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THE MARKETER – A COMPLEX SPECIALIST, A MAN OF CONCEPT, DECISION AND ACTION

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Abstract

Over the last fifty years, the theory and practice of contemporary marketing have been influenced by the focus of its applicative approach over a major landmark of the business world. A short characterization of its different orientations, from consumer oriented marketing to holistic marketing, can only lead to the conclusion regarding the formative complexity of the specialist working in this field. The profile of this specialist is to be understood in such a manner as to have a competitive response, based on the decisions he/she must make, in random and undetermined decisional circumstances. His/her inclusion in lucrative activities, the level of financial motivation and the requests to be confronted with are analyzed in the context of the working force market in Romania. The formative role played by the upper echelon of the Romanian school over future marketers is also emphasized.

Keywords: holistic marketing, marketer, key account manager, Romanian academics marketing.

JEL Classification: M31

Introduction

Interpreted in the later part of the 20th century as a new way of thinking and acting in the market sphere – contemporary marketing is considered, both in the academic medium and in the economic life, to be the method of leading the marketing

oriented enterprise [Fritz, W., 1993; Meffert, H., 2000]. According to a current definition of the most prestigious contemporary guild forum (American Marketing Association - AMA), marketing represents a function of the organization and a set of processes that create, communicate and deliver value to the customers and also manage long term relations with them, from which both the organization and its partners can benefit [xxx AMA, 2004].

Characterized by polyvalence, under the report of its content and its methods of operation, the *concept of marketing* can be viewed from several points. It also represents a *modern economic concept* in its permanent orientation towards the market, an *ensemble of methods and scientific action techniques* to reach the strategic goals of the enterprise, an *instrument of scientific leadership, a practical activity*, with the help of which the economic agent manages to adapt himself/herself to the market requirements, a *function of the enterprise*, a young science *in the field of managerial sciences* [Pop, N. Al., 2001, pp. 8-10].

The developments of marketing in the economic theory and in business practice, as well as in the sphere of activities without a lucrative goal, are differentiated both geographically (from one country to another) and under the aspect of transposing this approach into life, reporting to the economic structures of an area, region or city [Danciu, V., 2005, pp. 11-17; Bradley, Fr., 2005, pp. 29-30; Prime, N., Usunier, J-Cl., 2004, pp.8-15; Müller, St., Gelbrich, K., 2004, pp. 15-35].

We will now set out to deal with the concept and practice of marketing at the level of its known developments in the first decade of the new millennium.

1. A Short Incursion in the Evolution of Contemporary Marketing

The key question that the evolution of contemporary marketing has to deal with is situated in the sphere of *methods for managing resources*, that can be mobilized by economic agents or by macroeconomic bodies, that have embraced this managerial view (viz. marketing), in order to obtain a good finality of the approach taken. This finality may materialize in the increase of profit, turnover, market share, number of clients, as well as image improving, emphasizing notoriety or keeping the clients of an enterprise, institution, public or private administration or government body.

The process of performance managing of the resources of an economic agent leading his activity according to the scientific principles of marketing has witnessed in the last half *century a tendency to orient* itself towards a focusing element. Such an element is the kind that could focus the interests of the large majority of the market players, representing a major coordination of society

concern in its ensemble. A graphic representation of the concentration of the marketing activity content over one focusing element is shown in figure 1.

