

## ADJUSTMENT OF COMMUNICATION POLICY IN INTERNATIONAL MARKETING - ROMANIAN CONSUMER CASE

Cătălina LACHE<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “Petre Andrei” University of Iași

---

### Abstract

The phenomenon of globalization, of internationalization of production, trade and consumption requires greater efforts to adapt marketing communications to the specific of local consumers. In order to characterise consumers and place them in significant segments in terms of management, their individual features (age, gender, income, personality) have to be analyzed in the socio-cultural context in which they live and cement their values and style life.

The article presents the manner in which some international companies operating in Romania have adapted their promoting policy, arbitrating between the standardisation and/or particularisation of communications, depending on the social and cultural specific of Romanian consumers. Research results point out an evaluation of the power of the message to identify and be understood by the intended audience, to positively influence the attitude of the target segment and to determine the potential customers to try out new products, modifying their traditional purchasing patterns.

**Key words:** globalization, marketing communications, consumer characteristics

---

The extension of multinational companies in the countries from the Eastern Europe, among which Romania, imposes considerable efforts for the promotion of products and services.

In Romania there were 26,467 multinational groups at the level of 2008, representing 86% of the total groups of companies, the largest part of them being controlled from abroad (data from the National Institute of Statistics). The groups of companies from Romania carry out their activity mostly in trade, industry and constructions. The majority of the groups of companies are controlled by individual or legal entities from Germany, Italy or France.

The communication politics represents a key component of the marketing mix practiced by the multinational companies, whose products are offered in an undifferentiated manner to the consumers from several countries. Especially in this period of time marked by the global economic-financial crisis, in which the consumers try to reduce the financial and/or functional risks, the communication must be adapted to the necessities, desires, but also their cultural values and particularities (Lendrevie, J., De Baynast, A., 2004):

- **Universality**, which postulates the fact that the conscious and unconscious aspirations are common for all the individuals; the communication politics can successfully use the same publicity methods, optimizing the expenses, especially in the current period, of economic-financial crisis, which

imposes austerity in the administration of resources.

- **The particularization of communication in the national context**, which recommends the adaptation of communications according to the characteristics of the local markets and the culture of each country. We must distinguish, from the point of view of the purchasing and consume behaviour at the national level, the general traits of the way of living, of displaying their welfare, of feeding, of clothing, of inhabiting, of living generating social contacts, of expressing their opinions and administering their behaviour, which inevitably leads to the success/failure of introducing new products/services on the respective markets and compels us to report any marketing action to the cultural framework. The publicity messages must be personalized, according to the predictable reactions of the individuals to these communications.

The arbitration between universality and the particularization in the national context represents the optimal solution for implementing the communication politics of the multinational companies, which applies global strategies on the local, national markets. (Brassart U., Panazol J.-M., 2001).

The facilities of information and communication, the globalization of products and services, the internationalization of production and commerce, the electronic payments etc. have allowed the extension of the cultural horizon,

allowing the individual arbitration between the consume of traditional products and the modern ones, changes of cultural norms, values and references.

Thus, the culture, the social values and norms that a person has acquired through learning, through socializing, can be modified through acculturation, adopting other norms, values, customs that belong to other cultures. The globalization, extension and relocation of the multinational companies, the international tourism and the marketing communications have a significant contribution to the acculturation process.

There is a strong connection between culture and consume, which determines the structure of norms, the general concepts regarding the allocation of family budgets, and the particularities regarding the consume of alimentary products, clothing, dwelling place, use of certain services.

The ethnic and religious origin, the geographical localization, the values of local communities, the traditions and superstitions, the social class diffuses different cultural values, many times of symbolic nature, that are associated to the consume of goods and services. Even the manner in which the symbols of products are communicated and associated to the values shared from the socio-cultural point of view, can lead to their acceptance or rejection.

Fashion represents a factor that activates the system of goods production, the planned going out of fashion having the role of accelerating the process of acquiring goods and replacing them, based on criteria that no longer refer to utility and functionality, but to significations, aesthetics, and social position. The act of consume reflects the socio-cultural significance of the objects, representing the individual arbitrage between the

individualization, personalization and socio-cultural integration tendencies, the belonging to a certain group, with whom they share their values.

The values represent lasting beliefs, which reflect the preferences and motivations, justifying the behaviours (the purposes, means of achieving the goals). Through the system of values, the people will establish their existential, morality standards, for evaluating the events, for justifying their own behaviours, for defending their self. Shwartz appreciated that the values express “the individuals’ adhesion to the objects that allow the satisfaction of the set of motivations which have a relative importance in the daily life” (Schwartz, S.H., Bilsky, W., 1993).

The consumers cannot be understood without the correlation of values with the economic environment, with the notion of welfare, which many times corresponds with the abuse of “inflation” of objects that can be associated to the ridicule or bad taste.

