

THE COMMUNICATION PROCESS BETWEEN COMPANIES AND A CUSTOMERS: PROMOTION PROGRAM FOR A BRAND

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Summary

Every day we are being bombarded with radio and email advertisements, catalogs, direct mail, TV commercials at work and at home. The big number of messages to which potential consumers are being exposed every day create a negative attitude towards advertisements. Furthermore, customers more often avoid advertisements by watching only commercial-free channels, turning off the sound during the commercials, or by switching the channel. These facts would lead to conclusion that marketers should stop advertising their products because their messages will not be even heard. However, advertising can be a very powerful promotion tool if it can gain and maintain attention of potential customers. Therefore, in order to succeed today's advertising messages have to be better planned, more entertaining and imaginative, and even more rewording to customers.

Keywords: management, organization, contemporary manager, professional silhouette, personal and interpersonal skills, specialization managers

Introduction

Advertising message should follow directly from the firms' positioning strategy. In this context, companies have to decide how they want to position their products and brands – on products' attributes and benefits or rather on values and beliefs. Designing a brand identity strategy is also a very

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important element as the brand identity reflects how the company desires and wants the consumer to perceive the brand – its image. In addition, by basing on the target audience areas, firms can identify rivals in those markets and learn about their strategies in order to claim a different position in the market. Furthermore, both marketing strategies should be developed on the bases of the target market's needs, wants and expectations in order to effectively communicate the message. The communication process between companies and their potential customers can not only rely on advertising. Therefore, firms have to carefully plan and design their promotion mix which can be comprised of advertising, sales promotion, public relations, personal selling and direct marketing tools. The chosen promotion mix tools have to be blended together to form a constant and coordinated communications programs.

The communication process between companies and customers

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Furthermore, the communication process between organizations and their target groups has to be very dynamic in order to adjust to purchasers' requirements, therefore, it is essential to implement new, unconventional and innovative forms of product and brand promotion. The main forms of unconventional marketing are guerilla marketing and product placement. Guerilla marketing comprised of flash mob and ambient relies on imagination and creativeness and most often is utilized in public places. Therefore, this particular marketing technique directly interacts with consumers and creates a word of mouth marketing, which in effect can turn into viral marketing. The fact that advertising is being challenged with growing audience fragmentation has encouraged marketers to seek for alternative form of promotion such as product placement. Product placement is a common practice in which products or brands are being placed in films, TV series, television programs, blogs, books, magazines, and comics. In product placement a product or a brand can be seen or used and mentioned by the main character. If a product or a brand placed in any mass media is accompanied by a famous actor then the product placement can be interpreted as a type of indirect

endorsement by a celebrity. The main purpose of product placement is to reach the target market more effectively, to gain consumer's attention and interest, to increase customers' memory and recall of a brand and to widen brand awareness and to support building its image. The companies should also aim to build a profound relationships with their target markets. The best way to achieve this goal is to acquaint consumers with new and innovative forms of promotion such as special events, contests and sweepstake promotion. Special events can appear as concerts, parties, trade shows, presentations and other forms that aim to promote a product or a brand. Special events aim to build brand awareness and brand image, however, the most relevant aspect of this tool is its ability to leave an inerascible and positive imprint on customer's mind and to motivate them to identify with companies' products. In overcrowded markets companies should also encourage their consumers to make a purchase by adding extra value to a product. The extra value can be added by organizing innovative contests and sweepstake promotions. These sales promotion tools do not only aim to expend short-term sales but mainly aim to generate excitement among consumers and to support building brand image and brand awareness.

Developing a successful promotion program for a brand

Nowadays, companies in order to claim and sustain their market share have to use more complicated and innovative techniques and technology. The company's success on a market depends on its knowledge of consumers' needs as well as on producing and offering the highest quality products, setting attractive prices, and providing customers with suitable places and conditions of products or service purchase³.

The constant communication is essential. Producers, wholesalers, retailers, and manufactures that provide a variety of services and products to final customers communicate with them by strategically directed and realized promotion that provides information about product's attributes as well as benefits of its use. The communication process is comprised of two phases⁴:

1. Implementation of marketing research that allows companies to gather information about customers' needs, wants, and preferences.
2. Dissemination of information to the market.

