

MARKETING EVOLUTION: E-MARKETING - QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH TECHNIQUES

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Abstract: E-marketing is a generally accepted concept, due to its advantages compared to other marketing mechanisms: it is faster, more efficient, more intelligent and less expensive. The option for e-marketing is also enforced by its flexibility with which it addresses potential clients. Moreover, e-marketing is the environment which leads to quick results, allowing complex calculus in order to analyze request and market evolution as pertinent as possible. Access to new market segments and gaining the existing clients' trust and loyalty through the products' quality and price is mostly due to the e-marketing campaigns.

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Classic marketing. Promoting policy

In the current economic practice and theory, the term marketing is used more and more frequently. From the etymologic point of view, it comes from English and refers to buying and selling.

It can be defined like this: "Marketing is analyzing, programming and controlling the resources of different producer companies, their politics and production and distribution activity with a view to satisfying the demands of different consumer groups and gaining profits.

The definition given by the American Marketing Association-AMA is as follows: "*Marketing is the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large*".

Marketing emergency must be analyzed in close connection to the evolution of the commercial function and the changes in the traditional reports between companies' functions.

Managers have made great efforts to build efficient organization and commercial structures, capable to sell mass production. Such a project implies important changes such as: adapting distribution cycles to the new demands, improving communication procedures and survey techniques. The technique of distribution by implementing the self-service system revolutionized the system and led to tackling commercial problems in a different manner. This led to the conclusion that it is no

longer commercially viable to create products that are imposed on the customer, the inversion of the process being more efficient: first the potential clients are consulted in order to learn their demands, and then the products demanded by them are created, accompanied by various services. Thus, sales are no longer a coercion activity, since clients are offered a product in agreement with their demand; in other words, there has been a transition from a producer-oriented market towards a seller-oriented one, the consumer being the one who stands at the center of this commercial world. There is thus an economic democracy, but on the other hand, these commercial techniques and proceedings led to clients' manipulation, taking advantage of the clients' weak points, serving the managers' appetite for domination.

A modern company, with marketing vision, must apply a series of methods that focus on the following aspects:

- Investigating the market;
- Identifying a market;
- Adapting to the market in an operative way;
- Influencing the market;

The methods applied should be based on the following beliefs:

- All the activities and programs should be consumer oriented;
- The purpose of the activities should be profitable sales, and not sales for the sake of volume;
- Offering a large variety of products (goods, services, ideas) to satisfy customers;
- All the activities should be in accordance with the company's possibilities;
- Marketing activities should be part of the system/company's activities

The developing of the marketing process takes place only if:

- Two or more parties have unsatisfied needs;
- Each party wants and can satisfy its needs;
- Each party has something to trade;
- There is a means of communication between the parties.

When a business is initiated, the starting point is the market. Marketing helps the company to know the market, and market knowledge is vital for the permanent adaptation of the product/service or business to the market changes. A good marketing positioning implies the permanent obligation of knowing the market, in order to adapt the company to the environment changes, with the help of its management and in order to act with maximum efficiency, in order to satisfy the customer. With a view to adapting, market knowledge is a reactive process, but in order to take action, marketing must be proactive. Thus, the decisions and proactive managerial behavior is based on marketing specialists' previsions. Any business must start from the market. Market monitoring and signal analysis are compulsory for the marketing department, actually representing the very reason for its existence. With the aim of taking strategic decisions, for the business/company's development, decision metrics must be employed, such as SWOT, **BCG** (Boston Consulting Group), **PM** (products and markets) etc.

Promotion politics implies combined efforts to influence the buyers' opinion in favor of their own goods and services or ideas, reported to a certain market.

Promotion is the most visible component for the consumer, and new theories consider it "communication policy", since it often describes the entire field of "company communication", in order to increase sales.

Sale communication, according to marketing management approach, includes the following elements:

1) Advertising and publicity

Publicity is any kind of impersonal communication referring to ideas, goods or services, usually by means of mass media, the most frequent publicity forms being printed ones, audio and/or video.

Taking into account the fact that advertising is not only a means of uninterested information, one can state that advertising is a voluntary form of communication subordinated to a commercially objective. This is not objective information, but rather a plea for a product or a company, in order to achieve sale.

