Universitatea BABEŞ-BOLYAI

Facultatea de Ştiinţe Economice şi Gestiunea Afacerilor

The proceedings of the International Conference

MARKETING – FROM INFORMATION TO DECISION

7th Edition

7-8 November, 2014

Cluj-Napoca
ROMANIA

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Shopping Centers' Customer Behavior in Romania

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ABSTRACT Retail trade has experienced a spectacular development during the last decade in Romania. The same trend applies to the shopping center sector, which has started the development process later than the modern retail formats. Intensive growth of the shopping centers in Romania began in 2006, the market soon reaching maturity in terms of cumulative sales area. However, in terms of the ability to segment and identify buyers' preferences, shopping center managers are still in early stages. Also, the Romanian literature in this area is limited. Few articles deal with shopping centers, and often a singular subject is approached from only one researcher's point of view. This research aims to fill a gap in the literature. It deals with the selection of shopping centers and shopping behavior within them. Thus, the aim of this paper is twofold. On the one hand it identifies the personal factors influencing the selection of a shopping center as a shopping destination, and on the other hand it describes the main coordinates of a shopping center visit.

Keywords: shopping center; shopping behavior; attraction factors, shopping destination choice

JEL classification: M30, M31, M39

1. Introduction

Purchases can no longer be identified with the mere act of buying (Solomon *et al.*, 2006: 320). A retail culture has emerged in recent years, and shopping has become a form of entertainment or a hobby. As a result, the buyer is no longer seen merely as passive receiver, but also as an active co-creator of the retail stores and shopping centers assortment of goods. Shopping center marketers should consider shopping location selection process to understand how to better satisfy their buyers, so they choose, return and become loyal customers of their shopping center (Micu, 2013).

Little is known about the opinions and attitudes of the Romanian consumers towards the characteristics and marketing practices of shopping centers. Thus, it is extremely useful for both managers of shopping centers or investors and for researchers to identify visiting and purchasing habits of shopping centers' customers, and the factors that attract them to specific shopping destinations, and those that determine their satisfaction and loyalty. This research is part of a trend that tries to characterize the emerging market of shopping centers in Romania. Some other authors that have approached this issue are for Romania are Coca *et al.* (2013) and Swoboda *et al.* (2014), while for other countries: Ahmed *et al.* (2007) for Malaysia, Cheben and Hudackova (2010) for the Czech Republic, Khare (2011) for the Indian market, Chen *et al*. (2012) and Xian and Chang (2014) for the Chinese one. As the first research on shopper behavior in shopping centers in Cluj-Napoca, other interesting aspects to be revealed

Message Strategies in Effective Advertisements

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ABSTRACT Many researchers have tried to establish a link between the content and effectiveness of advertisements. They are focused mainly on television commercials and on their effect on target audience. The objective of this paper is to identify message strategy types in effective print advertisements, awarded by Effie in Romania in the period 2007-2013. A total 230 campaigns and 448 printed ads were selected and analyzed in order to discover specific patterns of effective advertising. The study found, that 31 different advertising appeals were used in effective advertisements, but among them dominant were the unique and practical product features. There is no general format of effective messages, different product categories use different message strategies. However, one can observe an overuse of transformational messages, even in the case of products such as financial services which are recommended to be advertised by means of informational messages. Message strategies developed by local and multinational agencies do not show significant differences.

Keywords: message strategies, appeals, effective advertising, EFFIE

JEL Classification: M37

1. Introduction

The topic of effective advertising has been discussed in the literature since the 60s (Sheth, 1974). Advertisers have tried for many years to discover what makes the advertising effective having in mind either their content (Laskey, Fox and Crsk, 1995; Frazer, Sheenan and Patti, 2002), their creative elements (Kover, Goldberg and James, 1995; Ahmad and Mahmood, 2011) or the media expenditure (Van den Putte, 2009). Kover *et al.* (1995) defines effectiveness in advertising the ability of a commercial to elicit interest in purchase or use (Kover, Goldberg and James, 1995). The worldwide known advertisement effectiveness award is EFFIE established in 1968 in the United States. The EFFIE-awarded campaigns represent a very good database to study advertising effectiveness elements.

It is no doubt that there is a relationship between the advertising message strategies and their effectiveness (Frazer, Sheenan and Patti, 2002). The advertising message strategy alternatives have concerned specialists since the 80s (Frazer, 1983). Based on Frazer's (1983) creative strategy alternatives, Laskey (1989) developed a typology of main message strategies for

Telecom Market Segmentation Using the K-mean Algorithm and the Recency, Frequency and Monetary Value

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ABSTRACT Mobile phone operators aim to retain a large number of loyal subscribers. As a consequence, Relationship Marketing should have a central role in their activity. Operators seek to offer quality services, which cater to their subscribers' needs, so that subscribers not only show a great degree of satisfaction, but also return to the same provider in the future. To design and implement successful strategies and marketing programmes, these companies must segment their customers according to relevant criteria. The present study aims at identifying the different subscriber segments within a subscriber database according to the time of the last recharge, the recharge frequency over 2 months and the associated value. Thus, although the RFM model variables were used to segment the database, the K-mean cluster analysis was also employed. To estimate cluster internal cohesion, the Average Sum of Squares Error Indicator was used. Furthermore, to determine the difference between clusters, an ANOVA and a Tukey post-hoc test were used. The analyses returned a result of eight subscriber segments, each showing evidence of a different behaviour. The results are relevant for Telecom companies in that they must adapt their marketing strategies and programmes to their subscribers' needs.

