

Influencing the environmental behavior through the green marketing. The Case of Romania

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Abstract. The formation of the environmental protective behavior is a major objective of the communication actions specific to green marketing. The message sent to the audience is cognitive (informative), affective (feeling creation) and conative (action stimulation). The paper has the aim to explore the green marketing techniques used by Romanian NGOs and companies in order to influence the environmental behaviour of individuals. The paper describes the nature of marketing communication objectives and how these are transposed in visual messages and actions, through appropriate techniques and channels. Within their mission, the environmental NGOs have the objective to shape the environmental protective behavior of the citizens, through targeted actions, being active promoters of the environment protection. The companies are acting to educate consumers to be environment protective, striving for an image of environmental responsibility.

Keywords: green/environmental/ecological marketing, marketing communication, pro-environmental/ecological behaviour, environmental protective behaviour

1. Introduction

Environmental issues have modified the way businesses compete in the marketplace, forcing them to adapt their strategic planning process to new legal, social, and economic requirements. The consideration of the ecology as a relevant variable for the achievement of the economic goals of the organization has led to the appearance of the concept of environmental marketing (Calomarde, 2000). The objective of this new vision of marketing is to satisfy the firm's and the consumer's needs in such a way that the external impact of their economic activity is minimized (Coddington, 1993; Fuller, 1999; Peattie, 2001; Polonsky, 1995).

The evolution of the marketing function and a greater social awareness with respect to these issues have given the concept of environmental marketing a more global perspective in relation to the firm's economic activity. Furthermore, the NGOs with the mission to protect the environment have a great contribution to the development of the green marketing, by their creativity in finding genuine and unique techniques to communicate with the population in the fight against her passivity concerning the environment issues.

Regarding the shaping of individuals' pro-environmental behaviour, there are two main green marketing actors: *the companies* and *the NGOs*. In their marketing communication system, they are committed to plan and implement interrelated actions aiming to empower the consumers and the citizens as individuals responsible for the future of the planet.

The purpose of the paper is to analyze the main techniques used by the Romanian companies and NGOs in their communication efforts aiming to form the pro-environmental behavior of the population as responsible consumers and citizens.

2. Main aspects concerning the relation between marketing communication and ecological behaviour formation

2.1. The nature of the environmental marketing communication

The nature of the marketing communication objectives can be: *cognitive* (informative), *affective* and *conative*. Regarding the cognitive level, the companies offer information to consumers in order to enable them to accurately compare product's environmental attributes. Much of the literature examining consumers' environmental behavior suggests that the more information they have, the more "environmentally responsible" their actions will be (Balderjahn, 1988; Burger and Corbin, 1992; Maloney et al., 1975; Gill et al., 1986 as quoted in Polonski et al., 1995). At the second level, the communication has to create feelings regarding the environmental issues: destruction, pollution, lack of the responsibility for the future of the planet. The communication has to be impressive, persuasive and creative in order to develop the environmental sensitivity of the message receivers. According to Kolmuss and Agyeman (2009) the environmental awareness (knowing of the impact of human behavior on the environment) has a *cognitive knowledge-based component* and an *affective perception based component*. At the third level, conative, the message has to encourage the action of the receivers, their pro-environment behavior.

Regarding the effectiveness of the marketing communication, most specialists agree that it depends on three conditions: the source of communication has to be *powerful*, *attractive* and *credible*. Each attribute involves the trigger of specific mechanisms which cause changes in attitude or behaviour of the receiver. (Popescu, 2003). The internal mechanisms which cause the change of the attitude are: *agreement*, *identification* and *internalization*. The *agreement* is the result of the authority relationship between the parties involved in the communication. The *attractivity* of the communication source depends on the manner in which the receiver perceives its features (physical, lifestyle). If the receiver perceives the source as familiar and similar or if he likes some of its features, then he finds it *attractive* and the change of the attitude will be achieved by the process of the *identification*. The receiver will be willing to adopt the attitude, the behavior or the source's preferences. Regarding the *credibility*, a source perceived by the receiver as credible will cause a change of the attitude through the process of the *internalization*.

2.2. The environmental orientation of the companies

Banerjee (2002) and Banerjee et al. (2003) found that companies' ecological behavior can be manifested through two dimensions that reflected, on the one hand, the degree of acceptance of ecological ideals within the firm's culture (environmental orientation) and, on the other hand, to what extent environmental issues are implemented into the strategic planning process (environmental strategy).

Environmental orientation and environmental marketing are closely linked concepts, they involve integrating ecological values and ideals into the firm's internal culture and translating this commitment into specific strategies at the communicational and operational levels. (Fraj-Andres et al., 2009).

