

MARKETING

The need for a managerial and governmental strategy.

Public Relations as an expression of strategic communication

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If this study was entitled “Strategic Communication and Its Enemies”, the list of such enemies would include: 1. *Ignorance*, which supports the identification of Public Relations either with propaganda (majority of politicians) or with advertising (majority of managers) or with customer service (majority of Romanians); 2. *Underground economy*, which gives transparency a wild berth; 3. *Clientelistic business*, where neither brand nor market positioning is required; 4. *Underground politics*, which communicates perfectly with the clientelistic business but poorly with society; 5. *Clientelistic politics*, which communicates well with the clientelistic business and the underground economy, but for which state institutions are some forms without content; 6. *Pre-modern organizational culture, with ascendant in Feudalism* which impairs the efficient communication not only in trading companies but also in public institutions, where the clan objectives are more important than the managerial goals.

In order to honor the title of the conference organized by the National School of Political Studies and Public Administration, my aim is to develop the last point since a prevailing trait of the pre-modern organizational culture is the lack of strategic thinking and, consequently, of development strategies, managerial strategies and communication strategies. My examples here are taken from the public relations sphere.

We often hear the statement that Romania needs a favorable image. Whenever someone speaks of “favorable image” or of “positive image”, it’s certain that we are not dealing with a professional. A public person,

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an organization or a country does not need a favorable image but rather an *adequate* image. The following question pops up: “Adequate ... to what?” The answer is simple: the public image must be adequate to the objectives (economic, political or geostrategic). Because public image is not a panacea, it is merely an instrument used to reach the objectives of a strategy, as it is a strategic element by itself.

It is not fortuitous that the notion of Public Relations is also defined, briefly, as “strategic communication”. The image strategy must be only a part of a more comprehensive, holistic strategy. Whoever begins with an image strategy without referring first to a business strategy (if we are dealing with a company), a political strategy (in case of a political party) or a government strategy (if we are dealing with a government) profoundly misapprehends this concept? They put the cart before the houses! Why have we been failing to implement an efficient country image strategy? That is because we lacked a social development strategy springing from a society project.

I may be taunted with the fact that we disregarded a great post-Decembrist accomplishment: the famous Snagov Strategy. And I label it “famous” because the parties and the governments after 1995 treated it like a legendary document: they all heard of it but nobody had ever seen it! I met high officials who had no idea whatsoever about the chapters of the Strategy. When asked about the Snagov Strategy they used to call they secretary of chief of cabinet, gesture which reminded me of a saying belonging to journalist Marius Tucă: We, Romanians, when we hear the word “strategy” we immediately go fetch the dictionary... We don’t even think strategically and as the saying goes: God, give Romanians *l’esprit de l’escalier!*, which means the we are very smart, analytical and wise only after we hit the upper threshold. Our goal is not to avoid the threshold but to think anticipatively. Each year the first snow catches us unprepared as if we were a tropical country. The floods have always taken us short although the first catastrophic floods occurred in 1970, then in 1975 and since then they have kept repeating regularly.

I have presented only a part of the causes for which in Romania Public Relations come into prominence with great difficulty in their professional

version. As a rule, they are practiced as propaganda or advertising; because it is easier to force the “story” down other people’s throats or pay an advertising company than drafting a development strategy. I have noticed that the disease of advertising touched the country image as well. After renaming “country image” as *brand*, the government entrusted Romania’s branding as tourist destination to... two associated advertising companies: Asesores en Turismo, Hotelaria y Recreacion SA and Taylor Nelson Sofres. But the concept of *brand* is not only a matter of creativity; firstly it is a matter of strategy. Advertisers play in this game a part that comes later, as operators of some messages that stem from the objectives of the image strategy. In their turn, such objectives derive from the economic and political goals of Romania and from the information on target-publics which are delivered by research surveys.

In default of a long-term all-embracing vision, these objectives do not exist and without it Public Relations has its hands tied and cannot do anything consistent or sustainable. Public Relations can shape a reality but cannot substitute one. They are neither literature nor advertising or propaganda or religion, because they do not create a parallel universe or a transcendental universe, beyond reality. In a smart organization, public relations are a function of the management and in a country with smart elites – a function of the government. The organization, as the country, must adapt beforehand, entertain a bidirectional communication with its publics – be them internal or external, know how it is perceived by the interested publics and take those practical measures meant to give birth to a new reality, more adequate to the public’s expectations. Public relations represent the very precocious alarm system that warns the organization (the country) regarding the new trends as well as the misperceptions that baffle the success of its managerial (or governmental) objectives.

For decades it has been said that Public Relations are the “small flywheel” of the organization. Of course, the “big flywheel” is the management but whenever the latter is in crisis, public relations have a decisive contribution in overcoming the managerial crisis. The same thing applies to a country; all we have to do is to replace “management” with “government”. I hope that it is clear now for all our readers why in the last 24 years we had numerous “image strategies” on paper but no real strategy. No government dared to appropriate such a strategy as part of its governing tasks. What

would it have actually meant? To be more eloquent, I shall refer to a “smart organization” as all successful companies are. If the PR expert informs the Board of Directors (on a periodical basis!) that, for instance, the clients perceive the staff as poorly qualified, a decision is taken for the implementation of an in-service training of the personnel. The Public Relations department has the mission of informing the stakeholders on this policy and its outcomes and not to replace such a policy with messages such as “Our personnel is very well trained”. *Mutatis mutandis*, if the Bucharest Government finds out that in the interested countries Romania is perceived as a corrupt country, it must opt for and enforce the cessation of this reality and go down to business, rather than denying it or finding excuses. One of the Romanian image campaign objectives is to make the results of the new policy known by the stakeholders.

Therefore, the first rule in the elaboration of an image strategy is *to admit that you have a problem*. The one who breaches this rule stops making an image strategy and launches a justification campaign, stops looking for solutions and begins seeking for alibis; stops giving smart answers and begins throwing polemic replies. There is nothing more detrimental than surround ourselves with walls of justifications. After all, we end up their prisoners while reality moves on...

Public relations as strategy

The concept of public relations as strategy originates from the *management function of public relations*, as defined by the scientific community in the field (Grunig, Dozier, Harlow and others): „The activity of public relations represents a standalone function of leadership; a means of achieving understanding, acceptance and cooperation; a way to manage problems and controversies; a form of stimulating the leadership’s responsibility to serve public interest; a system of early warning; an objective and honest activity” (Harlow, 1976).

As I have shown elsewhere, „the most important phenomenon in the second half of the 20th century was *the generalization at macro-social level of the techniques and procedures specific to public relations*, their coming out of the „mother’s nest” (the organization). In my opinion, the phenomenon

represents an adaptation reaction to the social system, thus ensuring its self-balance and self-reproduction as the industrial civilization was becoming post-industrial. It's about the adaptive function which public relations have had since the beginning within those organizations which regarded them as a managerial activity. But now, this function has started to play its role at the level of the societal system" (Borțun, 2012).

However, the emergence of new media and the worldwide economic-financial crisis has brought again into the spotlight the role of public relations in terms of the way in which organizations adapt to the environment. Moreover, these events have brought about the interest given to *strategic* public relations (public relations as management function, operating with medium and long term objectives), thus distinguishing ever more clearly between the latter and *tactic* public relations (public relations has support for marketing and image-building, operating with short-term objectives). Strategic public relations are those having at the core not sales objectives, but rather development objectives, which are responsibly planned in relation to the set target, but also in relation to the impacts on the publics and environment where they activate.

The role of public relations in the organizations' adapting to the environment has very important consequences on the public relation profession. Once the signals received from the environment have been interpreted, the public relation advisor has to cooperate with the managers in order to establish *the strategy for organizational change*, as well as *strategic plans of reacting to refractory events* (foreseeable conflicts, possible crises etc.). This is how Grunig and White describe this function: "The successful PR advisor continuously keeps watch over the environment, trying to extend the visibility over this scope beyond the current horizon. (...) In principle, the attempts to see clearly and to anticipate help the organization buy time to plan activities, allowing it to foresee and not just to react to changes (Grunig & White, 1992, pp. 43-44). From this standpoint, the role of public relations is to provide a "radar" for anticipating opinion trends and the topics of public debates which will affect the organization and its publics.

Unfortunately, in most Romanian public institutions it is thought that the public relations specialist must be first of all an employee and only secondly a specialist, a vision which corresponds to the “closed systems” approach. In almost all ministries and government agencies, PR specialists have the status of civil servants, the heads of departments included. When it comes to the departments in public institutions, the employee’s mentality translates into a “humble servant” behavior, which calls off the role he has to play in an intelligent organization.

PR employees tend to maintain and promote an organizational image as favorable as possible, starting from the premise that if the organization is “sympathized”, its messages will also be received with good will under any circumstances. Employees only deal with supplying information *about the organization* outside it, but not with delivering to the organization information *about the environment*. That is why they cannot be part of the decision-making process; they have too little to say about *WHAT is said*, their main focus is *HOW things are said*. Sometimes, information about the environment is sent daily, but after they were forged: for example, as I myself discovered some years ago, in a Romanian ministry, the periodic press monitoring reports include more positive news about the respective ministry than were actually published, in order to save the honor of the press bureau.

Unlike the PR *employee*, the PR specialist is the icon of an open approach, which operates changes both within the organization as well as in its environment. He has the ability to offer advice and has a major impact on the decision-making process. In this view, public relations become effective in the prevention of crisis situations. As I said earlier, if the “big flywheel” of the organization remain the management, public relations are the “small flywheel”, capable of removing the “big flywheel” from the dead point (from the managerial crisis).

From the two approaches of public relations, two different methods of practicing the profession also derive: a *technical* one, where the specialist is just a doer, and a *strategic* one, where he participates to the decision-making process. James Grunig and James White refer to these two alternatives

“handiwork public relations” and “professional public relations” (Grunig & White, 1992, p. 44).

As a *technician*, the PR person describes the receiving environment in order to render the organizational communication as efficient as possible; as a *strategist*, the PR person participates to the decision-making process, that is: he is part of the dominating coalition (*dominant decision making coalition*). Jon White and David Dozier argue “This dominant coalition needs information in order to make decisions. Therefore, information is often supplied in a discriminatory manner, by the persons within the organization, who interact frequently with the organizational environment and who collect, select the information originating from this environment and transmit them to those who make decisions in the majority coalition” (White & Dozier, 1992, p. 93).

This is why I am participating in this conference: I want to plead in favor of the professionalization of the institutional communication in Public Administration in Romania – both in the central and local administration. Even at the cost of a new legislation, regulating the rights and obligations of the communicators in public institutions, defining the status of the communication specialist as *civil servant with special status* and, at the same time, binding employers to select the communicators only from the *graduates with studies in the field*. Without such a revolution, which I am tempted to call “professional revolution”, it is impossible to imagine a more efficient, less corrupt and more citizen-dedicated administration. The much-proclaimed “modernization of the state” cannot take place without the modernization of its communicational structures.

Edward Bernays (1891-1995), known as “the father of public relations”, considers that this activity can turn competition, an engine of free societies, into something more efficient and more productive: like all things, ideas compete to gain the interest and support of the public. The public relations activity can make a public adhere to current beliefs and actions or to convert to new ones – for instance, the Romanian civil servants’ body may switch from the values of the clientelistic pyramid to the modern values focused on merits. In a famous paper, published in 1923, Edward Bernays called this “creating a public conscience”, which he considered the noblest

meaning the PR profession may have: “I consider that the highest mission of the public relations advisor in the society he lives in is to create a public conscience” (Bernays, 2003, p. 162).

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The influence of Public Relations in nation branding: the case of Bucharest

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Abstract. *This study aims to explore why public relations play an important role when discussing about place branding. The economic crisis that hit the market in 2008 has left as a consequence negative aspects upon many countries and places in the European Union. Intense competition between places together with fast movement of globalization, require the action of branding places. Public Relations represent the main activity that could still get audience's interest about the certain topic. The current paper starts by an analysis of the academic literature on the importance and elements of place branding, place marketing and city branding, and briefly also on suggestions made by practitioners towards the proposed topic. Furthermore, after the literature findings, research objectives have been established. Some of the objectives that are going to be discussed are related to: the theory of place branding, place marketing and city branding, key elements influencing or contributing towards place branding, the current image of Bucharest in communication with place branding professionals, as well as to explore the importance of PR in sustaining place branding in Bucharest. After establishing the objectives mentioned before, the research methodology process has been discussed. Regarding the methodology that is going to be implemented, a qualitative approach is going to be used in order to have valid data. The data are going to be collected in the geographical area of Bucharest, Romania. After doing an in-depth analysis of articles published regarding the proposed topic, academics and practitioners suggest that 15 to 20 interviews can provide us with accurate results. The interviews are going to be audio-recorded and transcribed in English. The limitation that this type of methodology has is that after interpreting the data findings, the results cannot be generalised.*

Keywords: *public relations; nation branding; Bucharest.*

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Introduction

The economic crisis that hit the market in 2008 has left as a consequence negative aspects upon many countries and places in the European Union. Intense competition between places together with fast movement of globalization, require the action of branding places.

In the recent years, understanding and managing the marketing of places as brands (product) has shown an increase demand in the research area. Similar to companies, places have started to brand themselves in order to increase tourism expenditures, attract investors, number of visitors, international media, driving up exports, as well as to create a reputation.

Globalisation has pushed developing places into a competitive arena where the main players are the older established places (Hanna and Rowley, 2008). Places are branded for so many years and some of them even commercialise their brand name and logos such as New York, Paris or even London. In the Balkan region, place branding is a topic which slowly starts to have a meaning.

When discussing about place branding in the literature, practitioners and researchers use terms such as place marketing, urban marketing or even city branding. Some of the players that help constructing a place's image and reputation are governments, public relations agencies, publicity agencies, as well as local communities.

This study aims to explore why public relations play an important role when discussing about place branding. Moreover, branding a place usually means increase a place's image, as well as a place's reputation. Thus, Public Relations represent the main activity that could still get audience's interest about a certain topic, given the fast movement of technology that we live in which people are beginning not to trust advertisement anymore.

The further research will likely contribute to the academic and practitioner knowledge regarding the process of place branding during a crisis periods and the importance that public relations have in branding a city.

Literature review

Branding

Branding is a term usually known for products and services, but in the last two decades practitioners and researchers have shown that it can also be used when talking about cities, countries or even regions (Anholt, 2010; Upadhyaya, 2012; Cozmiuc, 2011; Crombie, 2011; Lindstedt, 2011).

Usually a brand is perceived as an image which has a network of people working for it and who has built a community in the scope of achieving “entrepreneurial activity, innovation and economic development” (Crombie, 2011, p. 16). An interesting statement has been emphasized by Mayes (2008) that questions concerning “not only what a brand does and for whom, but also to whom and by whom” (p. 134) should be addressed before starting a branding strategy.

Anholt (2003) stated that branding places is different from branding products. On the other hand, Stachow and Hart (2010) mentioned that places can be branded in a similar way as products do.

Place branding

Because globalisation has pushed places in the competitive arena, limitations in the differentiations between places do exist. First, in order to be different, a place has to point out to its target audience what another place does not have. Secondly, place branding should meet and satisfy the needs of the potential target audience (Mayes, 2008). Branding is considered one of the most powerful tools in order to increase profit in the commercial sector (Cozmiuc, 2011).

Kavaratzis (2004) mentioned that in order to develop a city's brand, a city marketing strategy should be stated which actually leads to the understanding of a city's image and perceptions. As Martinez (2012) stated, practitioners refer to the field of promotion, with references being made sometimes to marketing, sometimes to branding. This fact lead to interpret what Karavatzis (2004) mentioned that ‘stories’ need to be developed for places by the development of infrastructure and afterwards these stories should be communicated and promoted.

According to Upadhyaya (2012) places exist as “holistic entities or as collections of contributory elements or individual services or facilities” (p. 41), fact that emphasizes that place branding differs from region to region. The aims of place branding are to achieve economic, social and cultural benefits (Mayes, 2008). Skinner (2008) emphasizes that unlike products, places do not begin with a development phase. Often, the marketers’ implications towards branding places are limited due to the fact that local communities develop the cultural environment, invest in heritage and infrastructure.

When discussing about topics such as place branding and place marketing, terms such as ‘branding’, ‘brand’, ‘brand image’, ‘brand identity’, ‘brand personality’, ‘place image’ (Gertner, 2011) and ‘location’, ‘destination’ (Hanna & Rowley, 2008) are frequently used.

As stated by Pryor and Grossbort (2007), academics and practitioners use the term place branding in accordance to place marketing, place promotion or concepts related to tourism marketing. When discussing about products and services, branding has become an important element which led companies emphasize their competitive advantage. When talking about cities, regions or countries, place branding is developed with the help of companies from local industry, as well as tourist offices, playing the role of the “marketplace actors co-producing marketplace meanings” (Pryor & Grossbort, 2007, p. 302).

Place branding is the concept of marketing, promoting, branding and regeneration of a city, country or region (Lucarelli & Brorström, 2013; Herstein et al., 2014). Anholt (2010) stated that it is the main tool to attract customers, visitors, traders or even investors. Furthermore, strategic place marketing (a concept developed by Kotler et al., 1993) explains that places have to promote themselves in the same way as businesses do. The end-user is the main decision-maker for the positive or negative image that a place has (Anholt, 2010).

Usually, when discussing about place branding, a place image is the main element coming into people’s mind. The image of a place is shaped up by

the local communities' perceptions towards the place, as well as external target audience. The difference between a place's internal and external image is that the first one is perceived as part of the 'place's identity' (Lindstedt, 2011). People's perceptions about the image of a place is highly dynamic, the images are actually based on a stereotype. In order to create a powerful place image, a lot of time and effort should be invested (Avraham, 2009; Martinez, 2012).

Mayes (2008) emphasizes the fact that place identity is built from the internal features and history of a given place. Before starting any branding campaign, the identity of the city or place should be investigated focusing on the people's beliefs, cultural history and values (Martinez, 2012). Gotsi et al. (2011) argues that companies can be one major factor influencing the increasing image of a place.



Figure 1. The concept of place brand perception (Zenker & Martin, 2011)

Zenker and Martin (2011) argue that a place brand represents the perceptions and expressions that the target audience has in their minds and leads to two brand effects that can be measured such as: willingness to stay at the place and the satisfaction of the residents.

The term 'branding' is considered to be quite new when it is related with place marketing policies (Metaxas, 2010).

Place marketing

As it is mentioned by Zenker and Martin (2011, p. 33), place marketing's aim is to share a customer-oriented approach by "creating, communicating, delivering and exchanging" the city's historical value with its end-consumers : visitors and local community.

Place marketing enhances people's perception about places. The elements that compose the image of a city or country are the 'location, leadership, type of regime, economic situation, government stability and more' (p. 197). Advertising, public relations, direct mailing/marketing and sales promotions are the main major techniques influencing the way a place is perceived by media, international organizations or publics. The main goals of place marketing are to create a distinct identity of a place (Avraham & Ketter, 2008) and to increase social and economic benefits (Zenker & Marting, 2011).

As positioning a company's product or service is important to the target customers and affects choice decisions, the same element is applicable to the process of place marketing. Thus, a clear positioning strategy can ensure that all the marketing elements are consistent and supportive (Walker, 2011).

City branding

Cozmiuc (2011) introduces the concept of city branding when talking about place branding. City branding is affected by several fields such as: marketing, public policy, public relations, tourism, economic development and international relations.

Nowadays, municipalities, media and local government invest a lot of money in branding a city. The main reason for investing amounts of money is because they want to differentiate from their neighbours, meaning to emphasize their competitive advantage. City branding has two main objectives: increase investment and tourism expenditure and achieve community development (Herstein et al., 2014).

As mentioned by Kotler (1993), visitors, residents and workers, business and industry and export markets are considered to be the main target groups when developing a branding strategy for a city (cited in Herstein et al., 2014; Crombie, 2011).

On the other hand, Rizzi and Dioli (2010) discuss about place marketing and city branding as two different terms. Place marketing is the

“indispensable instrument in terms of operative implications associated with a specific place” (p. 303), while city branding is a strategy in which a place brands itself having as a result a positive or negative image associated with that specific place.

Suggestions

Metaxas (2010) explained that place marketing is a strategic process and it has to be developed in the same way as products and services. After emphasizing the competitive advantage (characteristics, values etc.) that a place has, the ‘final provided good’ has to benefit of a good and well-structured marketing mix. Objectives, strategies and techniques have to be established.

Skinner (2011) suggested that a broader understanding of the terms place marketing and place branding should be researched, as well as the practices associated with the two terms. Moreover, Gertner (2011) stresses out the fact that practitioners should develop more in-depth the terms of place marketing and place branding towards a more structural framework in order to emphasize the competitive areas, as well as efforts done by specialists, residents, visitors and other entities participating in this process to be analyzed more. When discussing about branding and place, important elements should be closely examined such as: Public relations strategies, foreign direct investment, advertising and promotion (Anholt, 2010).

According to Szondi (2010), one of the main issues when talking about place branding is that the Public Relations field is usually ignored, being the main concept of relationship building or engagement with stakeholders. Facing an economic crisis, communication during and after crisis is realised with the help of Public Relations. In order to gain attention, press agency / publicity help the creation of favourably or negative image through pseudo-events related to a certain place. PR is considered to be the main actor in the relationship between institutions and its audience, by creating an ‘internal brand culture’ which can afterwards be shared with the publics. Involving citizens to create the brand of a place is another task realised by PR practitioners.

Research aim

The purpose of this research is to explore the evolution of place branding during the recent years, as well the influence of Public Relations nowadays when communicating information about a place to potential target audience.

From the research aim and literature review mentioned before, the research objectives are stated:

- Identify the theory of place branding, place marketing and city branding
- Identify the key elements influencing or contributing towards place branding
- Determine the current image of Bucharest in the opinion of place branding professionals
- Explore the importance of PR in sustaining place branding in Bucharest.

Methodology

Methodology refers to the specific principles implemented in the research activity such as rules, principles and formal conditions that can guide scientific research into a logical framework that emphasize ways to solve the problem questioned (Gelo et al., 2008). After doing an in-depth analysis of articles published regarding place branding and place marketing topics, Gertner (2011) sustains that a predominant number of them are of qualitative nature in the form of essays or editorials, and that a "small set out of the large number of qualitative articles made an attempt to adopt a specific method, such as ethnography, textual analysis, focus groups, in-depth interviews, literature review, historical approach or hermeneutics" (p. 96).

The objectives mentioned before are going to be achieved through the collection of both primary and secondary data. Secondary data will be gathered by examining closely the literature review about place branding, place marketing and city branding theories, elements and implications. In order to have a strong view about literature findings, the results will be compared and contrasted.

Quantitative approaches	Qualitative approaches
Sampling	Sampling
Probabilistic	
Simple random sampling	
Systematic random sampling	
Stratified random sampling	
Cluster sampling	
Purposive	Purposive
Convenience sampling	Convenience sampling
	Homogeneous cases sampling
	Extreme/deviant and Typical case sampling
Data collection	Data collection
Primary data	Primary data
Tests or standardized questionnaires	Open-ended interviews
Structured interviews	Focus group
Closed-ended observational protocols	Naturalistic observation protocols
Secondary data	Secondary data
Official documents	Official documents
	Personal documents
Data analysis	Data analysis
Descriptive statistics	Description
Inferential statistics	Identification of categories/themes
	Looking for interconnectedness between categories/themes
Data interpretation	Data interpretation
Generalization	Contextualization
Prediction based (theory-driven)	Interpretation based (data-driven)
Interpretation of theory	Personal interpretation

Figure 2. Difference between quantitative and qualitative approaches

Source: Gelo et al., 2008

Discussions about qualitative and quantitative research have been debated in the academic literature, mainly because of the implications and outcomes they can provide (Gelo et al., 2008; Barnham, 2012). As it is stated in Figure 2, besides the difference between the two approaches regarding the sample size, sample criteria and questioning route, a major difference exists in the validity, explanation and comprehension of the data findings.

Moving on, regarding the primary data collection for the proposed paper, a qualitative research approach is going to be used. The qualitative research approach will be applied in the form of interviews containing unstructured questions. According to Barnham (2012), qualitative research help interviewers to go in- depth with the research questions in order to have a better understanding about the interviewees' perceptions and associations with the topic.

Interviews are considered the best research technique when gathering information because they can provide more details and explanations about participants' perceptions, associations, beliefs, strategies towards a certain topic (Stathakopoulos, 2005).

Sample

The information that will help the author analyze further the research objectives mentioned has to be detailed and reliable. Thus, participants who are going to be involved in the research process have to have knowledge about topics such as: place marketing, place branding, city branding, Public Relations. They have to be professionals working with this kind of terms in their daily lives. The most suitable persons for providing the information needed are PR and place branding professionals. Because the proposed approach is a qualitative one, the sample will be non-random and in order to contact them, the snowball effect is going to be used. Area sampling is going to be Bucharest, Romania.

Sample size

In comparison with the quantitative research methods, the existing literature does not provide a certain sample size for qualitative research (Marshall et al., 2013). According to Marshall et al. (2013), it is suggested that in order to have conclusive data around 30 interviews should be done, while for a single case study, like the one presented in the current paper, around 15 to 30 interviews are considered enough. As stated by Francis (2010) in interviews "sample size is often justified on the basis of interviewing participants until 'data saturation' is reached" (p. 1229). Glaser and Strauss (1967) explain that data saturation emphasizes the fact that no additional data can be found for conceptual category (cited in Francis, 2010).

Thus, for the proposed topic, 15 professionals working in the PR and place branding field are going to be interviewed in order to acquire valid data.

Data collection

The method applied in order to get the information needed is going to be through face-to-face interviews. Gelo et al. (2008) stated that in qualitative research, data collection allows an “in-depth understanding of the participants’ perspective” (p. 275) towards a certain phenomena. In order to ensure the quality of the data collection, interviews are going to be audio- recorded and transcribed. Due to the fact, that the topic area is going to focus on Romanian professionals, interview questions are going to be provided in English and in Romanian for professional not speaking English.

According to the objectives previously mentioned, the research questions have been elaborated and can be seen in the Appendix 1.

Data analysis and interpretation

After gathering findings of the research, a content analysis is going to be provided. The author is going to group the data by means of ‘coding system’. As stated by Gelo et al. (2008), coding system reflects the process of grouping different sections in the interview answers in order to acquire broader perspectives. Qualitative research findings are based on ‘inductive interference’ (Gelo et al., 2008).

Pilot testing

In order to observe if the interview questions decided are understandable by the participants and help at providing the information needed, a pilot testing will be done. The pilot test will be realised upon 3 participants in order to observe their reactions towards the questions. Pilot testing is a useful way to assist the limitations, flaws or other weaknesses that the research design might have (Turner, 2010).

Limitations

Curtin and Fossey (2007) state that qualitative approach cannot provide a generalization of the findings, which lead us to the limitations, that this type of approach provides. Furthermore, the results of the study may be influenced by the certain characteristics of the country.

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Branding insights: an interdisciplinary journey from perception to action

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Abstract. *Our interdisciplinary study examines the brand's perceived intentions and ability, as predictors of consumer behavior. In an attempt of answering a call for research in the branding area, we found out contradictory views, both of them based on strong arguments, including empirical results. Each view has been examined by the lens of branding, social cognition and behavioral theory. We found convergent findings from cognitive psychology and behavioral theory to support one of the two views and to extract a hypothesis. Thus, we hypothesized that an effective branding process, meant to achieve both consumer trust and sales objectives, should address the brand's perceived intentions before ability. We suggest that further empirical studies are needed to test the hypothesis, although for some particular cases, tests confirmed the priority of intentions. Overall, our paper offers an integrative view of consumer underlying behaviors revealed by results of other social sciences and how should be used in brand construction process. The benefits of updating branding theories by integrating results confirmed by other social sciences are discussed.*

Keywords: *branding; brand perception; brand image; brand trust; warmth; competence; intentions and ability.*

Introduction

Bad news about big companies are not surprising anymore. We find out about such things even on TV, since in the recent years the cases of companies successful-until-yesterday that now are losing ground to smaller

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companies have increased. Independent lines of research, some of them starting from very different points, have warned about this phenomenon.