³ Reško D. Wołowiec T. Żukowski P., *Zasadnicze problemy z podstaw zarządzenia organizacją*, Wyższa Szkoła Biznesu – National-Louis University, Nowy Sącz 2010, p. 197.

⁴ J. Altkorn, *Strategia Marki*, Polskie Wydawnictwo Ekonomiczne S.A., Warszawa 2006, p. 39.

The information transmitted to target markets should be carefully planned and designed in order to meet company's objectives. In fact, the big number of information transferred to target audience can have an opposite effect – consumers may have difficulties in making purchase decisions. However, if companies do not provide consumers with information about their products, consumers may not even know about their existence. Therefore, it is crucial for companies to communicate with their target markets and provide them with carefully selected and planned information that can increase the demand for their products⁵.

In fact, communication efforts do not only concern informing potential consumers about product availability, but also should encourage and convince them to make a purchase. Furthermore, most of the products require a use of promotion of which main purpose is to convince customers that product's attributes and benefits will fulfill their wants and expectations. Therefore, promotion is considered as a very important marketing domain.

Many people consider marketing as selling and advertising. However, selling and advertising create only a piece of the marketing iceberg. According to P.F Drucker, the main aim of the business is to create customers⁶. Therefore, the main objective of marketing is to learn, discover, and understand consumers' needs. Marketing mix can be defined as the group of tactical and controllable marketing tools that company blends in order to produce the response it wants to achieve in the target market⁷. Furthermore, marketing mix is comprised of everything a company can do to effect the demand for its services and products. According to McCarthy, these tools can be categorized into four wide groups known as the "Four Ps" of marketing: product, price, place, and promotion⁸.

Marketing mix composition aims

The marketing mix composition aims to combine products with attractive prices, distribution channels that provide convenient purchase conditions and effective promotion. Furthermore, product can be considered as

⁵ Ph. Kotler, G. Armstrong, J. Saunders, V. Wong, *Marketing, Podręcznik Europejski*, PWE, Warszawa 2002, p. 234.

⁶ L. Żabiński, K. Śliwińska, *Marketing: koncepcje, badania, zarządzanie*, PWE, Warszawa 2002, p. 29.

⁷ L. Garbarski, I. Rutkowski, W. Wrzosek, *Marketing: Punkt Zwrotny Nowoczesnej Firmy*, PWE, Warszawa 2001, p. 63.

⁸ Ph. Kotler, *Marketing: analiza, planowanie, wdrażanie i kontrola*, Wydawnictwo Felberg SJA, Warszawa 1999, p. 89.

a fundamental tool of marketing mix because it presents the actual firm's offer. In marketing, product can be considered as a material good, service or idea offered to a market for sell and in order to fulfill certain needs⁹. The second major and very important marketing mix tool is price that can be defined as the value placed on goods and services¹⁰. Distribution is comprised of all the activities that make a product or service available to target customers. The last element of marketing-mix is promotion. Promotion consist of all the communication methods that marketers use in order to provide information about a product to target groups and to persuade them to make a purchase.

Marketing mix decisions have to be made for influencing company's trade channels as well as target consumers. As can be seen in Figure 1.3 a firm prepares its offer mix that consists of a product, service and price, and uses a promotion mix comprised of advertising, sales promotion, personal selling, public relations, the Internet, and telemarketing in order to reach its distribution channels and the target customers more effectively.

The concept and the essence of promotion

Promotion can be examined from different perspective such as economic and marketing perspective. The two types of promotion are separated and categorized by significant differences. In economic perspective the main aim of promotion is to increase profit as well as demand for company's products. In marketing perspective promotion can be considered as one of the marketing mix elements that aims to inform, persuade and remind target market of a product. In fact, even the most useful products and brands can turn out to be a failure if customers are not informed about their availability¹¹. In addition, the key to the success is to convince customers that company's products are designed to fulfill their needs and wants. Furthermore, because of the tough competition even the most established companies have to constantly remind consumers about their products and aim to sustain positive product and brand associations in their minds. Whether the aim of specially designed promotional activity is to persuade, remind, or inform, the ultimate objective is to influence recipient's behavior, feelings, and beliefs.

