

TRANSITION FROM EMOTIONAL TO RATIONAL ADVERTISING FOR FOOD PRODUCTS ON THE ROMANIAN MARKET

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Received Dec. 09, 2016. Revised: Feb. 28, 2017. Accepted: March, 10, 2017. Published online: Apr. 14, 2017

ABSTRACT. Advertising helps to establish a set of assumptions that the consumer will bring to all other aspects of their engagement with a given brand. Advertising provides tangible evidence of the financial credibility and competitive presence of an organization. Persuasion is becoming more important in advertising. In marketing, persuasive advertising acts to establish wants/motivations and beliefs/attitudes by helping to formulate a *conception* of the brand as being one which people like those in the target audience would or should prefer. Considering the changes in lifestyle and eating habits of a significant part of the population in urban areas in Romania, the paper aims to analyse how brands manage to differentiate themselves from competitors, to reposition themselves on the market and influence consumers, meeting their increasingly varied needs. Food brands on the Romanian market are trying, lately, to identify new methods of differentiation and new benefits for their buyers. Given that more and more consumers are becoming increasingly concerned about what they eat and the products' health effects, brands struggle to highlight the fact that their

products offer real benefits for the body. The advertisements have become more diversified and underline the positive effects, from the health and well - being point of view, that those foods offer (no additives and preservatives, use of natural ingredients, various vitamins and minerals or the fact that they are dietary). Advertising messages' diversification is obvious on the Romanian market, in the context of an increasing concern of the population for the growing level of information of some major consumer segments.

Keywords: advertising; persuasion; positioning; target market.

REZUMAT Tranziția de la publicitatea emoțională la cea rațională pentru produsele alimentare pe piața din România. Publicitatea ajută la stabilirea unui set de ipoteze, pe care consumatorul le va corela cu toate celelalte aspecte ale angajamentului său față de un anumit brand. Publicitatea oferă dovezi concrete ale credibilității financiare și prezenței competitive ale unei organizații. Persuasiunea devine tot mai importantă în

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publicitate. În marketing, publicitatea persuasivă acționează pentru a stabili dorințe / motivații și credințe / atitudini, ajutând la formularea unei concepții a brandului ca fiind unul pe care oamenii din publicul țintă ar putea sau ar trebui să îl prefere. Având în vedere schimbările în stilul de viață și obiceiurile alimentare ale unei părți semnificative a populației din zonele urbane din România, lucrarea își propune să analizeze modul în care brandurile reușesc să se diferențieze de competitori, să se re poziționeze pe piață și să influențeze consumatorii, satisfăcându-le nevoile din ce în ce mai variate. Multe branduri alimentare pe piața românească încearcă, în ultimul timp, să identifice noi metode de diferențiere și noi beneficii pentru cumpărători. Având în vedere că tot mai mulți consumatori devin din ce în ce mai preocupați cu privire la ceea ce mănâncă și efectele produselor asupra sănătății, brandurile luptă pentru a sublinia faptul că produsele lor oferă beneficii reale pentru organism. Reclamele au devenit mai diversificate și subliniază efectele pozitive ale produselor asupra sănătății (fără aditivi sau conservanți, folosirea ingredientelor naturale, diferite vitamine și minerale sau faptul că sunt dietetice). Diversificarea mesajelor publicitare este evidentă, în contextul unui nivel tot mai mare de informații, de care dispun unele segmente de consumatori.

Cuvinte cheie: publicitate; persuasiune; poziționare piață-țintă.

INTRODUCTION

Advertising helps to establish a set of assumptions that the consumer will bring to all other aspects of their engagement with a given brand. Advertising provides tangible evidence of the financial credibility and competitive presence of an organization (Hackley, 2005).

Persuasion is becoming more important in advertising. A major reason is that competition is finding it easier to erode any functional or price advantage attached to a product. Persuasive advertising acts to establish wants/motivations and beliefs/attitudes by helping to formulate a *conception* of the brand as being one which people like those in the target audience would or should prefer. Product reality for the consumer is concept relative: we see what our concepts have taught us to see: things are seen through a conceptual lens. Concepts, perceptions and the resulting perceptual judgments are thus inseparable (O'Shaughnesy, 2004; Lakhani, 2008).

Advertisers also try to establish their products and brands as metaphors. A high-performance car can become a metaphor for success. Advertisers try to make their brands omnipotent. In doing so advertisers try not only to attach meanings to the brands, but to attach brands to meanings (Brierley, 2005).

The 90's were characterized by a tendency of globalization in the entire advertising industry. Trade barriers across Europe have fallen and large commercial areas once closed (such as Russia and China) opened their markets. Advertising agencies form vast multinational networks, with impressive research capabilities and media space and time acquisition.