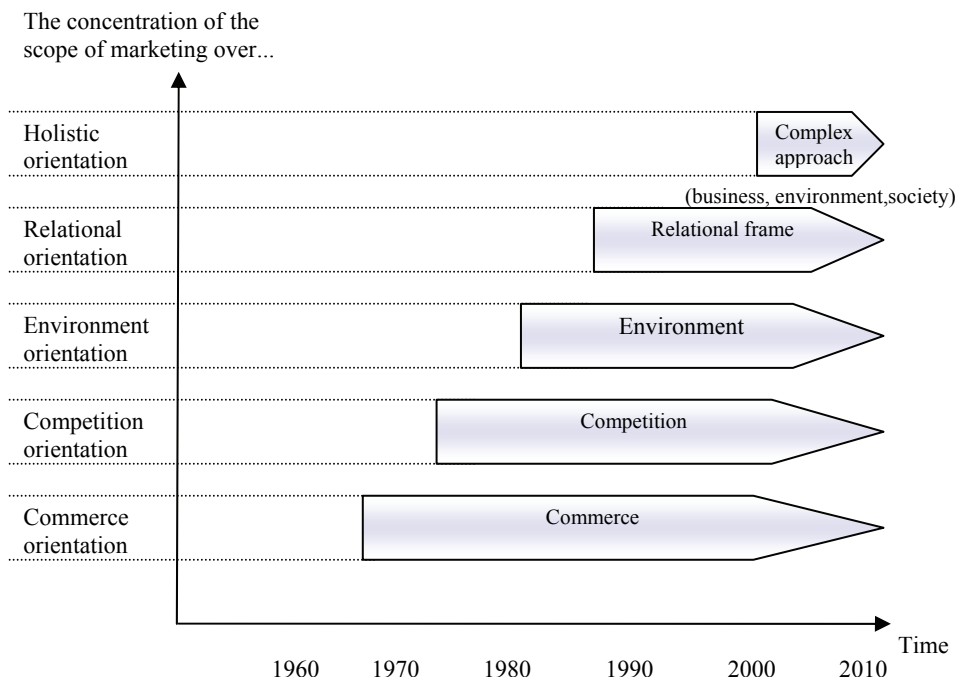


Figure 1 – The stages of contemporary marketing development

Primary source of information: [Meffert, H., (Editor), 1999, p. 7; Pop., N. Al., 2001, p. 19; Kotler, Ph., Keller, K. L., 2009, pp. 674-684]

From the commercial orientation to the competition orientation of the economic agent

Specific to the sixties and seventies, the commerce focus, i.e. the distribution of an enterprise in its relations with the market can be motivated by the preponderance of understanding the marketing as a performance method of capitalizing the merchandise of an enterprise. “The old marketing concept” – as presented in specialized literature - [Florescu, C., (coord), 1992, pp. 33-36] comes from the direct association of its specific activities with the sale of products, by sensitizing the client to buy at any cost, without taking into account his/her real purchasing needs. “The new marketing concept” is centered on the needs of the customer and the economic performance of the business agent. Even if specialized literature

already contains one such unanimously accepted vision, the economic practice, including the Romanian one, is still tributary to some of its most extraordinary facets, such as the communication policy. Following repeated experiments undertaken by authors in the Romanian business environment, requiring respondents to formulate a hierarchy of terms they associate with the marketing concept, the most frequently quoted is that of “advertising”. Even the Romanian specialized literature, of reference in the management field, is tributary to the “old marketing concept”. Thus marketing is considered a subfunction of the commercial function of an enterprise, together with the supply and sale subfunctions [Nicolescu, O., Verboncu, I., 2008, pp. 292-294]. The reference marketing papers of Romanian literature have consecrated to the marketing concept, for almost two decades, the role of „... integrator with respect to the other functions of the enterprise” [Florescu, C., (coord.), 1992, p.28]. The integrating character of the marketing function at the level of an enterprise results from its interface with the other functions of the organization, orienting them to the requirements of the market [Kotler, Ph., 1986, p.16; Olteanu, V., in Florescu, C., Málcomete, P., Pop, N. Al. (coord.), 2003, pp. 263-264; Landrevie, J., Lévy, J., Lindon, D., 2006, p.1059; Weis, H. Ch., 2007, p. 34].

From the commerce orientation to the competition orientation

The significant mutations undergone by the physiognomy of global economy, determined by the globalization process, have had a powerful influence over marketing. The competition – considered a true engine of the market economy [Porter, M., 2008, pp. 23-24] – has presently taken global dimensions, and the evaluation of its formative factors, together with establishing its branch, region, product, service, brand level coordinates allows the enterprise to accomplish an adequate diagnostic analysis and position itself correctly in the market environment. The focus on competition of the marketing approach has been backed by a development in thinking and acting on behalf of the business agent on a short and long term basis. This characteristic is crucial for the appearance and development of the *strategic marketing* [Pop, N. Al., 2000, p. 20].

