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The Use of Semantic Differential in Function of Measuring Image of the Company

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ABSTRACT – *In order to influence consumers to buy products, company has to figure out how and where to present them, i.e., it is necessary to make decisions about which marketing communication instruments to use to refer them. What is needed is to provide consumers sufficient information to identify the brand in a given product category at the moment of purchase decision, because consumers, before opting for a particular product, go through various stages. Company can apply different marketing communication instruments, but needs to co-ordinate them to send consumers a clear and consistent promotional message. Whether company has implemented marketing communications successfully can be seen from different indicators, from economic to communication, that is, from increasing sales to a positive image. It is very important for a company to measure the effects of implemented marketing communication, because it helps in making the right decisions in the future and obtaining as many regular customers. One of the main goals of the company is positive and clear image that can be achieved through the instruments of marketing communication. Company can measure its image by applying semantic differential, which can help in obtaining a picture that consumers have about the company and its products. Its usage can be of the great importance for entrepreneurs, as well*

KEY WORDS: *marketing communications, measuring the effects of communication, the indicators of communication success, image, semantic differential*

Introduction

In modern conditions of conducting business and severe market competition, each company strives to be recognized and fights for its products to be the first choice of consumers. To achieve this goal company needs to implement marketing communications and to promote its products. Also, one of the reasons for implementation of marketing communication is to establish and maintain long-term relationships with customers. Before deciding to purchase a particular product, consumers pass through cognitive and affective stage of the purchase process. While going through these stages consumers have different levels of awareness, knowledge, beliefs, preferences and actions i.e. willingness to purchase

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and therefore they need different information based on which they form beliefs and attitudes about the product and the company. Information can be obtained from different marketing communication instruments which company implements. Company is interested in the success of marketing communications, and promotional messages and campaigns. Since consumers form an image of company on the basis of gained messages, effects of marketing communication instruments should be approached from consumer's perspective and their understanding, viewing and integrating individual instruments in a comprehensive conception of the brand (Weilbacher, 2001). Therefore, it is very important for a company to measure the effects of the implemented marketing communication. Measuring the effects of communication is related to finding out whether the target audience knows and remembers promotional messages, recalls certain details from it, has feelings about the message and attitudes in regard to the product and the company, purchases products and the like. In this paper is presented an example of how the company could measure image, as an indicator of the success of marketing communication, through the use of semantic differential. The implementation of this technique does not have to be related only to large companies implementing numerous marketing communications instruments and having expensive campaigns, but can also be connected to entrepreneurs that use less promotion instruments but strive to communicate consistent message with its target audience.

The essence of marketing communication

For the company's achievement of the desired success in the market, it is not enough to produce a good product with an acceptable price and with an effective distribution system, but is also necessary to set up an effective system of communication with the market, especially consumers. If consumer does not recognize product or is not informed about its characteristics and advantages compared to competing products, she/he will not buy it. Therefore, it is very important that company implements marketing communication, i.e. to make decisions what to say, how and when to communicate, who to contact and how often in order to inform consumers about the existence and characteristics of its products.

In developing marketing communications strategy, company combines different instruments of promotional mix: advertising, sales promotion, marketing public relations, economic publicity, personal selling and direct marketing (e.g. De Pelsmacker, Geuens, Bergh, 2007; Ognjanov, 2009; Salai, Grubor, 2011; Stanković, Đukić, 2014). Company integrates these instruments taking into account the balance of advantages and disadvantages of each. In fact, the company strives to achieve consistency in communicating and providing unique promotional messages directed to consumers (Belch, Belch, http://imc.sdsu.edu/articles-abstracts/ae_effect-imc.htm). By performing integrations at various levels, synergetic effects appear through an appropriate combination of instruments of promotion and media (Naik, Raman, 2003; Domazet 2015).

Creators of communication programs can have a number of challenges because each marketing situation is different and each marketing campaign requires a different creative approaches and a basic question is what message to send to consumers. The problem is further complicated by the fact that consumers are actually the subjects who integrate in their minds all the messages and contents received from different media they are exposed to,

and at the same time, determine what types of media they want to be exposed to, as well as the amount of time they want to devote to each medium. The effectiveness of promotional messages depends on its content, creativity, structure, form and origin (Salai, Grubor, 2011).

