits of the Internet, several perceived risks make them reluctant to online purchases.

# **Social responsibility values: managers and students perspectives\***

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**ABSTRACT** Based upon GLOBE international research instruments, this empirical study aims at comparing the attitude towards organization's social responsibility values of Romanian middle managers and students. The sample consists of 523 middle managers from a large spectrum of business fields and 429 students (261 in engineering and 168 in business). The students' involvement in the research is based upon the assumption that most of them will hold middle management position in the near future. The data has been collected between 2001 and 2008 from managers and in 2009 from students, using a section of GLOBE III questionnaire, about the importance of CSR related values in critical decisions. The findings show significant differences ( $p < 0.05$ ) between the middle managers and students for ten out of fifteen values. The group of managers give significantly higher importance to cost control, decisions' effect on long term competitive ability of the organization, on relationships with serious important business partners, sales volume and on firm profitability. The students consider as more important (than managers) the organization's responsibility to economic welfare of the nation and local community, as well as the decisions' effect on environment, minority and female employees (negative gaps, showing the students' aspiration towards paying higher attention to these issues in adopting critical decisions).

## **1. Introduction**

The research question the present study tries to answer concerns the convergence and divergence in Romanian middle managers and students' opinion about the *organization's social responsibility values*.

Doing business in the long term interest of all of the organization environment constituents is a topic of concern for researchers, consultants, politicians, business practitioners etc. since the middle of the XX<sup>th</sup> century. The reason is that business and society in its general sense are interwoven (Wood, 1991) in a complex network, which provides the context and means of human being's quality of life.

The importance of the issue is emphasized by the actions taken by international and global decisional institutions, aiming at strengthening a more humane, more ethical and more transparent business behaviour. Among these actions, the following have a great impact on business behaviour:

- a) European Union's *Green Paper - Promoting a European framework for Corporate Social Responsibility*, invites the organizations to a holistic approach of social responsibility and a social responsibility integrated management (Commission of the



# **Marketing research regarding business type customer loyalty for noncarbonated beverages on the Romanian market**

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**ABSTRACT** The retention process for most goods and services implies the deployment of complex resources within an exactly defined timeframe. Adapting a retention strategy will undoubtedly be carried out taking into account the characteristics of the product or service considered. The customer retention activity is maybe the most important barometer for the complexity and level of conceptualization for the organizational marketing strategy itself. No economic entity can evolve in its reference environment unless it benefits from a coherent strategy for creating and delivering value on it's specific market. From this respect the present article using a qualitative type research – semi structured in depth interview among business type customers for noncarbonated beverages defines and investigates the concept of loyalty, variables regarding loyalization and the particular relationship between satisfaction and loyalty for the considered products. The conclusions of the authors proposed a new approach to the concept of loyalty based on variables that define it in different market contexts. For fully defining the loyalty concept a broad area of future research has to be done, especially regarding the Romanian market environment which is influenced by a continuous maturization process of the Romanian consumers

## **1. Introduction**

As we speak about customer loyalty, we approach a trully complex universe, a process which encompassed a wide area of concepts, instruments and marketing theories. Two main area can be individualised – the one reffering to customer loyalty in case of people buying goods and services and the one reffering to customer loyalty in case of bussiness type customers - organizations.

The two types of loyalty are very different concerning multiple aspects but also have the same amount of interference. They cannot be fully defined whitout each other context, and more they are conditioning each other.

That is why we consider important at the level of present article to have an equal insight in terms of scientific literature review concerning both aspects of loyalty - people customers and business customers, although the main objectives of our research was to unveil characteristics of business type customers loyalty for noncarbonated beverages.

# **A Qualitative Model for Brand Evaluation with a Pilot-Implementation in the Case of Ursus**

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**ABSTRACT** During the last decades successful organizations have concluded that one of their most valuable assets, if not the most valuable, is represented by their corporate brand and/or brand portfolio. However, branding, as a concept, process, and strategy, is one strewn with many obstacles and misunderstandings. If branding is considered and treated as a simple „dressing” of an organization, only depicted by a name, logo or an advertising campaign, then its results should certainly be expected to be superficial. One of the basics of a brand is the presence in its composition of both tangibles and intangibles. Theses last ones, the most difficult to quantify, are those that make the assessment of brand value a very difficult and subjective process. The challenge and purpose of this paper is to develop, conceptualize and pilot-implement an operational general qualitative model for brand evaluation.

## **1. Introduction**

In the context of an unstable and uncertain economic environment, in a competitive market often compared with a battleground, its players try to survive by means of differentiation, to attract potential consumers, but also to maintain existing ones.

The objective of this paper is to develop a qualitative brand evaluation model, capitalizing on existing and recognized methods, optimizing them and complementing them with new parameters, taken as key factors, such as: social prestige, originality, social responsibility, promoting techniques, brand prestige.

The brand selected for the pilot-implementation of the proposed methodology – Ursus – was chosen due to its brand strength, tradition, and its recent rebranding – its repositioning on a new market segment (premium beers) – thus offering us the opportunity to indirectly asses the results of this rebranding process.

In the first part of the paper we briefly and critically reviewed the main issues related to brand evaluation and some of the most popular methods used at international level. Further on, we described our model for brand evaluation, the factors involved, the evaluation process and its phases, the specific coefficients, the data collection instruments involved, and the computational algorithm. Finally, we presented the result of the pilot-implementation of the brand evaluation model in the case of the local beer brand – Ursus, along with a set of conclusions and future improvement directions, concerning both our methodology and its implementation.

# **Credibility's Dimensions of Commercial Web Sites**

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**ABSTRACT** The purpose of this study is to identify the dimensions of credibility of a commercial website. This research has two *hypotheses*: 1. "Among the credibility dimensions it is expected to identify: Real world feel, Ease of use, Expertise, Trustworthiness, Relationship with website visitor, Amateurism"; And 2. "It is expected to identify supplementary dimensions of the construct." The study has a two sided implication for identifying the credibility's dimensions: First - Only commercial sites are studied (the previous literature presents research results for generally approached sites or for specific sites such as health or finance); Second- Commercial sites are particularly studied for presentation sites category. It is very important to study commercial sites' credibility in order to change attitudes and behaviors (in a way that marketers desire) regarding a brand or a product. The research results can be framed in economic literature but also they can be applied in marketers' activity in the new era of the Internet and digital world.

## **1. Introduction**

Gaining websites credibility is important as increased credibility has the ability to change attitudes and behaviors on medium and long terms. There is a direct positive correlation between credibility of websites and persuasion using websites.

Past and present research on dimensions of websites credibility identified common elements (factors) but also different dimensions varying from one study to another. These differences could be explained using the manner this concept of credibility is defined, as the user's perception of potential usefulness of information of any kind.

Perception is a subjective concept. It doesn't depend on an exact aspect such as using a certain number of words or a certain color. Above that, websites credibility dimensions are different if the types of analyzed websites are different (finance, commercial), the respondents are part of different profile targets (various age categories) or the research instruments used to collect data from respondents are different.

## **2. Research on Credibility of Websites**

The methods to assess credibility used in past researches rely on information focused on one or a number of certain websites or on past experience and knowledge of a user. From this point of view, there is no scale to match exactly every assessed website or all types of websites.

