

THE MARKETING MENTALITY WITHIN THE ORGANIZATION - A COMPARATIVE STUDY BETWEEN COMPANIES AND NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS IN ROMANIA

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Abstract: *In contemporary Marketing theory and practice, debates regarding the role and place of the homonymous activity within the company are frequent. The development of a marketing mentality, as specialists state, allows the implementation of a marketing vision in all the organization's departments, regardless of the activities performed. The economic theory enunciates all the more the existence of a marketing doctrine urged to ensure the methodological frame of the organization regarding market and consumer orientation. Based upon two selective exploratory market research performed among the major distributors of electro-technical materials and electro-technical solutions integrators, respectively among some public faculties' management the authors want to examine the existence and the decision makers' responsiveness regarding the implementation of a marketing mentality in one's organization. The conclusions concern both business environment and academic non-profit organizations' activity. The connection between the marketing mentality as an essential premise for the development of the entrepreneurial university concept is also emphasized.*

Keywords: marketing mentality; empathic thinking; qualitative research; marketing doctrine; entrepreneurial university.

JEL classification: M 31

1. Introduction

Contemporary Marketing results in a multitude of facets, which gives the characteristic of a multidimensional concept. In this context the Marketing represents: a *modern management concept* for guiding organizations which practice it towards the market and the consumer; suggestive in this regard is the definition attributed to the famous German professor Heribert Meffert, which is also the title of one of his works of reference: "Marketing = market - oriented business management" [Meffert, 2000];

- a) *A set of methods and techniques* of research and action on the market, such as to maximize the results of the company which uses them;
- b) *A function of the company*, which has its location in a separate department of the organization [Pop, 2008, pp.57-66];
- c) *A management science*, which features a conceptual and structural framework, a research methodology and its own language [Florescu, 1987, p. 65].

Consequently, approaching the domain's issues, both theoretical and of practical use, requires a comprehensive approach to all mechanisms which characterize the marketing decision.

2. Theoretical Considerations

The theory and practice of marketing are in a perpetual confrontation with the major processes of the contemporary world, like: globalization, hyper competition or the effects of “digital” revolution. Under the conditions imposed by the imperative of sustainable development of the society, the marketers’ interest turn to inter- and trans-disciplinary oriented domains. Among them (without claiming an exhaustive list) we note:

- *The customer relationship management* in the intensive development of business opportunities [Kumar, Shah, 2009, pp.119-136; Irit, Barak, 2011, pp. 24-38; Schulze, Schiera, Wiesel, 2012, pp. 17-32; Homburg, Wilcek, Hahn, 2014, pp. 58-77; Gonzales, Claro, Palmatier, 2014, pp. 76-94];
- *Fostering creativity in the research - development - innovation (RDI) of new products in a partnership system* [Tellis, Prabhn, Chandy, 2009, pp. 3-23; Roberts, 2011, pp. 23-25; Troye, Supphellen, 2012, pp.33-46; Coviello, Joseph, 2012, pp. 87-104; Rubera, Kirca, 2012, pp. 130-147];
- The development of the *brand’s capitalized value* - as a synthesizer element of the organization’s performances [Keller et al., 2008, pp. 42-56; Mizik, Jacobson, 2009, pp. 137-153; Krasnikov, Mishra, Orozco, 2009, pp. 154-166; Strizhakova, Coutler, Price, 2011, pp. 342-35; Torelli et al., 2012, pp. 92-108];
- *The Marketing developed in computer mediated electronic media* [Trusov, Bucklin, Panwels, 2009, pp. 90-102; Friedrich et al., 2009, pp. 54-61; Kozinets et al., 2010, pp. 71-89; Yadav, Pavlou, 2014, pp. 20-40];
- *The extension of specific marketing activity in non-profit areas and at macro and world-economics* [Kotler, Gertner, 2002, pp. 249-261; Humphreys, 2010, pp. 1-19; Gertner, 2011, pp. 91-106];
- *The use of marketing-controlling and the development of early warning systems* in grounding the decision making process in the field [Zerres, Zerres (editors), 2006, pp. 91-108; Wufka, 2007, pp. 91-116; Homburg, Artz, Wieseke, 2012, pp. 56-77].