The content of promotional message is related to brand concept, idea or association, and all other values, or the perception that marketers are transferring to consumers, and should be relevant, creative, consistent, engaging, persuasive, to cause behavior, that is, action of the target audience which is the core principle of integrated marketing communication (Kliatchko, 2008). Also, for the message content is very important its interaction with communication channels, because it is communication channels that enable customers to know how to get to brand, while the message content assures and convinces them to the purchase (Domazet 2016). Promotional message has a strategic and creative component (Shash, D'Souza, 2009). The strategic component refers to the question of what to say, that is, what is the idea, while the creative component consists of questions how message communicates and includes words, images, music, location, layout, logo, colors (Domazet, 2015). One of the segments of creative marketing communication strategy is the selection of an adequate appeal. The aim of appeal is to provoke a reaction to promotional message content, where appeals influence the intellect, decision making, feelings, imagination, image, which means the psychological side of the consumers mind (Salai, Grubor, 2011; Domazet 2016).

Structure of the promotional message answers to the question how to say something logically, primarily in the context of whether the communicator needs to carry out definitive conclusions or leave them to the audience, as well as whether to use arguments that are one-way or two-way, and in what order to present the strongest arguments (Salai, Grubor, 2011). There is no single answer to the question of whether to carry out definitive conclusions or to leave them to the target audience.

The form of promotional message gives the answer to the question of how symbolically to express the message and is conditioned by the media that sends promotional messages.

The source of promotional messages or communicator is the initial component of marketing communication process, because it broadcasts a promotional message and therefore must know the message coding system, the media through which it is to be sent, and how the target audience will decode the message (Domazet 2016). The success of the communicator depends on his knowledge and expertise, reliability, objectivity and attractiveness for a given audience.

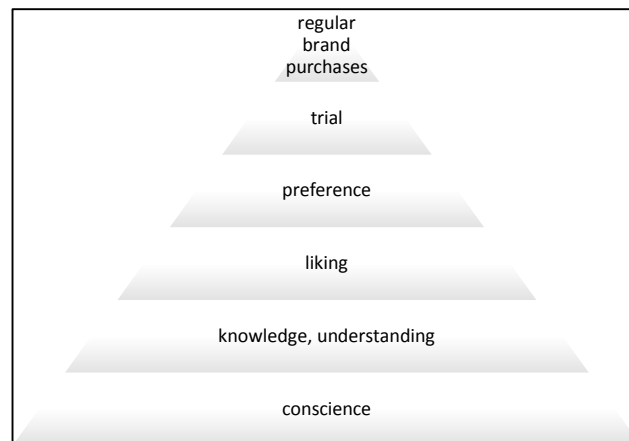
Indicators of marketing communication success

Communication indicators of marketing communications success are related to researching whether consumers recognize or remember the promotional message, how many times they saw it, which parts they remember, how they feel about the message, and their previous and current attitudes toward a company and a brand (Keller, 2001). Also, as indicators of marketing communication success, there can be mentioned attracting consumers attention, easily memorable promotional messages, message persuasion, the content of useful information, interest for promotional messages and the level in which providing the entertainment, consumer response, positive image, brand popularity, as well

as the extent to which promotional messages justifies the cost as measured by an increase in sales.

What kind of effects marketing communications have in relation to consumers, can be seen through the so-called. "Pyramid of communication effects" – Illustration 1.

Illustration 1. Pyramid of communication effects of marketing Communication



Source: Belch, Belch (2009, 218)

Based on the illustration it can be concluded that the company first needs to achieve goals that are at the lower level of the pyramid, awareness and knowledge and understanding of the message and the brand. The next task is to move upward consumers who are aware of and have knowledge about the product. If most of the target audience is not aware of the brand, then marketing communications should build that awareness. The target audience can be aware of brand, but without knowing anything about the brand, whereas marketing communications goal is to inform them. If the target audience has knowledge about the brand, the task of marketing communication is to find out what are their feelings about brand, and if they are negative, to find out why, in order to eliminate mistakes. The target audience can like the product, but does not need be to prefer it in comparison to others. In this case, the goal of marketing communications is to build consumer brand preference by comparison of quality, value, performance and other factors with competing brands. If the target audience prefers a particular brand, but it is not convinced to buy it, marketing communication goal is to convince them to buy it. Some members of the target audience can be convinced that product is high-quality, but still do not decide to purchase. In that case, a company has to encourage consumers to purchase, for example by lowering the price of the product, offering a discount, or allowing consumers to have experience with the product.

Marketers use the instruments of marketing communication to achieve different objectives, including creating awareness about a company or a brand, meeting consumers with attributes, characteristics and advantages of the brand, designing, maintaining and possible changing attitudes about the brand, creating brand preference and purchase intent. Kotler (2003) found that marketing communication contributes to increasing brand

awareness and positive brand image. Consequently, all described phases can be seen as indicators of marketing communications success.