The advertising specialist makes use of a series of special information from surveys, motivations analysis, etc. and function of these, they must place the buying act in a very rich context from the psychological and social point of view.

Defining the role of advertising within the global marketing strategy is not such a difficult task as long as the company understands to struggle to defend its products' image as well as the company's public image.

From a managerial perspective, advertising has the same general objectives as, for example, promoting, informing, convincing, recalling.

Concisely speaking, advertising objectives are: knowing about the product's existence, knowing the product's characteristics, building the company or product's image, causing immediate purchase, post-sale communication to remind about the brand or the product to faithful customers.

For some products, the need for information is low, since buying them does not require supplementary information, eventual brand problem may occur.

For other products, though, the need for information is great. This category includes:

- New products;
- Products with a great technical complexity;
- Products with high purchase risks.

When the product's quality is suspicious, it is obvious that advertising cannot make it a success. The consumer is tricked into buying it only once. This does not mean that all products subjected to advertising are good quality, even though the product was initially purchased following advertising actions; this will not happen twice. Moreover, due to the unfortunate experience, that specific category of buyers may refuse any product belonging to the same brand in the future, consumers growing suspicious. There is also the situation of quality products which do not enjoy appropriate advertising, and consequently sales do not increase. The advantage offered by the product's originality must necessarily be exploited by the advertising specialist.

The main advertising media are:

- The press: daily, periodic, specialty (for professionals);
- Television ;
- Display;
- Radio;
- Cinema.

Apart from the products specific to these media (clip, spots) other printed products can be used, such as calendars, products catalogues, fliers, prospect, brochures, leaflets etc.

It is difficult to quantify the impact of advertising on the increase of sale

volume or the improvement of the company's image, since advertising is only one of the numerous factors which can cause sale increase, and its effort is difficult to isolate.

If the objective of advertising is to reveal a product's definite advantage, or to create a positive attitude towards a certain brand, then advertising efficiency can be measured by a market survey (by help of a questionnaire). The subjects can be asked how much they memorized of the transmitted message and what is their attitude towards the proposed brand.

Advertising efficiency can be measured on two levels:

- On a cognitive one (studying the increase in sale volume) ;
- On affective level (methods devised by psychologists with the purpose to measure customers' preferences and attitudes).

2) Personal sale

Personal sale is a relatively expensive form of promotion, but a very efficient one.

Personal sale is a person-to-person type of communication presenting the following advantages:

- ☞ Each party can state their opinion on the spot, and non-verbal means such as gestures, mimic etc. can sometimes be decisive;
- ☞ One can establish relationships that later can be developed, allowing a more precise focus than advertising;
- ☞ requires an answer;
- ☞ the impact is greater than that of advertising;

Its main disadvantage consists of the limitation of the total number of contacts, and total costs are higher than in the case of advertising.

The most important aspects referring to personal sale management are:

- recruiting the best sale agents;
- keeping the best sale agents;
- quality of instruction;
- establishing new services for clients;
- knowing the products' technical qualities and their disadvantages as well;
- reputation with clients.

Personal sale must be conceived as mutually advantageous long-term relationship with the client and not necessarily as a short-time means of boosting sale volume.

Nowadays some companies use category sale that is each sale agent specializes in certain lines of products.

For important clients, this type of sale is supported by a team of financial, production and distribution specialists, thus possible adaptations of the company's response to the client's needs being possible.

The company must analyze the unique role played by personal sale in the marketing mix, so that the client's needs should be satisfied in the most efficient way.

Sale agents can fulfill one or more of the following functions in a company:

- ☞ market research (finding new clients and pursuing new relationships)
- ☞ targeting (dividing limited time resources between effective clients)
- ☞ communicating (information about products and services)
- ☞ selling (mastering the art of negotiating and selling)
- ☞ offering services (offering services and consultancy to clients)
- ☞ gathering information (thus performing market analysis)

- distribution (when the company owns a limited number of products they decide to which clients they are sold)

3) Special promotion techniques – with the aim of stimulating short-time sales.

The American Marketing Association defines sale promotions as those marketing activities – others than personal sale, advertising and publicity – which motivate the costumer to purchase and the distributor to be efficient, such as: presentations, exhibitions, demonstrations, as well as other techniques different from the routine ones.