Although most studies have explained how Internet and technology have challenged marketing communications practice (Qualmann, 2009; Dann, 2010; Universal McCann McCann, 2012, 2014), we focused on the works that went deeper to consider the underlying behaviors that would explain market twists.

Therefore, our paper comprises three main parts. The 1st part explores studies that have identified inadequate branding as the failure cause, pointing out the lack of consumer trust on one side and brand dilution or „impersonal aloofness” (Malone & Fiske, 2014, p. 9) on the other side. The second part presents recent branding-related findings and how are they supported or not by literature and empirical results from cognitive social psychology and behavioral economics. The third part of the paper points out theoretical contradictions, extracts a hypothesis to be further tested, discussing findings and implications.

Branding and consumer trust

Although the literature of the past decade discusses about a profound paradigm shift facing the marketing theory and practice; an earlier groundbreaking insight we find in Anderson's view of brands evolution.

Anderson (2005) explained how product brands evolved in the mass marketing times and why the product-centric approach became obsolete in today's customer-centric world. The author envisions a new age of „customer-centric brands” belonging to those companies able to develop fully customized offers and a high level of trust in brand promise of serving individual preferences better than others. Published on July 15, 2005, in the online article “Brands: Think people, not products”, the Anderson's view about migration of brand strength from products to customers has been explained as an historical transformation driven by scarcity. Anderson explained that the scarcity of consistently high quality products have generated the success of product branding, and consequently, a period of product brands prevalence in the first half of the 20th century. As easily one can notice, the time period of product brands prevalence referred by Anderson, is, in fact, the same period of time well known for the rising up of the standardized goods consumption and mass marketing that generated

the marketing mix theory of the 4 P's (McCarthy, 1960), still dominant marketing paradigm. The author described that „over time, more and more products entered the market and shelf space became the scarce good. Power shifted to retailer brands. Now ... the shelf space constraints evaporate ... and the scarce good become customer's attention. We are moving from product-centric brands to customer-centric brands.” Product-centric brands represent promises about products (or retailers) – “buy this product from us because you can trust that it will be a quality product at good value.” Customer-centric brands offer a radically different promise – “buy from us because we know and understand you as an individual customer and we can tailor an appropriate bundle of products and services to meet your individual needs better than anyone else” (Anderson, 2005).

Yet, Malone and Fiske (2013) are the first authors to clearly indicate that although mass marketing belongs to the past, it is still the main practice, and a lot of companies remained captives of what authors call „the Middle Ages of Marketing”. Pointing out that trust is a prerequisite for human relationships, the authors explain how mass marketing erodes trust instead of brand nurturing. They show that the lack of trust drives customers away, and loyal brand buyers are replaced by circumstantial consumers that randomly choose between proximity and discounts. Supporting the assumption that the extended lack of trust was generated by the mass marketing practice, Malone and Fiske present the result of 10 separate studies that evaluated by the lens of Fiske's cognitive theories (2002, 2007, 2008) more than 45 companies and brands, and reveal that most brands fail the test of consumer's trust. The authors explain this situation by the increasing brand abstractness that drives clients away because it opposes their natural need for humanity in relationships with product provider, and by the fact that “the constant pressure for faster and larger profits has steered companies into violating all the prerequisites for trust that we all unconsciously expect of them” (Malone & Fiske, 2013, p. 8). Malone and Fiske (2013) conclude that brands should show a human face driven by good intentions in order to be trusted by their customers.

Branding and consumer's perception of brands: intentions and ability

Recent research apply cognitive theories to the consumer-company context (Aaker, Vohs & Mogilner, 2010; Aaker, Vohs & Garbinsky, 2012; Kervyn, Fiske & Malone, 2012; Malone & Fiske, 2013). Researchers test stereotypes of warmth (intentions) and competence (ability), to find out if and how these would operate on the consumer-brand relationship.

Although Aaker et al. (2010, 2012) use the terms of “warmth” and “competence” to report findings of their empirical studies, while Kervyn et al. (2012) use adapted terms: “intentions” (to name “warmth”) and “ability” (to name “competence”), all researchers have applied the same fundamental dimensions of social cognition to measure consumer’s perceptions on warmth and competence. Warmth and competence stereotypes correspond to the two fundamental dimensions of survival and social integration: warmth is about intentions towards others (good or bad), and competence is about the ability of carrying out these intentions (Fiske et al., 2002, 2007). Warmth (intentions) relates to other-profitable intent, including traits such as: good intentions towards others, communion, friendliness, morality, trustworthiness etc. Competence (ability) relates to self-profitable ability, containing traits such as: agency, intelligence, skill etc. (Fiske et al., 2002, 2007; Abele, 2003; Abele & Wojciszke, 2007, 2008, 2009; Wojciszke, 1887, 1988; Cuddy et al., 2007, 2008, 2009). Warmth and competence stereotypes are known to be central for human cognition, the main source of bias and discrimination that arise in all social contexts between persons, groups or cultures: (Fiske et al., 2002; Cuddy et al., 2007, 2008, 2009; Casciaro & Lobo, 2005, 2008; Durante, Volpato & Fiske, 2009). Aaker et al. (2010) show that warmth and competence stereotypes operates between consumers and organizations, and people perceive for-profit companies as being less warm, but more competent than nonprofits. Moreover, their empirical results revealed that willingness to buy is driven by perceptions of company’s competence, while admiration and increased desire to buy are directed to those organizations that are perceived both warm and competent (Aaker et al., 2010, 2012).

Kervyn et al. (2012) adapt the Stereotype Content Model of social perception to offer a new approach of consumer-brand relationship: BIAF - Brands as Intentional Agents Framework. BIAF confirms that warmth and competence stereotypes operate between consumers and organizations, showing that consumers perceive and behave towards brands in a similar way they perceive and behave towards people. Kervyn et al. (2012) report empirical evidence to support BIAF prediction that the 4 combinations resulted from perceptions regarding brand intentions (high vs. low) and ability (high vs. low), lead to 4 distinct emotions and drive 4 differential brand behaviors.

Results show that only popular brands are seen as both warm and competent, while high levels of perceptions on both warmth and competence dimensions are needed to attain trust, admiration and brand loyalty. In this regard, authors points out that very few of the companies

included in their study attained high levels of both perceptions, receiving low rates either on intentions (warmth), either on ability (competence), but most of them failed the test of consumer's trust: consumers do not believe that they would be well-intentioned (Malone & Fiske, 2013).

Contradictory visions on how to attain admiration, trust, sales

Overall, previous research found empirical evidence that companies are able to nurture high perceptions on both dimensions, and admired brands are both warm and competent (Aaker et al., 2010, 2012, Kervyn et al., 2012, Malone & Fiske, 2013). While high levels of perceptions on both dimensions lead to: increased willingness to buy (Aaker et al., 2010, 2012), admiration (Aaker et al., 2010, 2012, Kervyn et al., 2012, Malone & Fiske, 2013) and brand loyalty (Kervyn et al., 2012, Malone & Fiske, 2013), researchers show that ambivalent judgment prevails (Fiske et al., 2002, 2007, 2012, 2013), and most organizations are seen as either warm either competent, but not both (Aaker et al., 2010, Kervyn et al., 2012, Malone & Fiske, 2013).

An additional hint, about how difficult it is to establish high levels of both perceptions, is shown by cluster statistics regarding some well-known brands such as: Rolex, Rolls Royce, Porsche, Mercedes (Kervyn et al., 2012). Instead of admiration, feelings of suspicion and envy are found to be aimed towards these brands. All well known for their high quality, these brands are reported as being perceived as highly competent but not so well intended, which suggests they should seek for warmth perception improvement.

Although researchers (Aaker et al., 2010, 2012, Kervyn et al., 2012; Bennett & Hill, 2012) consider that organizations are able to nurture both competence and warmth, it is unclear which perception should be established first. Addressing a call for research to study which should be first, Aaker et al. (2010) suggest that establishing organizational competence before warmth (vs. reverse) "may be more effective for long-run success" (Aaker et al., 2010, p. 289). In favor of their suggestion, Aaker et al. (2012, p. 193) suppose that "warmth judgments may be easier to credential after a brand's competence has been established", and adding "small touches of warmth to a competent firm might be sufficient to offer a burst of warmth to their brand image".

Although transition from 'low warmth; high competence' to 'high warmth; high competence' was not tested, Aaker et al. (2010) studied perceptions improvement from 'high warmth; low competence' stage, as an effect of endorsement. Results show that endorsement significantly increased perceived competence of the warm company, but only when coming from a highly reputed media outlet. Although their study reveals that competence boosting by endorsement is possible, generating high levels of both perceptions, the feel of admiration and an increased willingness to buy, researchers assume that boosting perceptions of competence might encounter difficulties related with gaining an effective endorsement, since endorsement should come from a highly credible source (Aaker et al., 2010).

Certainly, since Aaker et al.'s (2010, 2012) research results indicate competence as the main driver of willingness to buy, their assumption is driven by sales-relates arguments. Indeed, the same premise of establishing competence before warmth is also underpinned by dominant management practice and marketing theories (Ries & Trout, 1981; Kotler & Keller, 2006; Grandey et al., 2005). But, if nothing is wrong with this approach, how is it possible such an increasing consumer distrust (Gerzema, 2009 cited in Aaker 2012, Malone & Fiske, 2013), and suspicious feelings reported by consumers towards high quality and respected brands such as Rolex, Rolls Royce, Porsche, Mercedes as indicated in Kervyn et al. (2012)? It is an intriguing question to be answered.

Since consumers judge companies as they judge humans (Aaker et al., 2010, Kervyn et al., 2012), and people are hard wired to instantly detect intentions of others (warmth) and secondly to asses the ability they seem to possess of carrying out those intentions (competence) (Fiske et al., 2002, 2007), we embrace Malone and Fiske's (2013) suggestion of considering consumer-brand relationships like people to people. In this light, consumers judge brand's warmth before competence.

Bearing in mind that consumer perception asses brand's warmth before competence (Fiske et al., 2012; Kervyn et al., 2012; Malone & Fiske, 2013), a cold but competent brand will fall on first impression, while a warm but less competent brand will pass on. This contradicts the suggestion that establishing organizational competence before warmth might be a more effective way of attaining perceptions of both warmth and competence. At least apparently, the brand focus on establishing competence before warmth would lead to an undesirable first impression, while the warm

but less competent brand would attain a good first impression, passing on the first test of consumer's trust, and consequently starting with better chances.

Therefore, establishing warmth before competence, seems more promising on Fiske et al.'s (2012) light of treating consumer-brand relationships as people to people. Yet, the question remains: Intentions followed by ability, or reversed? There are two opposite views, and both are based on strong arguments, including empirical results: client's trust in company's intentions supports one view and willingness to buy induced by ability of providing quality supports the other view. Thus, we explored trust-related literature to find out additional hints.

Trust behavior: emotions and rational considerations

Social literature is abundant of studies showing that trust shapes both the economic and social life. On one side, trust drives to economic efficiency due to the increased trust between partners and the decrease of transaction costs (Fukuyama, 1995), providing competitive advantage (Barney & Hansen, 1994; Dyer & Chu, 2003) and growth (Woolcock, 2001). On the other side, trust drives to increased quality of social life, generating a plurality of positive influences at societal level such as: income, health, longevity (Wilkinson 1996), education (Coleman, 1988), child protection and the reduction of the abuse (Cote & Healy, 2001), lower rates of crime (Halpern, 2001), the decrease of corruption and the maintenance of democracies and governments (Putnam, 2000).

Moreover, it has been shown that trust enables trade, since basically "every commercial transaction has within itself an element of trust" (Arrow, 1972, p. 357), and it often explains the business success of those trusted (Menkoff, 1993). Although rational choice scholars claim that people trust others to maximize their own utility when they expect to attain positive outcomes (Coleman, 1990), recent empirical studies of behavioral economists and psychologists reveal by contrast that people base their trust decisions on motivations unrelated to the utility maximization (Berg et al., 1995; Fethenhauer & Dunning, 2009, 2010 cited in Mensching, 2011).

Behaviorists consider that the interplay of emotions (coming from the intuition system that is fast, spontaneous and effortless) and rational considerations (coming from the reasoning system that is slow, controlled,

rule-based and effortful) determines trust behavior, while immediate emotions influence the decision to trust to a greater extent than rational expectations (Dunning, Fetchenhauer & Schlösser, 2012).

Discussions and concluding remarks

Corroborating the aforementioned idea that trust is incorporated in every commercial transaction (Arrow, 1972), with the recent results of behaviorists stating that spontaneous emotions, coming from intuition, influence the decision to trust to a greater extent than rational considerations (Dunning et al., 2012), we are tempted to believe that: *(1) consumer propensity to establish relationships with companies (commercial transactions) would depend on trust, and (2) the positive emotions towards company would influence decision to trust it to a greater extent than rational evaluations.*

In other words, (1) and (2) would mean that *(3) emotional trust* (fostered by the company's good intentions) would influence the consumer decision to trust the company to a greater extent than rational trust** (coming from perception that company is able to enact its intentions).*

Thus, *(4) consumer decision to establish relationships with company is influenced by perceived intentions (good or bad) to a greater extent than perceived ability.*

The notions of emotional trust* and rational trust** are used above as indicated by Aaker et al. (2010, p. 289): “research suggests there are two types of trust: sensing that another has one's best interests in mind (emotional or warm trust) and believing that another can enact the behaviors to accomplish the given task (rational or cognitive trust; McAllister, 1995).”

Following (1)-(2)-(3)-(4) reasoning route, we assume that: *(5) consumer perception regarding company's intentions might influence company's trustworthy and consequently, client relationships to a greater extent than its abilities, which would mean that (6) companies should establish perceptions regarding their good intentions before ability related ones, in order to nurture trust, customer-brand relationships, and consequently commercial transactions and sales.*

Therefore, knowing that warmth is about intentions and competence is about ability of carrying them out (Fiske et al, 2002, 2007), it appears that trust-related literature (Arrow, 1972, Dunning et al., 2012) provides additional inputs to support the hypothesis we have found following Fiske et al. 's (2012) view of treating consumer-brand relationships as people to people:

(H) Brands should establish warmth before competence, not the reverse.

Although research results for the very specific case of a for-profit social entrepreneur (Andrei & Zait, 2014) indicates the same 'warmth - competence' path of nurturing high levels of brand perception on both dimensions, further empirical studies are needed to test the hypothesis.

To conclude, our paper sheds a light on the controversy regarding brand's perceived intentions and ability as predictors of consumer behavior. We find out convergent results, from cognitive social psychology and behavioral theory, to support the hypothesis that *brands should establish warmth before competence* in order to nurture trust and customer-brand relationships, as carriers of their commercial transactions and sales.

Without neglecting sales-related arguments coming from marketing theory and practice, we think that a broader, integrative view of consumer underlying behaviors revealed by results of other social sciences would make a step forward. Ultimately, consumers and companies are social entities operating in the social world, thus, branding, marketing and all business theories would benefit from being updated and strengthened by integrating results from other social sciences.

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Materialistic values, shopping, and life satisfaction

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Abstract. *Various studies have shown that materialists are less happy in general than those lower in materialism. Several studies confirm that people who have a lower level of life satisfaction are more interested in shopping, therefore materialism determines directly and indirectly (mediated by life satisfaction) the desire of going shopping. There are only few studies that approach this topic within Romanian consumers. The conceptual model proposed here was tested on a convenience sample of 390 Romanians. Using structural equation modeling, our findings confirm only partially the hypothetical model. Materialism leads to life dissatisfaction and shopping, but life dissatisfaction does not increase shopping. To the contrary, there is a positive relationship between life satisfaction and desire for shopping. One possible explanation is that Romanians perceive materialism as a positive thing. Anyway, nuances should be done regarding the role of money and possession in bringing life satisfaction.*

Keywords: *materialism; materialist scale; shopping; life satisfaction; Romania.*

Introduction

After the fall of the communist regime, the Romanian society has been living the experience of the market economy, characterized by affluence of products and services, advertising that exhilarates consumption and hope of a life full of satisfaction, respectively by the presence of materialistic values. The product and service purchase, the contentment achieved after exploiting them and the belief that, for instance, owning a bigger house, a more expensive car or famous branded clothes represent indicators of success. The presence of the materialistic values is associated with the opinion that achieving certain goods or some high earning will lead to a

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happier life. In this context of consumption society boost it is necessary to study the relationship between materialism, shopping, and life satisfaction in the Romanian society.

Since the 19th century Thorstein Veblen (1889/2009) has tackled the issue of the ostensive luxury and consumption as indicators of the material wealth. Goods consumption represents a proof for the pecuniary power to the leisure class, and "in order to gain and to hold the esteem of men it is not sufficient merely to possess wealth or power. The wealth or power must be put in evidence, for esteem is awarded only on evidence." (Veblen, 1989/2009, p. 43). The American economist and sociologist with Norwegian roots critically analyses the life style of wealthy people, who are mostly preoccupied with spending money on products, which are not really necessary, and spending their time profitlessly. After a century since the appearance of Thorstein Veblen's well known work, Marsha L. Richins and Scott Dawson (1992) approach the issue of materialism starting from the idea that the American society is consumerist, the life style being characterized by a strong interest in product purchase. Therefore, the economic development of the American society has been related to extending the importance granted to consumerism from a limited group of the population, leisure class, to a wider segment, datum that lead to naming the whole society consumerist.

Some researchers associated the increasing of incomes not only with the development of the consumption-based behavior but with the direction towards other satisfactions than the materialistic ones. In this regard, Amitai Etzioni (2001/2002, p. 70) states that in the post-abundance society people become the advocates of the "voluntary simplicity", that is abandoning, at will, the materialistic sources in favour of the spiritual satisfaction sources. As early as 1971, Ronald Inglehart revealed that, once the economic security achieved, the young generations attach importance to "a set of «post-bourgeois» values, relating to the need for belonging and to aesthetic and intellectual needs" (Inglehart, 1971, pp. 991-992). After three decades, Roy and Anderson (2000) show that there are people in the USA that share the values of the creative culture, namely values oriented, among other things, towards interpersonal relationships, expressing one's self and spiritual progress. A research on the Romanian students points out that people who share the values of the creative culture are rather interested

in the spiritual values and having a professionally stimulating job, even if it is associated with a lower salary (Frunzaru & Ivan, 2011).

This paper presents the results of a survey that has as a general objective the understanding of the relationships between the materialistic values, consumption behavior and life satisfactions. The literature in this field of study can be divided in three sections. Firstly, we analyze the concept “materialistic values” specific to consumption society, in which advertising plays a key role in stimulating the purchase of products and services. Secondly, we tackle the relationship between materialism and consumption behavior. Thirdly, we investigate the relationship between materialism and overall life satisfaction, and particularly satisfaction regarding family, friends, and income.

Materialistic values – definitions and measurement

Approaching the materialistic values, as well as any other values, implies the risk of ideologization the scientific discourse. A critical analysis of the contemporary society can be achieved from the perspective of the arguments brought against the world that attaches more importance to material goods and less importance to spiritual goods. For instance, Jean Baudrillard (1970/2005, p. 29) considers that multiplication of the material goods and services lead to an opulent life in which people are no longer surrounded by other people, but by objects. Karl Marx (1867/1960, p. 110) had a critical perspective a hundred years ago, stating that, similarly to religion, “the products of the human brain appear as autonomous figures endowed with a life of their own, which enter into relations both with each other and with the human race”. Thus, goods are seen as objects, without noticing the social relations among them, fact named by the author: “commodity fetishism” (Marx, 1867/1960, p. 110). Therefore, discussing the materialistic values and operationalizing this concept pose theoretical and methodological problems. However we will use the terms: “materialistic values”, “materialism”, or “materialistic people” without giving them negative connotations.

We have to mention that materialistic values do not have any connection (a direct connection, at least) with the philosophical concepts which explain

the ontological reality through the existence of matter, but they represent the importance given to materialistic goods by individuals as members of the society. In *Dictionary of Sociology*, edited by Gordon Marshall (1994/2003, pp. 350-351), the concept “materialism” is defined from three perspectives, the first one confers a derogatory connotation to the term, and the others refer to metaphysical or Marxist approaches. Hereby, from the first perspective, materialism refers to the prevalent aspiration to sensuous pleasures, material possession or physical comfort, detrimentally to any superior spiritual or moral values (Marshall, 1994/2003). In *The Blackwell Dictionary of Sociology*, Allan G. Johnson (1995/2007) considers that “materialism” has two acceptances: one as a cultural value and the other as a materialistic explanation of social life (referring to Karl Marx). We can notice that, if in the first definition the materialistic values are associated with hedonism offered by material possession, in the second definition, which is similar to Thorstein Veblen’s approach, the materialistic values offer the possession of objects a role of social dignity.

More dimensions of materialism are underlined by Marsha L. Richins and Scott Dawson (1992), who consider that people, who share these values are focused on the purchase of goods, think that purchase of goods is a way of obtaining happiness and the possession of goods is an indicator of success (Richins & Dawson, 1992, p. 304). Therefore, the two authors developed a materialism scale with three subscales: “centrality”, “happiness”, and “success”. Hence, the materialists place possessions and getting them in the centre of their lives, aim at pursuing happiness rather through the purchase of goods than other means (such as interpersonal relationships or life experience), and tend to judge their or others’ success by the number or quality of possessions achieved.

The importance of material goods considered to be necessary in the pursuit of happiness is underlined by Marsha L. Richins (1987), who states that the materialistic values specific to the consumption society correspond to the “idea that goods are a means to happiness; that satisfaction in life is not achieved by religious contemplation or social interaction or a simple life, but by possession and interaction with goods” (Richins, 1987, p. 353).

Russell W. Belk (1985) developed a materialism scale with three subscales to measure possessiveness, nongenerosity, and envy. Compared with Richins and Dawson (1992), Belk (1985) defines materialism focused on interpersonal relationships, taking into consideration the influence of people's feelings about objects on their interaction with other people. "Possessiveness" is the inclination to retain control or ownership of one's possession, materialistic persons being worried about people taking their possessions. Belk (1985) defines "nongenerosity" as an unwillingness to give or to share possessions with others. In this regard, a materialistic person agrees with the item "I don't like to lend things, even to good friends". Belk (1985) consider that "envy" is the desire for others' possessions, be they objects, experiences and persons. Therefore, another distinction between Richins and Dawson's (1992) and Belk's (1985) scales is that in the first scale there is only one subscale that measures how materialists compare themselves with other people (subscale "success"), when in the second scale all three subscales focus on this trait aspects of living in the material world.

In order to measure the relationship between media exposure, materialism, and life satisfaction, Richins (1987) elaborated a more simple scale, a six item-scale, where four items measure "personal materialism" and two items measure "general materialism". The personal materialism consists in the fact that people consider that they would be happier if they had enough money to buy anything they want. General materialism reflects a general belief that money can bring happiness. Therefore Richins's scale (1987) underlines the importance accorded to possessions and to the belief that owning goods can bring happiness.

To sum up, we observe that materialism means the emphasis on material things; people that share these values consider that owning and possessing commodities bring happiness and offer a higher prestige. As personality trait, materialism is shared by people that are possessive, not generous, and envious. In this article, we focus only on the materialism defined as the appreciation to a higher extent of the possessions seen as source of happiness and success.

Materialism values and consumption society

Numerous studies done on all continents, in different cultures, have shown that there is a significant relationship between materialism and consumption. A cross-cultural study in the US and South Korea shows that for Korean sample materialism might have a stronger impact on consumption, and for the US sample there are higher levels of brand engagement (Flynn et al., 2013). At the same time, this study shows that even if materialism scales performed well in the translated form, the failure of the factor analysis proves that “materialism is culturally dependent and so materialism measures are culturally dependent too” (Flynn et al., 2013, p. 62).

A survey undergone in India shows that the more materialistic Indian consumers tend to have a more favorable attitude to television advertising and display higher consumption innovativeness (Mishra & Mishra, 2012). At the question if materialism is an universal construct that can be measured through the same scale everywhere, the authors show that Richins and Dawson (1992) scale of materialism administrated on an Indian sample has high reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity.

A research conducted in Malaysia confirms that materialism has a significant influence on compulsive buying. Moreover, credit card misuse was directly related to materialism, budget constraint, impulsive buying and compulsive buying (Asiah et al., 2014, p. 66). Consequently, the authors consider that the relationship between materialism, compulsive buying and credit card misuse raise the problem of the need to educate the public about prudent financial planning and responsible credit card usage.

For Nigeria, Steven Lysonski and Srinivas Durvasula (2013) measured the acculturation to global consumer culture and the consequences regarding consumer behavior and materialism. The findings show that acculturation leads to materialism to some extent, in the context where the respondents were exposed to marketing activities of multinationals, English language usage, social interactions, and global mass media.

In Europe, Otero-López et al. (2010) analyzed the relationship between materialism, life satisfaction and addictive buying on a Spanish sample.

Using structural equation modeling, the findings show that materialistic people determine addictive buying directly and mediated by life satisfaction. A study done on a Spanish female sample proves that anxiety and depression mediates the effects of materialism dimensions on addictive buying (Otero-López & Villardefrancos, 2013).

In summary, we consider that materialism values and consumption society are interrelated. Consumption society through advertising encourages the presence of the materialistic values and, in the same time, materialism emphasizes the acquisition of goods specific to consumption society. Much more, for materialistic people buying famous brands, sometime in a compulsive way, is a solution to own products that show their (material) success.

Materialism and life satisfaction

Studies consistently show that materialists are less happy in general than people lower in materialism (Nickerson et al., 2007; Sirgy et al., 2012; Sirgy et al., 2013; Atay et al., 2010; Otero-López et al., 2010; Baker et al., 2013). Nickerson et al. (2007) make an elaborated analysis of the studies regarding the impact of materialism on human life. For example, the authors underline studies that show that materialism negatively relate to agreeableness, self-esteem, self-actualization, educational level, openness to experience, and religious values. At the same time, materialism positively relates to narcissism, Machiavellianism, right-wing authoritarianism, hedonistic values, importance of security, need for recognition, and financial security. The survey conducted by Nickerson et al. (2007) proves that the stronger are the financial aspirations, the lower is the overall life satisfaction. Therefore, materialism correlates with a series of constructs, particularly with financial aspirations, that diminish overall life satisfaction.

A survey done by Sirgy et al. (2012) in Australia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Germany, Egypt, Korea, Turkey, and the US shows that the exposure to advertising, perceived to be materialistic, contributes to materialism. In turn, materialism leads to various standards of comparison in making judgments about standard of living. The higher is the level of aspirations the more negatively is evaluated the standard of leaving. A similar study

published in 2013 by Sirgy et al. shows that materialism may lead to life dissatisfaction when people evaluate their standard of living using fantasy-based expectations. Consequently, not materialism per se brings unhappiness, but how people establish their standard of living: using fantasy-based or reality-based expectations. A similar explanation of the relationship between materialism and life satisfaction is brought by Atay et al. (2010), where Joseph Sirgy is one of the authors. They discuss *ideal expectations* (people compare their own standard of living with those who are “filthy rich”), *deserved expectations* (about what people consider they deserve), and *minimum-need expectations* (people consider that they need more money to make ends meet). Therefore, when people’s expectations are not based on their past material possessions, they become unhappy because of the gap between what they have or can have and what they would like to have.

A particular situation can be found in more religious countries. A study realized in Malaysia shows that stress partially mediates the relationship between materialism and life satisfaction (Baker et al., 2013). The authors suggest that “materialistic values in such cultures are in conflict with religious beliefs and such values tend to create stress that adversely affects one’s well-being” (Baker et al., 2013, p. 559). Thus, for more religious people materialism can lead to life dissatisfaction directly and mediated by stress brought by the incongruence between materialistic values and religious values.