Keywords: customer segmentation, relationship marketing, telecommunication, RFM model, K-mean algorithm.

JEL Classification: M31

1. Introduction

For a long time, companies have focused on selling large amounts of goods and services without really accounting for their subscribers (Baea *et al*., 2005). This perspective is no longer suitable for the current market and, as a result, companies must focus not only on attracting new subscribers, but also and especially on creating and developing quality-based relationships with them (Chang and Tsai, 2011). Companies must make significant efforts to understand subscribers' needs and behaviour to develop adequate strategies to retain active subscribers and regain lost subscribers, especially because it is easier and cheaper to keep and increase current subscriber value than attract new subscribers from competitors (Tsiptsis and Chorianopoulos, 2009). In fact, in Telecom companies, turning regular subscribers into loyal

Gaining Insights into Factors Affecting Customer Loyalty in Direct Selling

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ABSTRACT The purpose of the research presented in this paper is to identify the factors that influence the customers to repeat the purchase for cosmetics products from the direct selling companies. The present research followed three phases: (1) investigating consumers 'experiences in buying cosmetics products through direct selling and building items for the quantitative research instrument (using the depth interview); (2) testing the questionnaire (using a quantitative survey); (3) identifying factors affecting customers loyalty (using a quantitative survey and exploratory factor analysis). The main factors affecting customer loyalty identified in this research are: satisfaction, brand trust, trust in the salesperson and habit. Those factors were selected to be included in a future customer loyalty model.

Keywords: loyalty, satisfaction, trust, habit, qualitative research

JEL Classification: M31

1. Introduction

Direct selling is a research area not enough investigated (Alturas *et al.*, 2005; Musa, 2005), which explains the small number of customer loyalty studies for this type of selling. Direct selling, as an instrument of relational marketing, creates a customized long term relation between the involved parts in a specific transaction. From all types of direct marketing, direct selling furthest braces the connection between the company and the customers through the agency of selling force. This is an advantage that must be exploited specially due to the popularity of this selling technique on the Romanian cosmetics market.

According to WFDSA / The European Direct Selling Association Report (2011), cosmetics products are in the top of the best sold products on direct selling market, with a share of 36%. The second place is occupied by household goods and home care products (22%) (http://www.rodsa.ro/ro/centru-de-presa/rapoarte-si-informatii/raport-2011/).

The research of factors affecting customer satisfaction and customer loyalty has gained a lot of attention and interest during the last two decades (Oliver, 1999; Szymanski and Henard, 2001). Marketing researchers and practitioners are all agree about the importance of understanding and maintaining customer loyalty in growing the financial performance of the companies. Loyalty can also be studied in connection with the perception of credibility, as credibility is particularly important thru its influence on consumers' behaviour, especially in the online environment (Tugulea, 2014).

There are though different opinions regarding identifying process and the influence of loyalty determinants. The most common factors identified in marketing literature are: satisfaction, trust, involvement and switch costs (Mittal and Kamakura, 2001; Bamfo, 2003; Pirc, 2008; Too *et al.*, 2001; Sui and Baloglu, 2003). The managers deal with the problem of choosing key determinants when they plan marketing loyalty campaigns for their actual clients. For

Theatres as Nonprofit Organisations – an Important Framework for Cultural Marketers

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ABSTRACT Introducing marketing in cultural field seems to be a tool for improving the activity in cultural sector. It is known that marketers define their strategies in a particular way considering the main activities performed by an institution, either commercial or nonprofit. A primary condition for marketers consists in mastering the issues of the institution in which they operate. These issues refer to the legal status of the institution, the legislative framework that gives them the right to implement the proper strategies, the main objectives of the institution, the products or services performed by the institution and the market competition. This paper offers a better understanding of the concept of non-profit organisation, the theatres being included in this category, within a literature review concerning the activity of those organisations.

Keywords: Theatres, nonprofit organisations, marketing of cultural services, laws relating to Romanian theatres, competition for theatres, funding in theatres

JEL Classification: M31

1. Introduction

Literature review in marketing specifies and submits the specific marketing strategies adopted by a nonprofit organisation, compared with a commercial one. This paper proposes several arguments in order to define the status of the theatres from the point of view of being or not a nonprofit organisations. Two aspects are to be analysed in this respect: first, it must be established the legal framework for theatres by analysing the laws and all the statements concerning the legal status of theatres. Second, it is important to analyse the main objectives and the activities performed by theatres for their public, the market competition and, also, the fundraising items for the theatres.