The environmental orientation of the companies becomes concrete through the marketing communication system. The marketing communication has two kinds of target audience: internal (employees, shareholders) and external (general public, local community, stakeholders, opinion leaders). Therefore, the communication strategy will have two components, one for the internal target audience and other for the external audience. The strategy targeted to the internal audience must be based on the following ideas: *environmental issues are very relevant for the company; we make a concerted effort to make every employee understand the importance of environmental preservation; the company has a clear policy statement urging environmental awareness in every area of operations; environmental preservation is a high priority activity in the company; preserving the environment is a central value in the company*. At the basis of the communication strategy for the external audience must be placed the following ideas: *the natural environment affects the activity of the company; the financial well being of the company depends on the state of the natural environment; environmental preservation is an issue on maintaining a good public image; environmental preservation is vital for the company's survival; the company strives for an image of environmental responsibility*.

3. The research: content and findings

3.1. Within their mission, the environmental NGOs have the objective to shape the pro-environmental behavior of the citizens

I scanned the ecological campaigns of the NGOs posted on the Internet on romanian websites in 2009-2010. My objective was to observe the nature of the communication objectives(cognitive, affective, conative) and how these objectives are transposed in communication concepts and further, in visual messages and actions.I investigated, as well, the main techniques and methods used in the ecological communication, in order to shape the pro-environmental attitude and behavior.

I identified in all campaigns an informative component: ecological lessons, informations about pollution and how can we reduce the damages of the natural environment made through the economic activities. This component specific for the educational projects targeted to the teenagers (aged 8-18) is used, as well in the actions dedicated to the adults (i.e.journalists, employees, public servants, police agents).The communication at this level is simple, aiming only to give informations, to raise the level of knowledge of the individuals concerning the environmental issues.

The next communication level, the affective level, is reached only in few campaigns. The explanations consist on the fact that almost ecological campaigns are not stopping at the level to impress the audience but aiming to change the behavior of their target group, following the sequence: *learn-feel-act*.

The ecological campaigns targeting young people(teenagers aged 8-18) were conceived to produce results as the pro-environmental attitude or behavior.The sources of the communication have met the three conditions: *powerfull, attractive* and *credible*. The source was either an environmental NGO active in Romania or a visible romanian company (i.e.PETROM).The three mechanisms (agreement, identification and internalization) were triggered among the target groups.The *agreement* was obtained due to the relation adult(source)-minor(receiver). In some of ecological campaigns are used VIPs to promote the environment protection(the System band encourages and teaches students to recycle the mobiles and to collect the waste of electrical equipment; music concerts for the reducing the effects of the climate change; entrance tickets to the music concerts, consisting in used PC components-mouse, keyboard, monitors; romanian VIPs are participating in trees planting campaigns).Very sensitive to the VIPs behaviour, young people can naturally *adopt* their manner to perceive the environment issues. In all campaigns, the sources of the messages are very credibles: teachers, experts, VIPs, their attitude being very easy *internalized* by the receivers.

I found that the most campaigns had as objective(declared or not) to shape the pro-environment behavior of the target groups. The method used to build such behavior is the learning experience. I observed the following techniques used to form the pro-environmental attitude: the march of the students members in AIESEC („Bucharest wistles fault!”-for healthier food, cleaner waters, sustainable transport, a cleaner city, fight against discrimination, more green areas); the european campaign „We count to each other!” (informations about biodiversity and the risks of its reduction); collecting electrical equipment waste; the global campaign Earth Hour(do not use the electricity during 1 hour all around the world); competitions on ecological themes: photos, posters, painting, PC graphics, toys (Green Dollhouse), clothing; ecological education camps; the campaign „Business on bicycle”-initiated by Green Revolution, Raffaisen Bank and Orange for promoting the bicycle as alternative means of transport; sports competitions promoting the forests issue and fundraising for that; the campaign „I give you the oxigen!” to mark the trees with a white band; the campaign „The month of the Eco-shopping”, to encourage the reducing of the consumerism and the donation of the unseful objects to the social disadvantaged people; the campaign „Police Water” and contest of methods for water saving; exchange of experience between schools (national and international); ecological infoportals; students testing the water quality; the competition „Eco-Paparazzi(aiming to identify through photos good or bad practices related to the environment).