# **Value-Added Services offered in luxury restaurants and their implication for customer satisfaction**

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**ABSTRACT** Although in the beginning the luxury sector seemed to resist the global economic crisis's impact, the depression has finally affected it. Analysts affirm that the luxury sector never has been in a similar situation, this why has become more interesting to study the luxury consumer behavior within the current economical context, same as the luxury producers' approach. The purpose of this paper is to examine an element which may play in this period an essential part of competitive advantage in the luxury restaurants' domain, but not only: the value-added services. Having as starting point the affluents' characteristics and continuing with a documentary research, we managed to identify some differences between the value-added services offered by the luxury restaurants 'offers and those offered by the regular restaurants, same as their implications for the customer loyalty and retention.

## **1. Introduction**

Why luxury restaurants and not other luxury product?

According to „The American Express Platinum Survey”(2004), conducted by American Express among 870 affluent consumers, 59% of the respondents received the most personal buying satisfaction from „experiential luxuries”: dining, travel, entertainment and cultural/arts events, sporting events, personal health and beauty services, and home services. But from all those, for most of the affluents, the number one „experiential luxury” is fine dining. For others the main satisfaction is given by the acquisition of personal luxuries(automobiles, fashion, jewelry, etc.) or of home luxuries(furniture, linens, etc.). Even if there are affluents who don't receive the most personal buying satisfaction from experiences, they have bought this type of services.

# **Les particularités du plan de marketing pour exportation des producteurs roumaines de cosmétiques**

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**ABSTRACT** The cosmetics industry has a record in terms of launching new products, even in the case of series products. However, the cosmetics industry represents a vital industry, not specifically for the contribution they have to gross global product, but because it has a strong influence on social and human psychology or on the quality of life. Opportunities of globalization require continuous changes in the marketing policies of the companies.

The main purpose of this paper is to make a diagnosis of Romanian cosmetics industry by highlighting specific export marketing policies Romanian cosmetics producer to the European Union and create benchmarks to improve operational planning activities. Thus, in order to succeed in a mature market as the European market, we propose an export marketing plan framework, customized for the existing situation of Romanian producers, designed leading marketing efforts towards effective export activities. The particularities will focus on *election strategies phase* that suggests, in addition to traditional or existing strategies, to adopt some customized strategies. The analysis results concern *the development of e-communication system* with existing customers for increasing their loyalty to the Romanian products and *distributors marketing strategies decentralization*. Also, we have developed some useful form adapted to Romanian cosmetics producers in analyzing the situation, forecast revenue and measure the effectiveness of marketing.

## **1.Introduction**

L'industrie européenne des cosmétiques est considérée comme le leader mondial de la production de cosmétiques et un très important employeur. Le marché européen détient environ un tiers du marché mondial, les ventes de produits cosmétiques dans l'UE atteignant 69,5 milliards d'euros, en 2009 (rapport Colipa, 2009). Dans l'Union Européenne, le rythme de croissance a été très soutenu et positive jusqu'en 2008. La figure 1 illustre les taux de croissance à partir de 2002 jusqu'en 2009. Le chiffre d'affaire le plus élevé a été enregistré dans les produits de soin de la peau pendant que les produits de protection solaire ont la croissance la plus accélérée (Euromonitor International, 2009, Pitman, 2008). L'Europe de l'Ouest apparaît comme la région avec le plus grand volume de la valeur des ventes de cosmétiques, tandis que le potentiel de croissance d'Europe de l'est est très augmenté (Euromonitor International, 2009).

La consommation de produits cosmétiques est étroitement liée au mode de vie, ce qui explique pourquoi la recherche et le développement de nouveaux produits nécessitent des études détaillées des besoins des consommateurs, de plus en plus sophistiqués. Dans les dernières années, on assiste aux changements du segment des consommateurs sur le marché des produits cosmétiques (Ross *et al.*, 2007), en augmentant considérablement le segment composé d'hommes aussi bien que des enfants âgés de 10-14 ans.

# Conceptual approaches of brand loyalty

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**ABSTRACT** Brand loyalty, a concept that has gone around the world and which is discussed for several decades by experts in the field, represents the subject of this brief theoretical analysis. The objective of this paper is to highlight different approaches of the concept of brand loyalty.

## 1. Introduction

Brand loyalty is a term used in specialty literature to describe the tendency of a consumer to remain loyal to some products or brands that they come to know and trust. Most often, brand loyalty translates itself by repeated purchase of the product by the same buyer. This is why the companies that develop a brand work to maintain it and to generate the customer's brand loyalty, this meaning repeated purchase. Thus even the smallest change of the brand may have a disastrous effect on the company because there is the possibility to alienate loyal customers. Due to changes brought to products or services, even through the simple change of packing, they may lose confidence in the product and therefore not buy it anymore.

Even though most of the time a branded product is more expensive than an ordinary one, the consumer feels more safe using the brand product, knowing that the profits of large companies are mostly based on their reputation of delivering quality products and / or services. This offers the consumer a high degree of safety because he is sure about the quality of the products.

It is important to distinguish between the conceptual definitions of loyalty, which are abstract descriptions of the studied phenomenon and the operational definitions which are measurement methods (Jacoby & Chestnut, 1978; Peter, 1981). Conceptual definitions are needed to assess the construct's validity in the adoption of measurement methods. Without conceptual definitions, the correctness of specific measures of brand loyalty can not be assessed and the results may be meaningless.

Thus, below, using large specialty literature, we will present the theoretical research of brand loyalty concept. It begins with a conceptual definition of loyalty followed by the presentation of theoretical explanations of loyalty development and its applicability on different markets, and then the presentation of attitudinal and behavioral loyalty competences.

# **Romanian Consumers' Attitudes towards Counterfeits – An Empirical Study**

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**ABSTRACT** Even though the problem of counterfeits has spread all over the world, affecting every economy, the research on consumer attitudes and purchase behaviour of counterfeit products is sparse. Whether or not consumers knowingly purchase forgeries has been questioned many times. Certain consumers buy counterfeits, while others refuse to do that and purchase only the original. Our study intends to shed some light on the attitudes towards counterfeiting, to try to determine why consumers resort to counterfeits instead of originals and which of the following types of counterfeits (food, clothing, toys, cosmetics, electronics, mobile phones and computers) are the most interesting for the consumers. Also, a secondary goal was to try to find what consumers think about national brands. National brands lack respect and favourable attitude from respondents' side, due to low quality perception. Also, they do not perceive local products' consume as a support for local economy. Therefore they are not particularly interested in using them. For the purpose of this study the targeted population has been divided according to the locality of residence into five types: localities with small population, represented by rural areas, villages communes and very small towns; small and medium towns; medium- sized towns with a population between 100,000 and 150,000 inhabitants; medium to large towns with a population between 150,000 and 200,000 inhabitants and large cities - over 250,000 inhabitants.