There are other types of activities, such as: employing specialist to display products in shop windows and stores, interior/exterior designers, sampling, competitions, exhibitions and fairs, sales, prizes, discounts etc. which, from the financial point of view, imply extra costs, apart from destined for advertising. These costs have a tendency to increase, which proves that these techniques are used more and more.

Promoting sales does not represent substitute for promotional programs, but the supplementation of promotional activities, a secure means of building the clients' favorable attitude.

Unlike advertising and personal sale, which are used continuously and target long-term sales, sale promotions represent an activity taking place from time to time and targets short-term sale increase.

But there are activities such as leasing, consultancy and engineering, which can be included in the special promotion techniques and can build a long-time relationship. Their importance is great because they are special instruments for building image.

When comparing advertising and sale promotion, one can say that in the case of advertising, due to the messages, the customer is pushed towards the product, while in the case of sale promotion, the product is pushed toward the customer; in both cases these techniques must lead to sale increase.

4) Public relations

Advertising must be informative, convincing and suggestive.

Its main objective is changing demand on the market, in favor of its own service/product, by using a series of specific techniques.

Advertising, personal sale, sale promotion and public relations are instruments employed by marketing specialists in order to plan strategies and communication campaigns.

Advertising a new product or service can be more efficient when applying promotional mix.

Promotional factors refer to the product (for example quality, wrapping, shape, band, promotional prices) or the quality of the commercial (title, text, slogan, illustration, coloring, label) and their role is to draw the customers' attention and stimulate their interest.

The stages of elaborating a promotion mix are:

- Selecting specific objectives;
- Identifying and selecting relevant target segments or target clients;
- Identifying and selecting the components of the promotional mix;
- Their optimal integration, that is allotting each specific objective to each relevant segment and to each element of the promotional mix.

Designing the components of the promotional mix, within a specific structure

representing the direction given by the two moments, the initial and the final one, represents the company's promotion strategy.

A few general observations refer to the following:

- ☞ Designing the promotional mix depends first of all on:
 - The nature of the product/service;
 - The stage in the lifecycle of the product/service;
 - The chosen market segment or segments (respectively target public/publics).
- ☞ Not all promotion instruments can be used simultaneously, due to the high costs and their interchangeable character
- ☞ Promotion instruments are rarely used separately;
- ☞ No promotion instrument is superior to another, so none should be ignored; according to circumstances, the importance of one may increase for a short period of time, since each instrument has both advantages and disadvantages.

Building a promotion strategy implies taking into consideration different promoting activities as a whole, the creator's task being to determine the type of activities that will accomplish the promoting objectives of the company. That is why just one activity cannot answer to all the objectives.

A strategy implies allotting the necessary founding and efforts to different promoting activities.

Any company must possess its own promoting program. This program must start by establishing objectives.

Generally speaking, one can say that the objective of promotion can be communicating the necessary information to the costumer in order to take a decision, together with simulating sales.

Public relation and free advertising are extremely helpful in attracting attention and knowing about the existence of a solution to a given problem on the market, and potential buyers are more receptive to some promoting instruments than others.

Similarly to taking marketing decisions, promoting decisions must be based on understanding the company's position on the market.

For example, a dispersed market (for example pre-packaged products) needs a small number of contacts – advertising being the most appropriate, while on a geographically dense market, the personal sales approach is necessary.

The nature of his product also affects the methods used in their promotion.

For example, when the product has a high unitary value, there is a focus on personal sale.

The stage of the product's lifecycle also influences promoting methods.

When introducing a new product, the marketing mix must supply the information, which must draw attention on the product. In this stage, advertising is dominant. The product must also be displayed and pushed down the distribution channel, by means of personal sale, exhibitions, fairs, etc.

When the product reaches the maturity stage, the promotion mix shifts towards sale promotion.

During the decline stage, new products substitute the old ones, which are finally abandoned. In this stage raffles, games with prizes, competitions, championships are frequently used as specific promoting instruments; promoting expenses will be significantly reduced and then completely eliminated.

The apparition of the Internet allowed the development of a new type of marketing – e-marketing.