From the competition orientation to the environment orientation

The limited characteristic of our planet resources offers brand new features, reaching the idea of the appearance of *the new global economy*, backed by two revolutions (economic and technological) [Rischard, J.-Fr., 2004, pp. 11-17]. In

this context the concern for including the ecologic component among the strategic priorities of the enterprise management, makes marketing give special attention to its relationship to the environment. *An ecologic awareness* is developing within a large portion of the population and at numerous economic agents, determining important mutations in the consuming behavior and imposing to the enterprise the rethinking of the entire assortment of production and commerce.

From the environment orientation to the relational orientation

In the evolution of theory and marketing practice, at the end of the previous millennium, the key element of a new marketing development stage has been represented by *relational orientation*. Without changing its essence, marketing redirects its efforts toward the performance increase of enterprises by developing long-term relations with all its partners (suppliers, clients and other interested parties). Such a mutation takes place while *transactional marketing* turns into *relational marketing* [Pop, N. Al., Petrescu, E-C., 2008, pp. 21-24], the latter requiring a new approach of the business relation to the partners mentioned before. Client orientation backed by relational marketing leads the entire controlling activity toward the monitoring of profitability generated by the enterprise's relation to the bearers of the request. The significance of this measure for the organization takes a new qualitative dimension through two concepts frequently found in the theory and practice of the developed countries: *customer lifetime value* (durable) and *customer profitability* (over time). Both terms are specific to *interactive marketing* and tend to ensure the capacity to identify and capitalize customer differences.

From the relational orientation to the holistic orientation

Based on the increase of exchange complexity, at the beginning of the third millennium new physiognomic changes appear in the portrait of contemporary marketing. The satisfaction of market manifested needs by the request bearers engage the organization in more varied relations, not only with the beneficiaries of the performance, but with its own employees as well, with the environment, raising ethical responsibilities, toward the legislation and the community, to even higher levels. Thus the *holistic orientation* of contemporary marketing is contoured. [Kotler, Ph., Keller, K.L., 2008, pp. 59-61]. Figure 2, shows a graph of the structure of this orientation.

Based on holistic theory that considers the whole as much more than the sum of the parts, *holistic marketing* imposes the elaboration and appliance of various processes and actions correlated among themselves. Mentioning that everything counts, a new conception of integrated marketing is being developed which is at the same time relational, integrated, omnipresent inside the organization and socially responsible [Kotler, Ph., Jian, D. C., Maesince, S., 2002, pp. 50-53].

According to this new approach that strengthens the integrating role of the marketing function the optical view on marketing needs to be found not only in the homonymous behavior and at the top management level but also in the company’s functional departments.