The techniques used by the romanian NGOs in order to build the pro-environmental behavior are based on offering direct learning experiences and in the same time, contributing effectively to the reduction of the environment pollution: trees plantation (the campaigns: „Millions of people, millions of trees”, „Romania grasps roots”) waste collecting, waste selection, cleaning of the rivers, renovation of the thermal water sources from the resorts(MaiMult Verde organization), mapping the waste on the national territory(the project Let’s do it, Romania!); making toys from PETs; making clothes and bags from recycled materials and organizing fashion exhibitions or parades(„The students think green!”); actions organized by young people in

hypermarkets to encourage the consumers to not use the plastic bags or to collect selectively the waste(www.green-report.ro).

The main channels used by the romanian NGOs to communicate in the ecological marketing are:

- TV and audio spots:Earth Hour, Save the Danube Delta;
- posters: Green Peace, Earth Hour, „Don't mix the things.Collect them selectively”;
- mail: at the final of each message on the e-mail: „Please do not print only if it is very necessary”;
- internet discussion groups/ lists and forums: e.g.biodiversity conservation list;
- ecological education portals: Eco-Web.

3.2.The companies' interests to shape a pro-environmental behaviour of the consumers

Among the companies observed in my study, I identified PETROM as environmental oriented company. PETROM has an environmental orientation due to the adoption of the Corporate social responsibility (CSR)as an integrant part of the business strategy.One of the 5 pillars of the CSR is the Environment protection.I mention the recently PETROM programmes and campaigns: the platform “Respect for the future”, the project “The parks of the future”, the interactive promotion campaigns “Andrei's Country”, Andrei's School. Furthermore, PETROM has planned for 2010 in its marketing strategy one objective belonging to ecological marketing: “High product and service quality and environmental standards”(www.petrom.ro).

As a foundation of his actions for the environment protection, PETROM has its interest to be visible for the population as environment protective and for the government as complying with the environmental standards through the Corporate Social Responsibility platform(“Respect for the future”) (www.petrom.ro).

Other romanian companies are encouraging the consumption of green, bio-, ecological, eco-, eco-friendly or organic goods or services: food, cosmetics, medicines, energy efficient equipment.The main techniques used in their promotion actions are: fairs and exhibitions, virtual magazines, spots and printed ads, information and education campaign, printed materials(flyers, posters)(www.iqads.ro).The companies are present as well in actions and campaigns encouraging the consumers to collect the waste, to use bags and other objects from recycled materials, to save the water and electricity, to carry out eco-friendly activities (jogging, cycling, walk).

As a general opinion concerning the efforts of the romanian companies to be visible as environment protective: they have not as direct objective to shape a pro-environmental behavior of the consumers, they are interested to be perceived as being involved in the present concerns of the population.

But a dilemma is arising because the first concern of the romanians is the poverty and only on the second place is the environment, according the 2009 Green Barometer (a research carried out by Terra III Millenium Foundation and Alma –Ro Association).The romanian consumers are classified in eco-indifferent (8%), eco-neutral(28%), eco-supporters(53%) and eco-promoters (11%).The supporters are those who have a friendly environmental behavior and the promoters adopted explicitly the purpose to protect the environment.The small number of the eco-promoters creates great challenges for NGOs and companies to act very actively in order to shape a pro-environmental behaviour of the romanian individuals(www.teraiii.ngo.ro).

3.3.What is to do?

The romanian NGOs and companies are making ecological marketing, each in their specific sense. First, in their communication efforts to shape a pro-environmental behavior, they have to understand the cycle of the learning experience (Kolb, 1984). Second, because the aim of the green marketing is to have responsible consumers and active citizens, NGOs and companies have to cooperate, articulating their programmes, in order to build the Network Resources System suggested by John Grant(2008). That means joint actions to empower the individuals to act environmentally responsible.

4.Conclusions

In Romania, the communication in the green marketing must have as main objective the shaping of the pro-environmental behaviour of the individuals. The main actors in the ecological marketing

communications, the companies and the NGOs, have different basis of their communication on environment issues.

The environmental NGOs have included in their mission the objective to shape the pro-environmental behaviour and they are acting in consequence, using creatively a large of tools and techniques: learning direct experiences and effective educational or information activities.

The companies are interested to create and strenghten their public image through ecological actions. An appropriated communication policy of the environmental oriented companies can contribute to the creation of a company's identity according to the ecological principles. In the ecological marketing, communication and promotion aim to take the raising trend of the ecological conscience of the consumers and to strenghten it trough adequated actions. The companies can reduce the scepticism of the public opinion concerning the pro-environmental behaviour of the companies through information campaigns and programmes based on the cooperation between companies. The objectives of such actions and programmes will be the improvement of the companies' image. Promotion of the eco-goods and services is regarding the improvement of the company's (goods or service) image in the sense of accepting the ecological competency of the company(good or service) by the target groups.

Further studies are necessary in order to conceive a model of the environmental behaviour of the romanians.

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