⁹ A. Nowacka, R. Nowacki, *Podstawy marketingu*, Centrum Doradztwa i Informacji Difin Sp. z o.o, Warszawa 2006, p. 22.

¹⁰ E. Michalski, *Marketing, Podręcznik Akademicki*, PWN, Warszawa 2003, p. 35.

¹¹ A. Pabian, *Promocja nowoczesne środki i formy*, Centrum Doradztwa i Informacji Difin Sp. z o.o., Warszawa 2008, p. 28.

Nowadays, modern marketing requests more than just creating a very good product, with an attractive price and convenience access of its purchase. The crucial element of company's efforts is communication which enables building a profound relationship with the customers. Therefore, promotion serves as the main marketing mix tool by which companies communicate with their target groups. In this context, promotion can be also defined as a certain dialogue between organizations and their potential consumers. Furthermore, the communication process aims to elicit a desired reaction from the purchasers. The buyers' respond and reaction appears as acceptance or negation to companies' marketing offer – promoted product, its price and availability in a specific place and time.

The communication model between a company and its target market presented in Figure 1 consists of nine elements. The major elements of communication process are a sender and a receiver. The next two, a message and a channel, are considered as the most important marketing communication tools. The last elements of communication model represent the most important function of communication process – encoding, decoding, response, and feedback¹².

The communications process starts when an organization or a person sends a message to a target audience or a person by encoding the message into a symbolic form. The sender uses an appropriate media in order to carry the message to its destination. In this process, the group of target audience serves as receivers who decode the message. However, encoding and decoding process and understanding the message can be disturbed by channel noise. This element of communication process appears as any distraction that disturbs the process of coding and encoding the message. There are three main forms of communications noises.

1. Semantic – occurs when a sender uses technical language, words or phrases that the receiver cannot understand¹³.
2. External – typically, these are sounds, sights, textures, smells and environmental factors.
3. Internal – refer to someone's feelings or thoughts that interfere with communication.

Feedback is the receivers' response to the message. It represents target audience's reaction and perception of the message. The model emphasizes the most important factors and elements of effective communication.

¹² M. Rydel, *Komunikacja Marketingowa*, Ośrodek Doradztwa i Doskonalenia Kadr Sp. z o.o., Gdańsk 2001, 33.

¹³ J. W. Wiktor, *Promocja, System komunikacji przedsiębiorstwa z rynkiem*, PWN, Warszawa 2005, p. 14-15.

Senders should know which target group they want to reach as well as the response they desire to achieve. The sender has to send the message through the appropriate channel in order to effectively reach the target market. The sender should also build special channels to unveil consumer's response.

The communication process between organizations and target markets involves a use of variety of tools which characterize different structure and function. These tools create a complex composition called promotion mix. Company's total promotion mix which can be also called marketing communication mix is comprised of the specific blend of advertising, sales promotion, public relations, personal selling and directed marketing tools which a firm uses in order to achieve its advertising as well as marketing objectives¹⁴. Furthermore, all of the communication efforts have to be turned into a consistent as well as coordinated communications program. Nowadays, more companies decide to implement the concept called Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC). As can be seen in Figure 1.5, the organization carefully integrates as well as coordinates its many communications tools to deliver a clear, consistent, and compelling message about the company and its brand¹⁵. IMC also means that company's message, positioning, image, and identity strategies have to be coordinated across all promotion mix venues.

In planning the promotion mix companies should first concentrate on their product and brand positioning strategy. Company's positioning strategy refers to the complex set of feelings, perception and impressions that customers have for a particular product or brand. Positioning strategy can be also considered as the way the specific product and brand is defined and perceived by customers¹⁶. According to another definition positioning can be perceived as the act of designing the company's offering and image to occupy a distinctive spot in the minds of the target markets.

The main aim of positioning is to differentiate company's offer from competitor's offer. Therefore, the positioning task involves from the organization identifying a group of competitive advantages (benefits) and selecting the appropriate competitive advantage on which a company will build its position. In order to be able to choose the right competitive advantage firms often prepare perceptual/positioning maps. The main aim of the positioning maps is to present consumers perceptions of company's brands versus competing products on important buying dimensions (benefits). Therefore,

¹⁴ R. S. Winer, *Marketing Management*, International Edition, Second Edition, Pearson Education, Inc., New Jersey 2004, p. 230.