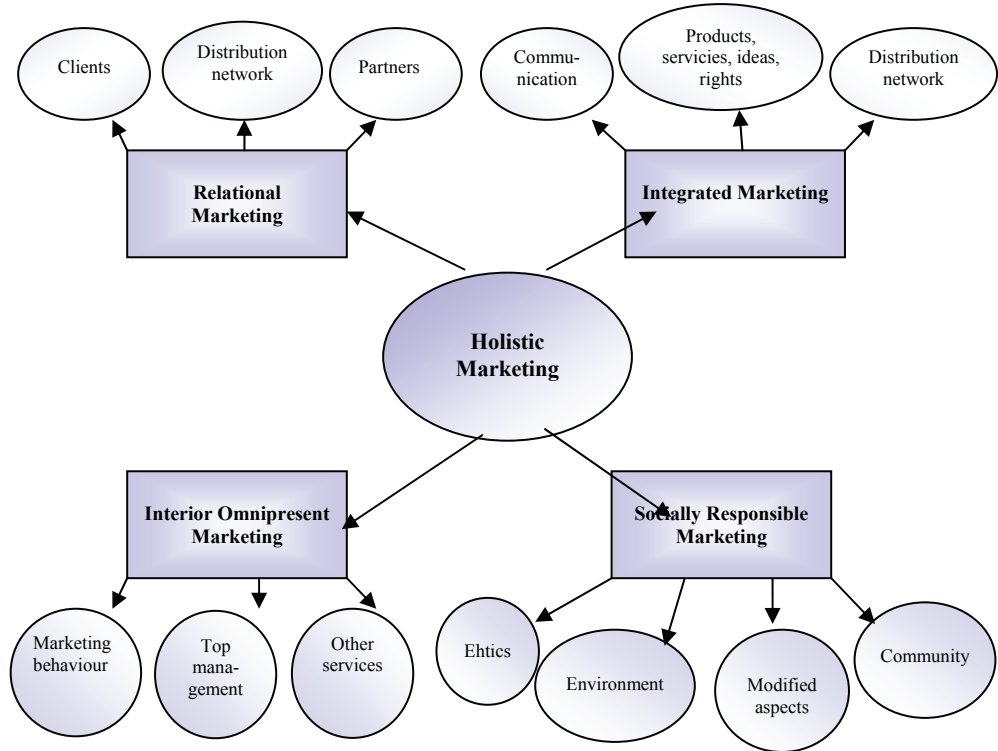


Figure 2 – The dimensions of holistic marketing

Primary source of information: Kotler, Ph., Keller, K.L., 2008, p. 61.

Even this review of the main marketing evolutions of the last fifty years allows certain conclusions to be drawn regarding the complexity of the specialists’ characteristics which activates in this field.

2. Who is the marketing specialist?

The need to outline the specialist in the field of marketing has been paralleled to the development of the theory and the practice in the field. Human resource management succeeded in outlining the marketing specialist in literature as the *marketer*. Defined as being the person working inside a specialized department (office, division, direction) of a company, institution or non-profit organization or working independently to plan, program, organize and run marketing activities [Vegheş, C., in Florescu, C., Mâlcomete, P., Pop, N. Al., (coord.), 2003, pp. 377-378] the marketer is still quite some distance away from the manager to be considered in the business theory and practice in Romania. A clear distinction between the marketer and the manager is not yet made. The formal and factual inclusion of the marketing specialist in the Romanian enterprises is defined by the way the marketing concept itself is understood at the management level. From the easy deprecating “jack-of-all-trades” to maker and performer of strictly specialized services, a large variety of concrete variants lies.

We consider the successful placement of the specialist in the organizational flowchart of the company and the exact definition of the profile, requirements and abilities s/he needs to have in a direct connection with the essence of contemporary marketing, as shown earlier in the study. First of all *a change in mentality* is required of the management of the organization, thus removing a large part of the local *malpractice* business environment. This involves in a smaller measure marketing as an investment, considering it more of an expenditure [Enea, M., 2005, pp. 314-317]. To those who use this kind of thinking copying the competition is preferred to an original approach, which is more complicated and expensive, requiring more creativity and effort. As a consequence the selection of marketing personnel “suffers” from the same mentality.

International experience proves that on a market that suffers deeper and faster changes – such as the Romanian market at the moment – copying has limited success. As a result, the marketing specialist needs to know how to react in order to avoid being overtaken by events and, furthermore, to profit from the respective changes. He can only reach his goal by combining *intelligence with imagination*, the main attributes of *genius* [Fisk, P., 2008, p. 5]. *Creativity, capacity to adapt and decisional elasticity* complete the profile of the specialist in this field. These attributes are imposed by the decisions that fall in all situations in probabilistic and undetermined universes. These decisions are significantly different from those of the decision makers that are involved in the strictly productive activities, making decisions in a deterministic universe. Permanently facing the unforeseen, generated by the spontaneous reactions of the market they address to, the marketers need to

have a much higher capacity to react and anticipate the consequences of the decisions they had taken.

Job Classifications of Romania (COR) ensures the institutional frame of the marketing specialist [www.dscllex.ro/ocupatii/cor2.htm]. Fifteen jobs that include the *marketing skill* are mentioned. Only a third of these require exclusive skill training in the field we are referring to (marketing manager, head of marketing department, head of marketing office, marketing specialist, marketing reviewer). Two skills are centered on field research (marketing economic researcher, assistant marketing researcher), proving that this *sine qua non* activity to the successful implementation of marketing in business already has a self-sufficient status in Romania. Four other skills contain the words “commerce and marketing” signifying the closeness between the two fields. The remaining four skills regard service providing, including marketing activities.