For marketing, the impact of the Internet has led to major changes in company culture, the disappearance of classical hierarchic model leadership, a spectacular change of the relationships between partners, radicalization of information and contact between partners, and shortage of economic cycles.

The Internet provides a series of obvious advantages for marketing: it allows companies to increase and intensify their presence on the market, offers possibilities for market development and increasing sales, contributes to improving services for clients, allows companies to change a potential client into an active one, facilitates information transfer and their rapid update, significant economy, increased safety, equal opportunities, information flow control.

Globalization and information society cause a radical change of marketing objectives, form a highly homogenous activity with mass addressability marketing becoming a highly heterogeneous, fragmentary activity, target markets oriented.

Products are offered everywhere on special e-commerce sites, on a global market, buyers can be anywhere in the world, the distribution process is controlled by virtual sales. Nowadays most producers, intermediaries and marketing specialists have sites using direct marketing.

E-commerce allows more than any other solution or technique successful client-oriented marketing. Successful marketing does not happen only as a consequence of understanding specific instruments and the way in which they are used. The Internet is an instrument and a technology, as well as a world in itself, a specific culture.

E-commerce allows the fulfillment of marketing specialists' dream – individual marketing – that is adapting the product to each individual customer. The client must only be led to surf the site and specify the characteristics of the chosen product. All the wishes and the path on the producer's site shall be monitored and recorded: what Web pages were visited, how much time was spent on a page, what advertisements caught his/her attention etc. Companies use such information to change the characteristics of their own offers and to customize user interfaces as marketing means. Based on the information gained extremely fast and with low costs, the company suggests other products which may interest the client, function of previous acquisitions of client with similar profile. Additionally, the data bases thus created can be used for a more efficient organization of selling campaigns, for identifying new targets on a certain market.

E-marketing exhibits the following specific features: direct and interactive character, being a more active environment than classical media, internet promotions attract clients toward a product/service, internet marketing facilitates a permanent exchange of detailed specific information, internet marketing offers other information and opportunities, there is no real obstacle referring to the size, scope and level of transactions via the internet due to marketing research; it is an instrument for globalizing research in marketing, in its customized global marketing variant it proves to be a viable alternative for the future.

Its characteristics are unique compared to other types of marketing; it is relational, and confrontation is replaced by relationship; it is interactive, dialogue oriented and open; it is direct, being directly oriented towards the client, without intermediaries; it is based on information representing the vehicle of IT networks; it is global, but it focuses on individual clients, it is fast, it has low transactional and communication costs, operates in a world without distances and does not have a closing

time being available 24 hours a day.

Although it may take a while until companies will adapt their conventional marketing strategies to the interactive model, they are forced to take into consideration these new marketing techniques.

E-marketing is an online strategy for promoting web sites, a plan of promoting its own web site through exclusively online means, aiming at attracting as many clients as possible and maintaining them as much as possible, with minimal costs and maximal profits. The essential stage of each e-marketing plan is optimizing web sites, especially for search engines and web directories. Marketing and advertising strategies are absolutely necessary to gain success on the Internet.

The Internet provides a promoting environment which can be used for identifying prospects, collecting information for these prospects. Online promoting of the content can be adjusted to the client's current or past behavior, to the behavior or knowledge previous to acquisition, or a combination of the three. The traffic of a certain web site can be increased by increasing the number of new users arriving on the site or by offering more pages to the already existing ones. Interactive publicity implies the viewer directly, controlling how much information is received.

The interactive bidirectional communication capability of the Internet, combined with its increased acceptance worldwide, attracted advertising specialists.

Promoting a web site is as important as building it. Thus, if the users do not know about its existence and its benefits, its utility is almost zero.

The means by which web site promotion can be achieved are, mainly, the following: traditional mass media means, publicity banners, search engines and directories, newsgroups, mutual links, affiliated programs, web ring.

An efficient image promotion of the company through modern means provided by this new means of marketing communication means much more than a simple accounting of the daily number of access entries. First of all, it means an effective opportunity to achieve marketing research, in order to achieve market analysis by using online data from users.

Market research in e-Marketing

Market research is a process that aids business decisions. It involves systematically gathering, recording and analyzing data and information about customers, competitors and the market.