¹⁵ G. Armstrong, P. Kotler, *Marketing: An Introduction*, op. cit., p. 402.

¹⁶ J. Pogorzelski, *Pozycjonowanie produktu*, PWE, Warszawa 2008, p. 47.

the perceptual maps allow companies to unveil the position that are occupied by their closest rivals. If two or more firms select the same position, then both of them will have to differentiate their offer by building a unique set of benefits.

Brand can be positioned at three levels – attributes, benefits, and beliefs and values¹⁷. Most of the companies build their brand and product strategies on delivering and emphasizing products attributes and benefits. The first positioning technique is considered as less efficient as product attributes can be easily copied by potential competitors. A brand positioning can be more improved if its name is associated with desirable benefits. However, this kind of strategy will not guarantee the success. Therefore, the most powerful brands go beyond products attributes or benefits, they concentrate more on beliefs and values. If companies decide to position their brand on values then they have to choose the appropriate value to which the brand has to adhere. Brand value can be defined as the state of mind that plays a significant role to consumers and is used to choose the mission for the brand¹⁸. While choosing brand values marketers have to go through three different phases. The first phase refers to brand's aspiration level which can be divided into three levels- need-driven, outer-directed, and inner-directed level. The need driven level signifies that the brand refers to biological as well as material needs. If the company chooses outer-directed aspiration level then the brand relates to customers' relational needs. The inner-directed aspiration level refers to people' need for self actualization.

The second phase requires from marketers choosing maximum three values among each aspiration levels that they wish to implement. In the last phase of selecting brand values companies have to translate the selected values into particular attributes or benefits. The brand values can be also translated into brand's mission statement or brand proposition. The main role of the mission statement is to express what a brand should be and do. Furthermore, anything that customer relates to the particular brand has to signal the chosen value of the brand. Therefore, brand values determine all the decisions that are being made in the organization. The brand is perceived as a company's promise to provide customers with certain set of features and benefits as well as experiences. Marketing communication plays the main role in conveying those values to consumers.

In planning the promotion mix companies can choose from two promotion mix strategies such as push promotion or pull promotion. Figure 1

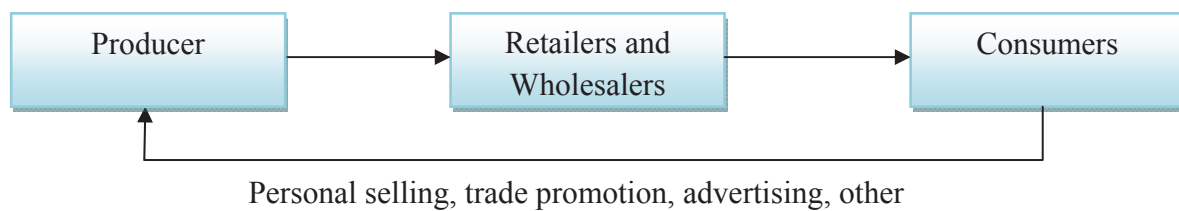
¹⁷ Ibid, p. 242.

¹⁸ R. Riezebos, *Brand Management: A Theoretical and Practical Approach*, Pearson Education Limited, United Kingdom 2003, p. 60.

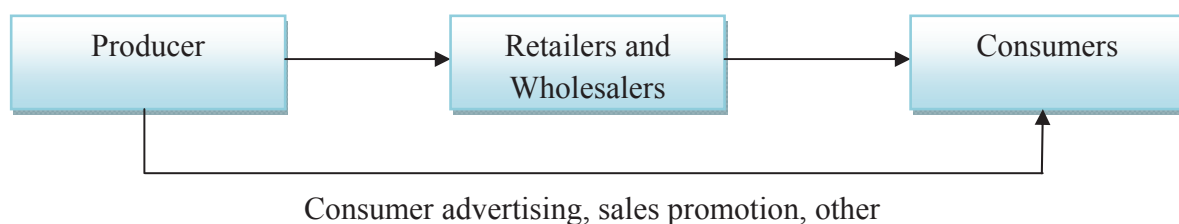
presents the main differences between these two strategies. In push strategy product is being “pushed” through distribution channels to end consumers¹⁹. In this kind of strategy marketing activities such as personal selling and trade promotion are directed toward channel members. The push strategy aims to induce wholesalers and retailers to carry and to promote the product to final consumers. In contrary, in pull strategy marketer directs its marketing activities such as advertising and consumer promotion toward end users. The main purpose of this strategy is to motivate consumers to request the product from retailers, who in effect will demand the particular product from wholesalers, who in turn will be obligated to order it from the producer. Therefore, under a pull strategy, customer demand “pulls” the particular product through the distribution channels. Many companies decide to use only the push strategy and some only the pull strategy. However, the combination of the two strategies is considered as the best marketing strategy.