## **1. Introduction**

Counterfeits represent an increasingly growing problem for the global economy. Certain authors (Bian & Moutinho, 2008) estimate the loss caused by trade of unoriginal products to approximately 300 billion dollars. The negative effect of this phenomenon is also underlined by Matos *et al.* (2007), who reach the conclusion that 5% of all the traded goods are forgeries. In fact, they have a powerful impact on any economy. They bring damage to brand equity as they devalue the image of original products, cause sales loss for the producers of originals, raise unemployment by reducing the number of workplaces, decrease the amount of taxes and dues collected by the states, and, nonetheless, deceive consumers (Maldonado *et al.*, 2005).

Forgeries or counterfeits are nothing but copies, identically packaged and marked, with the intention to not be distinguished from the original (Wee *et al.*, 1995). Other authors consider forgery unauthorized production of goods, whose special characteristics are protected through copyright (Cordell *et al.*, 1996).

The literature includes few empirical studies concerning consumers' perceptions on counterfeits. Among these, Matos *et al.* (2007), who reach the conclusion that consumer'

# Transport Service Marketing

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**ABSTRACT** I chose the topic "Marketing transports services", because in contemporary society, transport with what it implies, is considered to be one of the basic activities needed for the development of the economy of a country and a way of economic improvement of living standards of each state, by the direct impact which has the "consumption" of passengers transport services or merchandise transport services. So, were created the premises of developing several forms of transport as: route, railway, air, naval. In this article called suggestive "Marketing transports services", I will do a theoretical approach to environmental marketing concepts of the transport company, presenting the macro marketing and micro marketing in transport, with the objective to highlight the impact that internal and external environment have on carriers. To underline the extent to which transport is situated in the economic sphere will do a SWOT analysis on macro marketing and micro marketing. This SWOT analysis can help transportation firm in its stance on the current market. A good knowledge of environmental marketing firm providing transportation help to develop and maintain profitable relationships with your target market.

## 1. Introduction

Transport activity has been achieved through a link between work and their business environment in which they operated. It is noteworthy that there is close link between quality of transport services, transport method, the number of companies providing a specific area and profit. The benefits of cooperation between transport companies and the development a marketing with all specific elements, lead to customer satisfaction of transport services.

For these reasons, transportation is one of the activities with a high growth trend in recent years. If we look at neighboring countries and beyond, we see that they have a very well developed and strengthened infrastructure. International experience in managing transportation activity, shows that government policies for infrastructure development, promote diversification of small and medium businesses, and strengthening of large companies regarding their economy and ensure the social and economic equity balanced distribution of income between urban and rural areas. To achieve these benefits, Romania would need to have the necessary infrastructure and legal framework for transport, which serves as the basic in development transport and economy.

In this article, in the first part I will present the external environmental components of transport companies, the literature serving as a base, but also my own contribution, because marketing in the sphere of transport services is less developed. In the second part I will do a SWOT analysis to identify the influence of the external environment of enterprise, in the context of business or requirements contained in the target company transport.

Marketing of transport services can be achieved through flexibility and openness of firms to actually see the transport not only in terms of service, but having the whole image forming circuit performance. Transport marketing emerged as a result of the development of social



# **Innovation Diffusion and Adoption of New Products**

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**ABSTRACT** New products and processes that are adopted are among the most actively researched topics in marketing and social sciences. Such attention is justified by the role it plays in disseminating new products in a developed society, adoption of new products is a source of change both in consumer activity to the final consumer and society. In addition, the diffusion of new products play a critical role in the performance of individual firms, a stream of successful new products is essential for business prosperity in a free economy. The framework for exploring consumer acceptance of new products is drawn from the area of research known as the diffusion of innovations. Consumer researchers who specialize in the diffusion of innovations are primarily interested in understanding two closely related processes: the diffusion process and the adoption process. In the broadest sense, diffusion is a macro process concerned with the spread of a new product (an innovation) from its source to the consuming public. In contrast, adoption is a micro process that focuses on the stages through which an individual consumer passes when deciding to accept or reject a new product. The present paper aims to present the approaches reflected by the literature regarding the consumer behavior - the acceptance of new products and services.

## **1. Introduction**

The adoption process is the "mental and behavioral sequences through which the consumer progresses and which may result in acceptance and continue use of a product or brand" (Robertson, 1974 : 271). The diffusion process is concerned with how innovations spread, that is, how they are assimilated within a market. More precisely, diffusion is the process by which the acceptance of an innovation (a new product, new service, new idea, or new practice) is spread by communication (mass media, salespeople, or informal conversations) to members of a social system (a target market) over a period of time. This definition includes the four basic elements of the diffusion process: (1) the innovation, (2) the channels of communication, (3) the social system, and (4) time. The innovation diffusion theory was inserted to marketing in the 1960 (King, 1963; Frank, *et al.*, 1964; Silk, 1966; Arndt, 1967; Robertson, 1967; Bass, 1969). Researchers in management and marketing science have contributed to the development of diffusion theory by suggesting analytical models for describing and forecasting the diffusion of an innovation in a social system. This literature also has been concerned with developing normative guidelines for how an innovation should be diffused in a social system.

## **2. Adoption process and the concept of innovativeness**

The process of making purchasing decisions and the activity of informing attract the highest degree of complexity when consumers take into account new products. Thousands of new

# **The basic profile of the urban tourism consumers which are using the international hotel chains (in Romania)**

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**ABSTRACT** Each year the claims regarding the tourism services are growing in variety and expectance – fact that was observed in practice by the elite of the hospitality industry which is trying to do the best to satisfy each client. In the last few years, these trends were also present in Romania, just like the countries that have a strong tourism offer. For this reason, some of the foreign tourists, which want to accommodate in Romania will prefer a hotel that they already know and which they trust. Mostly, this hotel belongs to an international hotel chain, chain that offers similar services all over the world. These services provide comfort and physical safety for the tourists which are looking for such hotel accommodations. Starting with these premises, we have realized a focus group in which several actors attended, representing the entire Cluj-Napoca tourism market. With their help we have created the foundations of the urban tourism consumer profile, which chooses to accommodate into a hotel that belongs to an international hotel chain. This prototype is the first step taken in order to create the real profile of the tourism consumers in Romania.

## **1. Introduction**

Lately, the city became our way of life, our way of living. More and more rural inhabitants spend most of their time in urban areas because of their jobs, friends and relatives or just because of the opportunities and living conditions offered by an urban area. Nowadays, cities became a starting point and also a final destination. 80% of Europe's population lives in urban areas. Major urban areas daily face with limits of space, pollution, unemployment but at the same time they are the environment in which people live, work and relax.

Globally, in developed countries, the trend is to take short but many holidays during a year instead of a long expensive one. This led to the appearance and consolidation of urban tourism which is an important activity for cities, becoming a landmark for the development policies, because of the combination between the needs of tourists and tourism contribution to the welfare of city residents.

To develop a very good strategy and to improve the Romania tourism is very important to see how the tourism consumers are and which are their preferences. That is why we wanted to analyse the consumer profile that is using the hotels belonging to an international hotel chain.