Even if there are numerous studies that show the correlation between materialism and life dissatisfaction, only few of them present systematically how materialism leads to unhappiness. Based on a survey done on a random sample in the US, Marsha L. Richins (2013) analyzes if the attainment of products makes materialistic people happier. The findings show that materialistic people, compared to their peers, have higher positive emotions before purchase followed by hedonic decline after purchase. Therefore, acquisition brings to materialistic people happiness especially before the purchase and to a lesser extent shortly after the purchase of a desired object. Nevertheless, even if buying things brings happiness on a short term, research consistently shows that high-materialism consumers are less happy than others (Richins, 2013, p. 14).

Joseph Sirgy (1998) considers that materialistic people experience life dissatisfaction because they have inflated and unrealistically high expectations regarding possessions. People that share materialistic values have *affective-based expectations* that are ideal and influenced by the comparison with the standard of living of others from their community, town, state, country, or other countries. The nonmaterialistic people have *cognitive-based expectations* that are predictive, past, and ability based expectations. They compare their material situation with the wealth, income, and material possessions of the family, friends, neighbors, and colleagues; therefore they compare themselves with people like them. Based on these comparisons, when there is a higher gap between reality and expectations, people experience higher feelings of inequity, injustice, anger, or envy, fact that diminishes overall life satisfactions.

Many studies underline the negative impact of materialism on different aspects of living that consequently diminish life satisfaction. Materialism can lead to loneliness (Pieters, 2013), work-family conflict (Promislo et al., 2010), negative job satisfaction (Sardz ska & Li-Ping Tang, 2012; Richins & Dawson, 1992, Deckop et al., 2010), or psychological traits like low self-esteem, low level of self-actualization, and narcissism (Nickerson et al., 2007).

If materialism leads to unhappiness, the satisfaction regarding family life, friends and money leads to overall life satisfaction. Joseph Sirgy et al. (1998) show that there are top-down vertical spillover and bottom-up vertical spillover that explain the relationship between material satisfaction and overall life satisfaction. Generally, "overall life satisfaction is held to be a function of satisfaction within each life domain (job, family, personal health, leisure, material possessions, and so forth" (Sirgy et al., 1998, p. 105). Consequently, overall life satisfaction is negatively determined by materialism, and positively determined by satisfaction to family, friends and money.

In summary, materialism leads to life dissatisfaction not only because of the negative correlation between the financial or material aspirations and the overall life satisfaction. Though, in this paper we focus on the relationship between the desire of acquisition and possession of commodities and

life satisfaction. Accordingly, it is proposed that the higher is the level of materialism, the lower is the overall life satisfaction and the higher is the desire for shopping.

Materialism, shopping, and life satisfaction. A possible explicative model for Romanians

Only few studies examine the presence of the relationship between materialistic values, life satisfaction and behavior consumption in Romania. Based on comparative qualitative research conducted in Romania and Turkey, Belk and Ger (1994) show that in Romania consumption is seen as a good thing and it is associated with the prosperous life in the western European society. Compared to Turkish buyers, Romanians want to buy everything, are more innocent, confused, and frustrated. A study done by Ger and Belk (1996) on 12 countries, including Romania, shows that there are differences regarding how students see materialism in different countries. For example, if the American students see materialism as a weakness and an excessive behavior, Romanian students see materialism as an empowerment expression of control and freedom. This qualitative and quantitative study revealed that Romanians are the most materialistic, followed by students in the US, New Zealand, Ukraine, Germany and Turkey.

The studies done by Belk and Ger (1994) and Ger and Belk (1996) were conducted immediately after the fall of the communist regime, when Romanians discovered the free market and the possibility to buy everything they wanted (if they had money). This paper aims to see if there is a relationship between materialism, consumption and life satisfaction after more than two decades since the end of the Ceaușescu's regime.

Based on the theory presented in the first part of this article, we develop a theoretical model that presents the direct and mediated (by overall life satisfaction) relationship between materialism and level of interest in going shopping (Figure 1). We hypothesize, also, that the overall satisfaction is positively determined by satisfaction

regarding family life, friends, and income, and negatively determined by materialism.

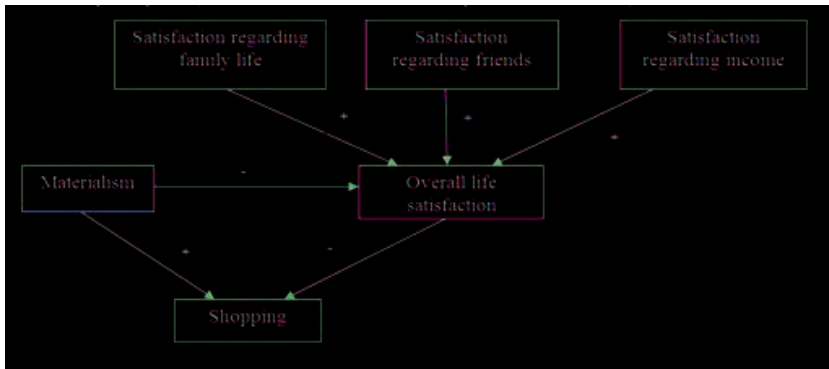


Figure 1. Hypothesized model of the relationship between materialism, shopping, and life satisfaction

Method

Sample

We conducted a sociological survey based on a convenience sample of Romanian consumers ($N = 390$). The majority of the respondents were women (57,8%), with higher education (58%), and employed (71,4%). The respondents' age was between 14 and 78 (mean= 29,5, S.D.=10.6) and the majority of them (70%) was younger than 30 (skewness = 1,62).

Measures

The materialistic values were measured with a six item-scale developed by Martha Richins (1987) translated and adapted into Romanian. Coefficient alpha was .62 for all six items and 0.77 if the item "People place too much emphasis on material things" were deleted. Because this item was one of the two items that measure general materialism (the other four measure individual materialism) we counted a single mean score for the scale based on the other five items (see Appendix). To test convergent validity we asked the respondents what their income was (no matter the

sources – salary, family, etc.) during the last month and what the monthly income would be in order to satisfy their needs. According to Richins and Dawson (1992, p. 311), “people who desire a lot of possessions will need more money to acquire those possessions and thus are expected to report a higher desired level of income”. Our findings show that respondents high in materialism consider they needed significantly more income compared to those lower in materialism ($r=.26$, $p<.01$). Thus, we can consider that the materialist scale translated into Romanian has convergent validity.

The overall life satisfaction, satisfaction regarding family life, friends, and income were measured on a Likert 5 point scale (from “1” – “not at all satisfied” to “5” – “very satisfied”). We measured the pleasure of shopping on a Likert 5 point scale (from “1” – “very little” to “5” – “very much”), as well.

Results

The positive significant relationships between overall satisfaction and satisfaction regarding family, income and friends confirm the theory developed by Joseph Sirgy et al. (1998) concerning bottom up vertical spillover (Table 1). Moreover, results show that materialistic people are less satisfied with life in general and with their income, and have higher shopping satisfaction. In contradiction with other studies (Otero-López et al., 2010; Asiah et al., 2014), our findings indicate that people who like to spend their leisure time shopping have higher overall life satisfaction and higher satisfaction regarding family.

Table 1. Correlations between variables

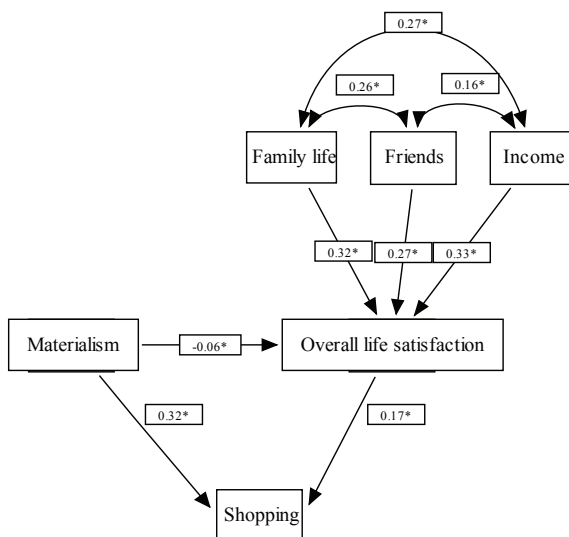
	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Overall life satisfaction	1.000	.48**	.45**	.39**	-.17**	.15**
2. Satisfaction regarding family	.48**	1.000	.25**	.28**	-.04	.19**
3. Satisfaction regarding income	.45**	.25**	1.000	.17**	-.13**	.06

4. Satisfaction regarding friends	.39**	.28**	.17**	1.000	-.09	.08
5. Materialism	-.17**	-.04	-.13**	-.09	1.000	.26**
6. Shopping satisfaction	.15**	.19**	.06	.08	.26**	1.000

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

To investigate the hypothesized model (Figure 1), we used the EQS program for structural equation modeling and the fit indices show that the model fits the data (SRMR=.042, CFI=.0978, RMSA=.058). Even if the Chi-Square value was significant ($\chi^2(6, N=390)=13.73, p=0.3$), because this statistic “nearly always rejects the model when large samples are used” (Hooper et al., 2008: 54), we can say that our model fits the sample data.

Standardized solutions reveal that materialism has a small but a significant negative impact on overall life satisfaction and, as expected, have a significant positive impact on how much people like shopping (Figure 2). Satisfactions regarding family life, friends and income have positive significant impact on overall life satisfaction. People with higher overall life satisfaction like more to go shopping.



*. Standardized solution is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Figure 2. Observed Path-Analytic Model for the relationship between materialism, life satisfaction(s), and shopping pleasure

Discussions

Our data confirm only partially the hypothetical model regarding the relationship between materialism, shopping and overall life satisfaction. The positive relationship between the pleasure of going shopping and the overall life satisfaction in the Romanian sample do not fit other findings that show that the lower is the level of life satisfaction the higher is the pleasure of shopping experience (Otero-López et al., 2010; Otero-López & Villardefrancos, 2013; Teleci, 2013; Asiah et al., 2014).

Therefore we have to answer to the following question: what is the nature of the relationship between life satisfaction and the pleasure of going shopping in our sample? Is there any causal relationship between these two variables? If yes, what is the direction of this causal relationship? The statistical relationships among the variables may not reflect causation. Nevertheless, prior research regarding materialism showed that Romanians see consumption as a good thing, as an empowerment expression of control and freedom (Belk & Ger, 1994; Ger & Belk, 1996). Thus, one possible explanation for the positive relationship between life satisfaction and shopping stems from the fact that Romanians perceive purchasing commodities as a good thing. Consequently, people who like to go shopping are people with a high level of satisfaction regarding life. Shopping has not (only) a therapeutic role for life dissatisfaction, but it is a source of satisfaction obtained in leisure time.

Nevertheless, future research should be conducted, both qualitative and quantitative. A qualitative exploratory study would be necessary for a deeper and detailed understanding of how Romanians perceive materialism, shopping and different sources of life satisfaction. Our study should be replicated with a survey that takes into consideration how mass media (television, advertising, social network websites, etc.) determines materialism within population.

Beyond these limitations, our findings bring into discussion two things: a methodological one and a theoretical one. First, we observe that the materialism scale developed by Richins (1987) has high reliability and convergent validity, fact that confirms other studies (Mishra & Mishra, 2012) that argue that materialism is a universal construct. Second, the negative relationship between materialism and life satisfaction raises

questions concerning the happiness in a consumption society. The desire of possessions and the importance allocated to commodities (considered as source of happiness and prestige) diminish the level of overall life satisfaction. Materialism or what Marx called “commodity fetishism” (Marx, 1867/1960) can be a source of alienation. Eric Fromm (1983, p. 133) considers that, originally, the idea of consumption of more and better things meant to bring people a better and happier life. Consumption was considered a source for happiness, but afterward it became a goal per se.

Nevertheless materialism is not a negative thing per se. Belk (1985, p. 266) underlines that if the opposite of materialism is ascetism, the self-denial of material source of satisfaction can lead to masochism, self-hatred, anorexia nervosa or other psychopathologies. Richins and Dawson (1992) point out that the desire for owning goods may cause employees to work harder or longer enhancing their incomes and standard of living. Moreover, the two authors stress the possibility of “instrumental materialism”, when people want, for example, a bigger house not for them, but for their family to have a better life. Therefore it is important not only the desire of having more money but how to spent the money, as well. In this regard, Dunn et al. (2011, p. 115) bring arguments that “money is an opportunity for happiness, but it is an opportunity that people routinely squander because the things they think will make them happy often don’t”. Thus, money is a source of life dissatisfaction because we don’t know how to spend it. It should be invested in experiences, to the benefit of other people or to buy many small pleasures rather than fewer large ones. Likewise David G Myers (2000) and Leaf Van Boven (2005) underline the positive role of relationships and of investing resources in life experiences in bringing happiness. Concerning this Eric Fromm (1976) proposed to shift our lives from “having” to fully “being”. Therefore, only financial aspirations associated with the ultimate goal of possession of things, and not related with experiences and offering to others, lead to life dissatisfaction.

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Appendix

Martha Richins (1987) materialistic scale

1. It is important to me to have really nice things.
2. I would like to be rich enough to buy everything I want.
3. I'd be happier if I could afford to buy more things.
4. It sometimes bothers me quite a bit that I can't afford to buy all the things I want.
5. People place too much emphasis on material things.³
6. It's really true that money can buy happiness.

3. This reverse item was removed to increase the reliability of the scale.

Sport actors' walk of fame: the Trojan horse of celebrity

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Abstract. *Sport actors rank among the most prominent and influential public figures, as sport has become a resourceful field for the entertainment industry and object of various identity social practices. Media's centrality within the sport world continues to play a key-role in providing us with spectacular rises and falls on the celebrity stage, keeping sport actors under a close public scrutiny. The main aim of this paper is to focus on the challenges that the celebrity status brings for both sport actors, as well as for the brands that consider associating themselves with a sport star. What can sport actors and the brands they endorse win or lose on the celebrity battlefield? In discussing the risks embedded in the celebrity status, I choose to address five interrelated dimensions of sport actors' walk of fame: the marketing instrumentalization of sport actors' private life, the time constraints of the professional sport career, the winning-losing dialectics of competitions, the sport actors' complex repertoire of identities and the affinal branding network build around sport actors. All of these aspects attest to the media-dependency of sport actors, but, more important to the face threatening nature of celebrity and the importance of impression management for consolidating sport actors' brand value.*

Keywords: *sport commodification; sport celebrity; impression management; affinal branding; face management strategy; media exposure; brand value.*

Introduction: the media grounds of sport commodification

Living in a time when public exposure, entertainment and spectacular seem to have conquered many social fields, attesting to the *structuring effect* that media exert, especially, upon the cultural production fields (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 64). Thus, there is no wonder that the interest in the society of spectacle (Debord, [1967]1994) and the literature on celebrity

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is constantly growing (e.g. van Krieken, 2012; Leslie, 2011; Marshall, [1997]2004; Rein et al., 1997; Rojek, 2001).

In this context, sport has been one of the most resourceful fields for the celebrity market, as it is also one of those forms of culture that has increasingly been subject to high “mediation” and “mediatization” (Thompson, 1990). Media facilitated sport’s entrance under the *commodification radar* and played a significant part in the emergence and diversification of sport-related products and markets. The symbolic power of sport and its instrumental value for other social fields, such as media, is related to more than the general popularity of sport. It covers “the combination of success and product image” (Weis, 1986, p.242), which makes it a resourceful input for business purposes in general and for the spectacular socio-economic dynamics of celebrity in particular (Andrews & Jackson, 2001; Jackson & Andrews, 2005; Ogden & Rosen, 2010; Smart, 2005).

Similar to media, sport is another “victim” of the primacy of audience, which seems to have become the main performance indicator. Neither sport, nor media can exist without the public, as every outcome of their action is meant to gain the public’s attention. Hence, through this audience pressure, “the market logic ends up dominating the field of cultural production” (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 29) and manages to redefine it in terms of both content and design.

The instrumental role that sport and media play one for the other has consolidated their “marriage of convenience” (Lever & Wheeler, 1993, p. 130), converting it into a *win-win* relationship. While the popularity of sport competitions works as a resourceful input for media, providing large and heterogeneous audiences, media assure the most efficient means for sport events to reach up to their distant publics and “to benefit from an inordinate amount of free publicity” (Smith, 1976, p. 5).

Behind the obvious success of the sport-media relationship, the long “honeymoon had begun for *the ménage à trois* among owners, broadcasters and advertisers” (Lever & Wheeler, 1993, p. 130). Sport actors and sport events work as *commodities* and also as *commercial bait* for selling other

products and services, as well as for providing consistent (media) audiences' flows. Every actor from this circle of promotion plays multiple roles, generating a complex set of direct and indirect financial interdependency chains. From the big banners and billboards that wrap up the field, to the logos on the sport actors' outfit and the time-outs ads on the stadium screens, sport events act as a framework for a public *collage* of competition, advertising and entertainment elements. Fans are no longer the *romantic* supporters, but rather the pragmatic consumers who become more and more aware of their key-role in the wider circle of promotion that the sport actors are engaged in.

Increasing both their number and their power, these "interconnections between sport, the media and advertising have helped to create the impression that the pivotal social and personal experience of the modern age is to be a consumer", even when addressing cultural forms such as sport events (Craig & Beedie, 2008, p. 130). This is why sport events need to go beyond the competitive frame and to enrich their functional and emotional benefits by becoming a hybrid form of performance.

The commercial common grounds of both sport and media increased the interdependency between the two social fields and lead to a *hybridization processes* between the two, which explains why "the new cultural visibility of sport, in turn, stimulated a rapid growth in sport-branded merchandising" (Whannel, 2009, p. 206). Moreover, the success of this sport and media *joint-venture* (Dumitriu, 2014) inside the commodification framework has generated not only new products, but also *new commercial fields* per se, providing us with both new spectatorship and customer experiences.

In this context, the paper will focus on the most glamorous dimension of sport marketization process that is the sport actors' performances on the *celebrity market*. While most studies have laid stress on the celebrity's benefits and the central role of media in creating *highly marketable* sport products, I want to discuss some of the most important challenges and risks that come along with this celebrity status of sport actors. What do sport actors win or lose throughout their transition from public figures to celebrities? What do they have to cope with while enjoying their walk

of fame? What do marketers should be prepared for when deciding to associate a sport celebrity with their brand?

Given the media's centrality inside the social field of sport, as well as their constitutive role in crowning public figures with the celebrity status, I will rather insist on those *walk of fame* aspects for which media's coverage and framing process play a key-role. The problematization of sport actors' performances on the celebrity market will thus bring to the fore aspects related to their brand value, as well as to their engagement in preparing and mobilizing certain face management strategies. Aside from discussing how the celebrity status affects sport actors' life and public image, I will also address the challenges that their celebrity status rise for marketers in terms of brand associations with certain sport stars.

Sport actors on the celebrity market

The law of public visibility rules at every level of sport dynamics, but it reaches its climax when *celebrity* and *spectacular* aspects take the lead. Due to the symbolic nature of sport competition, that lies beyond the tension and the meritocratic aspects of the performance, sport works as a "natural source of prestige" (Allison & Monnington, 2005, p. 9) and a resourceful field for new born stars and impressive walk of fame stories. Though, as natural as it seems, placing sport inside the celebrity framework requires some problematization over the fine line between sport performances *per se* and fame-related social practices and representations. Moreover, it brings out significant aspects regarding the impression management and face management strategies (Goffman 1967, 1971; Brown & Levinson, 1987).

Joining their forces in order to cope with the dominant culture of the spectacular, sport and media are constantly involved in finding or creating *sport stars*. However, winning competitions or breaking records is no longer enough if these achievements do not become the object of further media interest and coverage. To some extent we can even say that media bring the ultimate social validation of sport success, by converting sport performance into *celebrity capital*. Moreover, we can speak of some sort of a tacit *media initiation ritual* that marks the transition of sport actors from "anonymity" to "celebrity", from "sport actor" to "sport star". If sport

actors manage to bear up well during this spotlight overflow, as celebrity ceremonial practice, then they prove themselves worthy of such public exposure and praise that come along with the celebrity status.

Achievements on the field are a good start for the exiting *walk of fame*, but they are never enough for holding the front page. Celebrity is not just about sport achievements, but rather “it is constituted discursively, by the way in which the individual is represented” (Turner et al., 2000, p. 11) by the media. This is why it can be said that sport actor’s achievements in competitions provide only the input for what media turn into genuine celebrity offspring.

Sport personalities such as Michael Jordan, Messi, Rafael Nadal, Usain Bolt, Michael Phelps or Nadia Comăneci have become a brand in their own right, providing us with a whole social imagery revolving around their global superstar status. The global nature of sport “introduces and promotes new heroes; individuals whose triumphs are appreciated and assessed on a global scale” (Gammon, 2014, p.247). However, despite their outstanding sport achievements, the media are responsible for activating those “chains of attraction” that assure their actual rise to fame, acting as “cultural intermediaries” (Rojek, 2001, p.10). This golden aura of fame is accompanied by a *high level of social expectations*, as well as a *moral responsibility* to behave both as role model and hero, which, in turn, give rise to more face threatening acts that come together with such high public exposure.

On the fame battlefield, no public battle can be won without having media on your side, as the “celebrity as role model is both made and undone by press and television coverage” (Smart, 2005, p. 8). As attractive as it is for sport actors, the (super)star status comes along with a *role-play dilemma*: how to find the perfect balance between the glamorous and restless celebrity lifestyle and the restrains and moderation required for sport performance?

Nowadays, the public appearances of sport actors reach far beyond the actual sports events and competitions’ settings, covering a wide range of commercial and entertainment contexts that are more or less sports-related. Sport personalities that are “blessed” with personal charisma and

enjoy media indulgence are destined for fame as their rise to the celebrity status is actually the outcome of sport's and media's "complicit, mutually dependent commercial relationship" (Nicholson, 2007, p. 208).

The fascinating power of fame transforms almost every sport actor into a potential advertising endorsement for consumer products. To some extent you can even rewrite the history of sport legendary performance by using the Nike or Adidas commercials. However, from sport related products and brands, sport actors have gradually entered new markets and, due to their large addressability and attractiveness in terms of "followers", they are the new brand ambassadors for banking services, shampoos, cars, deodorants, wines, vitamins, cereals, margarine, watches and the list can go on from mass products and services to luxury ones, from local to global brands.

All in all, media managed to push sport actors on the celebrity market, transforming them into some kind of *kaleidoscopic public figures* that anchor their fame into sport achievements, but go far beyond it in order to keep themselves in the foreground. The *kaleidoscopic* profile of sport superstars refers to the changing public images that a sport actor is related to on the celebrity stage. From successful athlete, to smart businessman, from the image on the red carpet, to the one in the shampoo add, from the press conference setting to paparazzi shots, these multiple reflections of the same public figure stand out as a proof of sport actors' celebrity status and require a good impression management. However, as I will discuss in the next sections, the celebrity status comes with a high level of public exposure and, therefore, with a high vulnerability in terms of face management, with significant implication for both sport actors' reputation as well as for their brand value.

Impression management on the marketing field: the ups and downs of sport celebrity

Changing the coordinates of the sport acts by synchronizing them with the commercial dynamics, media managed to lead sport into the *commodification temptation* and once it entered this path there was no turning back to the *platonic* stage of sport competitions. This reconfiguration of sport experiences did not alter only the nature of sport acts and the

spectatorship experience, but also the mere “condition” of the sport actor himself. In order to gain or maintain their success inside the sport world, sport actors had to adapt and internalize the ruling principles and values that define the marketization of this social field, using them as guiding lines in their overall *impression management* (Goffman, [1959]/2003).

A first aspect that sport actors had to cope with during this reconfiguration process was that, along with sport events becoming a product on the entertainment market, they themselves have been subject to the commodification process. Sport success is no longer just a matter of results and impressive track-records; it also covers a significant financial component and an active role on the commercial battlefield. There is no wonder that on a recent Forbes *World's Highest-Paid Athletes Top*, the top 3 athletes according to their Endorsements' deals reach to more than \$50 millions (Tiger Woods, golf player - \$55 millions, LeBron James, basketball player - \$53 millions and Roger Federer, tennis player - \$52 millions). The need for becoming a highly marketable product is part of sport actors' success and it reflects not only a personal agenda, but also institutional constraints, as sport actors' have to prove their profitability for their clubs and sponsors and to provide a consistent brand image.

Athletic talent is, without any doubt, the main condition for sport success, but, today, it is no longer enough for guaranteeing the laurels of glory. Faced with this *financial dependency of success*, sport actors had to learn how to sell themselves on the sport market, how to attract powerful investors and how to convince major sport clubs that they are or have the potential to become a profitable investment. Take for example the market of sport transfers²: whether we speak of national or global markets, athletes act as any other commodity that is been subject to an economic rationality and a dynamic negotiation process. Owners of these “goods” are interested in maximizing their profit by selling sport actors on the open sport market, while buyers are looking for a perfect balance between their initial investment and the expected return of investment.

2. According to Forbes, the most expensive transfer in soccer's history belongs to Cristiano Ronaldo, when Real Madrid bought him from Manchester United in June 2009 for £80 million or \$141 million in today's dollars - see <http://www.forbes.com/pictures/emdm45eedgk/1-cristiano-ronaldo/>.

The profitability barometer of sport success gave rise to some referential battles of titans in terms of financial and fame capital, like the *El Clasico*, the famous confrontation between Real Madrid's "galactics" and Barcelona's "aliens" or the Super Ball, which was the most valuable sport event brand worldwide in 2013³ (brand value of 464 million U.S. dollars, calculated by Forbes). In every sport discipline, there is this mirage of creating a team of sport stars not just for increasing the chances of winning major sport competitions, but also for gaining a significant competitive advantage in terms of brand value. This is because sport celebrities bring fans and, along with them, media's attention, sponsorship support and marketing opportunities.

However, in the next part of this article I will argue that sport celebrity and sport actors' endorsement is not necessary or always a *commercial Eldorado*, as the *sport-media-marketing* equation is far more complex and can bring to the fore significant constraints and face threatening situations. Rather than providing an extensive analysis of all possible problems that sport celebrities might have to cope with, I will focus on five dimensions that address both the brand value of sport actors, as well as the consequences of their high level of media exposure: the marketing instrumentalization of their private life, the time constraints of the sport celebrity status, the winning-losing dialectics, the complex repertoire of identities of sport actors and the *affinal branding* network build around sport celebrities.

Bringing private lives into the spotlight: sport celebrities' performances in and outside the field

Increasing sport acts accessibility and spectacularity meant also redefining the line between the public and private life of sport actors. Their celebrity status brought along media's chase for unrevealing those aspects that go beyond the sport performance itself. People became interested not only in sport actors' achievements on the field, but also in their performances outside it. Thus, as any other public figure, the sport actor found himself object to the overall *tabloidization approach* embraced by media.

Little by little news about sport achievements and game evolution left room for news about sport actors' lovers, parties, disputes, their food and music

3. <http://www.statista.com/statistics/253353/brand-value-of-sport-events-worldwide/>.

preferences or the “dirty” details of their divorce. Today athletes’ wives, ex-girlfriends, drivers or hair dressers become public figure themselves and hope for gaining their own *celebrity free pass* under the spotlights.

Media found the sport actors’ private life to be a resourceful input for adding more *drama* and *fussiness* to the sport performance on the field. Similar to other social areas, media played a central role in the *sport tabloidization* process, mainly by modifying the boundaries of perception (Goffman, [1959]/2003, p. 131) and the public visibility regions. However, the line between these regions (*front stage, back stage, zone of transition, residual region*) is so fine, that, in many cases, under the pressure of world’s *hypervisibility* and *transparency* (Baudrillard, [1987]/1997), even the backstage and transition zone become subject to sport actor’s performances as an act of staging the audience’s inopportune intrusion into a space that was supposed to be close for its scrutiny.

