

THE EVALUATION OF ATTITUDES AND OPINIONS OF RETAIL COMPANIES MANAGERS IN BRASOV REGARDING THE USE OF MARKETING INSTRUMENTS

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As a consequence of the present economic crisis situation, identifying new means of improving the activity of retail companies is a must. Marketing is considered to be one of the most profitable investments, its results having a positive influence on long term, but in Romania, marketing in the true meaning of the concept is only used by companies which can afford it, which have sufficient funds. A small shop chain or a company with only one selling point consider marketing a luxury that is not worth the effort. The present work emphasizes companies with marketing activity, as well as the marketing instruments used by retailers and the marketing intermediaries, if they exist.

Keywords: economic crisis; retail; marketing instruments; information.

JEL code: M.

1. Introduction

In order to have a clearer opinion on the present situation of the Brasov retail market, a quantitative marketing research was done amongst retail companies. At the basis of this research stood the statement or hypothesis that retail companies' managers use, in most cases, adequate marketing instruments. Using these instruments, as well as using marketing, can lead to a diminution of the negative effects of the economic crisis that our country is going through. The quantitative research was done after a qualitative research, a focus-group amongst retail companies' managers. The results of the focus-group imposed a secondary research, the quantitative one, briefly presented in this work, in order to obtain a better observation and understanding of the phenomena on the retail market. A profile of the consumer was also drawn. When it comes to this profile, all subjects characterized the consumer by the means of one word. Therefore, the consumer's complete profile is: snob; pretentious; undecided; and susceptible to influence. In other words, the profile of today's client is as follows: clients want high quality, low prices and very short terms of delivery. This profile makes thing even harder for retailers, given the context they confront with. The focus-group lead to obtaining a set of hypotheses that set the basis for the quantitative research. One of the main hypotheses is that marketing is highly important for all companies. The usage of marketing leads to improving activity on the markets. The importance given to marketing instruments, strategies and plans emphasizes the fact that in our country marketing activity has become a primary condition for the success of any company.

From the aspects of the quantitative research, are underlined through the present work only the most important ones that allow drawing a clear opinion on the retail activity in Brasov.

2. Methodological considerations regarding sampling

The quantitative marketing research was done on a representative sample of 384 subjects, with an error of $\pm 5\%$. The exactness of the sample was assured by giving equal chances to all individuals of taking part to the research. This leads to a minimization of the subjective elements in the selection process, by using the principle of random draw.

2.1. The population and its size

The analyzed population is formed by all active retail firms in Brasov. From the selected companies were interviewed only General Managers, Executive Managers or Marketing Managers, in the case of companies that have marketing departments. The structure of the population is as follows:

Table1. Structure of active companies registered in Brasov²⁹⁹

Class	Lei	No.	Retail form	No.
Small	0 – 250.000 lei	2648 (75.77%)	Food	1239 (46.7%)
			Non-food	1409 (53.3%)
Average	250.001 – 800.000 lei	500 (14.3%)	Food	248 (49.6%)
			Non-food	252 (50.4%)
Large	More than 800.000 lei	347 (9.93%)	Food	178 (51.3%)
			Non-food	169 (48.7%)
Total		3495		3495

²⁹⁹ Camera de Comerţ şi Industrie Braşov, 2009.

2.2. Choosing the method of sampling

Proportionally random multistage sampling was used in order to create the sample, taking under consideration 2 aspects: the size of companies and the retail form.

Table2. Structure of the sample by turnover and retail form³⁰⁰

Class	Lei	No.	Retail form	No.
Small	0 – 250.000 lei	291 (75.8%)	Food	133 (45.7%)
			Non-food	158 (54.3%)
Average	250.001 – 800.000 lei	54 (14.1%)	Food	27 (50%)
			Non-food	27 (50%)
Large	More than 800.000 lei	39 (10.2%)	Food	20 (51.3%)
			Non-food	19 (48.7%)
Total		384		384

3. Presenting relevant questions in the research

The research had a questionnaire of 41 questions. Out of these, the most relevant ones are presented:

How much is your company interested in gathering marketing information in order to conceive marketing actions?

Table3. Frequency of preoccupation towards gathering marketing information

How much is your company interested in gathering marketing information in order to conceive marketing actions?

	Frequency	Percent
Valid very little	19	4,9
2	24	6,3
3	40	10,4
4	63	16,4
5	97	25,3
very interested	141	36,7
Total	384	100,0

From the results we may see that 4.9% of the subjects claim that their companies are very little interested in gathering marketing information in order to conceive marketing actions, while 36.7% are very interested in gathering information. So, we may state that retail companies in Brasov that have marketing departments collect marketing information from the market. The information is used in conceiving marketing actions and in developing activities per se.

Do you own a clients data base, at the moment?

Table4. Frequency of owning a clients data base

Do you own a clients data base, at the moment?