Measuring communication effects

In order to measure the success of marketing communications by the company, it is necessary to perceive its effects. "Given the fact that some companies are investing significant resources in marketing communications and especially in advertising, measuring and analyzing the efficiency of marketing communications has great practical significance" (Domazet, Hanić, Simeunović, 2012). Companies are trying to measure communication impact of advertising, i.e., the impact on awareness, knowledge or preference (Kotler, Keller, 2006). However, elements of marketing communications that should also be explored are (Ewing, 2009):

- consumer reaction to the activities of marketing communications,
- interactions within marketing communication instruments,
- the impact of technology on the "empowerment" of consumers and planning and evaluation of marketing communications,
- understanding relationships between the activities of integrated marketing communications and potential of marketing in general,
- more successful understanding of when, why and how to implement the concept of integrated marketing communications.

Consideration of marketing communications effects is also important for the following reasons (Shah, D'Souza, 2009):

- allows determining how much investment in market communication contributes refunds through greater sales,
- presents the basis of managerial evaluation of communication alternatives (potential messages, instruments and media), whereas by selection of their most effective combination is allowed to determine what are the effects of different communication strategies,
- presents the basis for future planning,
- increases the effectiveness of marketing communications, by elimination of unproductive alternatives and by implementation of productive elements of the communication program.

Having in mind all mentioned above, there can be identified consequences in regard to possibility to manage marketing by companies, which could view the results of researches from the aspect of internal information that are in relation to investments in certain promotional activities and revenues earned by the realization of offers at the market.

Measuring the marketing communication effects is very useful but not easy to implement, due to undefined measurement criteria, the reliability of the used methods and the validity of the results. Namely, the authors have different opinions on what actually presents an indicator of the success of marketing communications. Although there are different indicators of marketing communication success, it can be concluded that marketing communication is successful if attracting attention, informing consumers about the product,



being easy to remember, and if helping the company to achieve its objectives, such as growth in sales, profits, market share, brand popularity, as well as improving the image of the product and the company.

Additional relevance to the above question suggests the contribution of marketing communication to building brand value (Schultz, 2004) in the context of forming brand awareness and brand image (Madhavaram, Bandrinarayanan, McDonald, 2005).

Analysis of image as a communication impact of marketing communications

By applying different marketing communication instruments company has aim to transmit the unique promotional message and to create a positive image. Communication effect of marketing communication is reflected in the image of the product and the company. The image is actually the picture that consumer has about product and company, obtained on the basis of experience, feelings, information and knowledge about the company and products. The company aim is to have a positive and clear image (Salai, Grubor, 2011).

One of the methods which can be used for measuring image is Osgood semantic differential (Osgood, 1964). Osgood semantic differential is a bipolar scale and assumes that some conflicting concepts include different levels of positive, or negative emotional meanings. Subjects evaluate the term on the scale. The scale commonly has 7 levels, medium is neutral, three to the left are negative and three to the right are positive. The advantage of this method is that it provides the spontaneity of the subject's response and is suitable for testing attitudes.

The implementation of this technique will be shown on an example. Company "A" has conducted marketing research, after conducting a promotional campaign, on sample of 60 respondents. After developing a set of relevant dimensions and their reduction, surveys with the content shown in the table below were given to respondents. The task was to circle the number that most closely matches their attitude on a given product attribute.

Table 1. The scale of product attribute value

	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	
bad	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	good
expensive	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	inexpensive
ugly	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	nice
not useful	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	useful
not healthy	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	healthy
unreliable	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	reliable
old fashioned	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	modern
ineffective	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	effective
complicated	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	simple

Respondents were given nine product attributes that they had to evaluate on scale of seven possible answers. The obtained results are as follows:



Table. 2. The attribute bad / good

x	f	xf
-3	0	0
-2	2	-4
-1	1	-1
0	3	0
1	9	9
2	18	36
3	27	81
Σ	60	121

The first attribute of product was related to whether respondents consider product as bad or good. Results show that the average value of x is $121/60$, i.e. 2.02.

Table. 3. The attribute expensive / inexpensive

x	f	xf
-3	15	-45
-2	18	-36
-1	13	-13
0	10	0
1	2	2
2	1	2
3	1	3
Σ	60	-87

The second attribute of product was related to whether respondents think that product is expensive or cheap. Results show that the average value of \bar{x} is $-87 / 60$, i.e. -1.45.

Table. 4. The attribute ugly / nice

x	f	xf
-3	2	-6
-2	1	-2
-1	0	0
0	3	0
1	17	17
2	15	30
3	22	66
Σ	60	105

The third attribute of product was related to whether respondents think that the product is ugly or nice. Results show that the average value of \bar{x} is $105/60$, i.e. 1.75.

Table. 5. The attribute unuseful /useful

x	f	xf
-3	0	0
-2	0	0
-1	2	-2
0	2	0
1	8	8
2	20	40
3	28	84
Σ	60	130

The fourth attribute of product was related to whether respondents think that product is not useful or is useful. Results show that the average value of \bar{x} is 130/60, i.e. 2.16.