The available technology today enables the composition and use of personalized messages that contain

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even the target-consumer's name. Database lists sorted by specific target groups allow individuals to be addressed directly, not only in groups of consumers (Adăscăliței, 2005).

All these have fundamentally changed the practice of advertising. Those who are now advertising are more capable than their predecessors in understanding and evaluating the results of market research or understand the consumer psychology and behavior (Nicolescu, 2001).

Today, the diversity in advertising agencies in Romania is very large, ranging from agencies that provide a full range of communication services (integrated communication strategy, creation, production, customer service, full service media, PR and BTL) to workshops focused only on creative services and communication of health services and social marketing (boutiques). The borderline between public relations agencies and BTL agencies is not very clear, most of them providing both type of services. BTL agencies primarily offer strategic planning services, marketing consulting, promotions, event production and direct marketing, while public relations companies are specialized mainly on providing communication strategies and expert advice.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

We have consulted specialized literature in the field of advertising and promotion and we have examined the

Romanian food market, especially the advertising messages used by certain brands, which are transmitted to consumers through television, radio, internet, street display or at different sale points.

For this paper, we have analysed the Romanian advertising environment, in all types of media. The aim is to verify if and how had promotional activities for food products changed in the last years in Romania, based on the continuously changing consumer habits and behaviour.

Considering the changes in lifestyle and eating habits of a significant part of the population in urban areas in Romania, especially those who are concerned about the effects of food on human health, the paper aims to analyse how brands manage to differentiate themselves from competitors, to reposition themselves on the market and influence consumers, meeting their increasingly varied needs.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The advertising industry in Romania is similar to the international one. Although the sophistication and refinement of the local advertising market is not up to the level of traditional markets (the United States or Western Europe), when it comes to consumer education, openness regarding advertising and communication channels diversification and sophistication, the institutional construction step, both methodological and instrumental, has been made.

Local agencies use the same concepts, strategies and tools as the international agencies, advertising campaigns from Romania are

exported to other countries, indigenous creations are winning awards in various festivals and multinational clients do not hesitate to call on the expertise of local agencies and specialists with the same confidence as those from countries with a long tradition in advertising (Beciu, 2003).

We noticed that many food brands on the Romanian market are trying, lately, to identify new methods of differentiation and new benefits for their buyers. Given that more and more consumers, particularly in urban areas, are becoming increasingly concerned about what they eat and the products' health effects, brands struggle to highlight the fact that their products offer real benefits for the human body.

The advertisements have become more diversified and not only insist on pleasure-generating product qualities (taste, aroma, sensation, texture, smell), but underline the positive effects, from the health and well-being point of view, that those foods can offer (no additives and preservatives, use of natural ingredients, various vitamins and minerals or the fact that they are dietary). The target-market segment of this type of advertising is made up mostly of women, who are more concerned about what they eat, but especially what they provide for their children.

First, major brands present in Romania are trying more and more, lately, to improve their image in the market when it comes to consumer

health issues. These brands increasingly convey more advertising, which assures consumers that the products are natural, authentic and generally beneficial to their health.

On the other hand, the Romanians have great confidence in local food, which is a competitive advantage for producers in our country. Romanian consumers tend to associate Romanian products with tradition, which has, especially in the food business, positive connotations for most of them. Thus, a product they perceive as traditional, authentic or made by an old recipe is very attractive, even if there are no other obvious qualities of that product. The fact that they are traditionalists makes the Romanian consumers more easily influenced by domestic brands' advertising.

In this paper, we followed the example of two well-known brands on the Romanian market: Danone (Activia) and Aqua Carpatica, both promoting their products relying on their benefits and certain tangible advantages offered to the buyers.

Danone owns several sub-brands, each being promoted in a specific way, according to the peculiarities of the target market. In general, Danone yoghurts, as well as many other brands of this kind, are being promoted through the following product features: good taste, high assortment variety, intake of calcium and vitamins. Also, the advertisements emphasize that these products are a delicious snack for any time of day, but especially at

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breakfast, for the whole family, especially for children (mostly fruit varieties).

The promotional messages used so far have been highly emotional and intended to persuade consumers using “traditional” advertising tricks: images of happy families enjoying the product (emphasizing on children) or consumers in various desirable situations related to the consumption of the product, highlighting its great taste and texture and the positive feelings and experiences that it offers to those who eat it. Some of the used slogans were “Taste life while smiling” (Danone), “Dense, tasty and nourishing” (Oikos), “Like old times” (Napolact). Some brands have been mentioning the word “health” in their slogans and commercials (even Danone, with its last general-brand slogan “Appetite for health”), but without pointing out any particular benefit or advantage. Activia does not have a stable slogan in Romania, but different messages revealing its properties and positive effects.