Bringing training and private aspects under the spotlight, media manipulate the public-private dichotomy and create that *exposure effect* that brings salient aspects of sport celebrities’ life into the open. In trying to bring the backstage to the forefront and to increase the proximity towards sport actors, media had to permute what was meant to be private into public issue, generating a hybridization of the performance regions. This, in turn, provided a good tool for amplifying the *sensationalism* and *spectacularity* of sport performances as media events, but it also generated a high pressure in terms of face management for the sport stars.

In terms of media coverage and attractiveness, news regarding sport actors’ private life end up competing with those regarding their public performances on the sport field. Moreover, private issues become the input for sport *pseudo-events*, which are “made for and by media” (Sartori, [1997] 2005, p.65). Product of this Big Brother chasing of sport actors outside the sport field, sport pseudo-events are built on converting private aspects into objects for public debate.

Athletes getting drunk, coaches’ refusing paternity tests or going for a shopping session draw as much public attention as a sport performance itself. It is not the sport actor who gets to decide where the line between his

private and his public life is, but rather it is up to media to decide to what extent this private-public hybridization can go. Media go for *disclosure* in digging up into sport actors' private life, converting private aspects into public ones. To what extent is this public-private mixture beneficial for the sport actors? What are the marketing implications of this high media exposure of the sport celebrities' private lives?

On the one hand celebrity is defined by high public visibility level, which media exposure of sport actors' private life undoubtedly provides. When sport performance can no longer buy you media converge, your private life can do that instead, keeping you under the spotlight. Moreover, many would argue that these private-life aspects humanize sport celebrities and bring them closer to their publics, which find it easier to identify with them. At first glance, it seems that everyone is winning: media, fans, sport stars and companies they "sell" for. Where's the harm in that?

On the other hand converting private aspects of the sport celebrities' life into public ones is rather a *Pandora box* than a *golden goose*, because this process is out of sport actors' control. This means that high media exposure involves high face management vulnerability. If inconsistency between the image that sport stars have built and projected on the public stage and their actual performances in private context is high, then this can turn into a harmful *boomerang effect* of celebrity. Improper behavior or language, personal preference in clothing, music, food or travel destinations, hobbies, friends or family history (divorce, fights, problems with the law et.) can become significantly face threatening for sport celebrities, as people usually project in them socially desirable values and role-models.

When and if these expectations are not met or, more important, if there is a powerful cognitive dissonance between the public image that sport actors' built for themselves and the one reflected by the private aspects revealed by the media, people feel not only disappointed, but also fooled. This is the turning point when admiration is converted into disgrace, when loyal or potential followers are lost for good. It is also the point where reputational crisis may emerge (e.g. Tiger Woods infidelity story, Adrian Mutu's drug problem).

There is also the problem of professional versus personal media coverage balance. While, at first, there is a consistent demand for more information about a rising sport celebrity from the public's part, the high level of media exposure usually leads to a suprasaturation point. This comes with a resistance position from the audiences' part, as they feel like there is a significant discrepancy between news about the sport celebrities' performances *in* and *outside* the sport field. People start to question the professional value of sport actors' and even criticize them for engaging more in the showbiz-performances than in their professional sport ones. Their "omnipresence" on the screen, at parties, events, in ads or public scandals is perceived as a proof of neglecting their sport career and, to some extent, as a way of falling into the *fame-sin*, which are both face threatening.

Moreover, the high media exposure of private aspects, may bring to the fore the glamorous nature of their life style and the significant discrepancy between their social status *before* and *after* their celebrity rise, as well as between them and most of their fans. From genuine envy to moral problematization of sport celebrities' extravagances and opulence, revealing too much about the private life of sport celebrities might bring more harm than benefits for their public image.

In the end of this section I would argue that this effect of the media exposure upon sport celebrities has lately been amplified by the sport actors' own presence in social media, which are mainly used as Krieger observes for *self-disclosure* (cited in Frederick et al., 2012). They definitely allowed a higher interaction between athletes and their fans (Sanderson, 2010), but have also provided a new way to convert private aspects into public ones. Social media are a more controllable way of revealing private aspects, although they have also become a great source for traditional media to get access to sport celebrities' private life and contributed to the overall increase of sport tabloidization.

The time constraints of sport celebrity

Unlike other fields of celebrity, the time pressure that sport actors have to cope with is significantly higher. There are two time-components of sport celebrity that I want to address in this section, both of them important in

terms of managing the public image of the sport actors and their brand value. On the one hand there are the constraints of a rather short career as top level performers, due to less controllable reasons such as aging or high injury risks. On the other hand there is the continuous change of the front-stage actors on the celebrity market and the need to *freshen-up* the sport stars that people (thus customers) related to.

Most studies regarding the time-frame of sport careers have been focused on the psychological and social implication of the athletic career *termination* or *transition* (Lavalley et al., 2000; Schlossberg, 1981, Stambulova, 1994; Kerr & Dacyshyn, 2000; Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994, 2001), focusing on the individual experiences of the sport actors and the way they handle the traumatic character of their “retirement” from the sport elite world. Moreover, these studies provide a rather problem-oriented perspective, with models and suggestions aimed to facilitate sport actors’ process of coping with the adjustment difficulties associated with this process. What was constantly neglected by these studies and what I want to bring into discussion are the “costs” of failing to handle the retirement from the elite sport career in terms of celebrity capital.

The emotional and financial impact that the sport actors’ career termination is amplified by the fact that popularity and social status are important aspects for many athletes’ *self-concept* (McPherson, 1984). Moreover, we are looking at an *overidentification* (Goffman, 1963) process or what Turner (1978) referred to as “role-person merger”, laying stress on the high identification and attachment to a social role that make sport actors unwilling to give up to this role despite the availability of more attractive role alternatives that they can turn to.

Used to the flash-lights, the public attention and veneration, the media interest and exposure, as well as the challenging competition calendar, most athletes have a rather hedonistic approach of their celebrity experience with no back-up plan or strategic way of converting this symbolic social death into a form of “social rebirth” (Allison & Meyer, 1988). However, the end of their professional sport career can be perceived as a “role-exit process” (Ebaugh, 1988) and managed appropriately. The celebrity capital gained during their careers as top level athletes can be more than just a source for

frustration. It can work as a solid anchor for a new career path, having a great (re)generative potential if it is wisely and strategic used.

Along or aside from the organic relation between sport performance and fame, which reflects rather a synchronism between the two (sport achievements bring and feed the celebrity flame), there is also a *strategic* approach of *fame as a gateway*. Aware of the short period of glory on the field, as the life cycle of great performance is very limited, many sport actors build on their “golden age” achievements a fame capital that, in time, could become an input for fame reproduction. In other words, while throughout their careers as active athletes/coaches sport achievements can generate fame, after their retirement from sport competitions, their superstar status should be strong enough to keep them on the front page.

Sport actors’ training and experience on the celebrity stage prepare them for a smooth transition to other fame-related areas like film, television, modelling or fashion. Take for example David Beckham: from perfume, to underwear, from acting to humanitarian campaigns or modelling, he built for himself alternatives *fame gateways* to make up for his football career input of fame. And if there is life after (sport) retirement, for certain there can also be fame after it.

Pele, Mike Tyson, Nadia Comăneci, Anna Kournikova, Hagi, Andre Agassi or Michael Jordan are a few other examples which confirm that the end of the sport “mastery performances” “cycle as elite athletes doesn’t need to ring down the curtain over the celebrity status. On the contrary, it is an opportunity to identify, explore and invest strategically in new ways to trade on it, adapt and accept new forms of celebrity re-contextualization.

As I have already mentioned at the beginning of this section, the time constrains of sport celebrity are also related to the constant need for change in terms of leading and secondary characters on the celebrity stage. For this reason, media are engaged in a dual process of identifying/creating and dismissing old sport stars, so that they provide the public with (fresh) new celebrity offspring. Once you have reached the celebrity climax in terms of media exposure, public interest and mastery performances on the field, it is very hard to maintain this level for a long term, so you inevitably face

a receding tide. The celebrity market is very dynamic and goes through rapid updating processes, generating concentric circles of celebrity statuses based on the intensity of media exposure and spectatorship engagement. The hard core circle of celebrity is always time-dependent, favoring the snapshot hierarchy of professional value and image capital, thus present-oriented.

Turning to sport actors who are on the rise and enjoy their celebrity bloom, they provide marketers better chances of reaching to a wide spectrum of customers, as their notoriety is a great starting point. Nevertheless, the marketing campaigns involving sport actors and sport-related products or services show that choosing from the *hard core* circle of celebrity is the (predictable) dominant approach that companies turn to, as this involves a lower risk level that they are expose to .

The winning-losing dialectics

Although it is easier (and mostly) related to glory and praise, the sport celebrity market is not only about positive turnouts. To be put under public scrutiny by media makes sport actors as in for admiration and support, as they are for disregard and contempt. Winning and losing, through their high emotional engagement, are both a resourceful media input in terms of *spectacularity* and *dramatisation* potential.

Whether it is about glorious moments or shameful ones, fame does its part in bringing the sport celebrities on the front page and feeding them with public visibility. Fame has a consistent face threatening component embedded in it and, thus, is strongly dependent on sport actors' impression management efficacy.

The celebrity or the hero status of sport actors is not always related to winning situations, as sometimes might be about losing with grace or failing courageously (Pivato, 1996; Rauch, 1996). The runner-ups, the great performances of outsiders or the close defeat in a David versus Goliath confrontation, can bring the loser a higher image capital than to the winner. The manner and the context of a sport performance can be more important in building up sporting heroes (Gammon, 2014; Hughson, 2009) than the actual winner or loser status.

Dramatic defeats themselves can work as great marketing stories, bringing to the fore values such as courage, perseverance or total engagement and, thus, playing the empathy card. The emotional intensity of losing and the life-lesson it can provide make the loser-corner as resourceful for sport celebrity as the winner's one. As Whannel (2004, p. 482) pointed out, where else would consumers (referring merely to football fans) maintain high levels of consumption even if the quality (success) of the sport performance declines? Where do customers (fans) continue to support and even become much more present in supporting their favorites if not in sport? For sport customers (fans) losing situations provide the perfect context to test and confirm their true commitment, which marketers perceive as a high level of customer loyalty.

Despite “the fetishization of success and winners on television” (Whannel, 1985, p. 61), the dominant competitive experience is that of the losers, not the winners. There are always much more losers in a competition than winners. Moreover, sooner or later, even great champions find themselves coping with failure. Such upsets become a subject of public debate, and media are always there “to encompass the athlete's betrayal of the public's trust and the fans' emotional investments” (Ogden & Rosen, 2010, p. 3). Putting pressure on sport celebrities, media force them to be always prepared to turn to *remedial/ redressive face management strategies* (Goffman 1967, 1971; Brown & Levinson, 1987) in order to save their public face and the brand value attached to it .

Therefore, sport celebrity is not all about winning, but rather about the manner of winning and losing. In this context, what really makes the difference on the short-run is the face management strategies that the sport actors engage in coping with the success or defeat. Nevertheless, we cannot deny the fact that, on the long-run a series of well managed losing situations values less than a series of winnings in terms of brand value, as sport remains the “ultimate meritocracy” global referent (Bell, 2009, p. 54).

The multiple identification pitfall of sport actors

Due to the symbolic value attached to sports, “questions of identity and identification are of critical importance both for the routine functioning of sports and for some of the problems recurrently generated in connection with them” (Dunning, 1999, p. 3), such as the marketing ones. The constitutive nature of identity and identification for the sport dynamics works as a solid premise for its successful adaptation to the consumer culture, in which consumption is understood as “an activity in and through which identity is constructed” (Smart, 2003, p. 74).

Celebrity is not only about the sport actor himself, but also his complex repertoire of identities and the wide range of communities he belongs and connects. From national, to regional or organizational (sport club) identification, the sport celebrities work as community coagulator agent, thus a resourceful “relationship marketing catalyst” (Magnusen, Kim & Kim, 2012). All these overlapping communities that the sport celebrities keep together mean not only fanatic supporters or rather silent ones, but also loyal, occasional or potential customers. Therefore, the sport communities build around these sport stars can act as customer-communities and be targeted as such by companies. But how stable and homogenous are these sport celebrity-based communities?

The most politicized dimension of sport community, and yet, the most stable one is built around sport actors’ national identity. International competitions give “nations a chance to show their power through sports and give people a chance to feel proud of their nation” (Li et al., 2010, p. 128). And who can best represent us if not our national sport stars? Sport actors are invested with both the right, as well as the duty to play for an entire nation, their performances during major international competition acting as a “public diplomacy tool” (Manzenreiter, 2010, p. 29). The symbolic capital of sport performances is related to a significant affective power, as the competition between nations on the sport battlefield is able “to arouse strong emotions in a direct manner and, in a less direct way, to create a sense of belonging and national pride” (Hilvoorde, Elling & Stokvis, 2010, p. 92). It is thus not surprising that most sport-related communication campaigns focus on emotional arguments, but most of all on pride and the feeling of belonging to a (national) community.

Sport actors and their achievements act as important resources for *identity stories* and *national branding anchors* that are globally accepted. The spontaneous association between countries and sport celebrities (ex. Romania - Hagi, Năstase, Nadia, Brazil - Pele/ Neymar/ Ronaldo, Russia - Plushenko, Sharapova, Argentina - Maradona, Messi, the UK - Beckham, Murray, Holmes etc.) attest to the resourceful (para)diplomatic and marketing value that they have for their country promotion. On the global scale, many people hear about and discover a country through its sport stars, which makes sport celebrity a significant component in branding a nation, with or without a clear strategy of its instrumentalization.

When we speak about the organizational level of sport communities or the sport-club communities, which have a rather global dimension, identification dilemmas might arise. The “citizenship of convenience” (Campbell, 2011) and the increasing phenomenon of sport migration define a professional sport field dominated by transnational sport actors. How many of Hypo Handball Club’s players are Austrian? How many of Manchester City Football Club’s players are English? Performance and financial reasons have become more important than national or spatial criteria, as both clubs and individual sport actors are interested in becoming more and more competitive and achieving greater results. National community or sport community identification becomes salient when Real Madrid meets Barcelona or when Chicago Bulls meets L.A. Lakers team, as people define themselves firstly by referring to their club community, which is transnational and, moreover, primary about *shared emotions* and *common competitive interests*.

This is why we are facing a rather circumstantial sport-community identification for both sport celebrities and fans. This network model of *sport community islands* (Dumitriu, 2012) means that, depending on the context, sport stars and supporters activate a certain community-identification mechanisms, while making the other identities silent. Thus, the same volleyball player for example could relate to its club community on the National Championship stage and to its national community during a World Championship, competing against its club teammates that play for other countries. In terms of marketing implication, these alternative sport community islands mean distinct markets and public targets, working as segmentation platforms for companies’ campaigns. Moreover, they

provide a widening of the potential customers, as using Cristiano Ronaldo as brand endorsement means addressing both Portuguese community, as well as Real Madrid community or football fans in general as professional community. It is hence no surprise that he is the second *World's Highest-Paid Athletes* in 2014, according to Forbes⁴, having 11 endorsement major partners like Emirates, Nike, Samsung Electronics and Toyota Motor that generate \$28 million a year in income and one of the biggest social media network-community followings on the planet with 83 million Facebook fans and 26 million Twitter followers.

However, the real problems in terms of face management and marketing consequences begin when sport celebrities switch team, especially well-known rival like Real Madrid and Barcelona (football) or Györi Audi ETO KC and Larvik (handball). Both clubs and sport actors as brands are losing followers, while marketers have to find out the proper strategy to benefit from these fan-community reconfigurations. Moreover, sport actors have to cope with contradictory situations generated by the globalizing stage of sport; for example FC Barcelona's hero (Messi) is not a Spanish football player although FC Barcelona is one of the most powerful Spanish brands, becoming, in march 2014, the first sport team to have 50 million Facebook fans and being valued at \$2.6 billion, almost double what the team was worth in 2012⁵. We can thus reevaluate the marketing and PR costs of sport celebrities' performances - both on the sport field and outside it - by relating to the impact that they might have upon the reconfiguration of the sport community islands built around a sport star.

Affinal branding: the marketing crossroads of sport celebrity

The previous sections of this paper have already discussed the marketing value of both sport actors and events, as well as of sport-related products and services. The high level of popularity and the wide addressability of sport acts are the main reasons that explain the rapid ascension of sport, "as it carries very strong images, has a mass international audience, and appeals

4. <http://www.forbes.com/sites/kurtbadenhausen/2014/06/11/floyd-mayweather-heads-2014-list-of-the-worlds-highest-paid-athletes/>, last accessed on 27.06.2014

5. <http://www.forbes.com/sites/mikeozanian/2014/01/03/barcelona-becomes-first-sports-team-to-have-50-million-facebook-fans/>, last accessed on 20.06.2014

to all classes” (Gwinner & Swanson, 2003, p. 275), providing higher levels of brand or corporate exposure (Kropp, Lavack, Holden, & Dalakas, 1999, p. 49). Moreover, it seems that the consumers’ general positive attitude towards sport has a moderation effect on their overall attitudes toward the advertising content (Pyun & James, 2011). Audiences’ sport-related “excitement” and “emotional attachment” (Copeland, Frisby, & McCarville, 1996, p. 33) is somehow transposed in their attitude towards advertising, setting important premises for a successful persuasive message delivery.

Along with actors, singers or (catwalk) models, sports celebrities are the spoilt *offspring* of advertising. The way from promoting products, to sport actors themselves becoming *the product* is quite short when it comes to a celebrity-saturated world where everyone seems to be involved in either producing or consuming celebrities (Rein et al., 1997).

Hence, sport actors entered the short list of the most wanted celebrity category and the mere fact that they have become brands in their own right converted them into what can be called a *brand-bond*, connecting a wide and, sometimes very heterogeneous, set of brands. From clothes and face-cream, to cars, banking services or hotels brands, sport actors are engaged in promoting almost any kind of product, service or social cause.

This branding network build around a sport actor, along with the high level of media exposure he has to cope with due to his/her celebrity status makes sport actors very vulnerable in terms of face management. The vulnerability brought by this multiple-roles that spot actors have to perform on both the public and the private scene has less prominent implication for the brands he endorses. Each of these brands requires a specific role-play from the sport actor’s part, in agreement with the brand values and the ad-hoc marketing approach, as well as with the sport actor’s personal branding concept.

However, as wider and diversified is the brand-association portfolio of a sport actor, higher is the face threatening pressure he has to cope with and higher the risks that each brand associated with him/her has to run. This potential domino mechanism is strongly dependent on the

messages and brand values' consistency between the sport actor and the brands he endorses, as well as between all the brands that he promotes. In most cases, a wider portfolio is more likely to involve a high level of product diversification, increasing the challenges for both sport actors and marketers.

If sport actors (and their PR staff) have to answer to the question: "Is this product/service/ company/cause compatible with my brand image?", the marketers should also keep in mind if the other products the sport actor promotes are a proper *branding peer group* to be associated with by the public. Does my bank or car brand benefit or stand to lose from this mediated association with the soft drink brand X, perfume brand Y or the shampoo brand Z the sport actor endorses? How exclusive or permissive should these commercial relationships be so that each brand would benefit the most from it? On the one hand, more brands promoted by a sport actor means a higher level of exposure and notoriety for him and a wider addressability, but, on the other hand, it is harder to provide and maintain a brand-value consistency between all the brands connected by this public figure.

In this context, we should keep in mind that the use of advertising through sport rises questions regarding customers' *identification* and *differentiation* (Lyberger & McCarthy, 2001, p. 431). Brought together by the same sport actor, brands should take a more cautious approach of the implications of this *affinal branding* association mechanism, anticipate and prevent potential crisis generated by brand value inconstancy. What might happen when the same sport celebrity who enjoys fast-food products on TV ads and billboards is also engaged in a social campaign promoting a healthier food-style? How can a luxury perfume brand work with been associated with the same sport actor involved in a mainstream shampoo brand ad campaign? To what extent can these work together without generating strong cognitive dissonance that customer will react to and that might affect the credibility of a brand?

Another dimension that can lead to such situations can be related to the potential discrepancy between the role-play on the commercial stage and the real life consumer behavior of the sport actor himself. How effective is

an ad if it is well known that the sport actor uses or even is a loyal customer of other competitor brand? As much as they like a sport celebrity, when seeing him driving other car brand then the one he so convincingly endorses on TV or definitely using other beauty products then the one he is so found of in the last ads, customers may call this inconsistency on the sport actors and reprobate their commercial (pro-profit) versatility.

Once they have entered the public eye, facing the *Big Brother effect* of celebrity, sport actors engage in a role-playing act that is meant to impress, while maintaining the coherence of their character. From appearance, to joy manifestations on the field, from TV interviews to fan's meetings and joining social causes, the sport actors have found a way to make his public scripts (commercial or not) fit in their overall personal branding concept and be consistent with the *role expectations* attached to each one of them. Nevertheless, improving their role performance requires constant time investment and attention in choosing the proper face management strategies, which reveal the mere dramaturgical dimension of sport's dynamics.

I will thus argue that the reconfiguration of the sport experiences generated by the commodification of these social fields and the high level of public exposure of sport acts gave rise to a *hybrid profile* of the sport actor himself in terms of role performance. This, in turn, requires a consistent concern for impression management from both the sport actors' part, as well as from the marketers one, so that the brand associations with a sport celebrity be a win-win situation.

Conclusion

The centrality of media inside the sport world and their high involvement in the overall process of sport marketization, impelled sport actors to enter and generate new competitive markets, exploiting their commodity value, as well as their role as performers on the spectacular scene of entertainment. Thus, the moment they step into the spotlight, sport actors find themselves subject to constant public scrutiny and their performance on the field is no longer enough to measure up to the social expectations related to their celebrity status.

This paper brought to the fore not only the common grounds of sport and media in fuelling sport actors' *walk of fame* and the marketing potential of a strong brand value built around a sport celebrity, but also the challenges and marketing risks imbedded in this celebrity status. Contrary to the celebrity magnetism that Holt and Mangan admit when claiming that sporting public is too busy worshipping to reflect on the objects of its fascination (Holt & Mangan, 1996, p. 5), I will argue, base on all the aspects that I have discusses in this paper, that we are rather facing a time when the spectatorship experience is more evaluative. The public has higher expectations from sport actors in terms of their performances *in* and *outside* the field. Along with the high level of media exposure, this places sport celebrities in a very face threatening context of professional and personal performances, requiring the mobilization of a wide spectrum of face management strategies.

The marketing instrumentalization of sport actors' private life, the time frame of the *golden age* of elite sport performances, the winning-losing dialectics, sport actors' complex repertoire of identities and the *affinal branding* network build around them attest to the dynamic and complex nature of sport celebrity, addressing both the benefits of this status, as well as its potential costs in terms of reputational and financial capital. Moreover, this article lay stress not only on the challenges that sport celebrities have to cope with in their walk of fame, but also on the challenges that marketers who want to associate their brands with sport celebrities have to consider and take on.

Another important aspect that this problematization of sport actors' celebrity status brought out, in line with previous studies, is the decisive role that media play in creating sport celebrities, helping or preventing them from maintaining this status, extending or shortening their celebrity story. This is why a good media relations management can constitute not only a competitive advantage, but rather a surviving strategy within such a high competitive market as the celebrity one. Moreover, the way media played this winning marketization card in regard to the sport world has led to a structural change in terms of behavioural and discursive practices, from both inside and outside the sport field. This, in turn, has generated

a reconfiguration of the whole social imagery of sport and spectatorship experiences, leading marketers to capitalize more and more on the sport actors' brand value.

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Perception and consumption of global luxury brands in Russia and Romania: comparative cross-cultural aspect

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Abstract: *It seems very interesting to compare luxury consumption in Russia with the post-communist countries of the former Soviet bloc. The aim of this research is to find out the common and specific about an attitude to global luxury brands in Russia and Romania. We investigate the motives for buying luxury brands in these two countries, as well as the brands' preferences for Russian and Romanian consumers. Furthermore, the portrait of an average luxury consumer in Russia and Romania is introduced and analyzed in the study. The current investigation consisted of two parts. First, it was qualitative research, as in-depth interviews with luxury brands consumers. It allowed us to formulate the hypotheses. Then to verify the hypotheses, we conducted on-line survey in which 45 female respondents from each country took part. As can be seen from the study, Russian and Romanian luxury brands connoisseurs have much in common. Both of them prefer global brands to local ones. The majority of Russian respondents agree that luxury brands are bought to demonstrate the status and welfare or at least it is a kind of reward for being hard working. As for Romanians, the key reason for luxury consumption is a very high quality and perfectionism in details. Although the consumers from the countries have shown some common characteristics, they are different in their attitude to Louis Vuitton (LV is not № 1 in Romania). What is more, the brands ratings and products choice are completely different in Russia and Romania. All our respondents have very strong cultural background: they visit opera, museums, listen to classical music and read serious books. Furthermore, their touristic destinations have cultural purposes as well. It means that people appreciate not only material brands, but also try to do their best to follow the cultural life style. This research contributes to some extent to the understanding of luxury brands consumption in Russia and Romania. The study can be useful for luxury companies, which plan to do business in these countries or already have been presented there.*

Keywords: *luxury brands; conspicuous consumption; connoisseur and star luxury brands; Russia; Romania.*

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Introduction

Luxury has always been the inalienable part of human life since the time passed away. People of different age, gender and social status always wanted to belong to the luxury world. Historically Russia had strong appreciation of luxury since tsarist time. Then after the revolution and during Soviet era the difficulties to access to this magic world were artificially created. However eventually from the end of XX-th century the new non-Soviet Russia again has strong admiration to luxury brands. The country is open to the world now and many global luxury brands have opened its boutiques there. Louis Vuitton brand (LV), which is a symbol of luxury presence in the country, was opened in Moscow in 2003. LV is considered one of the strongest luxury brands in the world and if it is introduced in a country, it means that the country has global luxury. In Bucharest LV boutique was open at June 2008.

Nowadays it seems very interesting to compare luxury consumption in Russia with the post-communist countries of the former communist bloc. The aim of this research is to find out the common and specific about an attitude to global luxury brands in Russia and Romania. We investigate the motives for buying luxury brands in these two countries as well as the brands' preferences for Russian and Romanian consumers. Furthermore, the portrait of an average luxury consumer in Russia and Romania is introduced and analyzed in the study.

Although Russia is considered as one of the prospective countries for global luxury brands consumption, there is a lack of academic research publications about the specificity of luxury brands consumption in the country. Although the Romanian researchers (Pop, Ciornea and others) study luxury in terms of its value, luxury consumers' segmentation and drivers of customers' satisfaction with luxury fashion products, we haven't found any academic paper about key motives for luxury consumption in Romania as well as brand preferences. Anyway, our preliminary observation research has shown that Romanian people have very high aesthetic taste so they really appreciate luxury brands, as Russians do. In our opinion, the luxury brands "starvation" stems from communism epoch, when luxury consumption was not encouraged and almost prohibited.

The paper is structured in the following way. First, we briefly summarize the relevant literature about luxury brands and motives for their consumption as well as different segments of luxury brands customers. Second, we present the primary research about luxury brands consumption in these two countries. Finally, we provide the research limitations and give some recommendations about luxury brands development in Russia and Romania.

Literature review

Luxury brands and its types

Luxury consumption does not depend on economic level, it is determined as a cultural phenomenon. In developing countries (as China, India) people can buy brands that hardly suit to their pocket. They have to save money for very long time and finally purchase something that is very expensive and beautiful. People buy luxury to differentiate themselves and raise their social status. Otherwise, in such developed countries with socially oriented culture as Germany, Austria or Sweden brands do not mean much to people. It is considered improper to demonstrate luxury. Wealthy people do not buy very expensive car or watch. These material artifacts have low value there. People can stand out for their prestigious education or scientific degree. So, admiration for luxury stems from culture.