First part of the paper comprises issues related to legal framework for both theatres and nonprofit organizations. The importance and the role played in the society by theatres and nonprofit organizations are also revealed. Afterwards follows a short presentation of the cultural offer available in the market, the main competitors and the fundraising strategies performed by theatres.The methodology is based on the description of legal framework and the role played in the society for both theatres and nonprofit organisations and then discussions relating the issues presented are proposed.

Antecedents of the Loyalty of Religious Service Consumers

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ABSTRACT Till now, Religious Marketing was not given the proper attention in the Orthodox Church, although the need for adopting new strategies in order to hark back to foreground is obvious. The purpose of the Marketing of Religious Services is to ensure the loyalty of the consumers of religious services, who have become more and more unstable and inconsistent, with expectations that are higher and higher and more difficult to meet. The Orthodox Church doesn't want superficial relations with its believers. In order to attract, keep and reclaim lost orthodox believers, religious marketing focuses on the introduction of the behavioural criteria such as: the perceived value, satisfaction, loyalty, the image of the Orthodox Church. This article is a theoretical study which defines and explains these concepts and demonstrates their practicability in the Religious Marketing. In this context, consumer satisfaction of religious services becomes a priority and forces the Orthodox Church to focus on providing quality services that can boost its image.

Keywords: Orthodox Church, consumer of religious services, loyalty, satisfaction, perceived value, image.

JEL Classification: J28, D12, Z12, D46, M38, M39

1. Introduction

Within the Orthodox Church it has been felt the need to reinvigorate the methods of approaching the orthodox believer. In this context, the Marketing of Religious Services appeared. It focuses on the consumer of religious services as an individual.

Religious Marketing is the decision making process of what should and should not be done so that the Church fulfils its mission (Shawchuck *et al.*, 1992). Mainly, the Marketing of Religious Services is concerned about the true spiritual, moral and emotional needs of the consumers of religious services and looks to satisfy them by elaborating a personalized offer. Therefore, the attention of religious marketing researchers does not focus on the content and benefits of religious services (which in any case represent an unhinged truth), but on the understanding of consumer needs. Thus, it is created a culture of the consumer of religious services, centered on their psychological sensitivity.

This study is a conceptual approach that, on one hand, takes into account the relational marketing literature that has been written so far and, on the other hand, aims to take the relational marketing principles and apply them in the religious field. Thus, the study is focusing on those decisive factors in triggering those favorable circumstances which determines the establishment of a long term relation between the Orthodox Church and its believers. The decisive factors that will be defined and analyzed in this study are: the perceived value, the image of the Orthodox Church, satisfaction and loyalty.

The Importance of Infrastructure and Tourism Facilities in Case of Religious Sites. Evidence from Romania

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ABSTRACT In the context of society secularization and modernization, increasing consumers demand and diversifying consumption habits, examining the degree of importance given to infrastructures and tourism facilities in the context of the oldest form of tourism, pilgrimage, represents a necessary and, at the same time, difficult step. In addition, specialty literature is extremely poor in this respect. It is the duty of those responsible with the management of religious site and local authorities to ensure a satisfying traveling experience from every point of view. Romania knows an unprecedented development of religious sites and the constant increase of the number of visitors to monasteries, the main pilgrimage locations in Romania. This paper aims to evaluate the importance given to tourism facilities and non-specific services when deciding to travel to a religious site. To this end, a survey using the questionnaire was performed, on a sample of more than 1500 respondents who were asked to evaluate a number of 10 attributes regarding the importance of tourism facilities within monastic settlements. The results revealed a low to medium importance of the most important elements of tourism infrastructure, from the set evaluated detaching the importance given to the souvenir shop. The analysis of the influences of socio-demographic variables on the opinions expressed revealed a series of significant differences, which allowed grouping the respondents in different groups or distinct segments. This approach can be useful for managers of religious sites in the context of adapting to the needs and the wishes of the visitors, a good management of experiences for different categories of visitors. The results are relevant also for tour operators on the market of religious tourism, in creating and promoting offers as close as possible to the expectations of the target market segments, but also the local community in the perspective of using religious tourism or pilgrimages as a tool for local development.

Keywords: religious sites; tourism facilities; travel motivations; Romanian monasteries.