With the implementation of strategic thinking in marketing, theoreticians and practitioners of the field are facing new challenges. This requires a rethinking of the phenomena and processes occurring in the market in a *holistic view* [Kotler, Dipak, Maesincee, 2002, 50-53]. Consequently, the marketing action must be projected on medium and long term in a systematic approach, in order to involve in the activities’ exchange process all the stakeholders involved in the business. This generates, on the one hand, the direct involvement of an increasing number of actors in the exchange process, and on the other, enhances the relationships between them.

3. The Marketing Mentality - key concept for market success of the company

For the marketing practitioner – the marketer – it has become essential to clarify the marketing’s position in the company [Verhoef, Leeflang, 2009, pp. 14-37] and thus to prove and strengthen his role in the decision making process, whether we are talking about a corporation or a small or medium sized company. This imperative arises acutely, because as early as the first decade of the XXI century an increasing number of studies [McGoven et al., 2004, pp. 70-80; Malter, Webster, Ganesan, 2005, pp. 35-43; Nath, Mahajan, 2008, pp.65-81] indicate a weakening of the role of the marketing function within companies, especially in the case of corporations, where the position of other heads of departments (accounting, finance, etc.) became much stronger than the one of the marketing director, and marketing and management issues enjoy much less attention in the board. Regaining the *integrating function* position by marketing among all the other enterprise’s functions [Weis, 2001, p. 31] cannot be achieved without much clearer demarcation of functions and duties, of responsibilities and tasks assigned to marketers in the company. Such an

approach is required to start with the underlining of *the main features of the marketer*. In our opinion the three most important characteristics would be the following [Schebesch, Pop, 2013, pp. 389-394]:

1° *empathic thinking and action*, capable of directing marketing decisions towards the requirements, tastes and *actual* preferences of the demand's carriers;

2° *rational creativity* in conducting research – development - innovation (RDI) for benefits (goods, materials, services, ideas, rights), which respond to market demand also in terms of socio-economic sustainable development;

3° *partnership spirit* for all carried out marketing activities, both internally - in collaboration with other departments of the company - and especially outside it, in relation to business stakeholders and, firstly, consumers.

The live implementation of such traits of the marketing specialist implies a more direct and responsible collaboration between the industry's theorists and practitioners. In the Romanian economy such a goal situates itself as a first order necessity in order to directly support the effort of economic recovery. Both academics and practitioners must understand the marketing activity's significance as an *investment and not a cost* [Pop, 2008, pp. 57-66]. The result of such a change of position translates into *promoting mid and long term strategic marketing thinking and action* in the company. On the other hand, the domain's decision makers must suffer a mentality change related to the marketing action's significance in the company. As early as the last decades of the twentieth century, the *Romanian school of marketing* initiated and led by Professor C. Florescu [Pop, 2011, pp. 322-330] supported the idea of *disseminating the marketing mentality* in all functional and technical departments of the enterprise [Florescu, 1987, pp. 34-35; 54]. The claiming of this development direction was encouraged by the fact that the marketing theory has materialized as an "open, dynamic ..., structural, organizational type" theory [Florescu, 1997, p.29].

The best recent marketing literature resumes this idea and endorses even the existence of a *marketing doctrine*, which starts to be defined in the company [Challagalla, Murtha, Jaworski, 2014, pp. 4-20; Kumar, 2015, pp. 1-9].