Kapferer (2013), speaking about luxury, refers to such metaphor example as a peacock. It is extremely expensive, very beautiful but has very low level of functionality. So speaking in a metaphor term, luxury is a peacock. In most cases, luxury is strongly connected with a brand. As Kapferer writes: "Only diamonds are luxury objects appreciated without brand. For everything else, there is no luxury without brands..." (Kapferer, 2009). Although there are a lot of definitions of what brand is (given by Aaker, Keller, Kapferer and others), "there is still no corresponding delineation of what constitutes a luxury brand" (Berthon, 2009). Klaus Heine describes luxury brand as "as images in the minds of consumers that comprise associations about a high level of price, quality, aesthetics, rarity, extraordinariness and a high degree of non-functional associations" (Heine, 2012). In this definition, Heine does not mention the history of a luxury brand and personalities of the brand creators. In our opinions, these two elements are

very important for luxury brands perception. For example, such brands as Chanel, Dior, Saint Laurent have very strong personalities of their creators. The personalities give more values to luxury. Luxury brands have three dimensions as functional, emotional and symbolic. The emotional and symbolic meanings are much more prevalent for luxury brands in comparison with functionality.



Figure 1. Rolls Royce decorated with LV monogram

The Rolls Royce decorated with LV monogram (picture 1) goes far beyond its functionality. Of course, this car is bought not as a mean of conveyance. This vehicle signals not only about the highest level of admiration for LV, but also about wealth and prestige.

Luxury brands are very different. The brands can vary in such criteria as prices, level of awareness, geographic presence and the other criteria. In this article we consider the luxury brands classification based on level of awareness and recognition. There are possible two kinds of brands: star and connoisseur brands (Nueono & Quelch, 1998). Accordingly, loud products constitute star brands and quiet products are underlain in connoisseurs brands. The more people hear about star brand the better. The examples of star brands are LV, Gucci, Rolex, connoisseurs – Bottega Veneta, Azzedine Alaia, Lange und Soehne. Even though if star brands are available only for a few people, many people preferably should know them. One of the possible motives for luxury star brands consumption is to demonstrate wealth to other people, who cannot afford these luxury products (Heine, 2012). Usually this fact has place in developing economics with very

heterogenic level of income. For example, in China brands should scream about status and be easily identified by other people.

For example, Azzedin Alaia has no explicit logo strategy. You can find the logo only inside. So it makes his bags unrecognizable to the majority of ordinary people and identifiable only to those “in the know” (Young, Nunes & Dreze, 2010).



Brand: Louis Vuitton	Brand: Azzedin Alaia
	
<p>A loud product of the star brand</p> <p>Reference no. 1: http://www.louisvuitton.com</p>	<p>A quiet product of the connoisseur brand</p> <p>Reference no. 2: http://www.net-a-porter.com/product/385167/Alaia</p>

Figure 2. Examples of the star and connoisseur brands

It is important to notice that star brands can have quiet products as well. Even LV has products with no explicit logo. These products are intended for mature consumers, mainly for Europeans for whom very knowable brands with logos are a kind of bad taste.

We mentioned before that there is no brand without luxury. Moreover, it is very important for luxury brands to be international (Kapferer. 2013). Although in our opinion luxury brands can be local (for example artisanal products), the luxury consumers prefer brands that are internationally famous and recognized in other countries.

Luxury consumers

Brands allow their consumers to express themselves (Young, Nunes and Dreze, 2010). Kapferer (2013) stressed that it is not obligatory to be extremely wealthy for buying luxury brands. He gave example of two groups who are not necessarily rich: the ordinary of extraordinary and the extraordinary of ordinary people.

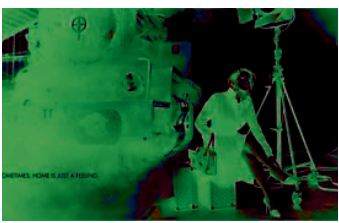

	
The ordinary of extraordinary people	The extraordinary of ordinary people

Figure 3. Segments of luxury brands consumers

The first group is about creative elite that include famous artists, musicians, politicians and others. The second segment is about usual people who would like to feel themselves very special and become closer to the first group.

Young, Nunes & Dreze (2010) offered the classification based on two criteria: level of prosperity and demonstration effect.

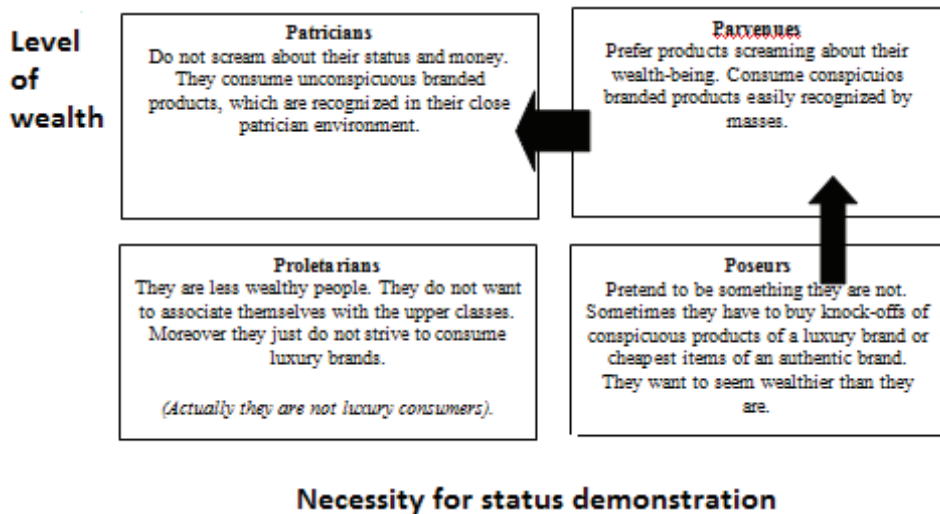


Figure 4. Segments of luxury brands consumers

Source: Young, Nunes and Dreze, 2010

Patricians are very wealthy and far from conspicuous consumption before masses. They want to be one of patricians and some quiet luxury branded products allow them to associate themselves with the other patricians. In our opinion, patricians can have aristocratic roots as well as they can be self-made people with high intellectual level and aesthetic taste. This group of people prefer mainly quiet products of brands. Some of the real luxury brands they can consume: Lange und Soehne (watches), Krug (champagne), Alaia (clothing), Wellendorff (jewelry). These brands are not very famous for broad masses.

Parvenus want to show everybody that they are wealthy and can afford to buy luxury brands. These brands should be easily recognized and their products must not be quiet. Paris Hilton with her pink Bentley is relevant to this segment.

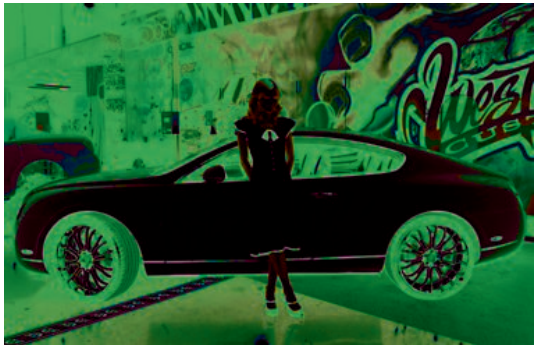


Figure 5. Paris Hilton with her pink Bentley (<http://www.modificationcars.com/pink-cars-modifications-valentine.html/paris-hilton-pink-cars-modifications>)

Poseurs like to show off but because of small income they often cannot afford to consume an authentic product of a luxury brands. So if their cultural background is not very high, the people from this segment can buy even a knock-off. Anyway, poseurs have more chances to become successful luxury brands consumers in future and move to parvenus segment. Poseurs strive hard to achieve success. As for parvenus it can be very difficult for them to move to patrician segment because as luxury creators and experts like to tell: “Luxury is not about money, it is also about culture”. In some rare cases this movement seems to be possible, when parvenus work hard and increase their cultural level.

As we mentioned before, the brand Louis Vuitton has both the loud and quiet products, so both patricians and parvenus can satisfy their needs in different products of LV.

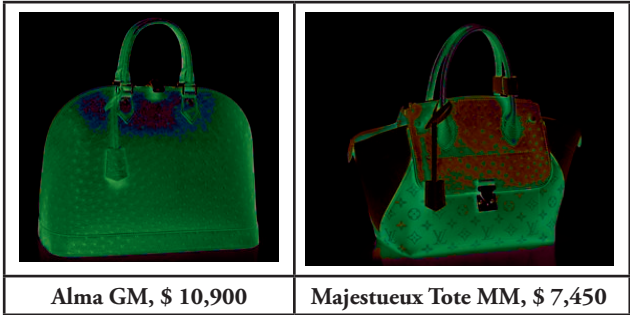


Figure 6. Quiet and loud products of LV (<http://www.louisvuitton.com>)

Majestueux Tote MM bag has strong visible LV identity as it combines famous monogram with parts of different leather. It costs a fortune as well as the bag for patricians, but it can be easily recognized in masses although the Alma GM is known among only connoisseurs. The choice between loud and quiet products depends on cultural level and values of customers. Some European consumers consider if brands can be easily identified it's a mauvais ton. In our opinion, there is no need to take into account proletarians - the people who do not strive for buying luxury.

If we do not analyze the way of getting money for buying luxury brands, we can use rather simple classification as “show-offers” and “connoisseurs”. However the way of getting rich is important. As in some cases when young people do not come into fortune, the luxury brands consumption can be the one of the incentives for getting prestigious education and well-paid job. People who inherit money they usually do not have to work hard. In this paper, we would like to offer the classification of luxury consumers based on need for showing off and way of getting rich.

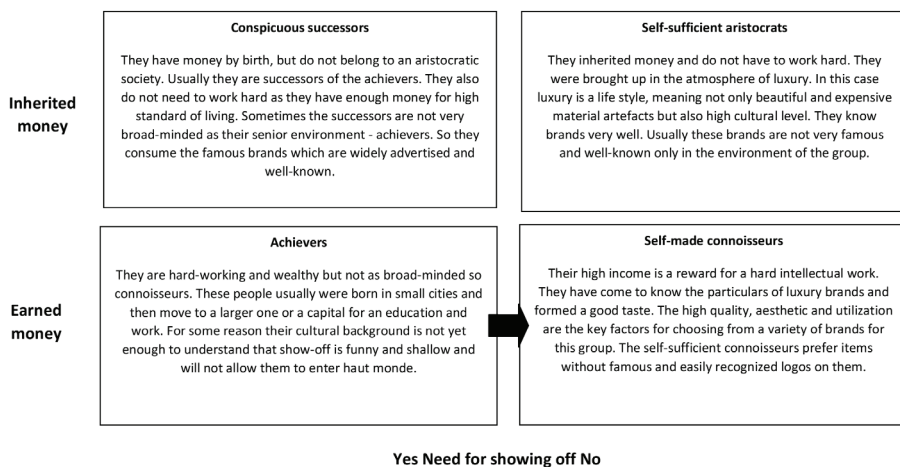


Figure 7. Classification of luxury brands consumers

In this classification self-made connoisseurs are free from logo mania. Their choice is based on high quality, aesthetic and utilization. These people do not inherit money, so they have to work hard to achieve prosperity and

status. Self-made connoisseurs are usually very broad-minded, travel a lot with cultural purposes and have prestigious education.

Achievers are also in a self-made category. They probably are born in small cities and then move to the capital for education and job. Their income is high but the cultural background is yet not enough to understand that show-off is shallow and funny. They are not broad-minded in comparison with self-made connoisseurs and prefer rather simple life style. Their life is primarily a combination of hard work and entertainment such as going to movie and café. These people are familiar with rather limited quantity of very famous luxury brands and think that their environment should recognize brands. Probably achievers will be able to move to a group of self-made connoisseurs if they work hard on their self-development and manage to raise their cultural level.

Self-sufficient aristocrats do not have to work hard because they have money and status by birth. Commonly they have a brilliant education and perfect taste. They visit opera, concert of classical music booking the best places in the best theaters and concert halls in the world. While going out they wear luxury clothing and jewelry that demonstrate their irreproachable taste and high social status. In most cases the self-sufficient aristocrats work and their work have strong social value. They can be professors, architects, actors, writers, even doctors or have family business. They do not understand how it can possible to do nothing. These aristocrats are of benefit to society in their deeds.

The last segment is conspicuous successors. They are usually children of achievers. They do not need to work hard for achieving high standard of living. Their close environment, which is achievers, determines their range of interests. They consume famous conspicuous items of luxury brands to make people know that they are luxury consumers. Moreover, their knowledge about brands can be rather narrow and based on advertisement. Besides, they cannot know about brands valuable among connoisseurs and aristocrats, as their cultural background is not very deep. These people rarely or never visit opera and concerts of classical music.

Methodology approach

The current investigation consisted of two parts. First, it was qualitative research as in-depth interviews with luxury brands consumers. The 4 in-depth interviews (2 from every country) were carried out. The people involved in luxury industry as the brand manager and fashion blogger from Russia and the researcher with the image consultant from Romania were interviewed. The interviews with Russian experts were organized off-line and lasted during 1 hour. Romanian qualitative part of research was done via Skype and also lasted during an hour with the every respondent. It allowed us to formulate the following hypotheses (research questions):

H1: *Romanian consumers prefer global luxury brands as well as Russian consumers.*

H2: *Both Romanian and Russian consumers buy the brands primarily to demonstrate their well-being.*

H3: *Luxury brands should be well known and with high level of awareness to be bought by both Russian and Romanian consumers.*

H4: *Louis Vuitton is № 1 (the most preferred luxury brand) in Russia and Poland.*

H5: *Consumers are ready to save money in favor of buying of luxury brands.*

H6: *Luxury brands consumers have higher education and strong cultural background.*

H7: *Real luxury is out of material artifacts.*

To prove these hypotheses we conducted on-line survey in which 45 female respondents from each country took place. All our respondents consume luxury from time to time, represent intelligent group of society and have income that is higher of an average country level.

The set of different questions, presented below, was asked.

№ 1. Please, value your reasons for buying luxury brands (5 - is the highest gauge, meaning the most

important motive):

Luxury brands have very high quality and perfectionism in details.

I like the atmosphere in luxury brands boutique.

I appreciate the history, the legend inherent in luxury brands. Moreover, famous people around luxury brands affect my decision.

I appreciate luxury brands because my environment (as colleagues, friends) sets so much store by these brands.

Luxury brands are about reward of my success and achievement of welfare. I want that people know I can afford the luxury brands.

№ 2. Which one of the following statements do you agree with:

The luxury brand must have some visible symbols (as logo, design, print and etc.) recognized by different people (the more people recognize the better).

The less luxury brand is recognizable in the masses it is better.

№ 3. Choose the one item from LV (figure 1) you are ready to buy:



№ 4. Would you please identify your brand №1 in the following categories:

Clothing

Accessories (like bags, belts, etc.)

Perfume

Watches

Shoes

№ 5. How often do you buy luxury brands?

1 item per 24 months

1 item per 12 months

1 item per 6 months

1 item per 3 months

I buy luxury brands as often as I want

№ 6. Are you ready hypothetically to save money to buy something from luxury brands?

Yes

No

№ 7. Please, indicate:

Your favorite composer

Your favorite movie

Your favorite book

Your favorite tourism destination

№ 8. Some social and demographic information about you:

Your age

Your gender

Your city where you are living now

Your professional activity

№ 9. In your opinion the real luxury is... (your answer can be philosophical)
Findings

The results of our research allowed us to check the hypotheses (answer the research questions) and to illustrate and compare luxury consumption in Romania and Russia. All our respondents from the both countries are from the segment of self-made connoisseurs. They have good education, high cultural level and work hard to keep high level of living. Their age range starts from 30 y.o. The eldest respondent is 47 y.o.

As can be seen from the study Russian and Romanian luxury brands connoisseurs have much in common. Both of them prefer global brands with some reasonable awareness to local ones. So the H1 and H3 were proved. Besides, the Kapferer's (2013) opinion that luxury brand must be international is true for Russia and Romania.

The majority of Russian respondents agree that luxury brands are bought to demonstrate the status and welfare (76%) or at least it is a kind of reward for being hard working (64%). So the H2 is true for Russians. As for Romanians, the key reason for luxury consumption is a very high quality and perfectionism in details (81%). Moreover, Russians appreciate more the atmosphere in luxury boutiques in comparison with Romanians. This fact can be positive for luxury on-line selling in Romania.

Although the consumers from the countries have shown some common characteristics, they are different in their attitude to LV (LV is not № 1 in Romania). What is more, the brands ratings are completely different in Russia and Romania.

Table 1. Brands ratings in Russia and Romania

Product categories	Brands preferences	
	Russians	Romanians
Clothing	Armani	Dolce Gabbana
Accessories	Louis Vuitton	Furla
Perfume	Dior	Chanel
Watches	Rolex	Swatch <i>(it was the most frequent answer, although this brand is not considered luxury)</i>
Shoes	Manolo Blahnik	Louboutin

So, H4 about LV is true for Russians. Russians, as well as Chinese, are ecstatic about this brand. If we compare what product from LV Russians and Romanians chose, we notice the evident difference. Russians chose the aesthetic and almost non-functional small bag with LV monogram, Romanian choice was a big bag, a kind of briefcase which is functional and also well-known because of the monogram. Romanians are more functionality-oriented, in Russia beauty is on the 1 place.

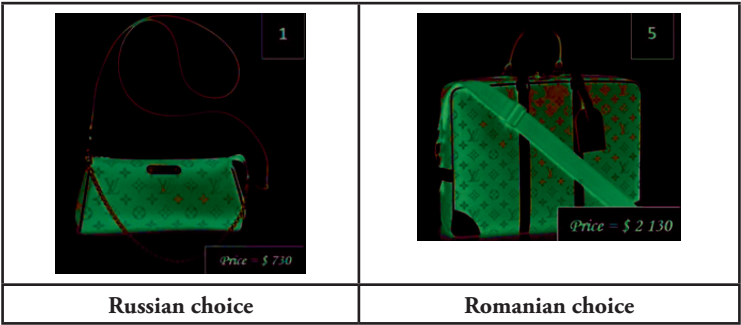


Figure 8. Russian and Romanian choice

Almost all our respondents can be called excursionist (Dubois, 1995). Russian respondents (80%) buy 1 luxury item per 6 months. Romanians (80%) buy 1 luxury item per 24 months. According to the survey, absolutely all Russians are ready to save money in favor of buying something from

luxury. As for Romanians, only 51% are willing to set aside money for luxury brands. It means that H5 is true again only for Russians.

All our respondents, as we mentioned before, have very strong cultural background: they visit opera, museums, listen to classical music and read serious books. Furthermore, their touristic destinations have cultural purposes as well. So, H6 was completely proved for the both countries. It means that people appreciate not only material brands, but also try to do their best to follow the cultural life style.

Both Russian and Romanian respondents were close in their answers about real luxury. Real luxury goes beyond material artifacts. Luxury brings some philosophical meaning. According to opinions of respondents from the countries, it is not about expensive things but about family, health, friends, passion... So, the last H7 was completely proved.

Conclusion

This study is only a first step to understanding the specificity of luxury consumption in Russia and Romania. Moreover, it entails some limitations. The research covered only limited quantity of cities from Russia and Romania as Moscow, Saint-Petersburg, Bucharest, Brasov. So, it does not reflect the whole countries. Besides, the limited quantity and quality of respondents were included in the sample (only 45 females from the each country). Moreover, one of the strongest limitations is basic statistics. Besides, the only genuine luxury brands were studied in the paper, the replicated versions left outside of our research. In future we hope to continue our mutual research with Romanian colleagues and include more consumers in our sample as well as to cover more cities.

In a nutshell, the research contributes to the general understanding of luxury brands consumption in Russia and Romania. The consumption is determined by different motives as mainly showing-off in Russia and rationality (craving for high quality) in Romania. Although both Russian and Romanian prefer international brands, their brands preferences are different as well as attitude to the place where the brands are bought. It

can be explained by different tastes and reasons for buying the brands. Besides various brands can be presented in the country and have different level of awareness and acceptance in the country. The study could be useful for both global and local companies, which plan to do business in these countries or already have been presented there.

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Marketing professionals: a managerial perspective

Rareș MOCANU¹

Abstract: *The marketing literature intensively has debated in the last decade the evolution of marketing, the shifting framework, the challenges it faces as well as the relationship to management. The technological development, the changing patterns in consumption, the economic crises, as well as the increased business constraints are some of the most important factors that are changing the way marketing is developed. In the new economic context, managers seem to be increasingly more dissatisfied with their marketers, considering them attached too much to qualitative results, on the expenses of financial outcomes. Considering these evolutions and discussions, the present paper investigates how the Romanian managers evaluate their marketers. In-depth interviews are conducted with managers from all sorts of companies, considering both their fields of involvement and their dimensions. The results largely confirm the studies around the world, as well as the concerns expressed by academics.*

Keywords: *marketing; marketers; managers on marketing; Romania.*

Introduction

There seem to be a wide-spread agreement amongst academics and practitioners that marketing professionals, including marketing managers in all types of corporations, have lost their influence on the long-term strategies of their organizations (Reibstein, Day & Wind, 2009; Seth & Sisodia, 2005; Verhoef & Leeflang, 2009; Webster & Lusch, 2013; Wirtz, Tuzovic & Kuppelwieser, 2014). Marketing seems to be at a crossroads (Gronroos, 2006; Gummesson, Kuusela & Narvanen, 2014; Klaus, Edvardsson & Maklan, 2014). Maybe this is the result of increased complexity and interdisciplinary of marketing. Marketers must master several domains: strategy, creativity, and analytics amongst others. They must have the ability to timely identify business opportunities and to

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accelerate performance. If they actually achieve these aims and their managers agree with this are other concerns.

How satisfied are managers with their marketers?

The Fournaise Marketing Group (2011) interviewed more than 1,200 large corporation and SMEs CEOs and decision-makers in North America, Europe, Asia and Australia. One of the striking findings was that 80% of CEOs admit they do not really trust and are not very impressed by the work done by Marketers – while in comparison, 90% of the same CEOs do trust and value the opinion and work of CFOs and CIOs.

The core source of the problem is that 80% of CEOs believe Marketers are too disconnected from the short-, medium- and long-term financial realities of companies. And that's because 78% of these CEOs think Marketers too often lose sight of what their real job is: to generate more customer demand for their products/services in a business-quantifiable and business-measurable way:

a) For B2C CEOs, more customer demand means more products off the shelves, more sell-in, more sell-out, more sales volume, more sales revenue.

Unfortunately, 69% of B2C CEOs believe B2C Marketers now live too much in their creative and social media bubble and focus too much on parameters such as “likes”, “tweets”, “feeds” or “followers” – the very parameters they can't really prove generate more (business-quantifiable) customer demand for their products/services, and the very parameters judged “interesting but not critical” by CEOs.

b) For B2B CEOs (and B2C CEOs in prospect-driven industries such as education and insurance), more customer demand means fuelling more qualified or sales-ready prospects to the sales pipeline – prospects that can then be converted faster into actual revenue by Sales Forces.

Unfortunately, 71% of these CEOs believe that while B2B Marketers are focused on the latest marketing technologies (such as marketing

automation, lead management and CRM) supposedly to generate customer demand, they are still failing to deliver the level of incremental customer demand expected of them.

c) Among the opinions expressed by these top management representatives about the MBA talent being recruited by their organizations are that MBA's all tend to think alike, to approach problems the same way, to be risk averse, to obscure a problem with excessive number crunching and analysis, to want to move into general management too quickly, to be unwilling to stay in a position long enough to develop competence and learn the details of the business, and to have no interest in sales and sales management careers.

These CEOs feel Marketers are too distracted and sucked into the technological flurry (and jargon) related to system integration, funnels, processes and scores, and have forgotten that technology is only a support tool that does not create demand per se – only accurate strategies and campaigns pushing the right products, product benefits, content and customer value propositions do.

These CEOs also feel B2B and prospect-driven Marketers have been so desperate to prove their worth that they've started to (wrongly) focus on performance indicators that are actually not theirs, such as prospect conversions and revenue. These Marketers have lost sight that these are primarily Sales Force-related performance indicators, and that they should focus instead on the customer demand-related indicators directly linked to their job and for which they have 100% control.

To earn the CEOs trust, Marketers will need to transform themselves into ROI Marketers.

75% of CEOs think Marketers misunderstand (and misuse) the “real business” definition of the words “Results”, “ROI” and “Performance” and therefore do not adequately speak the language of their top management: these CEOs fail to understand why Marketers cannot zoom in on a few critical key business performance indicators to precisely measure, quantify

and report on the level of customer demand they are asked to deliver, instead of drowning everybody with data and analyses that are too remote from the P&L.

CEOs believe they trust CFOs and CIOs because they are 100% ROI focused – where every dollar spent must have a measurable, quantifiable and positive impact on the company's P&L and operations. To earn the CEOs' trust and prove that they can be solid business generators, 74% of CEOs want Marketers to become 100% ROI-focused: they call them "ROI Marketers".

In this context, CEOs have a clear vision of what they expect from ROI Marketers:

a) 82% of B2C CEOs would like B2C ROI Marketers to focus on tracking, reporting and very importantly boosting four Key Marketing Performance Indicators: Sell-in, Sell-out, Market Share and Marketing ROI (defined as the correlation between Marketing spending and the gross profit generated from it).

b) While 85% of B2B CEOs (and B2C CEOs in prospect-driven industries) would like prospect-driven ROI Marketers to focus on tracking, reporting and boosting four Key Marketing Performance Indicators: Prospect Volume, Prospect Quality Rate, Marketing Effectiveness Rate (defined as the percentage of Marketing spending that directly generated prospects) and (business potential generated by Marketing).

"People trust doctors, surgeons, lawyers, pilots or accountants: simply because they know these no-nonsense professionals are trained to focus on the right set of data to take the best decisions and achieve the best outcomes possible. CEOs trust CFOs and CIOs for the same reasons. It's not a game of data, but rather a game of the "right & relevant" data for the right purpose and the right decision-making, with no fluff around" said Jerome Fontaine, CEO & Chief Tracker of Fournaise.

"Marketers will have to understand that they need to start "cutting the rubbish" if they are to earn the trust of CEOs and if they want to

have a bigger impact in the boardroom” he explained. “They will have to transform themselves into true business-driven ROI Marketers or forever remain in what 65% of CEOs told us they call Marketing la-la land. At the end of the day, Marketers have to stop whining about being misunderstood by CEOs, and have to start remembering that their job is to generate customer demand and to deliver performance. This is business. When is the last time you heard CFOs whine about being misunderstood by CEOs?” Fontaine concluded.

The four main accusations towards marketing managers are:

- They focus too much on tactical issues and use an out-of-date skill kit.
- They do not connect enough the marketing efforts to the financial returns.
- They are obsessed and over-rate new technologies.
- They use unsuitable indices to measure effects.

“CEOs want a lot out of their marketing managers – but the things they want may be different than what most marketing managers think,” said email certification and security company Return Path CEO Matt Blumberg in an interview with CMO.com (2014). “CEOs expect their marketing managers to run a profit and loss (P&L) [not just a cost budget], set priorities and make trade-offs, orchestrate marketing sub disciplines, and be great business partners to the rest of the organization. CEOs want marketers who can move seamlessly between being proactive and setting strategy and being appropriately”. *But then again this is the complexity of the marketing function.*

Marketing is positioned at the intersection of multiple corporate needs such as innovation, customer experience, sales, and operations. Rarely, however, do they own any of the processes associated with them.

The need for broader experience and a strong understanding of what drives a company’s profit and loss (P&L) makes a direct transition from marketing manager to CEO a bridge too far for most individuals wanting to make the leap. In an investigation of what is required to move from marketing manager to CEO, consulting firm *Spencer Stuart* finds, “To become a CEO a marketing manager must always make a double transition, out of their

function, and into a new company. The obstacles that marketing managers or directors facing with ambitions for the top job are considerable and are likely to be too great for those unwilling to step out of their comfort zone and test themselves in unfamiliar roles” (Birkel & Harper, 2009, p. 1).

