

THE ROLE OF THE SALES TECHNIQUES IN THE MARKETING ACTIVITY OF THE COMPANIES IN BUCHAREST

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In a time of economic crisis there can be easily observed the difficulty in finding managerial viable solutions to support the business at least at a level considered satisfactory in terms of economic performance. The managers will try to adopt marketing strategies able to drive to the preservation of the competitive position held in the reference market and to achieve goals. But this cannot be achieved without a pertinent analysis of the situation of both enterprise and business environment. It is also necessary to assess the marketing skills at its disposal, those specific capabilities needed to conduct a profitable operation. All the marketing department's efforts will be directed to implement sales techniques capable of giving to the promoted products specific advantages and thus to achieve the marketing goals proposed.

In the present study will be presented just a few issues considered important for creating a view about the behavior of the enterprises in the adoption of sales promotion techniques. The analysis of the information continued in the direction of understanding, by managers and marketing executives, the necessity of the implementation of some coherent communication approaches centered on sale promoting techniques. The analysis of the results obtained after the initiation of communication processes, which is based on sales promotion techniques, represents a significant component of the marketing audit initiated by the enterprises.

The strategic market orientation of the studied companies could be analysed also through some existing correlations between the position held in the reference market and the frequency of the use of the sales promotion techniques as well as between the level of competition and the frequency of the use of these techniques. Attracting and retaining customers over a long period of time, differentiation from competitive products are just some of the main objectives pursued by these companies. . Regardless of the place occupied in the reference market, it is absolutely necessary to implement specific types of promotional techniques to achieve the mentioned objectives.

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From this perspective, the importance of decisions made in the marketing department can be critical to the business concerned, which will seek the best solutions to overcome the crisis. As a result, there frequently arises a series of questions that can be structured as follows:

- Will the adoption and implementation of some techniques of promoting the sales in a time of economic crisis succeed to differentiate the offer of the company from that of other competitors in the same market segment?
- Which would be the most efficient sales promotion techniques, capable of fulfilling the communicational objectives arisen by the marketing ones?

- How much would the budget be for sales promotion techniques in case of an obvious economic crisis?

For all these questions were sought and found answers through quantitative marketing research initiated in the year 2010, among the 70 companies with headquarters in Bucharest. The collection, data analysis and interpretation were conducted during March-June of that year, based on a predetermined questionnaire with 19 questions. The observation unit was the company in Bucharest and the research unit was the marketing director or the person responsible for marketing activities within the enterprise.

In the sample there were comprised the following business areas: services (including telecommunications, insurance, marketing and advertising), with the highest share (51.42), trade with a share of 37.14%, production and distribution of industrial equipments, having a weight of 11.42% out of the total sample.

The limitations of this quantitative marketing research took into account the sample's representativeness, but if it is assumed that the analysed companies from Bucharest are in the top of the best Romanian enterprises in what marketing implementation concerns, then these results can be analysed qualitatively and in relation to the national situation.

In the present study will be presented just a few issues considered important for creating a view about the behavior of the enterprises in the adoption of sales promotion techniques as pertinent solution to support a competitive position in the market even in times of economic crisis.

What was considered to be relevant was the information resulted from the research on identifying the existing competitive level in a given field of activity and the position held by the enterprise in the reference market. Thus, 67.14% of the respondents indicated the existence of more than 20 competitors in the same market segment, while the positions held by national enterprises are concentrated in a proportion of 47.14% below the 11th place.

It is noteworthy the fact that 71.43% of the interviewed persons from the managerial level believed that in their field there exists a very strong competition, while 25.71% think that competition is rather strong. Only 1.43% of the respondents indicated a lack of competition. This information reflects the level of appraisal regarding the existing competition and it may indicate a trend towards knowing the competition thus embracing competitive strategies that will lead at least to the preservation of the competitive position held by that time.

The analysis of the information continued in the direction of understanding, by managers and marketing executives, the necessity of the implementation of some coherent communication approaches centered on sale promoting techniques showed a rate of 92.86% of the respondents who had adopted such techniques, while only 7.14% indicated the absence of such techniques from the communicational steps previously initiated. The importance of sales promotion techniques adoption was supported by a significant percentage of the respondents and namely: 61.43% considered it as being very important, 32.86% important and only 5.71% did give no relevant importance to the application of the sales promotion techniques.

The sales promotion techniques (table nr. 1) have been adopted to achieve clear communicational objectives, such as:

Table 1. The objectives of sales promotion techniques

Communicational objectives	Frequency of the responses - absolute-	Frequency of the responses - relative-
The increase in the sales volume for the promoted service or product	55	78,57%
The stimulation of the demand for the promoted	42	60%

Communicational objectives	Frequency of the responses - absolute-	Frequency of the responses - relative-
service or product		
Consumers loyalty	49	70%
Countering the actions of the competitors	17	24,29%
Influencing the consumers' behaviour	19	27,14%
Strengthening the company's image among the target audience	45	64,29%

From the point of view of the categories of the sales promotion techniques which were most frequently adopted by the enterprises, there were the following answers registered:

Table 2. The sales promotion techniques which were most frequently used by the enterprises from Bucharest

Sales promotion techniques	Frequency of the responses - absolute-	Frequency of the responses - relative-
Special offer	50	71,43%
Free offer	19	27,14%
Launching price	29	41,43%
Bundle sales	22	31,43%
Discount voucher	15	21,43%
Sample offering	14	20%
Tasting	8	11,43%
Demonstrations	20	28,57%
Promotional gifts	31	44,29%
Promotional contests	23	32,86%
Merchandising	15	21,43%
The advertising at the point of sale	27	38,57%

There can be noticed (table nr. 2) the preponderant focus on: special offers, promotional gifts, launching price in case of new products, the advert at the point of sale etc.