# **Dentists and Romanian consumers' perception regarding marketing activity for dental healthcare services**

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**ABSTRACT** This article is based on a comprehensive research effort aimed at both consumers as well as dentists/managers of dental clinics. Thus were initially conducted two focus group meetings with the role type of exploratory research, subsequently completed with a survey type research, among dental care services romanian consumers in order to highlight the factors determining the choice of a dental office office and their retention process. Subsequently for dentists/dental office managers was used an in-depth semistructured interview aimed at identifying the extent to which marketing activity seen in the light of specific scientific principles and methodology is implemented in the dental offices in Romania. Conclusions of the article reflects a number of correlations that the authors have identified between variables tested and used within conducted research, qualitative informations happily fill it with the quantitative ones. The result is a complex image, seen from mutiple angles on how to implement marketing activities in the dental offices and a series of recommendations which require the development of this activity line.

## **1. Introduction**

Proper foundation of marketing strategy in the dental health services area is based on the successful identification of the patient profile, relations established between them and contact staff etc, goals that can not be achieved without a coordinated and constant effort of marketing research.

An important aspect of marketing research use in the medical field is that they should be mainly focused on identifying the specific contents and status of patient satisfaction, studying of consumer motivations and not least on identifying optimal communication ways between medical staff and patients

## **Strategic benchmarking in public services**

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**ABSTRACT** Services are studied in detail since the 80's; the idea of analyzing value of services through customer's satisfaction is researched for a long time. The reason for which benchmarking studies have earned their right to be considered an effective method of this analysis of services is also the basis for this paper. This paper tries to transfer this process from SME's to local authorities, because we believe they are no longer able to please citizen's satisfaction regarding the given services, through their current policy strategies, which is why we believe it's time to identify effective solutions in solving problems such as environmental issues, waste management, economic competitiveness and more. The research method used in preparing the study is a method of data processing, statistical and mathematical method, named the actual ranking method. The importance of this method results from the mere fact that this kind of complex studies as benchmarking studies need both a hierarchy and a data collection and an accurate analysis in order not to leave room for interpretations and errors. Benchmarking exceed ideological approaches and contribute to finding rational solutions to adopt best practices in the world. The whole study is based on benchmarking process highlighting the importance of this method in terms of eco-efficiency.

### **1. General data about benchmarking**

Since ever, the actors on the world economic scene have compared their own products and services to those offered by their competitors on the market. Sometimes these comparisons have worn a formal aspect, but most times, comparisons were made informally. Currently, this self evaluation is stipulated in ISO 9000:2001 - Quality Management Systems. Fundamentals and vocabulary ", whose paragraph 2.8" Quality management systems assessment "provides that:" Evaluation of a quality management system can vary in scope and may contain a number of activities such as auditing and analysis quality management system and self evaluation. "

The history of the theory and methodology of implementing the conclusions offered by the self evaluation begins in 1981 when Xerox Company became the target of the direct attack of its rival company, Cannon. Thus a new tool for quality management, benchmarking, was first used by the U.S. Company in an attempt to regain the position previously held and more, achieving outstanding performance, which ultimately led Xerox Company, not only to develop a new management tool, but also to implement it in all its branches and structures. The new philosophy adopted was based on the Chinese classical art of war as illustrated by the philosopher Sun Tzu (500 BC): "If you know your enemy and you know yourself, you should not be afraid of the result of 100 wars", which he combined it in practice and theory, with the ancient Japanese word "dantotsu" whose meaning is "striving to become the best of the best." This maximum was the basis for the future strategy of Xerox, which was based on

# **Marketing flexibility for new product development**

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**ABSTRACT** Considering the new competitive landscape of postmodern marketing, this paper attempts to discuss the role of flexibility in the context of the new marketing paradigms. Starting from an analysis of the modern marketing, both from a theoretical and practical point of view, the concept of flexibility is brought at the forefront of new marketing systems, which are built around procedures that favour customer participation. The flexibility of marketing systems has to be applied to all the processes of participation, interaction and implementation, in order to develop complex value-constellation systems that are capable to maximise the satisfaction and the benefits of all parties involved.

The theoretical approach of this study has a number of limitations: first, the model developed and discussed is only a preliminary tentative to identify the main areas of the marketing system that need flexibility in order to enhance the value co-creation process; second, the analysis of flexibility in the context of participative marketing systems has mainly focused on the advantages of this approach; and third, the model presented is only a theoretical construct, that needs to be tested and improved through empirical research. This study can, however, provide a starting point for developing a stream of research into the necessary features of a participative marketing system, organised and managed in order to enhance the value co-creation process between customers, organisations and stakeholders.

## **1. Introduction**

Flexibility is a controversial concept that covers multiple aspects (Sushil, 2001). In the last 30 years, both theoretical and technological advancements have increased the importance of flexibility for customer satisfaction and marketing performance. In business studies, flexibility was often associated with manufacturing processes (McTavish, 1984; Prabhaker, 2001), human resource management (Dyer, 1998), and strategy. Despite the fact that flexibility is implicit in the application of the marketing concept (Combe and Greenley, 2004), very few studies have directly addressed marketing flexibility.

The main role of marketing is to develop and deliver better value propositions for customers (Keefe, 2004; Payne & Holt, 2001; Woodruff, 1997). However, the meaning of this purpose has significantly changed in the last century. The 21st Century markets are characterised by dynamism, unpredictability, intense competition and increased consumer power, evolving towards and increased fragmentation of targeted segments.

In this context, creating and delivering customer value is increasingly considered as the next source of competitive advantage. Many leading scholars argued that this process can be enhanced by emphasizing marketing relationships as opposed to transaction-based exchanges (Kotler, 2000; Parvatiyar & Sheth, 1997; Webster, 1992).

# **Protection of Life insurance policyholders through Grievances handling – Social Responsibility of Life Insurers in India**

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**ABSTRACT** This paper studies the impact of grievances on the performance of life insurance companies in terms of premium collected by different selected life insurance companies in India. The main objective of life insurance sector in India is to ensure speedy settlement of genuine claims, to prevent insurance frauds and other malpractices and put in place effective grievance redressal machinery to ensure corporate social responsibility. 22 life insurance companies were taken to collect information regarding Grievances and 13 life insurance companies were taken to collect data on death claim and Lapsation of life insurance policies. 18 different types of complaints have been undertaken for the study. Information on Premium, Death claim, Lapsation and Grievances were collected and ANOVA test applied with the help of SPSS to find out the effect of Grievances on the premium collected by different life insurance companies.

The researcher has analyzed the impact of grievances, death claim and lapsation on premium collected by life insurance companies. It has been recommended on the basis of analysis that Insurers can increase premium collection through minimizing grievances but they should treat it as social responsibility to make customer aware about life insurance concept and satisfied them whenever crisis occur to built trust among policyholders.

## **1. Introduction**

Traditionally life insurance in India is considered to provide protection against the risk arising from the death of a person. In the country like India where generally number of earning members in a family is small and in many cases only one family member earns, death of an earning family causes great deal of hardship for the dependants.

Basically insurance is a device to share the losses of a few, by transferring a portion of the loss to the insurance company in exchange for a certain cost. This means that lots of people who think they may suffer a loss, each put in a little money to cover financial costs for those among them who actually sustain the loss.

Obviously, since there is a cost one cannot insure anything and everything. One will cover only those things that would cause a substantial financial burden unexpectedly on him/her, if one had to replace them on one's own. Hence, insurance works on the concept of risk sharing, which divides risk among many people.