Reflecting on the presented findings one might argue that it features multiple contradictory propositions and arguments from CEOs about why marketing is seen as non-strategic.

On the one hand, marketing managers are viewed as lacking financial accountability, and obsessed with technology rather than delivering revenues. On the other hand, CEOs confuse sales indicators with demand-related indicators.

Methodology

The main aim of the present investigation is to understand how managers see their marketing professionals. Not only managing directors were considered, but also marketing executives. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with top management representatives from 27 Romanian companies, both business-to-businesses and business-to-consumer corporations. All of them have more than 50 employees.

Results and discussion

The principal issues that were uppermost in the minds of the executives interviewed were related to lack of innovative and entrepreneurial thinking, inability to define new methods for promoting products to customers in the face of major increases in the costs of media advertising and personal selling; a tendency for product managers and higher levels of management in the product management organization, all of whom have similar education, training, and experience, to approach problems in the same way; attempting to meet significant new competition with traditional ways of doing business.

Generally, inter-departmental relationships are of concern when considering the effectiveness of marketing. "In addition, we had to take in consideration the organizational arrangements made to facilitate two-way communication between marketing and other departments or business units". Several of the respondents noted these connections and commented that these were a top management responsibility. One chief executive observed that the budget planning and review process encouraged marketing managers to stick to the proven path therefore truly innovative and distinctive marketing approaches have a low probability of surviving the hierarchical budget planning process.

Skills that marketers are expected to have included leadership, management, sales and intuition. Most senior managers asserted that the marketer's background does not necessarily have to be in the same industry, unless the marketer cannot function in that industry without an extensive knowledge of its workings. However, based on the argument senior managers make that marketing skills are generally transferable, the marketer needs to demonstrate they have delivered commercial outcomes in previous employment, in whatever industry, to be considered credible.

There was virtual unanimity among these executives that marketing is the critical management function in their firms from a strategic viewpoint and that it is likely to become even more important in the current decade. In the most sophisticated marketing organizations, marketing is the line management function and the marketing concept is the dominant and pervasive management philosophy. In the rest of the companies in the sample, however, there appeared to be an incomplete acceptance of the marketing concept. In the most obvious situation, the respondent executive could point to an absence of any senior executive with clear responsibility for marketing within the organization. In these instances, there had been a history of strong production-, technical- (engineering or R&D), or sales-oriented thinking dominating the firm. Another symptom of the problem was an absence of any market segmentation strategy. There also were a few cases where the respondent executive felt that marketing weakness was due to a failure by top management to devote the necessary financial and managerial resources to the marketing task.

In the industrial products and services firms especially, and also in some of the consumer products firms, marketing and sales were organizationally distinct, with sales being seen as a line function and marketing as a staff responsibility, often associated with the corporate planning function. The marketing function in these circumstances was said to be responsible for long-range marketing planning and market development, whereas the sales function was responsible for current year sales volume and profit performance through the implementation of marketing plans through specific sales and promotion programs. Not all of these top managers would agree that the separation of marketing and sales within the organization is evidence of incomplete acceptance of the marketing concept.

One senior executive made the important observation that getting the marketing concept understood and accepted is still the biggest challenge faced by any organization, despite the fact that the concept is now more than a quarter-century old. In his extensive experience in the top ranks of both industrial and consumer products firms, he noted that marketing “tends to degenerate into a sales orientation and an exclusive concern for marketing communications.” He felt that there was an inevitable tendency in industrial firms for large customers, because of their importance, to bring pressures on the firm that create a very short-term orientation and a concern for specific orders and problems. He also pointed to sheer numbers of sales personnel compared with marketing as another reason why sales tends to dominate marketing. While these particular observations are attributable to a single CEO, they capture a set of issues of concern to a significant portion of this sample.

Conclusion

These chief executives and top managers believe that marketing is the most important management function in their businesses, and they see it becoming more important in the future. Whether they come from a marketing background or not, they believe that the development and maintenance of an effective marketing organization is a major requirement for success in the economic environment of increased competition and ensure growth. Having said that, however, these executives are critical of their marketing managers for a failure to think creatively and innovatively

and to understand the financial implications of their decisions. They see marketing costs increasing faster than the effectiveness of those expenditures.

Some Implications and Suggestions for Future Research

Although these concerns of top management are interesting for their own sake, and suggest some directions in which the marketing profession might look to find areas for improved management effectiveness, they also point to some underlying basic issues. These issues can be phrased as questions requiring further research and discussion.

How Does Management Performance Evaluation Impact on Marketing Performance?

There has been only minimal cooperation between organizational behavior and marketing scholars as revealed in the research literature, yet some of the most interesting and important issues of marketing decision-making may be those that relate to the human side of enterprise. Criticism of marketing for failure to innovate and take risks is an obvious area where behavioral issues are at the core, not technical issues of marketing science and decision-making. Part of the issue here is to explore relationships between various corporate financial goals and marketing performance as they are mediated through formal and informal performance appraisal systems. While recent months have seen some discussion of this issue in the management literature, it is an area that needs a great deal more management attention and academic research. Investigators need to look at relationships between measures of a firm's innovativeness, such as the rate of new product introductions, and how management in that firm is evaluated and rewarded. Marketing scholars need to become familiar with the work of scholars in organizational behavior on such topics as risk taking, organizational structure, and innovativeness, and integrate this into their own investigations of marketing performance and organizational effectiveness.

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Online marketing for women. An analysis of online purchasing behavior of young women in Romania

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Abstract. *Many researchers (Barletta, Peters, Qualman) consider women the most important global consumers because women usually take the purchasing decisions, if we are talking about commodities, household purchases, clothes, cosmetics, books or goods or services that are not necessary associated to women, such as small consumer electronics, computers, etc. In a society which has gone digital, we observe that women use social networks differently than men. For example, women usually use Pinterest, while men mostly use Google Plus. According to various studies, women interact more with brands in social media and use more often the mobile phones to access social networks, compared to men. Those findings are important for marketers when they target women in their online brand campaigns. The present paper researches online purchasing behavior of women in Romania, using both quantitative and qualitative research, to determine key groups of online young women by analyzing their behavior on social media and some other aspects like: what do they want from brands in social media, why and how they buy online.*

Keywords: *social media; Facebook; digital users; digital divas; digital cultures.*

Introduction

Society as a whole and the relationships between individuals have been strongly influenced in the past decades by changes that occurred at the level of different factors: economical, technological and socio-cultural. Globalization as a process and, mainly, the constant innovation in technology constitute the basis for the change of societies and individuals. The present society is a digital one, networked, directly influenced by

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the new technologies, by the ascension of mobile Internet and electronic commerce, as well as the appearance of digital cultures.

In the specialized literature (Qualman, 2009; Castells, 2009; Creeber, 2011), a globally connected society is discussed, defined by a series of elements that act simultaneously: the online information volume doubles roughly every 11 hours (Dumitrescu, 2013, p. 29); social media becomes the most popular activity on the internet, as well a majority individuals aspire to be a part of (Qualman, 2009, p. 1).; through social media the global society becomes a network society in which the users develop a cultural world different from the classical interaction space and is modeled after their own values and interests (Castells, 2009, p.120); the development of *the internet of all objects*; the ascension of m-commerce and mobile applications.

Social networks, especially Facebook, are spaces in which several factors act simultaneously (the users' friends, commercial brands, news channels, the pages dedicated to certain activities or hobbies, the public figures which wish to establish a personal brand for themselves, etc.) competing for the time allotted by users to the online environment. This means that brands must use personalized and original strategies to attract attention and differentiate.

The online environment lately revealed an aspect that brands and marketers ignored or started to harness only of late: women are the ones that make the most acquisitions and the most valuable ones from a financial point of view (element that was observed for online purchases and online purchase behavior). Physical markets begin to orient themselves toward this valuable segment and in the online environment companies intensify their strategies.

Literature review

From web 1.0 to social media and user generated content

Web 1.0, considered by Berthon et al. (2012, p. 261) as a "technological tsunami" that allowed consumers to interact with the companies, has

rapidly become a space in which the latter disseminated commercial and entertainment-oriented content. Although the internet appeared for a time as an environment in which companies held firm control, web 2.0 and the new wave of technologies have again modified the frame of reference, and social media has rapidly become the most popular online activity and has reconfigured local and international marketing models, communication paradigms and commercial activities. Currently we don't only discuss physical markets, but e-commerce and m-commerce as well. And social media was, in our opinion, the dynamo of this accelerate changes.

But, before discussing social media we must define the concepts of "web 2.0" and "new media". What sets them apart from web 1.0 is the fact that users are now able to generate and reutilize content. A few examples are: Facebook, YouTube, Wikipedia, Flickr or the blogs (Creeber, 2011, p. 3). Web 1.0 meant a series of concepts such as mp3, Britannica Online and personal sites and web 2.0 – Google Ad Sense, blogs, cost-per-click, search engine optimization etc.

Beyond all this, fundamental changes occurred regarding communication standard. Even since 1996, in the specialized literature some authors (Hoffman & Novak, 1996, p. 4) debated the birth of a new communication pattern directly influenced by the online environment evolution. As such it was the transition to the "*many-to-many*" communication model. Consumers interact with the environment and among themselves; companies disseminate content and respond to the environment; consumers can also generate commercial content. This communication model is currently much more visible by way of social media and contributes to the forming of digital cultures (Creeber, 2011, p. 3).

Erik Qualman (2009) talks in *Socialnomics. How social media transforms the way we live and do business*, about the fact that today, news and information find us. We are talking about the fact that social media has become the most popular activity on the Internet and that individuals wish to obtain and access information fast and with ease. The environment that social networks build is, in fact, a manifestation of *space* and space is, together with *time*, what determines human experiences and social relationships, according to Manuel Castells (2009). Blanchard (2011) considers that

the reason for which social media has known this kind of spread among individuals is because it helps them inter-connect in a manner that has value for them in regard to their social and personal experiences.

We are talking today about a “networked society” in which “individuals do not retreat in the isolation of virtual realities, but on the contrary, they expand their social relationships and selectively use the richness of available communication networks, thus building their own cultural world in terms of preferences and projects and modifying this newly built world according to their own interests and values” (Castells, 2009, p. 120).

During a research focused on social media users, Williams (2013) has identified a series of elements that constitute the purpose for which individuals use social media. Amongst these we recollect: social interaction, entertainment, relaxation, expressing opinion, disseminating and finding information.

One must take into account the fact that social media users have gained a sort of multi-functionality and a distributive attention when it comes to messages. As such, a user can read a press article, discuss with a friend on Facebook and read the messages of a brand, all at the same time (Papachirissi, 2010).

However, social media, especially Facebook and Instagram, has become what Qualman (2009, p. 43) called the competition between users on the subject “who does the most interesting things”. The photographs that the users upload on Facebook are part of this competition, are taken with the precise purpose of being uploaded online and represent a manifestation of one’s self, giving information about the user’s activities, status and preferences etc. (Qualman, 2009, p. 119). The image itself is associated by Marshall to an expression of narcissism (2006, p. 639, in Creeber and Martin, 2011, p. 120). Moreover, according to Marshall, Creeber and Martin (2011), mobile internet has contributed even more to the development of social networks and the dissemination of content such as photographs and real time sharing of opinion.

The users' profiles reconfigure the image of self by "remembering, transforming and adjusting the information" and the images of self in the virtual world are simultaneously constructs of the spirit and the result of the negotiation process with the electronic application (Georges, 2010, p. 69; Vătămănescu, 2012, p. 91). The users' profiles are a control instrument in social media by making use of the ability to set visibility of content policies and the messages that other users post on their friends' profiles augment or decrease the degree of visibility (Papacharissi, 2010).

As for the interaction with the brands, TechInfografics (2013) has realized toward the end of the year 2013 a division of social media users in regard to their attitude toward brands. Amongst the typologies identified: the silent fans, the occasional fans, unsatisfied consumers, loyal fans. One of the categories, the unsatisfied fans, highlights the importance of image management in social media, because research shows that internet users expect to receive an answer from brands within one hour from the moment they sent a direct or indirect message concerning the company. The silent fans, instead, the category of users that follows the content of brands because they like the variety of posts on their pages, but don't make their opinion public.

However, we believe that these categories of users or fans represent up to a certain point latent audiences that will manifest when brand messages or the quality of products or services will influence them to have positive or negative reactions. This means that brands need to select more carefully the type of messages that they distribute or associate with.

Social media and the reconfiguration of digital environment

The development of mobile devices and "*the Internet of all objects*" were influenced not only by technological innovation, but also by the extent that social media and mobile internet have experienced in recent years. Today, mobile devices (smart phones, tablets, etc.) are those that not only facilitate communication and social interaction, but also real-time access to information from almost any place on Earth. The digital society of today, thanks to "*the Internet of all objects*", is expected to reach the paradox that by 2020 the number of devices that are connected to the Internet will be larger than the number of people in the world (Dumitrescu, 2013, p. 27).

Contemporary society is heavily influenced by mobile internet and apps on smart phones (Martin, 2011). With these devices individuals check from trivial information such as weather, up to professional or business information such as stock prices or transactions, apply for jobs, make online purchases, pay bills online, answer emails, connect to social networks, etc.

Qualman (2014) conducted a series of statistics about social media on users and their purchase behavior. Thus, more individuals own a mobile phone than a toothbrush, 20% of the searched terms each day on the Internet were not previously searched, 53% of Twitter users recommend products in their posts, 93% of purchasing decisions are influenced by social media while only 14% are influenced by advertising, 90% of consumers have greater confidence in the recommendations received from their Internet surfer friends for the products they intend to acquire. At the beginning of 2014 statistics indicated that there are more Facebook profiles created every minute compared to the number of births, daily in America more adults use YouTube channel with a higher frequency as compared to using cable television, every second 2 new users sign up on LinkedIn and 80% of companies use Facebook as a recruitment environment.

In terms of purchasing behavior, a global study (Stadd, 2014) shows that Facebook (21%) and Pinterest (25%) are the most used social networks for acquisitions, while Twitter has the most influence when discussing product recommendations. Most users utilize Twitter (19%) for complaints about brands, while YouTube channel is least used for such cases (9%). The same study shows that YouTube (61%) is the most used online environment by users when they want to learn about products, the second being Pinterest (56%) and Facebook.

Consumer and purchasing behavior

When talking about marketing addressed to women, one should keep in mind that we are talking about women as the most important consumers of brands. If in the past we referred to women as a market segment or niche based on companies' profiles, today we talk about a market in the true sense.

Theorists who have written about marketing addressed to women draw attention to the fact that today women are “the most important global consumers” (Barletta, 2007, p. 21), and companies need to reinvent themselves by a “total repositioning of the methods of recruitment, sources of employment, reward systems, promotion, organizational structure, business processes, estimates, overall strategy, vision and leadership” (Peters, 2010, p. 469).

Underhill (2000, p. 116) shows the behavior of women when shopping as follows: if they do not feel comfortable with their purchase, they will not stop looking until they find the desired product or service and, in addition, women will not purchase products requiring a minimum of effort in terms of information on the characteristics.

Regarding social media, women access social networks differently. For example, Google Plus, Instagram, YouTube and Twitter are the social networks with the youngest female users, while on Pinterest typically the users consist mostly of mothers and housewives. The female users of Instagram, LinkedIn and Twitter have the highest incomes (WeberShandwick, 2013).

In America, social networks (except for LinkedIn social network) have more women users than men. Also, more women interact with brands in social media than men and use more frequently their mobile phones to access social networks (Clifford, 2014).

A study by the Women’s Marketing Inc. and SheSpeakes (2014) shows that women are more inclined to purchase products and services from the brands they interact with in social media, and their presence on social networks has as main argument the desire to form lasting bonds.

A survey conducted by the Pew Research Center and Burst Media (2014) shows that gender differences are found beyond the personal and professional relationships in the way we perceive information, and entertainment idea is reflected in consumer behavior online. The study shows that 38% of women use the mobile phone for online games, a

rate that exceeds by 10% the number of men who use the phone for the same purpose (2014). The research reinforces the findings of other studies showing that women ignore online paid advertising and tend to be more willing to interact with brands, as compared to men.

At the same time, women choose to interact with brands in social media to conclude transactions (71% as compared to only 17% for men users) and only 39% of female users scan QR codes, compared to 56% men (2014). Finance Online (2014) shows that women prefer visual sites, with photos and videos. This explains the success that Pinterest has among its users.

A survey conducted by Business Insider (Adler, 2014) indicate that 60% of time spent on social networks is from mobile and tablet devices, which shows that, in fact, women consume more time online than men following the latest news from social media using mobile technologies. The same Business Insider research shows that the most used social networks through mobile phones and tablets are Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and SnapChat (Adler, 2014).

Ernst & Young (2014) conducted a research on consumer behavior of women and men online consumers in America, and the results of the study indicate that the favorite sites of both categories are Amazon, Barnes and Noble and CDNow. Regarding the categories of products purchased, first three places in the ranking are occupied by books, computers and CDs. Women buy more toys, baby products and care products, as compared to men.

Ogilvy and Microsoft Agencies (2013) conducted a study on the online behavior of women and created a typology of them. The most interesting one is called Digital Divas. Users falling into this category stated that mobile phones brought them closer to brands, 1 in 5 users in this category has more than 900 connections online, and they shop online at least once a day.

The findings show that Digital Divas not only have Facebook or Twitter accounts, on which they are active and do not prefer online games, they

are constantly connected to brands and want their brands in the online environment to provide them as many valuable experiences as possible. They are rather interested in purchasing online than social networks themselves. They use social networks to find the most interesting information, to make recommendations, for information on the products and services offered by brands online.

For the market in Romania, studies show that 83% of Romanian women daily access Facebook social network, and 45% say they would like to buy from Facebook (Dobre, 2013). A survey conducted by Research and Consultancy Exact Digital Barometer in 2013 shows that 45% of Romanian women use mobile phones to surf the Internet, compared with 2011, and that the number of LinkedIn Romanian female users increased by 10%. In addition, 40% of Romanian women aged between 15 and 49 years use weekly other social networks and 48% of them use the Internet to search for videos or movies (Crăciunescu, 2013). Regarding e-commerce in Romania, women make most purchases. Among the most acquired products are cosmetics. Also, 57% of online services that Romanian women use fall into bank -financial category.

Reiterating Peters' idea from *The Innovation Circle* that brands need to constantly reinvent themselves, and to gain a piece from the market that women represent, one needs to properly understand their lifestyle, needs, purchase behavior and consumption patterns. We consider that brands that will pay attention to the construction of personalized messages for women will be able to succeed in attracting attention and have loyal consumers. Studies indicate the fact that women are more inclined to remain loyal to brands with whom they reach relationships based on sensory elements.

But in the online, consumer behavior of women depends not only on age or social status, but depends on the communities to which they belong, the circle of friends online, lifestyle and social media projected image. Some consumers are leaders of opinion for the other Internet users, and as for the others, they constitute a latent public that only seeks information and follows the activity of the former.

The question is, however, what are the main profiles of online consumers, with what their preferences differ when it comes to classic brands and brands online, and especially what motivates them to make purchases, recommendations or criticisms addressed to brands in social media.

Methodology

To determine the characteristics of Romanian female users of social networks we have conducted a research that employs both quantitative methods (applied research survey on 211 respondents aged between 19 and 48 years) and qualitative methods (three focus groups applied on 24 participants aged between 19 and 22 years).

The purpose of research is to determine the main characteristics of Romanian users of social networks. We constructed the questionnaire and interview grid used for the focus groups by considering three main dimensions: social media users' behavior, self-reporting and virtual friends on social networks, attitudes towards brands in social media.

The general objectives of quantitative research are: to determine the specific characteristics of female Romanian social media users, online behavior and determining online purchase patterns, reporting at brands in the online and offline environment, self-reporting and friends on social networks, factors influencing the purchase of products and services.

The general objectives of qualitative research are: revealing perceptions about brands online, the determination of self-perception in social media, determine the perception of virtual friends, user profiling for Romanian female social media user aged between 19 and 22 years.

The main research questions are:

- What are the main characteristics of Romanian female users of social networks?
- What are the target users' perceptions of social media on brands and their promotional activities on social networks?

- What are the most used social networks by our target users and which activities are undertaken by them in social media?

Discussions – the results of quantitative research

Behaviors in social media, self-reporting and virtual friends reporting

The questionnaire quantitative research was administered online on 211 female respondents aged between 19 and 48 years. Concerning the amount of time spent on social networks we differentiate two main user categories: 35% that allocate between 3 and 5 hours daily surfing said networks, and 26% that spend more than 5 on social media. At the opposite pole there are the users that spend less than 1 hour on social media (6%). Generally, our respondents have between 2 and 3 social media accounts (100% have a Facebook account, while 51% have a Google+ Account, 30% - a Twitter account, 32% - an Instagram account, and 29% - a Pinterest account). We consider that the high presence on Google+ is owed to the Gmail accounts that automatically generate the Google+ accounts. The results of the questionnaire are in accordance with the Romanian Copywriter statistics (2013) for the Romanian market, statistics that already indicated that the most popular social networks among Romanian people are Facebook and Twitter.

Regarding the number of friends on Facebook, 31% of the respondents have between 300 and 500 contacts, 24% have between 100 and 300, 19% have over 900 contacts and only 1% have under 100 contacts.

The electronic device most used for accessing social networks accounts by our respondents is the desktop computer (57%), while the mobile phone and tablet reach only 39% and 9%, respectively. The mobile phone is the device most used to connect to social networks by the respondents that spend on average between 3 and 5 hours online each day. An aspect of note is that respondents aged below 23 years mostly utilize the computer and not the mobile phone. However we need to mention that these results generated by the administration of the questionnaire on our 211 respondents don't fall into the global tendencies that emphasize the fact that women tend to use more the mobile phone to access their social network accounts.

For the reasons why our subjects utilize Facebook we mention: 45% responded that they mostly use Facebook to chat with friends; 42% of Romanian women who answered the questionnaire said they use Facebook heavily to find updated information about the program at college or at work; 19% of Romanian women who answered the questionnaire said that they use the social network to a minimum extent to read the press, while only 10% said they use Facebook heavily to read the press; 57% of people surveyed said that they use very little the social network for the gaming applications.

The criteria that are important when respondents befriends someone on Facebook, we noticed the following: for 36% of them matters a lot how interesting the posted content by someone is, while for 12% this matters to a reduced extent; for 29% it matters if the post contains interesting photos; to 76% is very important if they are also friends in real life; for 37% matters a lot if the person is a friend of their friends, while only for 7% this matters very little; for 33% matters very little whether the potential friend is a public figure, while for 5% is very important; for 34% doesn't matter if they know the person in real life.

Regarding self-reporting and friends-reporting in the virtual world, we have noticed some issues in the quantitative research: 11% of subjects strongly considered that they distribute more interesting content than their friends; 15% of respondents agree with the statement: "*when posting on Facebook, I censor my opinions more than in real life*", while 6% strongly agree with the statement above.

Reporting to brands, the interaction with companies and online acquisition behavior

Companies in social media act in the same space and time with users and their virtual friends answering a dual challenge: to generate content more interesting than their direct competitors and generate messages more attractive than online consumers' friends. Given that they characterized both personal and friends' activity on Facebook, respondents were asked to express why they choose to be friends with brands on Facebook social network. In general, participants said they give likes to brands' pages with which they have interacted also in the offline environment, from which

they use to consume products or services, or brands that are notoriously high.

To the question: *To what extent you use Facebook to interact with brands? (likes, shares, comments)*, 27% of respondents estimated that they utilize the social network to a small extent, and only 7% access it to a very high extent to interact with brands. 38% of the women that were questioned declared that they use Facebook to a minimum extent to recommend brands, while only 2% declared that they recommend brands on Facebook.

It should be noted that 35% of respondents largely agree with the statement: *There is no major difference between brand products and ordinary ones, instead I pay the brand*, and 12% agree to a large extent. Only 9% agreed to a small extent with the statement above. These results come as a practical background to the specialized literature which introduced the idea of “consumers do not believe that there is a major difference between products” (Klein, 2006, p. 39), and differentiation comes from the emotional connection that brands succeed in creating.

30% of respondents agree with the statement: *I usually buy from leading brands because their products/services are of a higher quality*, and 5% strongly agree with this statement. Only 11% agree to a lower extent to this. 28% of respondents agree with the statement: *I often buy from discounts/sales, no matter the brand*, 9% strongly agree, and only 10% agree to a small extent. This shows that there is no high degree of loyalty toward brands, if the differentiator is given by discounts. 8% strongly agree with the statement: *I buy from the brands with the lowest price, because I don't want to pay advertising costs*, 16% agree with the statement, and 25% agree to a small extent.

The results of the questionnaire revealed that 46% of respondents agree to a small extent with the statement: *I used to do often recommendations about products / services on Facebook*, and 6% largely agree. Regarding denouncing the negative experiences they had with brands, 56% of respondents have stated that they use less the social network in this regard, and 25% seldom. 28% of women who answered the questionnaire said they used Facebook to learn about new products and services, while just 5% say they

use the social network heavily on this. 31% of people who answered the questionnaire said they largely agree with the following statement: *Brands censor messages that do not express positive opinions about products / services*, and 7% said they agreed with the statement in very small measure.

For online purchases, 36% of respondents said they purchase online every two - three months, and 28% once a year. While only 10% make purchases online at least once a month. An interesting aspect is that about 26% do not shop online at all, and the highest percentage is found among girls under 23 years. Regarding respondents who make online purchases we noticed that the main categories of products purchased are: clothes and shoes (26%), books (18%), electrical equipment (17%), care products and cosmetics (9%). Other product and service named are: jewelry, handmade articles, tickets to theater, film and opera, etc. Regarding sites that they buy from: 66% of respondents said they use to purchase online from sites in Romania, while only 9% buy from sites abroad. Regarding the allegation: *Online purchases are unsafe*, 43% of respondents don't have a clear opinion whether online purchases are safe or unsafe. However, 8% of women who responded largely agree with the statement, while 24% agree to a small extent.

Results of the qualitative research

Given the results of quantitative research, in the three focus groups we rather paid attention to characteristics and perceptions in relation to the Facebook social network than competing products, given the fact that it is the most notorious in Romania and the most used equally by women and by companies.

The discussion started at a general level, the participants being asked to divulge what social networks they have accounts on and what the motivation behind the creation of these accounts was. During all three focus groups the most mentioned social network was Facebook. Other social networks that were cited: Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter, YouTube, and Pinterest. Only one respondent specified Google+, but she directly associated it with the automatic generation via the Gmail account.

Regarding their motivation for opening these social network accounts, the most cited argument related to Facebook and was peer pressure (be it the school group or the friend circle). This sustains the theory from specialized literature that social networks constitute a majority that most individuals wish to be a part of (Qualman, 2009).

We noticed the fact that respondents aged 19-22 consider Facebook as a channel through which they communicate with friends and faculty colleagues rather than an information source or a way to interact with the brands. Also, one can notice that even though they have multiple accounts on different social networks, they are seldom or not at all used.

Regarding the criteria on which respondents said they befriend new people on Facebook three in particular stood out: to be friends in real life, have friends in common, the person in question to have interesting pictures. These arguments confirm the results of quantitative research which indicated the same motivations. Some interesting aspects would be that: respondents do not believe that people have many virtual friends are popular, they appreciate their friends' activity on Facebook as either boring or irritating through the large number of posts such as check-ins or photos.

Further, Facebook being the most mentioned social network, participants in the focus-groups were asked to imagine that Facebook is a live person and should enter the room where the interview took place. In this context, they had to perform a characterization of the social network. Responses were of the most varied and creative, but have distinguished some common elements that were repeated. Among them we mention that Facebook is seen, through the young women's eyes, as corresponding to a *woman* and has features such as: active, sociable, popular, independent and optimistic. Other features mentioned by respondents were: *"It would be multilaterally developed; it would be trendy and have double, triple personality, or even multiple personality; actual, in phase with the news and a large circle of different friends", "time consumer", "a bookworm"*.