A model that proposes the analysis of the correlation between the hoped benefits, starting from the consumers’ values versus the characteristics of the offer, emphasizes the values that the client associates, concretely or abstractly, to the functional and social consequences, and in the end to the instrumental values (means) and terminal values (purpose). Thus, we can identify the level of importance of the characteristics and focus on what is more relevant from the point of view of the value that the consumers assign to them, using this in the advertisements (Rokeach, M., 1973).

Using these principles in conceiving the marketing communications, represents an important factor of success for the marketing politics.

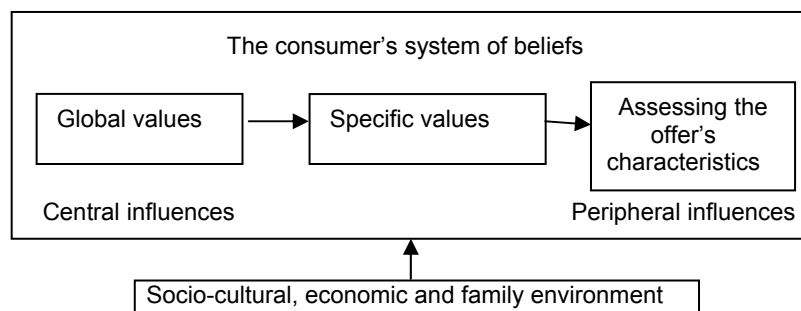


Figure 1 The consumers’ system of values

## MATERIAL AND METHOD

The purpose of the article is to present the results and conclusions of the research regarding the evaluation of the adaptation level of the communication politics to the specific of the

Romanian market, achieved through the investigation method, applying questionnaires in 100 multinational companies activating in Romania. The fields of activity of the companies where the research was carried out are: telephony and telecommunications, motor vehicle distribution

and service, finances, insurances, the production and distribution of construction materials, the production and distribution of office stationary/furniture, commerce and tourism. The commercial activities mainly refer to alimentary products, beer, wines, refreshing drinks, cosmetics, medicines, motor vehicles and electronic appliances.

The research objectives are the following :

- Evaluating the adaptation level of the communication politics to the specific of the Romanian market

- Evaluating the capacity of the message to identify and understand the target public, to positively influence the attitude of the target segment, to determine them to try new products, modifying the traditional purchasing patterns.

The research was achieved in the period March 1<sup>st</sup>- May 30<sup>th</sup> 2010

The sample is formed of two categories:

- 100 general managers/responsible persons with the marketing departments, that exert their functions in multinational companies activating in Romania;

- 200 consumers of the analysed products/services, selected randomly. Table 1 presents the characteristics of the sample made up of consumers.

Table 1

Sample characteristics		
	Nr.	%
Total sample	200	100
Gender: - female (F)	125	62.5
- Men (M)	75	37.5
Age: -15-24 years	10	5.0
-25-54 years	125	62.5
-55-64 years	49	24.5
-over 64	16	8.0
Level of education:		
- General and career	10	5.0
- High school and post secondary education	145	72.5
- Higher	45	22.5
Economic activity:		
-Active	177	88.5
-Off	23	11.5
Number of persons in the household:		
- 1-2 persons	18	9.0
- 3 persons	48	24.0
- 4 persons	129	64.5
- 5 persons and over	5	2.5
Self subjective material situation:		
- Very Good	19	9.5
- Good	47	23.5
- Average	103	51.5
- Satisfactory	23	11.5
- Unsatisfactory	8	4.0
The persons questioned currently using the Internet and e-mail	165	82.5
The persons questioned are currently using a bank card	157	78.5

The quantitative representativity is good and the degree of confidence of results as well.

Table 2 presents the opinions of general managers /responsible persons of the marketing departments from the analyzed companies, versus

the communication politics and its level of adaptation to the particularities of Romanian consumers and represents in fact a self-assessment.

Table 2

**The level of adaptation of the communication politics to the particularities of Romanian consumers**

Interviewed manager	Promotion actions:		
Opinions expressed	Universal	Adapted to the particularities of the Romanian market	Devised especially for the Romanian market
Total number =100	20	59	21
In % =100	20	59	21

Table 3 presents the consumers' opinions regarding the impact of the marketing communications, of the analyzed companies. The opinions were collected through the inquiry method, using as research instrument the questionnaire. The main aspects aimed at are:

- The cognitive effects, associated to the intrinsic quality of the message;

- The message capacity to reach the objectives:

- Attitude change;

- Change of the purchasing behaviour.