JEL Classification: M10, M21, R10

1. Introduction

The role of religion as a catalyst for a stream of rising tourism demand as well as the importance of identifying and disseminating best practices to encourage sustainable management and development of religious tourism destinations are concerns taken into consideration also by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2008, 2014). In the context of tourism research, to identify the motivations why people travel to places with religious significance and the influencing factors are a significant problem (Abbate and Di Nuovo, 2012). Although the phenomenon of tourism to religious sites is increasing worldwide,

The GAP Model Applied to Dental Healthcare Services

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ABSTRACT In the field of healthcare services, performances quality measurement presents special particularities due to the nature of healthcare services and the needs underlying the consumption of these services. Scientific literature regarding quality measurement sanctioned the Gap Model and SERVQUAL scale as efficient instruments that are able to offer an overview to this problem.The present paper proposes an adaptation of SERVQUAL scale designed to measure the quality of dental healthcare services provided in a dental clinic. Thus, with the help of five different research, taking the steps specific to the Gap model methodology, authors developed an adapted version of the original SERVQUAL scale, called SERVQUAL Dent and have applied it in the context of extended Gap model.The results led to the identification of gaps and the possibility to draw a global picture of the dental healthcare services quality provided within the dental clinic used as a location for research. In the end, we bring into question the benefits of using and adapting the SERVQUAL scale and Gap model for different contexts regarding the measurement of services quality. At the same time, we are drawing attention on the limitations or disadvantages raised by experts in connection with the use of the two instruments and we propose new research directions regarding the approached field – healthcare services quality measurement.

Keywords: Healthcare services quality, SERVQUAL scale, the Gap model, customer satisfaction, perceptions, attitudes

JEL Classification: M31

1. Introduction

Measuring services quality represents a complex task for any organization. Because of the services characteristics (intangibility, inseparability, perishability and variability), the way that customers can perceive quality can be very subjective, and the dynamic of perceptions is very high in comparison with the same perceptions related with products consumption. To find universally valid standard that can express dimensions of customers' experience during the services delivery process it is almost impossible (Plăiaş, Radomir and Nistor, 2012: 407).

More than that, in the field of healthcare services, perception regarding quality is developed taking into account primarily the functional dimension of quality and not the technical one because of the lack of customer's information regarding medical practice.

The Demand for Romanian Organic Agricultural and Food Products on European Markets

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ABSTRACT The aim of this study represents the identification of the demand for Romanian organic agricultural and food products that exists on the European market. The attention is focused on countries where German language is the official one, such as: Germany, Austria and Switzerland. The main objectives of the study are: the identification of foreign companies that purchased organic products from Romania and of the specific type which they bought, the reasons of their purchase, the satisfaction of the foreign companies regarding quality, price, bureaucracy, accreditation certificates and the global satisfaction of the Romanian organic agricultural and food products. In addition, the quantity of the import that the three countries made in the last year, the types of products that German countries want to purchase in the future, the reasons why there is still a lack of interest in our goods, the amount of money that a foreign enterprise would invest in Romanian products in one year, opinions and suggestions regarding our organic products are topics that will be approached in this study.

Keywords: Romania, organic, agriculture, food, products, export, German countries

JEL classification: M31

1. Introduction

The market of agricultural and food products is increasingly targeted by the entrepreneurs from all over the world. This fact happens mostly due to the economic benefits that result from this field. Moreover, these advantages grow if a company from a developing country decides to export their products in a more developed one. Considering this, it can be suggested that Romania has an opportunity that cannot be neglected. In addition, the FiBL – IFOAM researches from 2014 assert that the evolution of organic agricultural and food market not only evolved, but it also presented a tendency of recording a further growth. Due to this fact, the opportunity should be taken into consideration by those who want to enjoy the long-term economic benefits.

Romania has a high agricultural potential, due to the existing agricultural area of approximately 55,9% (13,3 mil ha) out of the whole surface of the country. Furthermore, although fertilizers were applied on a surface of 7.092.256 ha before 2010, a large area where the chemical substances were not used remains. This could be certificated as an organic surface (ANPM, 2010).

Individual Antecedents of Employee's Customer Orientation in Public Services

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ABSTRACT The aim of this research is to analyse individual antecedents of employee customer orientation in public services marketing. First, we will review the theory of customer orientation at individual level on the basis of which hypotheses have been generated. Then, sample and results are presented and finally, the conclusions will be presented. Results of hypothesis testing confirm the positive direct effects of the employees customer-mindset, of intrinsic motivation and of employee-job fit on customer orientation at individual level.

Keywords: marketing concept, customer orientation, customer-centred mindset, employee's customer-oriented behaviour, public services marketing

JEL Classification: M14, M30, M31

1. Introduction

Customer orientation as a manifestation of the concept of marketing at the level of individual employee was subject to sustained research efforts in the last three decades. This interest has been stimulated by the consideration of customer orientation as a resource that can positively influence commitment and job performance of frontline employees (Brown *et al.*, 2002 Donavan, Brown and Mowen, 2004).

2. Customer orientation at individual level

Customer orientation and market orientation have in common the concept of marketing. However, research on customer orientation at individual level and on market orientation at organizational level have taken the same turn (Zablah, 2012). Still, their common origin in the concept of marketing leads to the idea that the two constructs represent the same phenomenon (Kelley, 1992; Saxe and Weitz, 1982) at different analysis levels i.e. organisational and individual. Since the 1950s, the importance of customers for business survival has been understood and build around this idea the marketing concept which is focused on the notion that satisfying customer's needs and desires is the cornerstone of business performance (Drucker, 1954; McKitterick, 1957; Felton, 1959; Levitt, 1960; Kotler, 1967; McNamara, 1972).