The global business environment is buzzing with the single most important issue of building for the company a competitive edge by creating and retaining a larger number of customers than the competitors by offering the customers the expected satisfaction of the produced goods and services.

# **Practical Considerations on Adapting Marketing Decisions to Nowadays' Online Young Romanian Consumers**

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**ABSTRACT** Although the number of online Romanian consumers is clearly smaller than the European average, it is on a constant growth and, as a result, companies should acknowledge their distinctive consuming habits and preferences. In this context, our study, which is based on a primary research with 405 university graduates and student respondents from nowadays Cluj-Napoca, Romania, with the main instrument the questionnaire, aims to shape and define a series of variables of a great use in the marketing decision process. Accordingly, our directions are focused towards companies actively involved on the Romanian market, which target the online young consumer, while information regarding Generation Y's consuming habits is considerably limited. The main issues regarding the Romanian young consumer bring a point on: the role of the Internet and its heavy influence on daily activities, e-commerce, online security etc. These research recommendations emphasize a wide range of important variables which marketers should take into consideration, regardless any of the four Marketing P-s- product, price, promotion or placement.

## **1. Introduction**

Nowadays' society shaped an entirely new context for the business environment. The rapid technological progress, along with the Internet protrusion in our everyday life, which brought along world-wide instant information access, a global online market and a networking platform, had a heavy influence both on the market companies operate on and on their internal structure. Moreover, the appearance both of the online consumer and Generation Y, with different consuming habits and distinctive traits enhanced by the changes of the digital era, also resulted in fundamental shifts at the level of marketing decisions and implementations. Accordingly, this paper focuses on defining a series of variables of a significant importance in the marketing decision process, taking into account the hallmarks of the information society and addressing companies actively involved on the virtual Romanian market, targeting or willing to target the online young consumer.

Therefore, the main objectives are as follows:

- Presenting the most relevant information connected to the process of marketing decisions, in the present context of the information age.
- Identifying and analysing the most important traits of nowadays online young consumers, at the level of the USA and European Union.

# **Romanian paint market in times of crisis**

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**ABSTRACT** The purpose of this study is to examine how companies in the building materials industry of Romania are affected by the economic crises, to assess the effects of marketing strategies on company performance in the present conditions and to identify a pattern that can help companies to maintain successful performance despite the turbulences in the operational environment. Crisis come and go, it's the decision to adapt the company's strategy accordingly that makes a winner. A qualitative method was chosen for this research, and the empirical data was gathered from four companies in the Romania paint sector: Policolor, Fabryo, Deutek si Caparol. The findings show that the Romanian paint market as well the entire Romanian economy were affected by the present market conditions and have implemented several changes in their marketing strategies. This research can be useful for companies in the building materials industry, in order to help their management recognize the necessity of a proper business and marketing strategy that would support their activity along the development of the crisis and during the post-crisis situation. Conclusions and recommendations identify the strategic changes most likely to achieve that outcome, measured mainly in terms of sales, market share and profitability.

## **1. Introduction**

The purpose of this study is to observe the effects of the marketing strategies pursued by Romanian companies in the wake of the economic crisis that started in 2007, therefore it will be helpful to begin with a brief history.

The originality of the theme resides in two distinct elements: the glance at the literature review regarding the specialists' recommendations of specific measures to be taken in times of crisis, using the experience of the major economic crisis experienced during this century (The Great depression of the 1930's, the 1973's Oil crisis and Stock Market decline, the 1980 and the Credit crisis in the South Americas, the 1987's Black Monday with the falling of the stock market starting in Hong Kong), the Japanese Crisis of 1986-1990, the Black Wednesday of 1992 with the attack of the English Pound, the Mexican economic crisis of the 1994-1995, the Asian economic crisis of 1997-1998, other minor or major crisis) and the specific study of measures taken by Romanian companies in the paint sector as reported to the specialist's recommendations.

Construction sector was the engine of Romanian economy in recent years, recording annual growth of over 30%. There were two important moments that have boosted foreign direct investment in Romania and thereby boosting the growth in the construction market: acceptance of Romania into NATO in April 26, 2004 and acceptance of Romania into the EU on January 1, 2007. Thus, between 2004 - 2008 construction market had an annual growth rate of 37% of which: residential buildings registered growth on average by 51% per year and nonresidential buildings by 39% per year while civil engineering construction of 29% / year. After this period of explosive growth, the most important influence on the evolution of the construction sector as for all the other economic sectors, was that of the global financial crisis.



# **Malted Food Drinks in India- a study on Consumer Behavior**

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**ABSTRACT** In this paper an attempt has been made to understand the consumer behavior in relation to Malted Food Drinks (MFD) in India. Health drinks are the latest fad in the food business worldwide and this trend is fast catching up in the Indian market as well. The research focus was to study the changes in consumer behavior towards MFD across regions (Northern India and Southern India). To conduct this research primary data was collected through a questionnaire. Frequency graphs have been prepared to evaluate milk consumption pattern across the age groups, reasons for discontinuing a particular MFD brand and trigger for trying a new MFD brand. Data analysis has been done using SPSS Cross Tab.

The research concludes that when compared across regions, Northern region tends to show a discontinuing pattern towards MFD brand due to the taste Saturation however Southern region do not show such a discontinuing pattern. So it has been recommended that taste with health should trigger the consumer to change a MFD Brand. The research study also concludes that malted food drinks play important role in providing nutrition and health to the consumer. Malted food drink being the important part of daily nutrition in consumer diet product development and marketing should focus not only on the taste and flavor acceptance but also on nutrition. To drive consumption of new brands not only the taste and flavor is important but particular health benefit delivered is also very important.

## **1. Introduction**

As per Maslow's Theory in a hierarchy an employee moves up with time, the same concept can be extended to understand consumer behaviour just by reversing the logic. A consumer is attached with a brand or new innovate product for self actualization (top level) as the time passes and the product moves towards its generic behavior the needs of consumer shift to basic requirement (lowest level).

The level at which a brand starts in the hierarchy depends upon the level of consumer need for the respective product. To state an example, In 1980s branded milk was a symbol of esteem. Now in 2007 majority of households in cities depend upon the Mother Dairy or Amul etc. for their daily milk supply. The point here is that as the need of a product moves in the hierarchy so the respective brands. A brand moves with time from top level (self actualization) to lowest level (basic needs) of Maslow's hierarchy affected by number of parameters like company pricing strategy, competitors in industry, distribution, disposable income of consumers and life style.

The Indian food and drinks market is one of the fastest growing markets in the world. India has the second largest population in the world, with diversified food habits. Such a vast population and diverse eating habits make India one of the most attractive retail destinations across the globe. Increasing purchasing power, changing lifestyle, growing nuclear families and influence of western culture are the key drivers of the Indian food and drinks market.