Table. 6. The attribute not healthy / healthy

x	f	xf
-3	0	0
-2	1	-2
-1	2	-2
0	6	0
1	11	11
2	19	38
3	21	63
Σ	60	108

The fifth product attribute was related to whether respondents consider product healthy or unhealthy. Results show that the average value of \bar{x} is 108/60, i.e. 1.8.

Table. 7. The attribute unreliable / reliable

x	f	xf
-3	1	-3
-2	0	0
-1	2	-2
0	5	0
1	16	16
2	13	26
3	23	69
Σ	60	105

The sixth attribute of product was related to whether respondents think that product is unreliable or reliable. Results show that the average value of \bar{x} is 105/60, i.e. 1.75.



Table. 8. The attribute old-fashioned / modern

x	f	xf
-3	2	-6
-2	3	-6
-1	0	0
0	5	0
1	16	16
2	18	36
3	16	48
Σ	60	88

The seventh attribute of products was related to whether respondents consider that product is old-fashioned or modern. Results show that the average value of \bar{x} is 88/60, i.e. 1.46.

Table. 9. The attribute ineffective / effective

x	f	xf
-3	2	-6
-2	1	-2
-1	1	-1
0	9	0
1	15	15
2	12	24
3	20	60
Σ	60	90

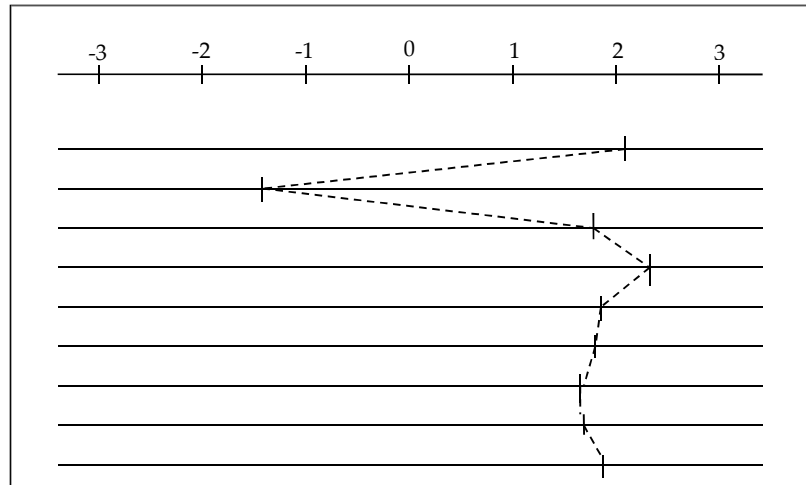
The eighth product attribute was related to whether respondents think that product is ineffective or effective. Results show that the average value of \bar{x} is 90/60, i.e. 1.5.

Table. 10. The attribute complicated / simple

x	f	xf
-3	1	-3
-2	2	-4
-1	2	-2
0	5	0
1	9	9
2	22	44
3	19	57
Σ	60	101

The ninth attribute of products was related to whether respondents think that product is difficult or easy. Results show that the average value of \bar{x} is 101/60, i.e. 1.63

Graph. 1. *The semantic differential for the image of the product of company "A"*



Based on semantic differential obtained after entering the average value of individual product attributes, it can be concluded that after a six-month campaign, product image of "A" company is positive, because the average value of almost all the attributes is on the positive side of graph. In fact, the product of company "A" is considered expensive, but on the other hand, healthy, of good quality, nice. Therefore, consumers can rely on the product because they trust it "solves the problem", i.e. achieves effects that are listed and contributes to satisfaction of needs.

In order to obtain clearer picture of communication effects of implemented marketing communications campaign, company "A" has to compare results with the image research related to the previous promotional campaign, or to compare them with the results of other methods of measuring the effects of marketing communication.

Conclusion

In modern business conditions priority for marketers is requirement of finding an adequate marketing communication mix instruments, defining their roles and the extent to which they should be implemented, as well as their mutual coordination and obtaining synergetic effects. This is especially important because consumers create an image of the company and its products on the basis of all information obtained from the company, i.e. based upon all the manners in which company establishes contacts with them. For the company, it is important to measure effects of implemented marketing communication, especially communication effects i.e. image. By measuring communication effects, a company gets information about effects of promotional messages in regard to interest, clarity, perception, memory, thinking and attitudes of consumers when it comes to promotional messages, products and the company itself. Measuring the effects of marketing

communication can be realized by various methods and techniques, and one of the methods for measuring the image is semantic differential that shows how consumers perceive and experience the company and its products. This technique, described in details within this paper, has potential to be implemented by entrepreneurs as well, no matter if they use only few promotion instruments as long as they attempt to communicate consistent message with their target audience.

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