Figure 1 Push and Pull Promotion Strategy

PUSH STRATEGY



PULL STRATEGY



Source: G. Armstrong, P. Kotler, *Marketing: An Introduction*, op. cit., 405.

The other factor that has to be considered while designing promotion mix is the product life cycle. The product life cycle consists of four different stages: introduction, growth, maturity, and decline. The introduction stage begins when a new product/brand is first launched. In the introduction stage, profits tend to be negative or very low. The reason for that, are the low sales and high distribution as well as promotion expenditures. Promotion

¹⁹ J. Blythe, *Komunikacja Marketingowa*, PWE, Warszawa 2002, p. 55.

expenses are relatively high in order to inform and encourage consumers to try a new product. In this stage a firm also has to concentrate on developing its promotion strategy which at the same time is consistent with its product and brand positioning strategy. Product can enter a growth stage only if it satisfies a market. In this stage, sales finally improves, and starts climbing quickly. However, attracted by occasion to gain profit, new competitor can enter a market. If the competitors introduce new product features, the market will eventually expand. In this case, prices will maintain at the same level or slightly drop. Promotion is still very crucial in this stage, the goal is to educate customers about brand as well as to challenge competitors. Sooner or later product's sales growth and profit will decrease, and at this point a product will enter the maturity stage²⁰. In this stage the majority of potential customers become product users. The main reason for a slowdown in sales growth is an appearance of many companies with a variety of products to sell, which unfortunately leads to greater competition. In maturity stage companies should concentrate their efforts on modifying their products, the markets as well as marketing mixes. Decline stage characterizes a high drop in sales volume. Product can enter the decline stage because of technological advances, increased competition, or changes in consumer tastes²¹. In this case, some companies withdraw from the market. These who remain in the market may cut their product offerings. In this situation, companies may decide to cover smaller market segments, drop the promotion budget, or reduce their prices.

Developing a promotion program

While planning the marketing communication program for the company, the marketers should think with regard to campaign concept. A campaign can be defined as coordinated sequences of promotional efforts constructed around a specific theme and message, designed and planned to reach a certain goals in a specific period of time²². Even though, the term "campaign" is often strongly connected with the advertising tool of the promotion mix, it should embrace the total marketing communication program. As a matter of fact, having a creative concept for an advertising campaign does not guarantee the success. Therefore, in designing a campaign marketers should

²⁰ Ph. Kotler, *Marketing*, Dom Wydawniczy REBIS Sp. z o.o., Poznań 2005, p.329.

²¹ G. Armstrong, Ph. Kotler, *Marketing: An Introduction*, op. cit., 285.

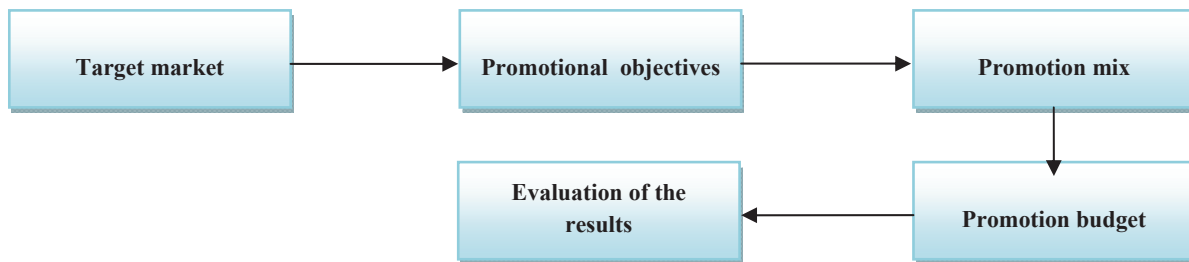
²² W. J. Stanton, Michael J. Etzel, Bruce J. Walker, *Fundamentals of Marketing*, Ninth Edition, McGraw-Hill, Inc., United States of America 1991, p. 422.

coordinate advertising, personal selling, sales promotion and public relations in order to reach their goals.