# **Corporate social responsibility in banking sector of India**

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**ABSTRACT** The paper has made an attempt to map the corporate social responsibility (CSR) in the Indian banking sector. The paper notes that recently the concept of CSR has been introduced. Unfortunately this concept has not been taken seriously by banking and other industries in India. In this direction, the paper maps the different initiatives taken by different banks in India to introduce the corporate social responsibility for sustainability. It is in this light, the paper has made an attempt to identify the impact of corporate social responsibility in terms of expenditure on CSR and sales of banks. 40 banks were selected to collect and analyze the data regarding sales and actual expenditure incurred on corporate social responsibility. To find out the relationship between sales and actual expenditure incurred by banking companies, Correlation and t-test have been applied with the help of SPSS. The analysis shows the unpleasing story of CSR in the banking sector of India. Study also reveals that amount which is kept to be utilized for fulfillment of social responsibility, is not utilized fully. Therefore it is being recommended to prepare stringent norms for successful implementation of social responsibility programmes. It is also recommended that awareness should be created about CSR amongst the general public to make CSR initiatives more effective. Realistic and operational models of CSR should be framed upon. New areas of CSR activities should be searched like CSR education, carbon management strategies, resource recycling and ecosystem conservation.

## **1. Introduction**

To acquire sustainable development in industries a new phenomena has been introduced which is known as corporate social responsibility or giving full satisfaction in all ways to consumers, employees, communities, stakeholders and all other members of the public sphere. CSR-focused businesses would proactively promote the public interest by encouraging community growth and development, and voluntarily eliminating practices that harm the public sphere, regardless of legality. 'Corporate social responsibility (CSR), also known as corporate responsibility, corporate citizenship, responsible business, sustainable responsible business (SRB), or corporate social performance, is a form of corporate self-regulation integrated into a business model. Many of the newly formed private and foreign banks are aware of the importance of such a step and therefore are having an active corporate social responsibility department.

Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has asked the banks to start non-financial reporting, which will be used to audit their initiatives towards the CSR. Such a reporting will cover the work done by the banks towards the social, economic and environmental betterment of society. RBI has also stepped in to spread awareness about banking and other monetary practices to the common man. Recognizing its role as the central bank of the country, RBI is working towards empowering every individual, especially kids with information about mainstream banking activities and how they can preserve their wealth. Corporate Social Responsibility thus helps to

# Virtual Market

## Study case on 20 sectors of Romanian economy

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**ABSTRACT** *v-Market (Virtual Market)* is composed by online platforms that allow companies to be present simultaneously on the Local - Regional - National Markets as well the EU Single Market - Global Market with differentiate products or services and marketing strategies, according to the specifics of each market. *v*-Markets are used to raise awareness and develop the markets, the products and services; the sell online (e-commerce/mobile business), the new techniques for market research and consumer behaviour analyzes, the more persuasive promotion methods, gathering automatically a huge quantity of information and extracting the knowledge from it. The combination of classical marketing techniques with online marketing creates new opportunities to the companies and makes them more innovative and competitive. Throughout 2008 and 2009 the authors realized 25 sector studies, analyzing more than 10.000 Romanian companies. The analysis had focused on the use of ICT–Information Communication Technologies in the marketing processes and the presence of the Romanian firms and products on the virtual market. They had gathered data, information and experiences, creating a databases and developing a database mining system in order to transform information into advance knowledge. The article consists in a synthesis of the last 3 years of work and represents the conclusion of the studies presenting the e-marketing situation of Romanian companies from the most important economic sectors.

### 1. Introduction

The following article synthesizes 25 studies realized by the authors during 2008-2009. Each study focuses on the use of the ICT – *Information Communication Technologies* in the marketing processes and the presence on the virtual market of the Romanian firms and products from different sector of the economy. The first part of the article describes the methodology used in the sector studies and is followed by the second part in which the results and conclusions of the study are presented.

### 2. Methodology

The 25 economy sectors were chosen after studying the Statistical Yearbook of Romania 2008 (<http://www.insse.ro/cms/rw/pages/anuarstatistic2008.ro.do>), the Romanian National Classification of Economic Activities (CAEN - Clasificarea activitatilor din economia nationala <http://recom.onrc.ro/obco.htm>) and European Commission classification of economic activities ([http://ec.europa.eu/competition/mergers/cases/index/nace\\_all.html](http://ec.europa.eu/competition/mergers/cases/index/nace_all.html)).

# **Sports marketing – It's not just a game anymore**

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**ABSTRACT** The purpose of this article is to work towards an understanding of the sports marketing phenomenon by analyzing its distinctive nature and the challenges that sports marketers must deal with. It also describes the environment in which the marketers operate and the potential external factors that can influence the market, the sports products and services and the creation and development of a sports brand. In addition, we shall include two comprehensive study cases, which show how much of an impact celebrity endorsement can have upon a sporting event and reveal at the same time a perfect example of brand development.

## **1. Introduction**

When we talk about sports nowadays, we no longer see it as an invaluable activity for leading a healthy life. Sport is more than jogging, swimming, playing tennis, football or basketball. It is a business. And when you come to analyze the astronomical sums of money involved, you can consider it a pretty big one.

Sports – regardless of its nature – manages to attract millions of people from all around the world, so, if some people transformed coffee grains into a million dollar brand, why not do the same with the competitions, clubs or players? The consequence? Pick any newspaper or magazine, watch any kind of sports programme on TV, walk on any street across the world and you are very likely to be exposed to some aspects of sports marketing: David Beckham, Ferrari, Nike, LeBron James or Real Madrid are names that invite you to the world of sport from all sorts of gigantic billboards, adverts and numerous other marketing communication tools.

## **2. What makes sports marketing so distinctive?**

First of all, let us try to define the sports marketing concept. Before doing that, bare into consideration that sports and the marketing of sport are unique, and differentiate themselves from all the other products. For instance, buying a ticket to attend a game or paying a TV subscription to see your favorite team in action is not the same as marketing a telephone or chewing gum. So, an appropriate definition of sports marketing could sound like this (Beech & Chadwick, 2007: 4): an outgoing process in which contests with an uncertain outcome are staged, creating opportunities for the fulfillment of direct and indirect objectives among sport customers, sport businesses and other related organizations or individuals. A few considerations could be made regarding the above stated. Firstly, the usage of the term "uncertainty of outcome", which is considered (Beech & Chadwick, 2007:5) the most significant appeal of sport. People go to a hockey or tennis game because they do not know who the winner will be. If the outcome is predictable, people will lose interest (just remember how mind-numbing Formula 1 was during Michael Schumacher's domination). Secondly, although the teams that compete have a major role in creating drama and tension, note that

# **Additional value-added to consumers of cultural/artistic services in Cluj Napoca**

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**ABSTRACT** This paper tries to present the most important additional services provided by art institutions in Cluj, comparing them with those in Western countries. My research that helped me to come to the conclusions presented was mostly a documentary one. Among those services analysed are wardrobe, buffet, simultaneous translation, websites, programs to attract more spectators, book launch ect. Study of consumer behaviour has become a concern of specialists in marketing, as we learn how buyers choose their goods and services necessary to meet multiple needs, we must concentrate on the factors affecting their choice. That is why this area of research must be considered very important if a cultural institution wants to be successful. Also I tried to offer solutions based on my research that can improve the quality of these added values and also be helpful in the relation between the general public and the management of these institutions. This can ultimately lead to a more efficient planning and marketing strategies in the future regarding other services that can be considered as value – added to the main service, concerts, plays ect., which nowadays are not enough to draw mass crowds to cultural happenings.