Figure 1 – Activia advertising (1)

People in the Activia target-market are lead to think that, with regular consumption of Activia yogurt, they will feel better, lighter,

The main innovation for Danone, in terms of promotion, is the Activia sub-brand, which has been present on the Romanian market for several years. Activia is different from other yogurt brands because it has been positioned on the market as a product designed especially (or mostly) for women, which, as a main advantage, prevents and helps remedy bowel problems and bloating. The brand even promises to return the money to the consumers that are unsatisfied with the results. Activia is being promoted in this manner all over the world, so we are facing a world-wide marketing positioning activity, including Romania. This way, the brand’s alleged positive properties have become famous on a global scale, making it one of the most important niche brands of all times. Of course, it is not suitable on all markets, but mostly on those where people pay more attention to their eating habits and the health consequences of their lifestyle (Fig. 1)



Figure 2 – Activia advertising (2)

will have a flatter abdomen and, thus, a more pleasant appearance (Fig. 2 and Fig. 3)

Like in many other cases, the product's real effectiveness is hard to prove and many discussions can be carried out about its efficiency in helping people that are facing the above mentioned inconveniences. What is really important is that the

marketing and promotional activities surrounding this brand made it very famous and credible and, more important, this strategy managed to make Activia the most trusted and frequently purchased sub-brand of Danone in many countries.



Figure 3 – Activia advertising (3)

The second brand that has been taken into discussion is Aqua Carpatica, one of the most important mineral water brands on the Romanian market. The reason we chose this particular brand is that it distinguishes itself from its competitors from the advertising point of view, insisting on a certain competitive advantage that makes it different from the others – the lack of nitrates in its composition (Fig. 4).



Figure 4 – Aqua Carpatica advertising (1)

Advertising campaigns for mineral waters has been quite linear in Romania so far. All the important brands have been promoting their products based on the following features: purity (generally, without mentioning particular details), closure to nature, tradition, source / origin control, freshness, etc. Advertising for mineral water brands has been mostly emotional, especially in television commercials, insisting on the pleasure of drinking fresh and pure water, the freshness feeling and the historical tradition of certain water springs. Over the last years, a few brands expressed the importance of correct hydration for the human body (using slogans, such as "You are what you drink", "You are 70% made up of water" – Dorna or "The queen of Romanian mineral waters", "Energy spring" – Borsec), but these messages have also been mostly emotional,

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without presenting real and tangible benefits.

The marketing and promoting activities of Aqua Carpatica highlight its presumed unique advantage: lack of nitrates, which are likely to cause hypertension, disorders of the circulatory system and thyroid glands, headaches, rashes, poisoning and even cancer. The brand claims that Aqua Carpatica water is 100% nitrates-free, due to the uniqueness of its spring, and, therefore, as their slogan says, “The purest mineral water in Romania”. Deriving from here, the company also relies on a secondary benefit – that their water is highly recommended for preparing baby

food. So, just like Danone’s Activia, Aqua Carpatica addresses a feminine and urban target-market: women who are very careful about what they consume and, most importantly, what they use for their children.

Another important marketing strategy used by Aqua Carpatica is involving the consumers in their “efforts” to maintain the purity of mineral waters in Romania, which creates a symbolic bond between the company and the consumers, which are being reassured that the brand is constantly struggling for a good cause and to satisfy their needs. (Fig. 5 and Fig. 6).



Figure 5 – Aqua Carpatica advertising (2)

The “100% nitrates-free” campaign has been and still is very controversial, like many other marketing activities. Competitors and various institutions doubted the truth behind Aqua Carpatica’s statement and even accused them of false advertising, claiming that there is no such thing as nitrates-free water in the world. While the truth remains uncertain, we observe that, in terms of product promoting, this campaign has been very successful and it opened a



Figure 6 – Aqua Carpatica advertising (3)

new path for rational advertising in Romania, offering consumers tangible reasons to choose a certain brand.

CONCLUSIONS

Advertising helps to establish a set of assumptions that the consumer will bring to all other aspects of their engagement with a given brand.

Persuasive advertising acts to establish wants/motivations and beliefs/attitudes by helping to

formulate a *conception* of the brand as being one which people like those in the target audience would or should prefer. Advertisers try not only to attach meanings to the brands, but to attach brands to meanings.

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Advertising messages' diversification is obvious on the Romanian market, in the context of an increasing concern of the population for what they eat and drink. The growing level of information of some major consumer segments makes food brands to convey advertising messages that appeal to the rational side, instead of the hedonistic messages that have dominated the market in recent years.

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