Regarding the reference to brands, the focus group participants said they choose sites to be friends with on Facebook from amongst the ones they know or from which they usually buy from. However, an interesting

aspect is that the respondents admitted that they deleted from the list of considerations specific brands because they provide information about products that they could not afford for financial or health-related reasons, and were, as a result, creating a sense of frustration.

Next, respondents were asked to indicate which they consider to be the most active brands on Facebook. The listed brands were those that produce cosmetics and care products, jewelry, clothing, food and news channels. Among the frequently mentioned brands were: KFC, H&M, Promenade Mall, telecom brands Vodafone and Orange. The Romanian traditional brands mentioned are: Rom chocolate and Napolact. Regarding interaction with brands via likes, share of links or comments, most respondents said they do not usually comment on posts because they do not believe that their opinions are valued by brands and they also believe that brands sort public messages received from consumers so that they could project a positive image.

Another interesting aspect of the results in both studies is that the respondents don't have the inclination to be loyal to brands, but buy according to the mood or discounts and promotions. These issues do not fall into the mainstream global thinking in the literature showing that women tend to be more loyal to brands they interact with and use to make recommendations of products and services both online and offline.

Final discussions. Romanian female social media user profile

Following the questionnaire on 211 respondents and therefore the achievement of the three focus groups we came to a series of common characteristics that generally apply to Romanian female social media users, mainly for those aged between 19 and 22 years since this age group constituted the base of our qualitative research, giving detailed answers.

We built the user profile considering three dimensions: social media behavior, self-reporting and to virtual friends in social media, attitudes towards brands in social media.

For the “social media behavior” factor we considered the number of social media accounts that respondents own, the average number of friends on Facebook, time spent online, online purchases.

In regard to self-reporting and reporting to virtual friends, we considered their perception on the activities conducted by them and their friends in social media, their perception on the new social media tendencies (selfies, for example), the degree of online exposure, and in regard to attitude toward brands we considered the interaction with brands via likes, shares, comments, the criteria that determines their appreciation of a brand (to “like” something of Facebook) and the way they perceive the promotion activity of brands through social media.

Thus, in our view, we can distinguish between two main categories of users. For social media behavior, the first category consists of the users that: average 300-500 friends on Facebook; have more than 2 accounts active on social networks (usually, Facebook and Instagram / LinkedIn), but also a number of accounts on other networks that were created out of curiosity, but do not use them (e.g. Pinterest, Google+ or Twitter); spend on average three hours online daily; generally, the main activity on Facebook consists of conversations with close friends; don't make purchases online at all or very seldom; rarely post on Facebook and created the account as a result of peer pressure; mainly use their Facebook account to track activity of other rather than post themselves; don't publicly expose through posts about their personal life; prefer the classic environment interaction.

The second category consists of users that: average 700-900 friends on Facebook; have accounts on most social networks and constantly generate content on at least three of them (usually, Facebook, Instagram and Twitter / Pinterest); spend five hours online; generate content about personal life and exhibit it publicly; want to show their virtual friends what they do through pictures or virtual check-ins; make purchases online often; usually are trendsetters for their virtual friends; are always up to date with new information about applications, gadgets, brands, clothing, etc.

Regarding self-reporting and to virtual friends, users of the first category consider friends in the online environment annoying, think about

themselves that are not popular and produce content that does not bother others. They are rather introverted people online, they express by distributing messages and pictures that show professional messages that do not exhibit their personal life; consider selfies, check-ins and the large number of virtual friends that their friends have on Facebook as an expression of frustration and need for attention.

Users of the second category generate a lot of content on social networks because they feel that it best expresses them, they need to provide information about places they've visited and people they interacted with. They expose their personal lives, use to generate a large number of pictures (usually selfies) and check-ins, see the social network as a personal diary that they share with the virtual community.

Regarding interaction with brands on social networks there are a number of similarities between the two categories identified. Among them: the weak interaction through comments, perceptions that brands will only promote their products and services, perceptions related to the fact that paid ads on social networks are annoying and invading the private space by substituting content generated by friends. However, users of the second category are more open to make recommendations on brands in the online environment, to publicly express their grievances in relation to brands on social networks.

These typologies are strictly generated by the results of our research and are not official types of Romanian social media users. The research has a number of limitations related to the number of respondents and the age segment of the participants in focus groups.

Of course, users of social media in Romania can be fitted into global typologies as the one by Ogilvy and Microsoft, that present the Digital Divas type (very connected to the online environment, in line with trends, easy-going in their interaction with brands and eager to expose themselves, passionate online purchasers). This typology is most often represented in Romania by female bloggers who work in fields related to fashion, beauty, feminine lifestyle or culinary, as well as public figures. They generally

have a number of friends that exceeds 1,000 and are active on most social networks (especially on Facebook, Pinterest, Instagram and Twitter).

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Modern marketing: Valenti & Performance

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Abstract. *The real and the virtual world of the contemporary society, based on the components and tools of the super technological forms of human communication and relationship already exists as a modern integrated system, dominated by the dynamics of competition and performance in areas such as E-Economy, E-Business, E-Marketing, E-communication, E-socialization, E-education, E-media, e-culture, e-Career, E- democracy etc.. The economy and the business of the new millennium have suffered a deep and rapid transformation both globally and specific (national / regional / local / organizational). In less than two decades, a complex new E-economy has emerged with multiple links between market actors and the powerful functionality of the virtual world networks. Marketing as a philosophy and instrument of business is an economy has experienced profound transformations having been subject to changes in structure and content, approach and use, resulting in the modern E-marketing (characterized by the new E-marketing mix: Cyber-marketing; Relationship marketing; Viral marketing; Green Marketing and other defining entities. The E-economy and E-business environments have demonstrated mobility and flexibility, quick adaptability to changes and challenges, performance and high-performance under a fierce and aggressive competition. They became environments in which the relative limits and restrictions of the present generate challenges and opportunities of the future. All this being done under the terms of existence and dynamic integration of components and tools for E-marketing, E-communication, E-socializing etc.*

Keywords: *marketing; e-marketing; cyber-marketing; relationship marketing; viral marketing; green marketing.*

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Introduction

The contemporary society of the third millennium exists and is growing dynamically by two mega entities: *the real world and the virtual world*. The existence of these two worlds, with differentiating identities and characteristics that customize them (as in individuals, groups, organizations, etc.) has become a dynamic generator in an exponential stream of challenges and development opportunities in all environments and human communities.

The complex and diverse reality of contemporary results in the virtual world has proven that the virtual environment has become the real support of human communities, that its members successfully interact *real-virtual* between the two distinctly personalized worlds.

The complex research, the real world results and effects of the challenges and opportunities of the virtual world are marked by integrating results and performances of these two worlds in all macro and micro fields of the contemporary society.

The modern society of the real world whilst based on the technological components of the virtual world is dominated by strong competition in areas such as: E-Business, E-Marketing, E-economy, E-communication, E-socializing, E-education, E-media, E-culture, E-career E-democracy, E-policy, etc. Each of the aforementioned areas provide the guarantee of the performance for existence, life and activity integrated between the two worlds: *real and virtual*. The business environments of the first decades of the third millennium (both on a global and on a specific scale) are highly dynamic and can be found in a state of constant flux. These environments are characterized by mobility and flexibility, quick adaptability to changes and challenges, performance and high-performance under a fierce and aggressive competition. These are environments in which the relative limits and restrictions of the present generate challenges and opportunities of the future under the conditions of existence and dynamic integration of the two worlds: real and virtual.

As justification, this article aims to provide a detailed and convincing approach to modern business success in the real world using the super performing tools

of modern marketing, built on a network of “E-....”s of the virtual world: *E-business*, *E-communication*, *E-economy*, *E-marketing*, *E-Technology*, *E-socializing*, *E-identity*, *E-education*, etc..

Finally, “*E-marketing*” has become the support tool and generator of ongoing challenges and opportunities of modern society, a society characterized by the effects and performance, impact and results of multiple and various “E-....”s, found in all areas of existence, life and work of the contemporary world.

Contemporary Marketing: Evolution vs. Realities

The society and economy of the third millennium experienced profound changes caused by the existence and dynamic development of two mega entities: *the real world and the virtual world*. The existence of these two worlds with identities and characteristics that differentiate them and customize them (individuals, groups, organizations, etc.) has become a dynamic generator in an exponential stream of challenges and development opportunities in all environments and human communities. In these circumstances there has been a profound shift from the “old” economy to the “new” economy with multiple and complex links between the market players under the generic term of *network economy* (Kotler et al., 2008, p. 19). Such an economy required the creation of process modeling for business and trade based on typological structures and new collaboration and exchange between bidders and buyers. *Marketing*, the philosophy and tools of doing business in the economy, did not remain immune to these profound changes and has been subject to changes in structure and content, approach and use.

The stages of development for contemporary marketing highlight how the focus of marketing activities and tools have evolved over time, with each step leading towards a certain type of decision-making guidance. The transition from consumer orientation to sales then to competition and further towards the environment has led companies to focus approaches from *market orientation* - a specific stage of extensive marketing development to a *customer orientation* – a characteristic of intensive development marketing (Bruhn, 2001, pp. 17-20).

Traditional marketing approach has proven effective in various economic and social areas up to a certain historical stage, a stage marked by the transition from the industrial economy and society to the informational and communication based society. This was based on technological and diversifying media and means of communication, on the information and knowledge, all resulting in a rapid general integration of the real world to the premises of the virtual world. Such a step is found in the last decade of the second millennium and the beginning of the third millennium. *The emergence of World Wide Web has opened a new era of marketing.* One of the first concepts that revolutionized the marketing businesses and the market as a whole was the *Cyber-marketing*, which launched marketing with the Internet as the primary channel of communication.

Cyber-marketing as the first form of modern marketing is defined as “*the use of the power of computer networks and online communication and of the digital interactive environment to achieve the marketing objectives*” (Orzan & Orzan, 2007, p. 23). This is considered as a online information policy or a consumer-centered *online marketing* and is characterized by addressing the intersection of three areas: marketing, economics and technology; process of creating and maintaining customer relationships through online activities to facilitate the exchange of ideas, targeting the consumer market; include integrated brand management, sales, market research, advertising and online assistance; using tools such as e-mail, online advertising, newsletter, websites, etc.

The Traditional Marketing - Cybermarketing comparative approach highlights the relevant general and specific issues, resulting in the conclusion that Cybermarketing differs from traditional marketing through clearly superior facets and tools related to: Costs; Time; Interactivity; Globalization; Availability.

The traditional marketing mix, known as the 4P model includes four controllable and combined elements / tools: the Product, the Price, the Market / distribution and the Promotion, being used by any firm / company in order to produce the desired reaction in the target market. It has its applicability also in marketing conducted online, established under the

name of E-marketing mix (online marketing). In this context, the impact of the Internet on each of the four elements was essential and controversial from the point of view of specialists. Thus, with respect to the concept of E-marketing mix, the opinions are diverse, and even so far a common view on this concept was not reached. Compared to the traditional marketing mix, the E-marketing mix has a number of elements that overlap with the conventional mix, but also some elements that are specific to the digital environment. The online marketing mix means the application of the 4Ps to be adapted in order to identify and meet the consumer's interests, a goal that required two other components in the virtual environment: the interactivity process and the databases. These new components created a new formula, specific for the online marketing mix, set up as $4P + 2D$, where the first D is the dialogue (feedback) and the second D is represented by the organization of data in the form of databases and data warehouses. In the online marketing mix the 4Ps turn in the sense of acquiring other meanings influenced by the speed of deployment of economic activities (Kotler et. al., 2008).

In conclusion, the E-Marketing mix must provide the present and create at the same time the future of the business success of a company / firm. Sales promotion, distribution and pricing tactics can affect the sales and profits. But the real art is to do these things so that at the same time they can be a support for the future.

A comparative analysis of the promotion techniques within the traditional marketing and within cybermarketing (<http://www.scribd.com/doc/137171840/Cybermarketing-Manual.pdf>), shows an unprecedented development of the E - marketing field, of some new policies, strategies and tools in the field of marketing, a field subject to constant change due to technological and social influences on the customers' consumption and acquisition behavior.

Given that traditional marketing is an intensive process that involves high consumption of time, human and financial resources, and sometimes even ineffective, the E-marketing (online marketing) has become a powerful alternative to traditional marketing.

The key factor of online marketing consists of an element of which the traditional marketing does not benefit, namely the possibility for the customers / consumers to directly engage and effectively participate in the online marketing processes carried on.

The online marketing adds more interactivity, more choice possibilities for the consumer, more informative value to the products and services, reducing the costs and removing the geographical boundaries. It operates with the new tools of the virtual world: blogs, email marketing, forums, chats, online books, corporate websites and online media. And as promotion methods in E-marketing the following are used: newsletters, mailing lists, spam and specific forms of marketing: with permission (permission marketing), relational, environmental (green), viral.

Relational marketing

The relational marketing / relationship marketing concept is based on three distinct theoretical approaches, which are in an effective practical interdependence: behavioral approach, communicational approach, and managerial approach. The three types of approach aim, in the context of the concept of relational marketing, the significant changes in the management process of human resources and relations within the firm / company, but also in relation to third parties. Conceptualization of the relational marketing has driven marketing schools and experts in the field, during the last two decades 1990 - 2010 to create a support with multifunctional and integrative valences designed for the business in the third millennium. The concept of relationship marketing is continuously evolving (Zbucnea, Pînzaru & Galalae, 2009).

Relational marketing expresses a strategic dimension of the marketing concept, consistent with the firm's / company's strategic management approach. It is based on the relational capital of the firm / company, consisting of a synthesis of knowledge, experience and trust built up over time by the firm / company based on its lasting collaboration with the suppliers, customers, employees and other stakeholders. It is a totally interactive marketing that effectively leverages the technical support created by the "digital revolution" (Kotler et al., 2008, p. 38).

Relational marketing is based on seven key principles: Intention of creating a unique relationship; Interaction with trade act partners; Selectivity to various categories of customers; Integrating the customer in product / service evaluation; information about the customers; Investing in customers; Individuality for customers.

The business environment in Romania also faces the challenges of relational marketing. The new competitive framework that Romania's accession to the European Union created required the local economic operators, first of all, to operate a change of mentality. The performance of this type of marketing is assessed by the ability to identify and develop medium and long business in areas where it is able to meet all requirements of quality management and competitiveness. It is for the academics and researchers in the field to provide a rigorous conceptual framework for the relational marketing in Romania, as well, and to determine as such it to be successfully applied. Without this effort of scientific creativity, the relational marketing is at risk to fail in punctual applications of its tools meant to promote sales.

Viral marketing

The viral marketing is an online advertising method in which the advertisement is transmitted from one person to another without direct intervention of the person making the promotion. The name is given by the manner in which viruses spread through e-mail, multiplying themselves on many levels by social networks specific for online environment. It has as its reference support the cybermarketing and its communication channels: Internet, Intranet, Extranet, local area networks (LAN), metropolitan area networks (MAN), CDs, multimedia means, on-line and off-line systems.

The viral marketing aims at overcoming the normal limits of any sales market in a real space. This type of marketing presents many advantages over traditional marketing, including: the number of people that can get the message, the high speed with which the message is spreading using the existing social networks, reliability, low cost, propagation range, choosing the target consumer and people (age, gender, preferences, hobbies).

Internet, viewed as a medium for the propagation of viral marketing campaigns, overcame the “through word of mouth classic” marketing. In the online media the implementation of spoken communication attained an unimagined scale, the message going to an unlimited number of people, and the blogosphere and other media were those virtual structures that underlay the viral marketing campaigns.

The Word of Mouth Marketing Association includes the viral marketing in the list of marketing subtypes of word of mouth marketing. The classification is made according to the method of transmission of the message and includes the following classes of oral marketing: opinion formers’ marketing, buzz marketing, viral marketing, marketing through blogs and marketing through the channels of the online application Really Simple Syndication (RSS). Some of these types can be used as channels through which the viral messages can be transmitted, such as the blogs or the RSS application channels. Viral marketing also operate with buzz marketing type messages. The buzz marketing is a way to get people to talk, generating agitation about a subject through its very nature (<http://womma.org/wom101>).

The viral marketing uses the opinion formers’ ability to set an example for the blogosphere community and to send the message to a large number of receptors, counting on them to disseminate the information in the social groups to which they belong. Facebook, Twitter or Youtube applications, based on the same concept of interactivity, are extremely effective in spreading viral campaigns because they easily identify the target audience through the profile created on these social networks. The message can be directed to a selected group of people based on their characteristics and preferences.

The viral marketing has been structured according to another method of classification in the following categories (<http://www.clickz.com/831941>): value viral marketing, guile viral marketing, vital viral marketing, spiral viral and vile viral marketing.

The value of viral marketing consists in sharing valuable information between the users about a product or service, and the positive impression

made will be sent to friends and acquaintances, urging them to try it. Examples of products and websites representative of this viral marketing strategy can be considered Hotmail, Harry Potter books, Amazon.com and Yahoo.com.

The guile viral marketing uses skillful techniques by which the supply of information, sale of a product or the inclusion of other people in a system is based on a reward or commission. Amway and Tupperware are products examples of this tactic, and Quixtar.com and My Points are examples of web pages.

Vital viral marketing refers to the sharing of information that requires a product to be used as support. If a user wants to share an experience to an acquaintance, that person must try that experience by means of a product. Macromedia Flash, Adobe Acrobat, eBay.com and AOL are examples of this type of viral marketing.

Another type of viral marketing is the spiral viral, by which interesting or funny experiences are transmitted motivated by the desire to share the same feeling with the receiver of the message. Hampster Dance, Frog Blender and numerous games can be given as examples.

The negative viral marketing (vile viral) tries to prevent other possible users of adverse effects from the use of a product or service. An example of this type of viral is Crystal Pepsi. By its negative nature, this message is the most probable viral success, by its fastest spreading and by the most users reached by it.

The viral marketing uses three types of viral messages (Zimmerman, 2005): pass along, incentivised viral and undercover, which include items by means of which the attention of the people is captured, causing them to spread the information to their acquaintances.

Channels of transmission of viral message must be known and chosen so that a viral marketing campaign can be successful and avoid failure. The Internet is an ideal medium for this purpose because of the multiple pathways it possesses, the very low cost, the high speed of propagation

of information, the ease of use and the large area of propagation. Given the multiple facilities and the complexity of Internet, it is normal for the arrangements for a viral marketing campaign to be carried on to use a wide range of options as distribution. These options include: e-mails, instant messaging links, e-books, e-postcards, web sites, distribution of free software, web hosting, free templates, forums, using electronic gift certificates, blogs, newsletters, email marketing, online games and banners.

The viral marketing involves a high degree of creativity in making a campaign so that it will have a strong impact on the target audience, to generate responses, to infect (virus) both the current and the potential customers. For this purpose a strategy is used, which combines the message, the channels and the list of recipients so that their potential can be used to the maximum in order for the intended objectives to be achieved. This marketing strategy should consider both the advantages and the disadvantages of the viral marketing specific techniques.

The advantages of viral marketing as compared to the traditional marketing concern: the number of people that can get the message, the message spreading high speed using existing social networks, reliability, low cost, propagation area, choice of the target consumer and public (age, gender, preferences, hobbies) etc.

But the viral marketing presents a number of disadvantages that should be considered in the specialist's strategies and successful use of marketing technology in online media, which refers to: the unexpected extent that the message can take, the lack of control of the message spreading, message distortion, size and format used, and the attachments.

The viral marketing involves major risks to be assumed, which sometimes may adversely affect the business / company, but the "difficult mission is for the viral elements to produce value" <http://studentsonmarketing.wordpress.com/2009/01/21/a-fi-or-not-viral/>).

Knowing the advantages and disadvantages that characterize the viral campaigns a series of examples that showed a notable success can be

analyzed. Viral campaigns were created, which have been a huge success and remained in public memory as fun, innovative, useful or shocking.

Thus, Hotmail is the example of a viral campaign successfully used, the company becoming a leading provider of free e-mail services. The launching of the new Seat Leon car model has used the viral marketing, as part of the strategy, which consisted in sending by e-mail and by instant messaging programs the news of the publication of the 3 episodes presented in the form of comics, which did not present the car, but the emotions created by the publication of these episodes, by visiting three different addresses: “www.episodul1.ro - The Beginning”; “www.episodul2.ro - It is coming”, “www.episodul3.ro - Published”. Also, discussions on the campaign were generated and maintained on various forums. These elements contributed to capture the public attention on the vehicle launching campaign and to increase the traffic on the websites.

Regarding the Romanian viral campaigns, the campaign started by the television station Acasa TV was called “Hacking Acasa.ro”. Reviving the Acasa.ro portal included a step that simulated a cyber attack, which had a duration of four hours. Knowing the high levels of traffic registered on this site, the “Hacking Acasa.ro” proved to be really successful.

Marketing 3.0 / Green Marketing

As seen by Kotler (2010), Marketing 3.0 is the new trend of firms / companies to reach the consumers by unifying strategies focused on human resources as the key resources of an organization, with the strategies focused on profitability. By adopting and implementing a set of positively centered values the company can improve its image, both to the customers and to the partners and the employees. Marketing 3.0 approach is based on “the new wave technology” generated by the fifth-wave computing. The convergence between the new wave technology and the new consumers’ purchasing trends is the focal point of the marketing strategy that aims to reach the target customer as soon as possible, a strategy called by Tasner (2010) “Web 3.0 Marketing”.

An important feature of web 3.0 Marketing is represented by the activities of Corporate Social Responsibility (abbreviated as CSR). The CSR concept varies depending on the entity defining it, so that it may be different in the corporations' vision as compared with the vision of the nongovernmental companies (Crane et al., 2007). According to Mallin (2009), CSR activities are defined by the firm's initiative to create and change its values and behavior consistent with the stakeholders' (partners, investors, consumers) expectations.

United Nations initiative called "Global Compact" (UNGC), aims at encouraging the businesses worldwide, so that they generate sustainable and socially responsible activities. UNGC has adopted the CSR concept as being the full involvement of companies in sustainable economic development, working with employees and their families, the local community and society at large to improve their living standards.

Marketing 3.0 includes a special component, called green marketing, which brings strategic benefits for the companies that use this market approach. In this context, environmental activities developed by various companies improve their image in front of consumers, investors, employees and the general public. In recent years, a growing number of consumers show a growing interest in ecologic products and a company that has these products will thus attract these consumers (Dahlstrom, 2011). Green Marketing related studies show that over 64% of consumers think that the environment must be protected and used rationally, the contemporary consumers being willing to sacrifice their comfort or their money in order to get ecologic products.

Sustainability, in Marketing 3.0 concept, is not a risk factor for management, but an element of the marketing strategy, source and potential of growth and innovation. Large companies that survive in the present, and possibly in the future, are those companies that have adopted the sustainability concept, which offered them a competitive advantage and therefore profitability (Iannuzzi, 2012).

The consumer is considered the cornerstone in the development of Marketing 3.0. The consumer's role in the successful application of web

Marketing 3.0 can be provided by meeting three objectives: innovation, creation of stories which to affect and involve the consumers and, consumer's empowerment (Kotler, 2010).

Virtual world and the digital market of modern society have created a vast and solid connection among people around the world, between suppliers of products / services and their customers (Ryan, 2009). The companies / firms focused to be active in this globalized market, and in recent years they quickly and successfully implemented, CSR type activities, green marketing, sustainability or any other strategic aspect of Marketing 3.0.

Also in Romania, in order to highlight the market success of Marketing 3.0 activities, namely corporate social responsibility, the green marketing and the sustainability activities, some generic events have been organized by three Romanian companies: Avon Cosmetics Romania ("Smile Festival"); Petrom "Andrei's Country" - planting "; Enel Energie ("Plant the Bill"). The analyses of the three events highlight the fact that for each of the target groups, the specific marketing 3.0 objectives have been met with results that exceeded the initial estimates. The target audience had a positive attitude regarding the companies' initiatives and supported them in achieving these objectives and events.

Relevant research synthesis

Viral marketing / marketing campaigns: Transylvania Bank and CTM COSMOTE

The objective of the research focused on the impact that two viral marketing campaigns (conducted by Transylvania Bank - BT / 2009 and mobile phone company COSMOTE - CTM COSMOTE / March, 2013) had on the customers' behavior and on the image that has been created through an online promotion carried out for the two companies. The aim was to analyze all the elements that can contribute to the implementation of a successful marketing campaign, as well as to analyze some issues that could adversely affect the company or the product involved in the campaign. It was also taken into account the fact that in a viral marketing campaign, there are elements that cannot be controlled (audience reaction, feed-back sent etc.), but in order to carry out a successful campaign both positive

examples and negative examples must be used, in order to minimize the likelihood that the campaign to fail.

The qualitative research was applied using the non participative observation, based on the accession to the viral marketing sources that provided the thematic subject of the research: viral marketing campaign conducted by BT (2009) and the campaign conducted by CTM COSMOTE (2013). Note that the two viral marketing campaigns have used specific items (clips, context, language, characters) from a video viral video ("six beautiful horses" - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T-Zu0bRGUuQ>) published prior to 2009. The research has also relied on the accession to information published in the online media, on websites, blogs, forums, regarding the two viral campaigns. Of a particular importance were the nature and the content of the comments posted by the internet users who watched the three videos and the number of visualizations recorded over time.

The painting offered by the said flick is one of ignorance, of grotesque reflected by the place and by the language of the interviewed person, as well as by the people who appear in the images. An original element is the spontaneity of the moment, which probably has increased its popularity among internet users. Perhaps it is this ingredient, namely, the spontaneity of the moment, that greatly contributed to the spread of "virus" in the online media, and has led to the phenomenon of "six horses" that pretty much everyone knows, even without the clip to be watched. It is called a phenomenon because at this point, the original clip (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9DW_jvxbDQs) has 2,991,859 views, while it was posted on the youtube.com website on 09.11.2008. The comments posting option is disabled for this video. In 2009, the website blog.standout.ro, reported that the said video record 11.797 views per day, while he was not promoted by traditional means of promotion (<http://blog.standout.ro/2009/06/social-media/top-20-clipuri-virale-in-romania>).

In addition to the video that was originally posted, other videos with the same content have been subsequently posted. In their turn these videos have recorded a fairly large number of views: the clip available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T-Zu0bRGUuQ> recorded 1,584,280 views (June, 2014), and at the same time, the clip available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T-Zu0bRGUuQ>

com/watch?v=Z7zpSVmQ94M, recorded 1,064,874 views. They contain comments which prove that they caused amusement to those who have watched them, and some of those who posted comments had taken inside the messages the phrase “six horses.” Based on the above information, it can be reconfirmed the status of viral phenomenon of the “six horses” video. In addition, this movie status is reaffirmed by the fact that parts of it were used in the two advertising campaigns of BT and CTM COSMOTE. Given the differences between the two companies (objects, target audience, etc.), we considered necessary a brief overview of the two spots having as inspiration source the “six horses” phenomenon.

The spot the made by BT has a duration of 20 seconds. The character Zânuț (the Elf) of the BT spot (2009), is found afterwards in other spots in the advertising campaigns of the bank. The BT/2009 spot advertises loans that are usually secured by assets, but according to Elf’s claim, they are guaranteed by two beautiful horses (the product shown in the commercial is actually a loan already guaranteed by the National Credit Guarantee Fund for SMEs). The spot ends with the famous phrase “maximum six horses,” said by the Elf. The spot available by accessing the link, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ont-zrJ319M> is not the only spot existing on youtube.com and it recorded 47 898 views, being posted on 19.06.2009. The comments related to this post are similar to those of the original clip and show that among a certain type of audience it managed to arouse amusement, although on other sites (see <http://www.zoso.ro/banca-transylvania-guarantee-6-way-beautiful/>) there are also critical messages with respect to the borrowed elements that appear in the spot. However, given that the loan tenderer was a bank, there were also published comments with a question mark, namely if the spot published online had the purpose of an actual bank advertising campaign? A variant of the answer to this question is suggested at the end of this presentation of comparative research.