## **1. Introduction**

Study of consumer behavior has become a concern of specialists in marketing for a long time, as we learn more about how buyers choose their goods and services to satisfy multiple needs, this helps us determine the factors affecting their choice. The manner in which consumers approach purchasing decisions knows a great diversity whereas their reactions are determined to a large extent to the problems they face in their living surroundings.

All the experts admit that in fact, consumer behavior can not be explained only by knowing the system of factors that act in close contact and interrelation, but how they act and especially the place and role they have in the system are viewed differently, therefore we encounter different classifications in the literature of these factors.

In the modern era economic factors are essential because they characterize macroeconomic purchasing capacity by the companies at a certain time, therefore consumer behavior training is a prerequisite. They directly affect the size and consumption trends.

Largely due to social norms, but not only, men and women buy different product types and use other criteria in their choice when they purchase a certain product or acquire a specific service. Based on identifying behavioral differences between sexes, some service providers, as those of cultural manner can address specific market segment. *Added Value* can be both *rational* and *emotional*. When we talk about rational added value, we have to mention trust, confidence, assurance, when about emotional added value we think about self-esteem, prestige, status, social acceptability. Key issue about Added Value are that the customer adds

# **What drives the Romanian bank market? A benchmarking approach**

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**ABSTRACT** The paper aims to investigate the competition image of Romanian bank market, applying a benchmarking technique between the two most significant local banks. The banks must focus on a continuous exploration of the best practices. The paper reveals a part of an extended research, focused on identifying the appropriate solutions in hypercompetitive financial markets.

## **1. Introduction**

The success of a company depends on the attractiveness of its market, and also on its advantages in comparison to main competitors. The company might have advantages in several fields: financial, human, commercial and technological. The competitiveness degree of each activity field allows the company to maintain a certain position in the market and also to create a targeting strategy based on its key activities.

Each company has to analyse the costs and the performances of each internal activity, as well as to focus on the continuous improvement of these activities. It also has to estimate the competitors' costs and performances. As the company will be able to develop certain activities better than its competitors, it will have a competitive advantage, which represents a starting point in achieving excellence for that particular field.

## **2. Literature review**

A way to comparatively present the situation of the company on the market at a given time supposes the assimilation of a benchmarking philosophy at the level of the company management (Dattakumar & Jagadeesh, 2003).

## **Work and Travel – factor of influence in students' personal branding**

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**ABSTRACT** Formal education is very important for the students. But nowadays, this is not enough. They need to access different extracurricular programs in order to develop specific skills that will be strong advantages in the recruitment process, and will help them develop their personal brand. Dan Schawbel: "The sooner you develop your brand, the more prepared you'll be for your successful future". Students also need to be aware from early on, about how to develop their personal brand. Having so many options to choose from, they need to know how each of them could influence their development. Work and Travel is an extracurricular program that contributes to the development of many skills that are important for building any strong personal brand of an economical student. The research will show which aspects from the Work and Travel program will help students develop later their personal brand. It will not create their brand, but it will influence them to think and develop skills that will use to create one later. The results of this research will be useful for students to know if this extracurricular program would be helpful for them in order to develop themselves and to add advantages to their personal brand.

### **1. Literature Review**

Personal branding, self-branding, self-positioning, or any other form of self –branding, under different names, was first mentioned in 1981 by Al Ries and Jack Trout, in their book entitled "Positioning: The Battle for your Mind". More specifically, in the 23<sup>rd</sup> chapter: "Positioning Yourself and Your Career – You can benefit by using positioning strategy to advance your own career. Key principle: Don't try to do everything yourself. Find a horse to ride."

The one that strengthens later the personal branding concept and gives the start for many researches in this domain, is Tom Peters, in 1997, through his article "The Brand Called YOU", from "The Fast Company" Magazine. Another guru in personal branding is considered to be Dan Schawbel, who writes about the history of personal branding, the impact of Internet, networking, etc. One of his most important books is "Me 2.0: Build a powerful Brand to Achieve Career Success". Many times, in the researches conducted in this domain, individuals are compared with a company (Beals, 2008, Beckwith , 2007, William, 1997), or products (Bence,2007). Others, accentuate more the emotional side of human being (Goleman,1995, Rampersad, 2009, Kaplan, 2009).

There are also people who don't agree with developing a personal brand. One of them would be Walt Crawford(2009), who thinks that branding ourselves we loose the specific in us, and "authentic personal brand is oxymoronic: You've given up your authenticity in order to define your personal brand ".

## **Bank Personnel Quality Dimensions**

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**ABSTRACT** Services are experiences and bank employees influence customers' experiences within bank units. Moreover, front-line employees are the link between customers and the institution and therefore, their attitude influences customers' perceptions of service quality. The authors attempt to get additional insight into employee quality dimensions by highlighting the relationships between them. For this purpose, a conceptual model of the determinants of bank-personnel quality and customers' satisfaction with bank territorial units is proposed and Principal Component Regression is performed to test the hypotheses. Our findings support the assumption that employee quality dimensions impact the perceived bank personnel quality which in turn influences customers' satisfaction with bank territorial units. From a theoretical perspective, our study adds value given the „grasp” into the relationship between employee quality dimensions. From a managerial perspective, several implications derive from our study. The results we obtained will help the bank management to design better strategies to improve bank personnel quality.

### **1. Introduction**

The importance of contact personnel in the banking and financial services sector is given, on the one hand by the aspects that differentiate services from products (the characteristics of financial services), and on the other hand by the need to consider employees as part of the provided service. Employees who interact with the bank's customers can be seen as a tangible element added to services which increases customers' confidence in the bank; put it differently, contact personnel help the bank in “creating” the services and therefore should be considered as a valuable resource that contributes to bank performance and offers a base for the future growth. Those employees that meet bank customers find themselves in a marketing role and need to conduct marketing activities that are intended to inform, attract and convince clients. Bank employees do not have only the task to sell services but also to contribute to the service's "creation" and to provide both the customer and the bank with appropriate messages. The expression "service's creation" refers to the obligation that the employee responsible for the presentation and the sale of financial



# **The consequences of the financial crisis on promotional policy of companies**

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**ABSTRACT** The extension of the economic - financial crisis and the beginning of the most severe financial recession of the market economy in Romania affected the promotional policies used by managers and administrators of companies, regardless of the field of activity, size or company turnover. Due to the economic recession, most managers have significantly reduced or even eliminated the financial resources that allocated for promoting the business, the products and the services provided by the company, without seriously considering the consequences that these actions would have on the economic-financial efficiency of the company's activity. Based on the study carried out, I wish to put forward a few specific proposals for developing the economic-financial efficiency of companies in the current age of crisis, by revising and improving promotional policies.

## **1. Introduction**

The first signs of the economic-financial crisis in the Romanian market economy emerged in September 2008; in 2009, the crisis intensified as a result of a political crisis which contributed to the economic downturn and, hence, to the revision of the management policy of private companies by its administrators and shareholders.