In marketing research, it is necessary to define the level at which variables are studied: firm level or individual level (Iacobucci and Ostrom, 1996). Macintosh (2007) noted that such a definition has not been clearly done in the study of marketing relationships that can arise in the form of interpersonal relationships and individual-firm relationships. Research on customer orientation has been done at both organisational level (Kennedy, Goolsby and

The Emergence and Development of the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

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ABSTRACT This paper aims to provide an overview on the emergence and development of the technology acceptance model (TAM) by Fred Davis by summarizing its evolution, its key applications, extensions, limitations and criticisms addressed to him. This model is an example of how users accept and use technology, for which researchers have different opinions about its theoretical assumptions and practical effectiveness. This article presents the theory and the technology acceptance models that have been developed based on this theory (TAM2, TAM3 and UTAUT). The focus is predominantly on constructs models and hypotheses to be tested in order to validate their use in different contexts.

Keywords: technology, models and theories, using the system.

JEL Classification: O32, Q55

1. Introduction

Theories and models of acceptance of new technology helps create an appropriate theoretical framework and experimentation that can demonstrate appropriate use of technology and systems. The literature contains several studies on the application of technology acceptance model, including synthesis and meta-analysis. These studies mainly analyze users' perceptions of the determinants of technology acceptance and causal relationships between these factors and behavioral intentions to use. In Romania among those who used the technology acceptance models include Balog and Pribeanu (2009, 2010) and Balog (2012, 2013).

In this article is presented and analyzed theory of technology acceptance (TAM) and models that have been developed based on this theory. Therefore, the first section describes the technology acceptance model (TAM), section 2 briefly describes how they were developed and validated perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use of the TAM model. In section 3 will be presented developments and major extensions TAM model proposed in the original TAM model. The paper concludes with limitations and criticisms of the technology acceptance model (TAM).

2. Technology acceptance model (TAM)

Technology acceptance model (TAM) is an information systems theory developed in order to make predictions about technology acceptance. This model suggests that when users are presented with a new technology, a number of factors influence their decision about how and when they will use. TAM is based on the causal relationship belief - attitude - intention - behavior within the theory of reasoned action (TRA).

Assessing Perceived Corporate Social Responsibility: A Literature Review

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ABSTRACT In the contemporary market context, characterized by increasing competition and a rapidly changing marketing environment, corporate social responsibility (CSR) and its perception among consumers and the general public can significantly impact business performance, customer loyalty, employee attachment and other important business sustainability factors. The current paper is part of a larger study directed at analyzing the impact of perceived CSR on customer loyalty. Considering this larger study's purpose, it is important that the theories and methodologies related to assessing CSR be reviewed. This paper focuses on consumers' perceptions of CSR, by reviewing some of the most relevant scientific approaches regarding the methodologies that can be applied when perceived CSR among customers must be assessed.

Keywords: CSR, perceptions, stakeholders, assessment

JEL Classification: M31

1. Introduction

The concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR) has gained great importance during the last decades both within practitioners and scholars, as CSR has been proven to generate several benefits to companies. As the European Commission (2009) states, CSR implementation and communication can increase or improve customer satisfaction and loyalty, employee motivation and productivity, company, brand or product reputation, cost savings, as well as relations with the local community and public authorities. Researchers have scientifically proved that CSR investments can improve employee attraction and retention (Kim and Park, 2011), as well as relationships with customers and other primary stakeholders (Peloza and Shang, 2011; Gogozan *et al.*, 2012). Previous research has shown that consumers are more and more interested in CSR, while most of consumers believe that companies should engage in social initiatives and that firms benefit from these activities (Becker-Olsen, Cudmore and Hill, 2006). Research has also shown that consumers take CSR into account when evaluating companies and/or when purchasing decisions are made (Brown and Dacin 1997; Sen and Bhattacharya 2001).

The increasing academic interest in this concept has also led to the development of divergent definitions of CSR, and the proposition of several methodologies to measure stakeholder perceptions of this management strategy (Pérez and Bosque, 2013). Moreover, Öberseder et al (2013) argue that most consumers cannot fully comprehend the overarching concept of CSR, as the complexity of the concept likely is difficult for them to understand and to assess. Despite the expanding literature on the subject, both practitioners and scholars are still uncertain when it comes to measuring consumers' perceptions of a company's CSR efforts,

An Empirical Investigation upon the Values Appreciated by Consumers Regarding the Automotive Industry