The marketers have to take under consideration many factors in developing an efficient marketing communications, or promotion program. These include the goals that marketers want to achieve, the characteristics of their target markets that communication efforts are planned to reach as well as the approachable budget. Furthermore, the product's positioning strategy, its potential rivals' promotional strategies, push and pull strategy, and the stage of product life cycle also have to be considered.

In fact, each element of the promotion mix—advertising, personal selling, public relations and sales promotion—has its strengths and weaknesses as well as advantages and disadvantages. Furthermore, developing a promotional budget is a very difficult task as it has to accomplish company's promotional objectives as well as it has to be effectively and wisely distributed across all of the promotion mix tools. Therefore, marketers use the five step process of developing the promotion program presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2 Decisions sequence for developing the promotion mix



Source: own work.

The first step in developing promotion program involves defining the target audience. Market segmentation can be identified on the basis of geographic and demographic criteria as well as on behavioral descriptors. The geographic criteria represent the region, population density and size of metropolitan area. In demographic criteria marketers have to consider many factors such as age, gender, income, occupation, education, nationality, religion and social class. Some behavioral descriptors include consumers' attitudes towards brand loyalty, benefits sought, usage rate, readiness, user status—potential, first time or regular, and occasions—events and holidays that stimulate the purchase. Marketers also have to take under consideration consumers' life style, values, attitudes, opinions and interests. Segmentation decisions are very important to promotion mix efforts because they define who the target market is, therefore, designing and planning promotion efforts can identify the best possible ways to reach and gain attention of the target consumers.

Setting the promotional objectives is a crucial element in developing the promotion program. Marketers have to decide what the communication has to achieve. Therefore, promotional objectives can be divided into two groups such as sales and communication objectives. Sales objectives apply to those elements and their combination such as sales, costs and profit. In this case, companies aim to achieve growth in sales, costs reduction as well as increase in income. Communication objectives concern building brand awareness and image, and to position the product in consumers' perception maps towards related products. Setting communication objectives can be also based on AIDA, DAGMAR, and Lavidge Steiner hierarchy of effect model.

After determining the target market and promotional objectives companies have to concentrate on setting their promotion budget. There are four common budget setting methods: the affordable method, the competitive-parity method, the percentage-of-sales method as well as objective-and-task method²³. In case of affordable method companies set their promotion budget at the level they can afford. In percentage-of-sales method the promotion budget is set as a specific percentage of present or estimated sales or as a percentage of a product's sales price. The competitive-parity method involves planning to budget the same amount on the promotion as the potential rivals. Among all of the budget setting method, the objective-and-task method is considered as the most effective one. This particular method involves setting the promotion budget on the basis of the tasks and objectives that promotion aims to achieve.

The first step in designing the promotion mix involves deciding which components of the promotion mix will be implemented: personal selling, advertising, public relations, or sales promotion²⁴. In fact, the components of promotion mix cannot be considered as independent, they have to be coordinated in order to deliver the desired message. As a matter of fact, many sales promotional tools require a use of advertising in order to inform potential customers about the promotion. Furthermore, on this stage marketers also have to decide which promotion mix tool will be the main driver of marketing communication strategy. In practice, usually advertising or personal selling play the main role in the firm's promotion program with public relations or sales promotion playing a supportive role. Marketers can base their decision on the comparative importance of these two elements of promotion mix.

²³ E. Michalski, *Marketing*, op.cit., p. 319.

²⁴ J. W. Mullins, O. C. Walker JR, W. Boyd JR, J. C. Larreche, *Marketing Management A strategic Decisions- Making Approach*, op. cit., p. 332.

Figure 2 Strategic circumstances as well as importance of the promotion mix elements- advertising and personal selling



Source: J. W. Mullins, O. C. Walker JR, H. W. Boyd JR, J-C. Larreche, *Marketing Management A strategic Decisions- Making Approach*, op. cit., 332.