The promotional policies of companies play an important part in balancing the economic-financial activity of companies and, consequently, the job security of the employees of economic entities, whether the market economy is facing a financial crisis or simply does not aim to promote the supplied products and services in accordance with the existing solvent demand, the customs and the demands of the consumers.

## **2. Background**

Due to the economic-financial crisis and, thus, the economic recession that shook the Romanian market economy, the managers, administrators and shareholders of private sector companies were forced to revise the budget of private companies, particularly the financial resources allocated for the well functioning of economic entities on a medium or a long term.

The economics dictionary defines the economic recession as the general decline of the level of economic activity and economic deterioration, characterized by unemployment, devaluation, inflation, decrease of the living standards, consisting of two or more consecutive trimesters of negative economic growth (the gross domestic product is the macro-indicator).

In the case of the Romanian economy, the financial crisis was also negatively influenced by a serious political crisis due to political instability that was caused by a struggle for power and

# **The Online Marketing Mix of Hospitality Units From Harghita, Mureş and Covasna Counties, Romania: Two Exploratory Studies**

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**ABSTRACT** Since the Internet as a communication and distribution channel left its experimental state it has changed the approach to marketing communication. Considering the rapid growth of Romania's tourism market, small tourism enterprises such as guesthouses also began to keep up with the newest marketing communication trends. We conducted two exploratory studies.

a) Owners of hospitality units already have a competitive vision to some degree on 'good marketing' and putting related strategies in practice. In the first study, using an online questionnaire on a sample of N=65, we gathered data about the way hospitality units think about their marketing activity, the marketing tools they use, with an emphasis on online marketing tactics and tools.

b) In the second study we emphasize the importance of the use of online marketing tools in influencing the customer's decisional process in the case of Harghita county guesthouses, especially the website as a central hub in communicating the service and the brand.

## **1. Introduction: The role of online communication in the marketing mix of small tourism enterprises**

Since the Internet as a communication and distribution channel left its experimental state it has changed the approach to marketing communication. This new trend in marketing communication has a great impact on the way small businesses spend their marketing budgets (Constantinides, 2002; Kotler, 2005).

The information-intensive nature of the tourism industry suggests an important role for the Internet and web technology in the promotion and marketing of destinations and not only (Doolin, 2003).

In a time of constant change small businesses which have some or most of their target segments online it's crucial to learn, to innovate and to adapt to the new trends in online marketing communication (Kalyanam & McEntyre, 2002). In the case of a small business which is active in the field of tourism the need to choose properly the elements of the communication and promotion mix is even more important.

For a small tourism enterprise, such as a guesthouse the online marketing mix can contain the following tools in order to achieve its ultimate marketing goals: website, navigation and search tools (in case the website contains a critical amount of information), ordering tools (in the case of a hospitality unit website a *booking system*), recommendations and suggestions, usability and testing, dynamic pricing, banner ads, textads, sponsored links, outbound emails, viral marketing, e-coupons, affiliates, help desk, message boards, user ratings and reviews,

# **A Tourist Place Image: Biertan Fortified Church**

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**ABSTRACT** Knowing the image of a tourist place, it is much easier and efficient to plan and improve the site features. This paper is a survey on the visitors' image regarding a religious and historical sight of tourist interest in Transylvania. There was made a marketing research that shows the visitors' image of Biertan Fortified Church, Sibiu region, Romania, both at cognitive level and affective level, also showing four primary components for a holiday: transportation, accommodation, activities and attractions. The questionnaires were completed by tourists in the location, but also by people who already visited the place on other occasions. Following the processing and interpretation of results, the paper proposes a series of measures to improve the accessibility and quality of the services offered by this religious and historical sight of tourist interest in Transylvania.

## **1. Introduction**

Although Transylvania has a rich cultural and historical heritage, this legacy is not used to its fair value and a large number of residents and tourists are not aware of this potential. Here lie over 100 fortified churches, seven of them included in the UNESCO patrimony, Biertan being one of the best known and most visited churches. The studies have shown that the image of a destination plays an important role in the visitor's decision to visit it. This paper would like to determine the image of the Biertan Fortified Church from the visitor's point of view, to suggest measures that improve the quality of services offered by this destination so that the Biertan model can be used for other fortified churches from Transylvania in future researches. The paper will further analyze the concept of "destination image", enumerate the research objectives, make a short presentation of the tourist site – Biertan Fortified Church, analyze the methodology and the research results, develop new suggestions for improving the image and show the findings and future researches.

## **2. Destination Image**

In 1965, Reynolds described the image forming as being the development of a model built on a few impressions chosen from a lot of information. In the case of the destination image, this information is composed of the opinions of others (family, friends), the media (magazine articles, radio and television), literature (travel books, brochures) (Echtner & Ritchie, 2003). If this image is positive and the tourist visits the place, the initial image will be affected and modified through their information and experiences.

Over the years, the term "destination image" was defined in different ways by researchers. But I believe that the most complete and accurate definition was developed by Crompton (1979) "Sum of beliefs, ideas and impressions that a person has of a destination", his paper's objective being to measure the image of Mexico in different States of the United States (Echtner & Ritchie, 2003).

# Mobile Networking for Mobile Marketing (mNet-4-mMk)

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**ABSTRACT** Mobile Networking (*mNet*) is linked to Mobile Marketing (mMk) activities through a new technology - Web 2.0. *mNet* uses online resources and techniques such as: social networks, professional business networks, virtual communities, affiliate partnerships, newsletters/RSS, blogging, twittering, chat and messenger, e-groups and more. mN builds relations, develops new ideas and creates opportunities based on BUILD-SHARE-CONTRIBUTE concept, sharing and accessing data-information-knowledge, ideas-innovation-inventions, good-or-bad practices, communication-collaboration-comfort. As a low cost marketing form, mN takes 95% commitment and time, 5% money. We have designed Mobile Networking in 4 levels: junk networking (JN), passive networking (PN), multilevel networking (MLN), empathy networking (EN). They are based on the strategies and techniques used today and the overall vision of the MobiNet - mobile networker. Mobile Networking uses mobile profiles on multiple and versatile networks creating the unique and personal mobile professional, technical, academic composite image, which is the virtual identity card (vIC).

## 1. Introduction to Mobile Networking concept

Networks are structures formed by *interconnected nodes*. The nodes can be individuals, companies or groups while the connections can be based on friendship, business, interests, location, age, education, goals etc Networks gain a new perspective by the development of mobile networks, introducing Internet platforms in order to let people to build - share – communicate – contribute in a better and efficient way.

Using the mobile networks the *MobiNet* (mobile networker) can access data and information; transform information into knowledge; share the knowledge-experience-ideas easier and more quickly. Overall, mobile networks boost collaboration and innovation, making people more competitive.

Today, the most popular online networks are: Facebook, Hi5, Twitter, Myspace, Badoo, Bebo, Blogster, Friendster, Google Buzz, LinkedIn, Delicious, My Journal, Netlog, Research Gate, TalkBizNow, StumbleUpon, Tagged, Xing etc. Different sites are presenting the lists and remarks concerning the social networking sites, for example: <http://qualitypoint.blogspot.com/2010/05/list-of-social-networking-sites.html>.