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ABSTRACT The principal goal of the research is finding out what are the values within the automotive industry that the car users, payers and buyers look for. The concept of "value" represents a subject that is very discussed and commented within the speciality literature and this is the reason why managers try to add to their products and services greater value to offer to their customers. In order to achieve this goal, we need to know what value is and deeply understand its nature, the importance of developing a higher value through your business than your competitors and the primary role that is played by researching consumer behavior. These are very important elements that lead to value creating strategies. Regarding the methodology, we used as a research instrument the questionnaire and as a means of contact we appealed to the "face-to-face" survey, which gave us the possibility to enhance the relationship created between the interviewer and the interviewee. In order to reach the purpose of the investigation, we will analyze the following: a) for the users: the values of performance, social and emotional, b) for the payers: the price value, the value of credit and financing, c) for the buyers: the values of service, comfort and personalization. Literature confirms that values are subjective; they differ from person to person. The class of the car, its safety, equipment, amenities and fuel consumption are considered assumptions of performance and are very important for the respondents. The study suggests creating a business model on the automotive segment, keeping into consideration the values searched by the clients. A correct positioning on a well established segment can be more efficient that general standardised approach with different types of messages.

Keywords: value, customer expectations, automobile, emotional value, the value of performance

JEL Classification: M 31

1. Introduction

Good knowledge of consumer behaviour can prove to be highly important for companies in outlining their products to meet the consumers' needs and expectations. To that extent, thorough studies should be carried out on target segments of population, so that the best marketing decisions – for the companies and consumers alike – can be made. Factors such as personal preferences, budget limitations or quality and quantity can help companies to

The Sales Force of Multi-Level Marketing Companies in the Context of the Marketing Communications Mix. Case Study: Avon Cosmetics Romania

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ABSTRACT Multi-level marketing (MLM) companies have gained an important position in the worldwide direct selling industry, even if there are still questionable issues about them. These companies heavily rely on their sales force and therefore make significant efforts to support their activity. Thus, knowing that one important benefit of the marketing communications mix comes from the synergy of its components, MLM companies make important steps towards the adoption of integrated marketing communications (IMC). In this context, the purpose of the paper is to analyse the sales force of MLM companies' sales force in the context of the marketing communications mix. The proposed case study is based on both secondary and primary information, with the aim to characterise the activity of Avon sales representatives and to identify how they see the components of Avon's IMC in terms of use and support to them. The primary research consists of two empirical studies, a qualitative one (an interview with a team coordinator) and a quantitative one (we sample Avon's sales representatives by means of a questionnaire, with 97 of filled in questionnaires being valid). The main results of this study refer to the characteristics of the questioned Avon sales representatives as well as to which components of Avon's marketing communications mix are seen as useful by the sales representatives. The major conclusions reveal that Avon sales representatives use to a large or very large extent the company's web site, the electronic brochure and the customised packages along with samples. Moreover, Avon's catalogue (online and printed) and online marketing (content marketing and Facebook page) are considered by the questioned sales representatives as being the most useful tools for their activities, followed by TV ads, sponsorship and concerts.

Keywords: multi-level marketing, sales force, marketing communications mix, Romania

JEL Classification: M31, L22, L81

1. Introduction

The direct selling industry, as part of the non-store retail trade, has known a continuous development, with the volume of this market reaching 18, 768.12 million Euros in 2013 (the growth rate compared to last year's is of 25.75% - The European Direct Selling Association). Within this industry, multi-level marketing (MLM) companies have gained an important

How Moderating Effects Predict Recycling Behaviour? An Examination of Situational Factors and Satisfaction with the Local Council

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ABSTRACT This article presents relevant empirical evidence concerning recycling behaviour. Specifically, it shows how Romanian people adopt positive attitudes toward recycling and strong personal norms in this respect, but more often they do not translate their good principles into corresponding behaviour. Based on *The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB)*, the study proposes a conceptual framework including either direct or moderating influencing factors in terms of recycling behaviour. The findings show that consumers' intention to recycle is deeply related to attitude, personal and social norms and perceived behavioural control. Moreover, there are situational factors as a function of defence mechanisms that come to moderate the impact of social norms and perceived behavioural control over the recycling behaviour. The findings come to shed light on the situation in which certain situational factors may change relationships between variables and may give them other facet and significance.

Keywords: Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), moderating effects, recycling behaviour.

JEL Classification: M31, M38

1. Introduction

Sustainable consumption today plays a crucial role in the high-growth economies of many countries. There are relevant potential strategies for marketers interested in advancing a fundamental attitudinal and behavioural change toward sustainable behaviour (Carrigan *et al.*, 2011; Putzer *et al,*, 2013). Consuming differently, wisely and thoughtfully (Martin and Schouten, 2012) is a step toward sustainability and a good starting point to address environmental issues. Although people have been supporting the idea of sustainability for a long time (Pop *et al.*, 2014), their inconsistent and even conflicting consumption behaviour remains a concern. Concerning sustainability, recycling behaviour may be considered a key player in a modern economy worldwide. Despite the relevant increase in the share of EU municipal waste recycled (42% in 2012), the public awareness in terms of this process is still

The Timing of New-Product Announcements in the Cinematic Film Industry - Relating Pre-Launch Consumer Behaviour to the Financial Success of Movies