As can be seen in Figure 2 many factors influence the choice between advertising and personal selling as the dominant tool of promotional program. Therefore, the marketers have to consider many factors such as number of customers, buyer's information needs, size and importance of purchase, product complexity, pricing policy, resources available for promotion, and distribution strategy.

In the next step the marketers have to select the precise activity in each of the promotion mix components. Sales promotion can be composed of free samples, coupons, premiums or sweepstakes, etc.. In advertising the marketers have to consider a specific media like TV, radio, magazines, newspaper, billboard or the Internet.

The third step involves from the marketers deciding within each activity which specific vehicle they are going to employ²⁵.

Standardization versus adaptation of promotion program

We live in the world of rapid change where borders disappear, distances decrease and product from other countries more often appear in our local supermarkets. In fact, we can watch entertainment and news which come

²⁵ G. Armstrong, P. Kotler, *Marketing, An Introduction*, op. cit., p. 420.

from other countries on television and thanks to the Internet communication with other people across the world became more faster and easier. In addition, due to these changes more and more companies decide to operate internationally.

Firms that aim to operate globally can choose to adopt or standardize one or some or all of the marketing mix elements which are comprised of the four P's: product, price, place, and promotion. In case of fully standardized strategy companies offer identical goods globally at identical prices as well as distribution channels, supported by the same sales and promotion programs²⁶. On the other hand, if companies decide to implement a fully adopted marketing strategy then they adjust all of the marketing mix elements to every target group they want to reach.

This part of paper concentrates on analyzing the possibility of standardization and adaptation of the product and promotion program. If marketers decide to implement a fully standardized strategy then they plan and design the advertising message that is effective all over the world. The promotion standardization requires the use of the same promotion strategy in every country in the world without implementing any changes. On the other hand, if marketers choose to implement a fully adopted strategy they create a different advertising message for each country they want to operate on.

A fully standardized promotion strategy provides companies with many benefits such as cost reduction due to economies of scale and enables companies to build the image consistency. However, due to the fact that implementation of fully standardized strategy is rarely possible marketers decided to look for alternative strategy such as standardization with adaptation to local market. The choice between these global marketing strategies should be based on the analysis of the culture in which the company wants to operate. The problem appears when firms avoid the cultural aspect and transfer their country's culture to the marketing activities abroad. As a result, individuals on the basis of their own culture may interpret a firms' marketing communication message in a distinctive way. In fact, the execution of domestic marketing research can substantially differentiate from the process of global research. Therefore, before any global marketing strategy can be chosen and a product can be launched marketers need to learn and understand foreign culture, learn about potential competitors and foreign market environment.

Culture as the concept has been given a big number of definitions. Culture can be considered as learned view a group of individuals have about life's preoccupations which ranks what is significant as well as instills a spe-

²⁶ M. de Mooij, *Global Marketing and Advertising, Understanding Cultural Paradoxes*, Second Edition, SAGE Publications INC., California 2005, p. 25.

cific behavior²⁷. Culture includes knowledge, morals, art as well as any other habits and capabilities acquired by individual as a member of specific society.

While referring to international marketing the definition of the culture can slightly change. In this case, culture can be defined as the sum of learned values, customs and beliefs which serve to direct the customers behavior in a specific country market. Culture consists of three major components:

1. Values – serve as guides and indicators for what is right and proper behavior, they tend to be commonly accepted by all of the specific market members²⁸.
2. Customs – represent modes of behavior or widely accepted and approved ways of behaving in certain situations.
3. Beliefs – create a big number of verbal and mental processes that reflect assessments and knowledge of the services and products.

In fact, those three culture components have a major effect on international marketing. They influence consumption behaviors as well as the consumer buying pattern. Values, customs and beliefs send indirect and direct message about the selection of products and services. The culture in which customers live also affects and determines their decision making process.

However, Isobel Doole and Robin Lowe in their definition included eight characteristics of the culture such as language, aesthetics, religion, values and attitudes, education, social organizations, law and politics as well as technology and material culture.

Religion plays a main role in many countries. Religion refers to set of beliefs that relate to a reality that cannot be verified empirically²⁹. In order to appreciate individuals' buying motives, practices, customs and beliefs understanding and awareness of their religion is necessary. In fact, religion taboos and requirements can have a major impact on company's advertising campaign and its effectiveness. Education also represents a crucial element of the culture. The most important aspect of education is its level³⁰. A level of education differentiate between countries, in fact developed countries characterize higher level of education than some growing countries.