Table 3

**The level of adaptation of the communication politics to the particularities of Romanian consumers**

Interviewed consumers	Intrinsic quality of the message (cognitive effects)	Message capacity to reach its objectives	
Expressed opinions		Attitude change (affective effects)	Change of the purchasing behaviour (conative effects)
Total no./ %	200/100	200/100	200/100
Very good/high	99/49.5%	95/47.5%	49/24.5%
Good/high	47/23.5%	44/22%	37/18.5%
Medium	23/11.5%	25/12.5%	25/12.5%
Weak/low	31/ 15.5%	14/7%	12/6%
Very weak/very low	-	22/11%	77/38.5%

For evaluating the advertisement impact, Lickert's scale was used.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The analysis of data presented in table 2 emphasizes the fact that 21% of the companies analyzed devise all the promotional actions, achieving them punctually for the market defined by the Romanian consumers. This approach emphasizes the fact that the Romanian market has a great growth potential, and the Romanian consumers are an attractive segment within the global market. 59% of the companies plan their promotional actions within the strategy of the group of companies, adapting them to the specific

of the Romanian market. The adaptation level is different from one company to the other and mainly consists in adapting or translating the publicity slogan, introducing new national stars who insure popularity, using slow music or Romanian traditional music, the traditions, customs and other aspects of the local culture (Vodafone, Dacia-Renault, L'Oreal, Garnier, Pantene, Avon, etc.) Only 20% of the companies rely on the notoriety of the company at the global level, the involvement in the sponsorship of great sports competitions, in cultural, scientific actions at the global, regional and local level, using identical promotional actions (Coca-Cola, Danone, Microsoft, Orange, Carrefour ș.a.).

The impact on the Romanian consumers, as it results from the study achieved, is the following:

- The cognitive effects are high and very high, for 73% of the interviewed persons; the trademarks enjoy notoriety and the consumers have understood the messages and remember the publicity slogans.

- 69.5% have changed their opinion, manifesting a favourable attitude to a smaller or very small extent; the consumers mention that they have tasted the alimentary products and drinks within the promotional campaigns (54%), have received free samples from the cosmetics companies (49%), have participated to a Drive Test (12%), have received discount coupons, CECs (16.6%), other bonus systems (17%).

- 43% of the persons interviewed have changed their attitude towards the purchasing, to a large and very large extent, adopting the products. The fact that 44.5% of the interviewed persons did not change their purchasing behaviour, despite the favourable attitude that they manifest towards the products/services/trademarks is explained through the economic aspects of the purchasing behaviours, where the choice is strongly conditioned by the evaluation of the price-quality-available incomes ratio.

In this period of economic-financial crisis, when both the companies and the individual consumers economize resources, the purchasing decisions are marked by the imperative of optimizing the manner of allotting the incomes, the lack of safety of the economic and social environment, the manifestation of positive actions having a normal proportion within the cognitive effects.

## CONCLUSIONS

The majority of the multinational groups of companies that activate in Romania have opted for the adaptation, to a smaller or more important

extent, of the communication politics. The majority of messages are correlated with the cultural particularities of the Romanian consumers and the national system of values. The main elements of the adaptation of messages refer to the form and content of publicity communications, the association of the products/services/trademarks image with the national personality enjoy the local public's sympathy and popularity, with sportive events, cultural actions, popular holidays, which ensure the consolidation of their image. Several types of communication are used: mass-media advertising, public relations, sponsorships, partnerships in the organization of local, sports, cultural and charity events, and the promotion at the place of sale. The fact that the communication politics is well adapted to the public formed of Romanian consumers, results from the inquiry results: the cognitive effects are high and very high, the majority of consumers have a favourable and very favourable attitude towards the analysed products/services/trademarks, and 43% of the interviewed persons have adopted them in the personal consume.

I appreciate that the multinational companies have adopted marketing communication strategies well adapted to the local values and culture, being favourably perceived by the consumers, by those that have transformed into clients, successfully competing with the traditional products.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Brassart, U., Panazol, J.-M., 2001** - *Mercatique et action commerciale*, tome 2, Hachette Technique.
- Gilardi, J.-C., Koehl, M., Koehl, J.L., 1995** - *Dictionnaire de mercatique: Etudes, stratégies, actions commerciales*, Foucher.
- Haley, R., 1968** - *Benefit Segmentation: a Decision Oriented Decision Research Tool*, Journal Of Marketing, no. 8.
- Lache, C., 2010** - *Comportamentul Consumatorilor*, Performantica, Iași.
- Lache, C. și colab. - The analysis of consumers' behavior in the frame of world economic crisis, Revista Metalurgia International nr.11., p 107.**
- Lendrevie, J., De Baynast, 2004** - *Théorie et pratique de la communication*, Dalloz.
- Lazer, W., 1963** - *Life-Style Concepts and Marketing, Toward Scientific Marketing*, Proceedings of the American Marketing Association, 130-9.
- Mitchell, A., 1983** - *Consumer Values: A Typology*, Mento Park, Calif.: Stanford Research Institute.
- Rokeach, M., 1973** - *The Nature of Human Values*, New York, Free Press.
- Schwartz, S.H., Bilsky, W., 1993** - *Vers une theorie de l'universalite du contenu et des la structure de valeurs: extension et reproduction interculturelles*, Recherche et Applications en Marketing, 8, 4.