Research can be based on primary data and information, or secondary data and information. Primary research is conducted when data or information are gathered for a particular product or hypothesis. This is where information does not exist already or is not accessible, and so needs to be specifically collected from consumers or businesses. Surveys, focus groups, research panels and research communities can all be used when conducting primary market research.

Secondary research uses existing, published data and research as a source of research. It can be more cost effective than conducting primary research, and the Internet opens a wealth of resources for conducting this research. However, the data would have originally been collected for solving problems other than the one at hand, so might not be sufficiently specific. That being said, secondary research can be useful in identifying problems to be investigated through primary research.

Research can also be classified as qualitative or quantitative. Qualitative research can be classified as exploratory. Qualitative research aids in identifying

potential hypotheses, whereas quantitative research puts hard numbers behind these hypotheses. Qualitative research seeks to find out what potential consumer perceptions and feelings exist around a given subject. This research can often be used to advise the design of quantitative research, which relies on numerical data to demonstrate statistically significant outcomes.

The Internet is a useful tool for both primary and secondary research, and can be used to gather both qualitative and quantitative data. In fact the communities on the Web can be viewed as one large focus group, regularly and willingly sharing their opinions on products, markets and companies. Today, organizations transacting online have a wealth of research information freely available to them, and sophisticated tools for gathering further data.

Market research should produce information that leads to actions.

Qualitative and quantitative research techniques of e-Marketing

Quantitative research gathers data that can be statistically analyzed to determine results. Data must be formally gathered, and should be collected to test a hypothesis as opposed to determine a hypothesis.

Qualitative data can be more difficult to quantify. Typically, because base sizes are smaller and not necessarily representative of the market under investigation (as it can be more expensive and time consuming to gather and analyze the data), qualitative data cannot be taken as quantified. It is however valuable in aiding a researcher in interpreting the market perspective. It is possible to combine approaches, producing data that can be used both qualitatively and quantitatively.

Table no. 1

QUALITATIVES RESEARCH	QUANTITATIVES RESEARCH
Assumptions	Assumptions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reality is socially constructed Subject matter is most important Variables are complex, interwoven, difficult to measure Insider's point of view 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social facts have an objective reality Method is most important Variables can be identified and relationships can be measured Outsider/s point of view
Purpose	Purpose
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Context of issues Interpretation Understand perspectives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Generalisation Prediction Explain causes
Approach	Approach
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ends with hypotheses for further research Inductive Searches for patterns Seeks complexity Makes minor use of numerical indices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Begin with hypotheses Deductive Analyses components Seeks consensus, the norm Reduce data to numerical indices
Researcher role	Researcher role
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Personal involvement, partial Empathetic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Detachment, impartial Objective

Source: <http://www.gifted.uconn.edu/siegle/research/Qualitative/qualquan.htm>

For example, many tools that can track brand name mentions are outlined. This data can then be analyzed qualitatively, where the researcher can examine the mentions and use their judgment to determine sentiment, or quantitatively, where mentions can be assigned numeric values across a range of categories which are used to generate a reputation score.

When both qualitative and quantitative research are used, usually qualitative research takes place first to get an idea of the issues to be aware of, and then quantitative research tests the theories put forward in qualitative research.

The table no. 1 aims to look at the main differences between quantitative and qualitative research.

Conclusions

The rapid development of e-marketing was and still is at high levels, in all its functional aspects, in contrast with the research and advertising process in traditional marketing. Through the e-marketing approach, the fundamental aspects of marketing have not changed. The present article is focused on the strategic approach of e-business and the functional one, through appropriate analysis: resources, demand, competition.

Planning an e-marketing campaign must take into consideration, apart from a considerable quota on the market, profit and profitability rate involved. Investment profitability and business value boosts and leads to evolutions and changes in e-business. Efficient e-marketing campaigns, which fulfill their goals and allow quantification of the company actions' impact on the market, represent the key to success in business today.

E-marketing instruments and strategies represent a solid support for dialogue between management and clients, allowing them to express their opinions and proposals in different ways. E-marketing is oriented towards a better understanding of the clients, their needs and their specific way of action, towards personal and direct-oriented communication. E-marketing approach is a personal one, centered on the client's profile.

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