Based on the exponential growth of the information resources which a company has available in the "digital" economy, the problem of shaping common principles at company level arises more urgent, regarding the development and maintenance of relations with the market to which all the company's departments relate to. These principles should provide both *decisional flexibility* at functional level for the department, in relation to the specific circumstances of each market, but which is based on *common values and norms*, as a result of experience gained in time by the company. Such a *marketing mentality* does not refer to the department's specific activities, but to a certain *way of thinking and action*, common to all departments in the company, through which - taking advantage of past performances – are prepared and occur all the company's actions (whether they occur in the RDI, organizational, human resources, accounting or controlling department) in order to fully capitalize it for the company's market success. In order to transfer the marketing mentality into action the enterprise needs specific transforming mechanisms of past experiences, regarding its relation with the market, into knowledge and tools usable in practice. If, for example, the financial and accounting department will assume the marketing mentality, when assessing the financial resources required for a future participation of the company at an international fair, it will be regarded as an *investment* and not as a cost. The direct consequence would rebound on the higher time period for the return on investment. Likewise, if the market's preparation for receiving a new product, before launching, would also be considered also an investment, that expense could be recovered over the entire life cycle of the goods in question. Such a marketing mentality should attach to the calculation sheet not only net profit for the new product, but also the qualitative gains for the company's overall activity (increased brand awareness under

which the product is launched, improving the company's image, increasing of customer's attachment to the company, etc.).

4. Research Methodology

To test how the *marketing activity in Romania* is perceived there have been conducted two exploratory selective market research studies. The *objectives* of these direct investigations were to capture the *meaning, the role and the place* of the marketing activity within the organization and the existence/ absence of a shared vision on it. The main focus of the researchers was on identifying the premises likely to lead to the *creation and development of a marketing mentality* among the managers of the investigated organizations. For the proper progress of the two studies, the necessary steps for designing a specific marketing research were followed [Lefter, 2004, pp. 20-32; Plăiaș (eds.), 2008, pp.76-83; Cătoiu (eds.), 2009, pp. 117-139; Schebesch, 2009, pp. 165-169; Wilson, 2012, pp. 18-47].

The first exploratory research was conducted among managers in the industry and trade of electrical products, which operate in Romania. The second exploratory research was performed among senior management (deans, vice-deans) of some public faculties in our country. The purpose of these two selective market researches studies, conducted by *survey method* using *in-depth face to face interview technique* and having the *conversation guide as a tool*, was to capture the elements set as objectives of the research, and – also – to ensure the conditions for a *comparative analysis* of the results. The research was conducted during March and April 2015.

Both research studies set about validating the following hypotheses:

H1 = Most organizations' senior management give multiple meanings to the marketing concept;

H2 = Most interviewees appreciate the importance of marketing for the organization as very important or important.

H3 = There is no focus of the marketing activity in a specific department of the researched institutions, as most interviewees claim.

H4 = The subordination of the marketing activity is attributed to various decision makers in the organization, without a precise focus on one in particular

H5 = The meaning assigned to the concept of marketing mentality is unclear to most interviewees

H6 = The representatives of the faculties have a clearer understanding of the concept of marketing doctrine than those of companies' management in the electrical field.

The results are reflected synthetic by:

4.1. Study 1

Performed among 25 senior managers in the electrical field, the study has brought together the main electric materials distributors and the electric solutions integrators in Romania, with an annual turnover between 10 and 150 Mil. Euro. The geographical division of the investigated companies (eleven from Transylvania, seven from Muntenia, four from Moldavia, two from Banat and one from Dobrogea) has ensured an adequate representativeness at a national profile.

The meaning attributed to the concept of marketing has allowed a wide range of answers. The option "a domain activity" and, respectively "a managerial science" were formulated by all respondents: the majority of the interviewees have included in the answer options as "a function of the organization", respectively "a set of tools and techniques". The first reaction that comes to mind for the respondents when confronted with this concept lead them towards the "spectacular" side of the marketing activity, as given by the publicity,

public relations, image or company's notoriety. The various response choices lead us to the idea of versatility given to the marketing concept's meaning, which allows us to state that *Hypotheses H1 is confirmed*.

Two thirds of the respondents claim that marketing is "very important" and a quarter consider it "important" for the whole activity of the company they manage. The declarative character of this affirmation *confirms hypothesis H2*, although the in depth discussion reveals serious deficiencies regarding respondents' knowledge of the regional market's (south-eastern) coordinates and a low attention granted to the marketing promotion of companies' performances represented in the research on the adjacent markets in Romania.