The analysis of the results obtained after the initiation of communication processes, which is based on sales promotion techniques, represents a significant component of the marketing audit initiated by the enterprises.

A conclusion of these internal researches was in accordance with the satisfaction of the clients in regard with The adoption of the sales promotion techniques. Approximately 92% of the enterprises have graded a high percent of satisfaction among their own clients in regard with the variety of promotional techniques adopted.

This positive result could be considered a positive signal in the direction of the coherent implementation of these type of techniques with the goal of maintaining the competitive position of the organizations.

Table nr. 3: Categories of sales promotion techniques that will be adopted next year

Sales promotion techniques	The frequency of the responses - absolute -	The frequency of the responses - relative -
Price reductions	44	62,86%
Presents and promotional premiums	3	45,71%
Contests and promotional games	20	28,57%
Free testing of the products	16	22,86%
Merchandising	15	21,43%
Advertising at the place of sale	26	37,14%

There can be noticed from the table, (table nr. 3) the orientation of the clients towards price reductions and promotional presents, techniques that drive customer interest towards the promoted products due to the easily perceived benefits. In addition, it was observed the fact that 74.29% of the enterprises of the study understood the necessity of increasing the budget of sales promotion techniques, while the other 25.71% preferred to maintain the same budget for the next year. What is also remarkable is the fact that none of the companies would consider reducing the budget even taking into account the negative economic situation.

Unfortunately, from a marketing theory standpoint, the specialists of these enterprises do not succeed to match correctly the sales promotion techniques with the implemented strategy. Therefore, 61.43% of the respondents consider that the sales promotion techniques have a direct connection with the marketing strategy of the organization and only 11.43% of the companies establish a direct relation of subordination towards a communication strategy. The enterprises which could not indicate any correlation between the techniques and the strategy were in proportion of only 11.43%.

The strategic market orientation of the studied companies could be analysed also through some existing correlations between the position held in the reference market and the frequency, (table nr. 4) of the use of the sales promotion techniques as well as between the level of competition and the frequency of the use of these techniques.

Table nr.4 The frequency of the use of the sales promotion techniques in accordance with the position held at the national level

Position held at the national level	The frequency of the use of the sales promotion techniques					Total	
	Frequently		Occasionally		Rarely		
	Absolute	Relative	Absolute	Relative	Absolut	Absolute	Relative
First position	11	15,72 %	5	7,15%	0	16	22,87%
Positions 2-3	14	20%	7	10%	0	21	30%
Positions 4-10	10	14,28%	4	5,71%	0	14	19,99%
< Position 11	15	21,43%	4	5,71%	0	19	27,14%
Total	50	71,43%	20	28,57%	0	70	100%

It is noted that in the case of the enterprises located in a lower position than the number 11 in the reference market, managers have indicated in proportion of 21.43% the frequent use of merchandising techniques, showing their concern for their existing competence in their field activity and for the adoption of techniques aimed to differentiate their product from other competing products. Moreover, the values obtained were placed relatively close to the situation of the places 2-3 and those ranked lower than 11, followed by those located in the first place, and that of places 4-10. No respondent indicated the rare use of sales promotion techniques.

Also, the influence of competition, (table nr. 5), present in marketing activities focused on the adoption of sales promotion techniques. In other words, the companies studied have the ability to identify the existing level of competition in their field and to find solutions to move towards promotion techniques that lead to achieving a competitive position.

Table 5: The influence of level of the competition on the frequency of use of sales promotion techniques

The level of the competition	The frequency of the use of sales promotion techniques					Total	
	Frequently		Occasionally		Rarely		
Very strong	37	52,86 %	13	18,57%	0	50	71,43%
Rather strong	12	17,14%	6	8,59%	0	18	25,73%
Rather weak	0	0	1	1,42%	0	1	1,42 %
Weak	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Inexistent	1	1,42%	0	0	0	1	1,42%
Total	50	71,42%	20	28,58%	0	70	100%

A very strong competition causes the adoption of common merchandising techniques aimed at increasing the sales volume of the products promoted. It could be noticed that 70% of the businesses that operate in an area marked by very strong competition and rather strong one understand the need and role of sales promotion techniques in the marketing strategy.

Attracting and retaining customers over a long period of time, differentiation from competitive products are just some of the main objectives pursued by these companies. Regardless of the place occupied in the reference market, it is absolutely necessary to implement specific types of promotional techniques to achieve the mentioned objectives. Thus, discounts, promotional gifts, advertising at point of sale, etc.. are techniques that can respond quickly to these requirements. An appropriate budget allocation for the effective application of these techniques shows the management maturity of the enterprises with marketing vision. Rapid exit from an unfavorable economic crisis requires decision making and communication planning, targeted to support sales promotion techniques.

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