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ABSTRACT New-Product Announcements are used extensively in the movie industry and as such this is a very interesting area to study the behaviour of both companies and consumers in terms of their interaction through new-product announcements. In this project the top 200 highest grossing movies over a two-year period were studied in terms of the interest shown by consumers pre-launch and the level of financial success of the movie over its in-theatre lifetime. Particularly a distinction was made in terms of the timing of consumer pre-launch interest. Using the website Wikipedia as a credible source of product information, it was found that Wikipedia use started to rise exponentially in the final two weeks before movie launch. Moreover, possible predictive correlation between movie success over its lifetime and pre-announcement interest was found to increase in the final 5 weeks before launch, from 0.5 to 0.71 two weeks before launch, whereas it stabilized in the final pre-launch weeks and did not get higher than 0.75 even 3 weeks after release. This indicates that movie success may be best predicted 2 weeks ahead of launch (using pre-announcement information search data).

Keywords: New Product Announcement, Movie Industry, Marketing Communication, Marketing Decision Making

JEL Classification: M31

1. Introduction

Pre-announcing new products long before their actual release date is regarded as a prominent pre-launch marketing communications tactic which can be found in many industries. The movie industry represents a distinctive example where forthcoming movies are pre-announced well in advance in order to generate media publicity and exposure.

In terms of new-product awareness, research shows that consumers turn to the internet to search for information on new products and as such the use of a popular website such as Wikipedia can be used as an indicator of consumer interest in products which may not even have been launched on the market yet. The volume of Wikipedia use may thus be used as an indactor of consumer interest and can then be used to (partly) predict the future success of a movie.

In this paper it will be analysed how and when pre-launch interest as measured through Wikipedia is related to subsequent movie success, where particular attention is paid to the best timing of measurement in order to predict movie success which is important from a

Corporate Reputation, Image and Identity: Conceptual Approaches

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ABSTRACT Corporate reputation is a valuable resource that companies can use in order to obtain both financial and non-financial benefits. Given its importance for business practice, reputation has made the subject of many scientific theoretical and research papers. Nevertheless, several scholars have argued that there is still no agreement with regard to the terminology used to define the concept. Furthermore, many scholars have noted the confusion between reputation and two related concepts (image and identity). Hence, it is not surprising that research in recent years aimed to clarify these two important issues. This paper briefly presents the findings reported by researchers who conducted an extended theoretical research with the purpose to shed light on the meanings associated with image, identity and reputation. Similarities and dissimilarities between approaches are noted in order to emphasize the issues shared by most researchers.

Keywords: corporate reputation, corporate image, corporate identity

JEL Classification: G39, M30, M31

1. Introduction

Corporate reputation has gained the interest of both academicians and business practitioners (Alniacik *et al.*, 2012; Eberl, 2010; Helm, 2005; Feldman *et al.*, 2014; Zhang, 2009) given its major influence on the success of companies (Alniacik *et al.*, 2012; Maden *et al.*, 2012). It is now appreciated that a solid reputation creates competitive advantages (Eberl, 2010; Feldman *et al.*, 2014; Ponzi *et al.*, 2011; Raithel *et al.*, 2010; Vidaver-Cohen, 2007; Walker, 2010) both in hostile environments (Feldman *et al.*, 2014) and during crisis (Feldman *et al.*, 2014; Shamma, 2012). Moreover, researchers assert that reputation, as an intangible resource of a company, is "difficult to imitate and impossible to substitute" (Jing and Lei, 2007: 3278). Hence, reputation is more valuable than "conventional physical and financial indicators" (Alniacik *et al.*, 2012: 3) and it can result in retaining old customers and attracting new ones (Schwaiger, 2004; Wang *et al.*, 2006; Zhang, 2009) and in reduced "uncertainty about future organizational performance" (Vidaver-Cohen, 2007: 280).

Donating Behaviour in the Non-profit Marketing Context: An Empirical Study Based on the Identity Theory Model

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ABSTRACT Non-profit marketing research experienced a large expansion in the last decades. With the rise of the third sector in the post-communist countries, in the last two decades, the non-profit sector experienced an increasing demand in reliable theories and techniques regarding resource involved in achieving organizational objectives and missions. Marketing, social and al behaviour theories were adopted in analysing influential variables on stakeholders' motivation in supportive behaviours towards non-profit organizations. Donating behaviour demands long term relations built by organization based on values and activities stakeholders identify to. The purpose of the empirical research article was to identify relevant influencing variables on supportive behaviour of donating in Romania based on individual, situational and organizational factors set off in non-profit marketing research. The results revealed that confidence in non-profit organizations, identification to the local community, social class perceived belonging and gender has relevant influence on donating.

Keywords: non-profit marketing, Identity Theory, donating behaviour

Jel Classification: L31, L33, M31

1. Introduction

Non-profit sectors are in a continuous expansion in the last two decades in Romania, playing an essential role in social services, leisure activities, educational, professional, environmental and all kind of non-lucrative sectors.