The location of the marketing activity is placed by two thirds of the interviewees in the commercial or marketing department, but only a half of them consider that it should be subordinated to the general manager, which *confirms hypotheses H3*. The opinion of a third of the respondents is very interesting, who claim that the marketing activity should have a *trans-departmental character*. We do not share – based on the domain's theory and on the international experience [Malter, Webster, Ganesan, 2005, pp. 35-43; Verhoef, Leeflang, 2009, pp. 14-37; Homburg, Wilczek, Hahn, 2014, pp. 58-77] – this opinion, nevertheless it is very important if it were to influence the thinking manner of the decision makers from the field. A *trans-departmental marketing thinking* is the only premise for the development of the *marketing mentality* among the entire company's staff. Based upon these views we appreciate that *hypothesis H4 is not confirmed*, there are though prerequisites for a correct approach for the hypotheses at the top management level, and the *marketing department's location as a leading department* in the company's organization chart Pop (coord.), 2011, p. 423] would correspond to this aspiration.

Regarding the meaning given by the interviewees to the concept of "marketing mentality", most answers defining it as "attitude towards the market", "positioning of the company on the marketing", "strategic thinking and planning", "a philosophy of the company regarding the market", "the complexity of the company's relation with the marketing", indicate a correct theoretical understanding of the concept. There have also been answers which assimilate the marketing mentality with its promotional communication side. Thus, we appreciate that *hypothesis H5 is confirmed*. Simultaneously, the respondents are rejecting though, entirely, the existence of a marketing doctrine in their field of work.

4.2. Study 2

The second research study, carried out among faculty management in the technical and economic field, veterinary sciences and communication, had as respondent deans and vice-deans in universities rated with high confidence degree. In these faculties there is at most one marketing discipline taught, and the respondent were mentioned the fact that the research does not focus on marketing as a study domain. Performed as a face to face interview, the research allowed an extensive dialogue with the management regarding the way they perceive the capitalization of the *marketing vision* in the process of leading a non-profit organization. Mindful of satisfying their own clients (the students), the interviewees have first emphasized the role given to the concept of marketing as a "managerial function", but also options such as "a study domain", "a philosophy", "an art" or "a certain behavior". They have connected one or more components of the marketing mix or concepts such as "strategy" or "SWOT analysis" to the discussed term. This second research study thus *confirms hypothesis H1*.

With reference to the recurrence of marketing activities performed by the faculties, we can state that the percentage between the proactive marketing activities and the ones which are rather a reaction to the market's evolution is rather equal. The main marketing activity in which the faculties engage is the attraction of potential candidates. Other

important domains mentioned by the respondents were the development of the relationship with the business environment, in the sense of sponsorship attraction, but also in offering the students' employment possibilities, the development of the relationship with the alumni, and also the developing of the research field as an activity domain for the faculty, as well for the students, but mainly for the staff. The majority of the interviewees considered marketing as "important" for the organization (faculty) they are leading, and only a small part as "very important". Although the answers were declarative, they have been accompanied by examples of the specific marketing activities performed among pupils, students and business environment (the main beneficiary of the university's service), which demonstrates a continuity of the preoccupations in this domain. Based on this element we also consider *hypothesis H2 confirmed*.

Concerning the potential *location* of the *marketing department* in the university, all the respondents considered there should exist such an independent department, subordinated to the rectorate. This claim is motivated by the fact that the management confirms the existence of such a marketing or public relations office in the university, and also the opinion that an organization (university) can be strong on basis of its components (faculties), and in order to do so there is the need of a supported effort of promotion. The respondents consider that this activity should be performed by specialists in the marketing field, but never externalized. The main reason would be that the academic environment is rather regarded as difficult to understand at a functioning level by an outsider. These arguments *do not confirm hypothesis H3*. The multitude of viewpoints regarding the delimitation of the marketing activities between the faculty and a specialized department in the university proves that each decision makers' levels of engagement have not yet been entirely settled in this regard. In addition, there have been no mentions regarding the internal marketing [Kotler, Keller, 2012, p. 387], designed to develop the relation between the organization's management and staff (professors and administrative staff). The marketing activity is assigned by the respondents to various decision makers from the organization also because it is *not included in their norm* – only in a small amount (in the professional counseling and school environment relations department). Thus, we consider *hypothesis H4 confirmed*.