	Frequency	Percent
Valid no	95	24,7
yes	289	75,3
Total	384	100,0

From all analyzed companies 24.7% do not own a clients data base, while the rest of 75.3% do. This means that retail companies in Brasov are interested in knowing information about their clients, most retailers owning data bases of their own clients. The preoccupation towards owning clients data bases emphasizes the importance given

300 Camera de Comerț și Industrie Brașov, 2009.

to having devoted clients. Having under consideration the present situation of economic crisis, the development of the market is slow down, and having devoted clients is an essential condition for surviving on the market.

How often do you appeal to information in mass-media in order to know what happens on the market you act?

Table5. Frequency of informing from mass-media

How often do you appeal to information in mass-media in order to know what happens on the market you act?

	Frequency	Percent
Valid daily	315	82,0
weekly	42	10,9
monthly	23	6,0
do not use this kind of information	4	1,0
Total	384	100,0

82% of the analyzed companies appeal daily to information in mass-media in order to know what happens on the market they act, 10.9% appeal weekly, 6% appeal monthly, while only 1% of the companies do not use that kind of information. From here results that companies are permanently interested in the events on the market they act, mass-media being an important resource of information. Retail companies in Brasov are preoccupied in staying informed because of the possible threats that need to be foreseen, as well as the opportunities that can show up. Any information connected to the domain of retail can lead to a development of companies' activity, despite the economic crisis. Knowing the market is vital, given the strong competition.

How much are your suppliers willing to give you useful marketing information?

Table6. Intensity of the information exchange between suppliers and retailers

How much are your suppliers willing to give you useful marketing information?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid very little	121	31.5	31.5	31.5
2	95	24.7	24.7	56.3
3	37	9.6	9.6	65.9
4	70	18.2	18.2	84.1
very interested	61	15.9	15.9	100.0
Total	384	100.0	100.0	
Total	384	100.0		

A lack of communication is noticeable between suppliers and retailers, as the retailers state. A very significant percentage of subjects, more precisely 31.5%, claim that their suppliers are not so interested in sharing useful marketing information, while only 15.95% of the subjects claim that their suppliers are very interested in this matter. The lack of efficient communication between business partners, in our case suppliers-retailers, is not a beneficial to neither of them when it comes to the activity on the market, but it only sets barriers in the way of developing and improving partnership relations.

Please evaluate the influence of the economic crisis on your market activity:

Table7. The intensity of the crisis effects on the activity of retailers on Brasov market

Please evaluate the influence of the economic crisis on your market activity:

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	very much	155	40,4
	much	113	29,4
	little	67	17,4
	very little	35	9,1
	does not affect the activity of the company	14	3,6
	Total	384	100,0

40.4% of the subjects consider that the present financial-economic crisis can affect the activity of their companies very much; 29.4% of the subjects consider that the crisis will affect their activity significantly, while 17.4% of the subjects state that the crisis will have a little influence on their companies and 9.1% go for very little influence, and only 3.6% state that the crisis will not affect the activity of their companies.

How much does marketing can help getting through the present economic crisis?

Table8. The importance of marketing in getting through the economic crisis

How much does marketing can help getting through the present economic crisis?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	very little	19	4.9	4.9	4.9
	2	28	7.3	7.3	12.2
	3	43	11.2	11.2	23.4
	4	109	28.4	28.4	51.8
	very much	185	48.2	48.2	100.0
	Total	384	100.0	100.0	
Total	384	100.0			

4.9% of the subjects consider that marketing can help very little in getting through the present economic crisis, while 39.3% of the subjects claim that it can help very much. It is visible that most of the subjects consider marketing very useful in diminishing the negative effects of the economic crisis. This aspect will lead to a development of marketing activity at the level of retail companies in Brasov, in the nearby future.

4. Conclusions

The present situation on the retail market in Brasov is to become more and more difficult for most companies in the domain. Staying informed regarding the events on the market as well as the struggle to have devoted clients certify that retailers fight not for supremacy, but for survival. Marketing instruments, such as data basis, marketing strategies, and so on, used by retailers confirm the hypothesis referring to the importance given to marketing in developing the activity of any company. Most managers of retail companies in Brasov claim that by an efficient marketing activity the negative effects of the economic crisis can be diminished and even eliminated. The insufficient communication and cooperation regarding information exchange between business partners, such as suppliers and retailers, in a real threat to the development of the activity of retailers in Brasov.

The impossibility of an extensive expansion as a result of the financial blockage and the deceleration of the demand impose an intensive development of retailers. Therefore, the fight is not only for finding new clients, but also for having the devotion of the actual clients. In the context of economic crisis, retailers who know how to better use marketing instruments and limited resources that they possess will gain the confidence of clients as well as market share. Nowadays, the focus is on services that lead to winning clients' devotion.

The results of the present study can be used as a source of information for all retailers in Brasov and not only, regarding the phenomena on the local retail market. Educating retailers in the direction of using marketing instruments and marketing per se can lead to a diminution of the crisis' effects.

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