Being part of one of post-communist countries, Romanian non-profit organizations encountered the problem of the lack of reliable techniques and theories used in the identification the supportive behaviour of donors, volunteers and other types of stakeholders.

Non-profit marketing researchers accord importance to the theories of relational exchange and Identity Theory in explaining supportive behaviour and model theoretical constructs, and practical techniques applicable in non-profit organizations. Identity theory and relational exchange theory arise from different research areas as sociology and organizational behaviour.

The research conducted in non-profit marketing regarding supportive behaviour (German, 1997) and volunteerism (Laverie and McDonald, 2007) revealed the use of related domains theories in constructing explanatory models. Identity Salience Theory (German, 1997, Laviere and Mcdonald) and relational marketing theory (Arnett, German and Hunt, 2003) were applied by researchers, revealing influential factors in supportive behaviour to non-profit organizations' activities.

The Use of Aesthetics through Visual Style as a Marketing Tool – A Literature Review

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ABSTRACT The purpose of this article is to present how the elements of the visual style appeared in the literature and in marketing, the modifications suffered during time and how are used nowadays as a marketing instrument. Also, it describes the main associations that people made with colors (both: worldwide and in Romania), the impact of the cultural background, the meanings of lines and shapes and the methods used in creating and evaluating them. The findings are based on an extensive literature review and, in the first part of the article, show that beside the fact that the use of colors is a reduced cost method of communication in marketing, it can helps you in various situations (such as coloring the product, package, atmospherics, etc.) and can be turned into a competitive advantage; in the second part, the identified information demonstrates that beside the complex process that you have to know when creating a form, its marketing applications are easy to be used. Last, but not least, it also describes the factors that can influence these elements and change their meanings. This article is drawn on a wide range of sources, it demonstrates the significance of the visual style as a marketing tool and it offers an insight on the things a company should know before starting to use it.

Keywords: visual style, consumer, aesthetics, marketing tool

JEL Classification: M30, M31, M39

1. Introduction

Living in a world with an increased level of imitation in what concerns the technical functions of a product, aesthetics have a word to say. More, the first element of aesthetics that it is perceived by the consumer is the visual one. So, it is the one that is more analyzed and discussed. The visual style is present at all products that exist on the market, even if in some cases it is not so obvious.

According to this, it has become a decisive factor in the buying decision when the products are similar in terms of price and functionality (Creusman and Schoormans, 2005). Also, it is said that the aspect of a product can influence consumers' perceptions (Hagtvedt and Patrick, 2008; Hoegg *et al*. 2010) and can play a key role in a successful product consumption (Bloch, 1995; Page and Herr, 2002).

Such an example is presented by Audi, who stated that the visual style contributes in a percent up to 60 in the buying decision of the consumer who wants to purchase a car (Kreuzbauer and Malter, 2005). So, when talking about cars, where the technical characteristics are less different between companies, incorporating in your strategy the aesthetic factor leads in gaining a competitive advantage (Warell *et al*, 2006).

Assessment of Commercial Websites' Credibility – an Instrumental Research

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ABSTRACT This study is part of a larger research. The purpose of the entire research was to study the credibility's dimensions of commercial Websites, expecting to identify supplementary dimensions comparing to similar studies. This study used students' perception on Websites' credibility, a specific online buyers target in Romania.The purpose of the qualitative research presented in this paper was to identify and create items for the research instrument in the quantitative research. The method was the focus-group technique and it was intended to generically identify elements of the commercial Websites' credibility.
Results consist in two instruments that assess the credibility of commercial Websites.

Keywords: commercial Website, credibility, online information, qualitative research, instrumental research

JEL classification: M31, M39

1. Introduction

Consumer behaviour is subjective and unpredictable, so it is a real challenge to predict the most important factors that can convince consumers to become loyal and maintain this behaviour. Over time, managers understood the importance of loyal customers and begun to focus on customer relationship strategies in order to keep them loyal to their brands, stores, services or products (Bobalca, 2014).

The information on the Internet can be delivered in various variants: Websites, e-mails, messages posted in online communities. As companies heavily use such information instruments, the online source credibility became a major concern.

„Credible information” was first defined by de Fogg and Tseng (1999) as the information that can be trusted, believed to be secure. In order to understand the construct of credibility, it should be known that credibility is a matter of perception. People simultaneously evaluate multiple dimensions when it comes to evaluate credibility. The two key components to be evaluated are honesty and expertise (Stanford *et al*., 2002).

According to Eisend (2006), there are various credibility dimensions in different studies coordinated so far. This aspect raises issues of research method procedures in credibility concept and dimensions studies. In particular, Eisend (2006) mentions methodological issues, generation, selection and grouping items issues, factor analysis procedure issues and factor interpretation issues.

The purpose of the qualitative research presented in this paper was to identify and create items for the research instrument in the quantitative research.