²⁷ Ph. R. Cateora, J. L. Graham, *International Marketing*, Twelfth Edition, McGraw-Hill/Irwin, Boston 2005, p. 98.

²⁸ T. Peters, F. Trompenaars, Ch. Hampden-Turner, *Riding The Waves Of Culture, Understanding Cultural Diversity in Business*, Second Edition, Nicholas Brealey Publishing Ltd, London 1997, p. 22.

²⁹ Ph. R. Cateora, J. L. Graham, *International Marketing*, op. cit., p. 103.

³⁰ S. Hollensen, *Global Marketing: A Decision- Oriented Approach*, Third Edition, Financial Times Prentice Hall, p. 203.

Therefore, in countries with low level of education marketers should adopt product labeling as well as print advertisements in order to avoid misinterpretation and confusion among consumers. In case of the characteristic such as aesthetics, marketers have to make sure that use of music, brand names, color in their goods and communication strategies are sympathetic and approvable to the local culture. As a matter of fact, colors do not represent the same meanings in every culture. Colors like black and white have different meanings in different countries. In Western and Middle East countries white signifies purity, freshness and truth while in some Asian countries this color represents death and mourning. In most countries black is the color that represents death, sadness and mourning while in some Asian countries black is the color of purity, freshness and truth. It is necessary for a company to consider which color can be used in its global marketing strategy as not learning this cultural meanings cause misunderstanding in global communication. Furthermore, as almost every country represents a different language, linguistic problems may occur. Companies that choose to translate their advertising campaigns into a foreign language can face translation problems. In fact, some words are not translatable, even if the words can be translated to another language it doesn't ensure that the same advertising message is going to be communicated. In addition, advertising slogans which are the short, memorable phrases used in order to communicate with consumers and persuade them to buy certain products can be also influenced by translation problems. Advertising slogans very often consist of words of foreign origin, a specific terminology or even puns in order to create more special and attention gaining effect. Puns represent the play on words which have two or more meanings which once translated to another language may not deliver the same message.

Conclusions

Furthermore, products' country of origin also plays a significant role in global marketing strategies. As a matter of fact, while introducing a new product to a foreign market, its country's reputation – cultural image, populations stereotypes and historical conditions – has a big influence on people's perception and attitude towards the country as well as its products. Due to the fact that product's country of origin has a huge impact on its success on the foreign market Harvard Business School professor Rohit Deshpande has presented a new term of nowadays business world such as "Providence Paradox". According to professor the Providence Paradox refers to "products and services manufactured by developing countries that have a dif-

difficult time establishing a profit margin due to where they are from”³¹. The consumers are not willing to pay a high price for goods or services which come from third world countries even if they represent the finest quality. The business paradox concerns the marketers from growing countries and is meant to simplify the ways to provide products by growing countries with the fair price, which means the high price without considering their origin. Furthermore, evidence shows, that consumers usually perceive products’ country of origin as persuasive stereotypical information used to evaluate products³². Therefore, consumers perceive Italian jewelry, French perfume, Japanese electronics as the best products. In order to build strong brands and be able to compete with products that characterize the finest country of origin marketers should first evaluate the risk of emphasizing the product’s country of origin in their promotional programs.

Promotion might be affected by religion, language, economic differences, law, nature of the product, its country of origin, and even media availability. All of these factors have a major impact on deciding which global marketing strategy can be implemented. If the cultural differences do not exist then companies can choose to standardize their advertising message or if the differences between countries require only a slight modification of the promotion program then companies can implement standardization with adaptation to the local culture. In fact, adopting the promotion by little modification is considered as comparatively cost effective strategy as redesigning promotion message may not be that expensive. However, if there are many significant differences between domestic and foreign culture then a company has to fully adopt its promotion program.

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³¹ O. Oberhauser, *What is The Providence Paradox*, <http://www.ortwin-oberhauser.com/what-is-the-providence-paradox/>, date 25.11.2014.

³² Ph. R. Cateora, J. L. Graham, *International Marketing*, op.cit., 367.

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