A major aspect that cannot be left out of a global evaluation of the marketing specialist in Romania refers to its financial gains. According to recent studies [Iorgulescu, C., 2008] the monthly salary is between 400 Euros (in case of hiring a fresh out of university marketing assistant) and 4000-5000 Euros (in case of a marketing manager in a famous company). The differences of salaries for this maximal position are connected to the general turnover, the allocated budget and the degree of problematic cover at a national and international level. Between these two extremes lie salaries of 700-800 Euros for a junior brand/ product manager, 1200-1600 Euros for a similar position with 3-4 years of experience and 1700-2400 Euros for a senior brand manager. Different monthly bonuses ensure a supplementary income of up to 20% of the net income.

The increasing number of multinational companies activating on the Romanian market offering, in general, more attractive financial framing than local companies, constitutes a first motivation for this salary evolution. Another reason is connected to the increase in importance of the *marketing department* of each company.

We can conclude that the job of the marketer falls under the category of those jobs that have had their East-West differences blurred in a steady rhythm.

Following the framing of the marketer at the company level we can notice that it is becoming more frequently sought for the position of *brand/product manager*. We estimate that soon, when the Romanian marketing practice will steer toward the intensive development of the market, to the prejudice of the extensive one and toward a sustained *relational orientation*, the most sought after position will become the *key account manager*. The marketer trained in such a job coordinates the ensemble of activities connected to serving a small group of customers or one main customer, but with a special significance toward the long term and short term

performance indicators of the company [Homburg, Ch., Krohmer, H., 2006, pp. 976-981]. This position has a special significance in branches of high degree concentration of customer (for example: companies delivering automobile components).

3. Role of marketing higher education in forming future marketers

At present there is a consensus among economics specialists regarding the *maturity stage* [Olteanu, V., 2007, p. 4-5] in which the Romanian marketing education can be placed, it took the ideatic base of a specialized worldwide literature and developed it by adding specific elements of transition economy as well as some features of the Romanian economy. It is well known that in the last decade some branches of marketing have also developed in Romania: cyber-marketing, relational marketing, direct marketing or the studies and researches made in some less known fields: sanitary marketing, cultural marketing, ecclesiastic marketing or sportive marketing. All these aspects created the foundation for a complex and well prepared marketer.

The consensus regarding the acquired development stage demands the correlation between the Romanian university marketing perspective and marketing evolution worldwide. The performance evaluation of a Romanian field of professional education must be correlated with its worldwide evolution, and the effects of the educative process are validated by the most rightful judgement - the job market. Being the beneficiary of the „academic marketing product” this last one taxes the higher education performances achieved in a given field. [Pop, N. Al., 2008, p. 57-66].

Romanian economics practice admits that both professional and academic experiences now interact more than in the past. With this being said it is worth mentioning the effort to diminish the distance between the academic education and its practice. This type of effort should not be understood as an empirical infuse in academic education but as an extension of the activities to implement the scientific rigor in practice. This activity is facilitated by promoting with consistency among companies of a strategic vision regarding their own evolution in the surrounding world that becomes more complex, let alone the global market. This sort of approach would launch in the business area a request for periodical marketing studies capable to mention the future evolution of competitors on the market, in a random decisional universe.

Marketing higher education creates a favorable need for *interdisciplinarity* since more complex phenomena and processes on the market appear. Interdisciplinarity

intensity leads the educational effort toward interactivity development and the extension of teaching aids. The marketer's complex education demands the mixture of the marketing knowledge with those of management at the same time with the development of a large spectrum of decisional and communicative abilities.

Conclusions

Requests demanded for the marketing specialist met a sustained dynamic being directly connected to the demands that continuously raise in the business environment. The attributes and responsibilities are stipulated in a marketer *profesiogram* [Florescu, C., (coord.) 1992, p. 435-437] meant to collect his professional aptitudes (observer, with capacity of analysis and synthesis, abstract thinking, space thinking, taste and the creative imagination) the memory abilities (visual, smell, taste, audio and tactile) all connected with the efficiency (attention, preciseness, tenacity and mobility, self confidence, carefulness method, and cooperation).

The new challenges of the knowledge society demand that the marketer should be able to use methods, techniques and decisional instruments all assisted by the computer. The specialized higher education is meant to take into account all these requirements in order to form the future specialists at the same time using the pedagogical elements in order to create the fundamentals to form and cultivate the already mentioned abilities at high standards.

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