In regards to a potential definition of the *marketing mentality*, this could be „a behavior carried out to ensure others' needs“, „the image which you want to present as an organization“, „a development strategy for the faculty“. Thus the activity performed in order to satisfy the clients' needs and the organizations' positioning on the market is indicated. During the semi-structured discussions, when questioned whether there are certain principles or values which guide their marketing activity, the majority of the respondents have answered affirmatively. However, they mentioned that these principles and values are not written, nor regarded more than the organization's mission and vision, being rather personal. From the mentioned ones we note: ethics, availability for students, dynamism, modernity or compliance with the quality standards. We can thus conclude that, in the development and implementation of the marketing mentality in an organization, the management's personal impact is very important. In regards to the evolution of the marketing mentality in the Romanian academic environment, all the respondents have acknowledged its importance, mainly due to the raising competition for the attraction of candidates. In spite of this, the majority of the respondents consider that the marketing activity should not exceed, nor in volume or importance, the general mission of a faculty – the one of generating and transmitting knowledge – otherwise risking to become a false image. Likewise, the conclusion that university in Romania must learn to sell an integrated service package to their potential clients emerged. Thus, they should include beside the educational experience, other aspects regarding the cost of life, the possibilities of spending free time or even employment. Another element emphasized by the management was the internalization tendency, as a response to the lowering number of school population in Romania. We can thus state that although there is a high knowledge level of

marketing among the managers of the interviewed faculties, this is *not integrated* in a marketing mentality. Furthermore, in the absence of funds to support the marketing activity, the efforts in this area do not always reflect a strategic planning and orientation in accordance to the faculty's long term vision. All these elements lead us to the claim that *hypothesis H5 is not confirmed*. Although we noticed a relatively clear acknowledgement of the concept of marketing mentality, its practical implementation method in the day to day organization's activity from the higher education environment is not completely made operational. On the whole, by comparing the responses from *study 1* with the ones from *study 2*, the *hypothesis H6 is confirmed*, which claims that the representatives of the non-profit organizations from the academic environment have a better understanding of the concept of *marketing doctrine*. Both groups of respondents do not engage though in assuming and implementing in their management activity this latter concept.

5. Conclusions

While the research has revealed a notable level of knowledge for the marketing concept, we cannot yet (with few exceptions) talk about a *marketing mentality*, integrated in the daily activity of all the functioning departments of the researched organizations. The development of an *empathic manner* of treating the client constitutes the essential premise for the implementation of the marketing mentality in the organization.

In the academic environment the implementation of a marketing mentality would represent the basic premise for the advancement of the *entrepreneurial university* [Păunescu, 2007, pp. 54-62; Stanciu, 2013, pp. 21-67; Fluture (Mahalache), 2014, pp. 61-103]. Such an aspiration would change the philosophy of the public university system's financing process. Certainly, this course of action requires a clear knowledge of the concept, dimensions and functioning of the entrepreneurial university. At the same time, it would be necessary that the public educational policies raise awareness among the business environment – the main beneficiary of the universities' product – for their direct involvement in supporting the educational process. This action claims for a clearer and more incentive legal frame for the engagement of the business environment in education, through fiscal facilities, and not only. The finality of this development would contribute to the ending of the low financing of the Romanian higher education. [Miroiu, Țeca, 2013, pp. 18-30].

The various disagreements reported in the literature regarding the decline and dispersion of marketing's competencies at the organizational level [Malter, Webster, Ganesan, 2005, pp. 35-43], and also the signals towards academic marketing's loss of ground [Reibstein, Day, Wind, 2009, pp.1-3] should be addressed by the academic marketing community through a coherent approach to strengthen new theoretical paradigms, advocated by the newest knowledge arguments. At the same time with the development of a better collaboration between academia and practitioners, the consolidation of the marketer's position and stability in the organization [Challagalla, Murtha, Jawarowski, 2014, pp.4-20] as a principle based concept, in order to guide the marketing decision making in the company.

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