The spot made by CTM COSMOTE (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nhvPNk2SQHU>) took over several elements from the original “six horses” spot. In a context of modern decor, but that tries to replicate the décor of the original flick, the main character and other Roma people and a horse are borrowed. In the first images of the spot a young man seated at a table and typing in front of a laptop is shown. A voice tells him “You who

are eating, how would it have been if you were the first one to find it and put on the net the six beautiful horses?”. Immediately after this question, in the image appears the character of the initial video and puts the question “How many horses must be harnessed to a cart?”, which is answered by himself “Six, or two, two, maximum six ...!”. After this moment, the package of banking services to which it is intended is introduced, with the access to Internet as its strength point. The ad was posted by the user CTM COSMOTE Romania on 03/14/2013 on youtube.com, which is the official channel of COSMOTE. Some comments are positive, others criticize the use of the example of the “six horses”. The clip has a duration of 50 seconds, as opposed to that presented by BT, which takes only 20 seconds. Carefully reviewing the mentioned spots, a number of items can be seen, which were used without taking into account a number of rules of viral marketing. And hence a number of negative effects on the two campaigns and companies resulted.

Conclusions regarding the success / failure of the two companies and the impact among the users, both in terms of created image and in terms of promoting the products and services through these spots are shown below.

For BT, the spot was an unfortunate idea, given the status a banking institution is supposed to have. By the said spot BT sent to the customers a message of a very simplistic approach of their business (spot advertises a product that addresses SMEs) in full financial crisis (2009), when many businesses have faced many problems in the context of relations with the bank. Just these difficult situations the businessmen in SMEs sector have encountered with respect to the banks suggests a negligence on the part of BT, with respect to the manner in which the credits addressed to them are guaranteed. Another negative aspect of this campaign is the fact that BT has opted to use elements of a viral video, which often targets a specific type of audience. In this case, the aimed subjects are particularly young people, who adhere more easily to these forms of entertainment, compared with businessmen, despite the fact that the virals circulate also within the companies, by e-mail or other channels. Given this aspect, it is likely that a businessman who did not watch the original clip does not understand what it is about and was likely to consider the words of the Elf as a form of disrespect to the customers. The banking system is known for the employees' sobriety, the seriousness with which the customers are

approached and their operations are treated. The spot contradicts this picture and is even joking about the manner in which the credits for SMEs are guaranteed. Such an attitude would have been rather suitable for a product addressed to young people (e.g. a special card for students, offering different facilities), because they are more receptive and nonconformist and also know much better the online media and the viral campaigns carried out in this context.

This spot does not address the right audience, and contributes in creating a distorted image of the bank, and given the small number of views in relation to the views of the flick that served as a guide, it can be said that the campaign aims to promote the company and one of its products, but it has been a failure. Unfortunately, this conclusion can only be based on information provided online.

Unlike the BT spot, the message of the spot made by CTM COSMOTE is appropriate to the target audience. It clearly addresses the young people by the presence of that young boy using a laptop and Internet services. COSMOTE uses elements from “six horses” as an example to young people who are eager to become popular, especially by these means. Usually they are the most knowledgeable in terms of online campaigns, and some of them want very much to be given the opportunity to become very popular, and to earn money very easy. CTM COSMOTE speculates this feature of the young Internet users and provides them with the means (Internet access and other services) by which they can reach the “viral” success promoted by the “six horses” phenomenon. A negative element met in the COSMOTE spot is the lack of spontaneity of the Roma actor. Even if he says the same words, the moment is not as funny as in the first spot. As we previously stated, the spontaneity of the moment in that flick was a strong point, which stimulated propagation of images on the Internet, but in the case of COSMOTE it had not the same impact.

Clearly, the spots seek through the use of the elements from the flick “six ways” to get a huge number of views of them, managing as such to promote the offered brand, products and services, but this is not always the case with the viral marketing. From the analysis of the spots and of the

manner in which they are promoted through viral marketing campaigns, we can draw some important conclusions.

Thus, in the case of Transilvania Bank:

- The commercial spot has negative effects on the image the customers have about the institution because of mismatches with the target audience;
- The attitude of the character of the BT spot increases the degree of negative impact it has and transmits to the bank's image, showing a lack of seriousness in dealing with customers' problems, amid an economic crisis (2009), which strongly affected the SME sector in Romania;
- Through the spot, customers have been sent a wrong message about partnership relationship that can be established between the two parties;
- Relatively small number of views shows that the aim of becoming a viral spot was not reached.

In the case of COSMOTE campaign:

- The COSMOTE spot is adapted to the target audience, given that young people are very receptive to such kind of thing (which is a plus as compared to BT spot that did not take account of this aspect);
- The use of the Roma character failed to have the same comic effect as in the original video because it lacked spontaneity;
- The spot fails to register a high number of views, which shows that its purpose to become a viral spot was not reached.

The brief comparative analysis, as well as other examples of viral marketing campaigns that took and are taking place in the public and business environment of the Romanian society, lead to a series of recommendations generated by the successful approach and implementation of the concept of viral marketing (<http://studentsonmarketing.wordpress.com/2009/01/21/a-fi-sau-nu-viral/>).

- "The difficult mission is for the viral elements to produce value". Unfortunately these two spots just mimicked certain elements from a viral clip but this was not a guarantee for success and has actually worked against them by contributing to the decay of the respective company's image (it is

obvious that in the case of BT this is more of an issue due to the fact that it is a bank and the clip was not adapted for the target audience).

- Viral marketing insures a rapid spread of the message but after this message has been launched the companies no longer have any control over it and for this reason it is necessary that all the steps for the viral marketing campaigns are obeyed in order to minimize the risk for failure.

- Contrary to all advantages generated by the use of viral marketing (low cost, rapid feed-back) there is a high degree of risk present that need to be assumed by all those who choose this type of marketing because of the uncontrollable elements. This is necessary even if all the rules are obeyed and this leads to a clear analysis of the advantages and disadvantages before such a campaign is initiated.

Conclusions and implications / Discussions

The present article has set for itself the challenge to offer a detailed and convincing approach for the success of real world business using the super performing tools of modern marketing, built on a network of “E-....”s of the virtual world: E-business, E-communication, E-economy, E-marketing, E-Technology, E-socializing, E-identity, E-education, etc..

In this context, “E-marketing” has become the support tool and generator of ongoing challenges and opportunities of modern society, a society characterized by the effects and performance, impact and results of multiple and various “E-....”s, found in all areas of existence, life and work of the contemporary world.

Thus the E-marketing of the 2014 year manifests itself through other challenges and through some trends.

In the global market consumption (international, regional, national, local), the advertising agency JWT has published a study of 10 trends that will characterize the behavior and mindset of consumers in 2014 (www.wall-street.ro/articol/Marketing-PR/159328/10-tendinte2014.html). These are listed below.

- Immersive Experiences (new technologies provide brands, retailers and content producers the opportunity to create experiences that allow consumers to abandon the “real” world).
 - Do you speak visual? (the world is expressed through an increasingly rich vocabulary based on pictures, emoticons and video content, reducing the text as a way of communication. Why? The human processes visual elements at 60,000 times the speed of processing text).
 - The age of impatience (puts pressure on brands to buy time with customers, as the on-demand economy becomes mainstream).
 - Mobile as Gateway to Opportunity (this trend emerged in 2013, including in Romania).
 - Telepathic Technology (robotics copy of a human body remotely controlled by the brain / BCI - Brain Computer Interface; the development of brain-computer interface type and emotion recognition technologies will enable brands to gain an understanding of what is in the minds of consumers).
 - The end of anonymity (new technologies and projects which aim to gather personal data are making it increasingly difficult for people to remain unregistered and unnoticed by corporations or governments).
 - Raging Against the Machine (brands can create friendlier technologies and focus on the needs of people who refuse devices and classic social networks).
 - Remixing traditions (creators of brands and corporate managers need to understand one simple thing: “One size doesn’t fit all”).
 - Proudly imperfect (imperfection has an increasingly different perception now, and brands can show that it is better to be imperfect, an example is the use of images less “worked” in Photoshop and the use of realistic examples).
 - Mindful Living (consumers develop a desire to live all kinds of experiences in a responsible manner and reported to the spiritual dimension of life: yoga, healthy eating, meditation, movement and so on. Brands are expected to react to the needs of this type of modern consumer).
- In the social networks, Romania manifests some tendencies (Forbes.com) These are listed below.
- Investments in online social environment will become a necessity, not a luxury, for an increasing number of firms / companies / organizations.

- Google will become a major factor for rapid development (being the second social network by monthly number of users - 343 million, after Facebook).
- Image social networks will become a success (eg. Pinterest, Slideshare, Tumblr, Path, Mobli and so on will continue to develop)
- We will see the development of Micro-Video (New micro-video / Twitter, video posts / Instagram, video sharing, movies / Twitter, movies directly from the smart phones, etc.).
- MySpace will increase (radical change of image and re-branding; application for iPhone users / receive private messages, listening to personalized radio stations etc.).
- LinkedIn will become an important player for B2B growth.

In 2014, advertising in Romania has some tendencies (www.limonade.ro/analize/tendinte-in-publicitate-din-2014).

- Mobile advertising (targeted advertising / mobile, declining share of advertising on TV, etc.). - “Increasingly less privacy” (personal digital information becomes available to the people in advertising and companies).
- Marketing content (companies constantly need more content, in order to support traditional advertising, content must be online and in social media to support any traditional advertising taking place. The content needs to be updated, interactive and current. Social media content must be constantly renewed, active, etc.).
- Targeted ads to “You” not to “we” (focused commercials / mobile phones; every client matters and must be sought where it is willing to see / hear etc.).
- Online and interactive promotion etc._

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Experiential marketing of tourism: an exploratory model

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Abstract. *Marketing is a dynamic phenomenon and marketing as a discipline has evolved overtime, the current era of marketing is evolving from the service dominant logic (S-D) as proposed by Vargo & Lusch (2004), to co-creation experiences (Prahadal & Ramaswamy, 2004). Experiential marketing orientation is the most contemporary of marketing discipline (Williams 2006) and is in sync with the service dominant logic. The notion of value has changed and it no more resides in goods or services but in consumer's utility expressed in terms of experience (Prahadal & Ramaswamy, 2004; Ramaswamy, 2011). The organized tourism as we see today started as a bundled array of exotic cultural experiences, supplied to the markets. The end product of tourism industry is experience and the memories of experience; it includes both the instant events and extended events. This paper aims to explore a framework for understanding tourism through the lens of experiential marketing. As experiential marketing is evolving, getting acceptance and seen as a tool for distinguished differentiation from the competitors (Prahadal & Ramaswamy, 2004), the need for understanding the way a consumer experiences a product and the various stages involved in it need to be further explored and empirically tested. The value of experience can be seen as a continuum between the goal directed/economic values to altruistic-hedonic 'end-in-itself' kind of experiences (Holbrook, 2005, 2006). The way experience is defined in the literature varies on the phenomenological perspective taken in past researches. Walls et al. (2011) provide a detail survey of the literature and have found almost twenty different definitions of experience. The experiences associated with various parts of tourism product like lodging, atmospherics, food and services (Walls et al., 2011) have been looked into discretely, but not much research has gone into understanding the holistic tourist experience and how it is recorded in the memory (to cherish!) as an end product, though a few exceptions exist like Walls et al. (2011). The subjective personal introspection and autoethnography has been suggested as a good tool to understand the value of consumption experience to the consumer (Holbrook, 2005, 2006), but how the tourism experience is different from the daily consumption experience, keeping in mind that tourism is seen as an interruption of routine life and away from usual place of inhabitation. Tourism when consumed provides with experiences that can be classified*

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as Instant events e.g. having a coffee at some restaurant and long episodic memories e.g. planning and execution of the travel. With the support of developments in the field of human autobiographic memory and the existing frameworks of consumption experience (Holbrook 2005, 2006; Walls et al 2011; Schmitt 1999) the authors suggest a conceptual model that proposes the role of emotionally charged, “flashbulb like memories” in enhancing the tourist experience, memorability of tourist experience and thus destination image.

Keywords: *experiential marketing; tourism; destination image.*

Introduction

Starting from simple ‘barter system’ to goods centric approach and then service centric approach; Marketing as a discipline is still evolving. It’s becoming a challenge for companies to attract consumers as the competing products matching on functional characteristics and comparable cost and quality are available to the modern consumers. Marketing discipline has seen the evolution from goods to services and is moving to experience based economy (Schmitt, 1999; Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982); since then more and more firms are focusing on consumption experience rather than only on goods and services.

The focus towards the consumption experience and experiential value was shifted perhaps after the work of Holbrook & Hirschman (1982); they strongly pitched for the experiential aspects of the consumption. They wanted to convey that it’s the time marketers started to seek the purpose of consumption from consumer’s perspective for a successful business. It was argued that the consumers seek for and receive fun, fantasy and feelings through consumption experience. A further push was provided by the work of Pine and Gilmore (1998), who took a step further away from the supplier side dominance paradigm and declared that the future of markets and economic activities will be all based on consumer experiences and the firms which will provide good consumption experience will survive the market competition. During the last decade of the 20th century the idea of consumer focus and experience as the next ‘point of differentiation’ was more or less established at the supply side of the market and the companies have already started to orient their businesses around the experiential paradigm.

The practitioners were looking for the answers to the questions like what we can do, how to create and manage the experience, what are the kinds of experiences those are sought by the consumers. These practitioner problems at conceptual level were resolved to a great extent by the experiential modules framework (namely *sense, feel, think, act and relate*) provided by Schmitt (1999). Their work gives a rich description of the evolution of marketing from traditional –functional focus to more holistic branding approach of 90's and explains why a more holistic approach of marketing is necessary.

The experience is conceptualized most often as customer's subjective response to the holistic (including all direct and indirect contacts) with the firm resulting in the consumption and consumption experience (Lemke et al., 2011). In classical psychology the human experience was viewed as something internal and as it has no connection with external reality but later on the theory of action was incorporated and human experience was started to be seen as an outcome of social action Vasilyuk (1991). The understanding of consumer experience is thus more holistic and incorporates the hedonic and subconscious dimension of consumer behavior as well as the physical engagement of consumer.

The question is; what is so unique about experience; what we as a business need to know about human experience to stage successful experiences. Do we need to see our consumers differently, what actually happens that makes a customer say 'Wow!' why do we need to be more careful now . In the coming sections we will explain; what are the ways in which experience is conceptualized in the literature, how can it be practiced, how tourism experience is different from other consumption experiences, and what tourism marketers can do.

The Consumption Experience

Human life is full of consumption experiences; from early morning 'teeth-brushing' ritual to 'retiring for night' we use products and services to create our experiences. Our human life may be seen as a collection of experiences that we live every day. Our consumption experiences include not just individual material but social consumption as well. The human

experiences include the experiences that are somehow shaped by the products and services and other experiences that are beyond the control of marketers and are created by the consumers for themselves.

The idea of experience is very old, it will be worthy to mention that Holbrook (2006) himself mention that even though they started and their work is seen as a benchmark but still the traces about customer experience can be found in some very early writings (e.g. Abbott, 1955). Experience has been used and defined variously in different contexts. Ethnologically and anthropologically speaking, an experience is the way in which culture affects an individual's perception of events; it includes the experiences happening to others, society and the world (Walls et al., 2011). As per economics and marketing perspective the experience is seen as very personal, subjective thing; occurring in response to the response of some stimulation provided by the product usage service settings, and involves the individual through active participation or through observation.

Customer experiences have primarily two dimensions, hedonic and utilitarian. The utilitarian dimension was of primary importance in the traditional marketing literature;, but as per the experiential marketing paradigm, the consumption is seen as a part of day to day human life and seen more as a hedonic experience apart from its utility. The experiential focus of research started by Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) is on the hedonic aspects (*fun, fantasy, feelings*) of consumption and how it contributes to the value in the minds of the consumer in terms of sensory feelings, pleasures and emotions.

There can be various perspectives through which we can conceptualize human experiences like psychological, social, spiritual etc; here in this paper we have restricted our focus to marketing, psychological and tourism perspective of the consumption experience.

Experience as in Marketing & Business literature

Pepsi saw a growth of 30% in sales in 2002 and a reduced advertising budget after adopting the experiential paradigm (Tsai, 2005); Blue Nile, Starbucks, Café Coffee Day, and Apple Store Experience are some other success examples. It seems holistic customer experience management is

the latest success strategy (Tsai, 2005). There is lot of conceptual literature around consumption experience (Pine & Gilmore, 1998; Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982; Holbrook, 2006; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004; Ramaswamy, 2011) and its ways of packaging for customers into the modules *feel, sense, think, act and relate* (Schmitt, 1999).

The qualitative study by Roederer (2012) seems to be one of its kinds; there is an effort to understand the dimensions of customer experience. In the study the author has analyzed the twenty oral life narratives of consumption experiences of his subjects and summarized the four dimensions of consumption experience as *praxeological, hedonico-sensory, rhetorical, and time-related* dimensions. The Praxeological dimension refers to the action, the individual's participation or behavior on his/her environment; it includes the things done by the individuals and the things done to him/her. The Hedonico-Sensory dimension reflects the agreeableness of the stimulus received to human senses, which are generally referred to as pleasure and displeasure of the experience. It is a state of consumption-evaluation of the hedonistic product/service. The Rhetoric dimension concerns the symbolic meaning associated to the experience or the event by the consumer, how he/she tries to explain the experience story. The Time-related or time dimension is seen as a resource input from the consumers side, if the firm is able to successfully keep the consumer engaged and happy throughout the event/service it should be seen as good utilization his resources and it will most probably result in a satisfied, loyal customer.

The consumer experience is a rather recent focus of academics and it is being tested in different context for its effects, to help further understanding and value of this perspective. The customer experience has a mediating effect on customer satisfaction induced through the social interaction and convenience in store shopping context (Srivastava & Kaul, 2014). The importance of the touch-

points in the service settings as well as in the entire supply chain has been discussed frequently in literature; it has been argued that all the touch-points create the total consumption experience. Using the metaphor of 'journey', Rawson et al. (2013) provided a commentary on the challenges and complexity brought in by more touch-points in the entire supply

chain. They emphasize on the bottom-up flow of the data and top-down flow of the deep understanding of experience expectations of the consumers to create successful consumption experience. There is a need to orient the organizations to experiential perspective of the value. There has been a major shift in the way value is conceptualized in theory and the traditional practitioner mindset has created a gap that need to be filled to create successful businesses in the current business environment. The major difference perhaps between the service dynamic logic of Vargo and Lusch (2004) and the experience economy perspective (Pine & Gilmore, 1998; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004) is the idea about customer value. The customer value no more lies with the organizations rather it's co-created with the consumer. It's no more concentrated in the goods or services but in the experience and semantic meaning created by the consumer. Value is customer's utility and high-quality interactions with the firms that can create unique experience for the consumer is new source of competitive advantage (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004) since the experiences are tough to imitate. The way a product is used and the semantic associations which a customer makes to a particular product and service is not always as thought or understood by the organizations. Roederer (2012) reported time-related dimension of consumption experience; the value co-creation perspective of Ramaswamy (2011) hints on the importance of time as a resource input by the consumer as well as the temporal length of consumption experience. If the experiences are to be classified on the temporal dimension then there will be a continuum of spontaneous/short duration experiences to lingering / long duration episodes of experiences. To better understand this aspect of experience one needs to understand the aspects of human memory and the human senses which gives us capacity to feel, make sense and remember.

Experience as in Neurosciences and Psychology

The experience is seen as an outcome of sensory feelings. The human body has five major sense; sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch. As the researches on senses and stimuli response have evolved the number of senses human body possess is debated frequently with some of the researchers claiming as much as sixteen different senses. For example say the sense of sight can be distinguished into the sense of color, sense of depth, sense of brightness etc. and sense of touch into sense of pressure, pain, temperature etc. (Pagliano, 2012); but such intricacies are beyond the scope of this study. Historically

speaking, the sense of sight and hearing were seen as superior of other senses, perhaps as these senses provide information from a distance and helps the brain in first hand assessment of the things and environment. Aristotle came up with the list of five senses with an order of superiority. Since then the sense of vision and hearing have gathered the attention of academic understanding as well as the business practices were centered around the satisfaction of these two senses. The third sense of smell has been a recent focus of retail chains and stores to add to the atmospherics of the shopping place.

Why do we need to understand links between the experience and human memory? Let's illustrate with an example of experiential products. Think of the coffee experience or weekend dinner at local restaurant, we do get a good experience we enjoy the ambience, good food and some good private time; but do we remember that experience after couple of hours when we get up in the morning, does that experience keeps us emotionally engaged for long, the answer is negative. Now think of a week long holiday tour you took with friends or family; isn't it more engaging, doesn't it makes you nostalgic. Or take an example of time spent at your graduation college; a meeting with college friend can unwind a whole lot of exciting memories. The tourism experience and the product value don't ends as soon as you are back to your usual place of residence. It is the immediate pleasure as well as the memories that you get after the trip.

The discipline of human psychology categorizes human memory into semantic and episodic memory. The semantic memory is related to our knowledge of world in terms of facts, ideas and concepts (Schwartz, 2011). We are not sure of the source from where we picked up the meanings most of the times yet we know what the things around us are. The episodic memory is associated with autobiographic memories. Our memory processes include encoding, representation and retrieval. Earlier studies established that we store information in the terms of images but soon it was realized that those images are distorted and the constructivism school of thought claims that there are well defined 'Schemas' and 'Scripts' that help in the organization of the memory (Howes, 2006; Schwartz, 2011). Violation of schemas often out to be memorable, the 'Novelty' dimension of servicescape or service quality perhaps is associated with this characteristic dimension of human memory.

The autobiographic memory operates at three levels; event specific memories, general events and lifetime periods. The autobiographic memories are organized as per the common themes that were dominant at particular phase of one's life e.g. memories from school days, college days, time when you lived in particular city etc. The link between strong emotions and memory is established, though some studies report that very intense emotion may actually result in poor details and recall of memory; but the flashbulb memories are found to be significantly accurate. Flashbulb memory is defined as highly confident personal memories of surprising events (Howes, 2006; Schwartz, 2011). The term flashbulb memories was coined by Brown & Kulik in 1977 (Brown & Kulik cited in Howes, 2006) and was associated generally with negative events happened in the past. The generalized understanding of flashbulb memories is that it involves spontaneous-surprising events (Howes, 2006; Schwartz, 2011). The element of surprise has been used by marketers in the past, surprise gifts, flash-mob etc are some examples. We want to make it specific that by flashbulb-like memories we mean the memories that disrupt the regular schema or script of the service, we refrain from including the negative emotions, and rather we are looking at the moderating/catalyzing effects of positive flashbulb events. Like celebrating the birthday/anniversary of a group member of a group tour to make the visit a memorable experience.

Another noteworthy contribution to psychology of experiencing was the concept of 'Flow' (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997). Depending upon the skill level and challenge level of the work various mental states are experienced; they range from anxiety to relaxation. A successful experience occurs when the mental state of flow is achieved. The state of flow is defined as the state when the subject is fully immersed in a feeling of energized focus, full involvement, and enjoyment in the process of the activity. The subjects in the state of arousal and control are most likely to attain the state of flow, he argues that through practice and conscious efforts one can achieve the state of flow and make his/her experiences satisfactory. Later empirical studies proved that the flow is obtained most of the times at workplace rather than at vacations.

The Augmented Reality Experiential Marketing has become popular recently; the big companies like Proctor & Gamble and Wal-Mart have already have already adopted AREM (Bulearca, & Tamarjan, 2010),

the AREM affects consumer satisfaction by enhancing the pre-purchase experience and pre-purchase value of the product (Bulearca, & Tamarjan, 2010). Some of the scholars (Tsai, 2005) see Integrated marketing as the management of holistic of holistic consumer experience, they propose strategic communications and strategic brand management to be maintained through integrated marketing communication; the idea of experiential marketing thus is a part of integrated management of consumer experience

Experience as in Hospitality and Tourism Literature

The idea of using experiential marketing for tourism can be traced back to 1980 when Krippendorff suggested that the marketing tactics used by many heritage destinations is somewhat a selling of experience (Leighton, 2007). Tourism and theme-parks were the businesses that started selling experiences ahead of other businesses, even Pine and Gilmore (1998), who gave a thrust to the idea of experiential marketing mention, “*Today the concept of selling experiences is spreading beyond theaters and theme parks*”; that much native is the concept of experiential marketing to tourism. But for long, tourism scholars have not explicitly engaged themselves into the theoretical issues involved with experiential marketing (Williams, 2006)

Experiential marketers view consumers as rational and emotional human beings who are concerned with achieving pleasurable experiences (Schmitt, 1999). We are living in a world that has overwhelming complexity and plethora of commodities and utilities. Commoditization of life sustaining goods is easy, but in the cases of services where the emotional involvement of consumers is high as compared to goods in general commoditization has always been a challenge. The end product of most of the services is the service experience co-created with the consumer. For these kinds of experiences the physical environment of the service place plays an important role; not only the consumers but the employees also experience the firm's facility (Bitner, 1992). The built environment (i.e. the manmade, physical surroundings, equipment etc.) was termed as servicescape by Bitner (1992). It's noteworthy that Bitner (1992) did not consider natural or social environment in his construct of servicescape but in tourism servicescape inclusion of the natural and social environments along with political environment is indispensable.

Walls et al. (2011) propose a holistic model explaining experience in tourism and hospitality context; it includes the four components viz. ordinary, extraordinary, cognitive and emotive which are generated and influenced by physical experience elements, human interaction elements, individual characteristics and the situational factors. Ordinary and extraordinary define the range of experiences one can have and cognitive and Emotional describe the internal response to different kind of experiences. Leighton (2007) proposed a framework for experiential marketing in the heritage tourism sector after a detailed industry analysis following the ideas as proposed by Schmitt (1999), he suggests that the firms need to identify their orientations; whether they want to have a supply focus for the benefit of customers seeking scholarship and learning, or they want to have a business that creates experience for the sake of experiential consumption and strong commercialization.

The Destination Image

The destination image has been seen as an important criterion for destination selection. With tourism's increased contribution to national GDP of many countries and increasing competition among destinations, the tourism boards/national tourism organizations are actively engaging in destination image management. Tourism academicians recognized the importance of destination image very early; Pike (2002) have provided a summary of published research that has contributed to the understanding of destination image. The destination image is classified sometimes as primary and secondary destination images. The primary destination images are formed after actual visit to the destination while the secondary image is formed from secondary information sources. A corollary can be drawn between this destination image classification and the concept of episodic and semantic memories. An organic image about a particular destination is formed by the information from various sources which may not directly be related to tourism at that place; the induced image is formed as a result of marketing communications, documentaries and films; the autonomous image is formed on the basis of past experiences and individual characteristics. The destination image is a complex construct (Gallarza et al., 2002) owing to its *complex, multiple, relativistic and dynamic* nature. It is because of its dynamic nature that it can be changed

or improved depending upon the positive or negative information about the destination.

Baloglu and McCleary, (1999) drawing upon the psychology of human memory proposed a model for destination image formation. The core underlying assumptions were the 'Image theory' which suggests that the world is a psychological or distorted representation of objective reality residing and existing in the mind of the individual (Howes, 2006). The environmental factors or atmospherics induces both the cognitive and affective images. The objective evaluation of environment refers to cognitive dimension where as the feel or the engagement of senses is responsible for affective dimensions. We have preserved most parts of the Baloglu and McCleary, (1999) destination image formation model and have proposed that strong 'flashbulb like memories' induce strong emotions and thus moderates the cognitive and affective evaluation of information inputs.

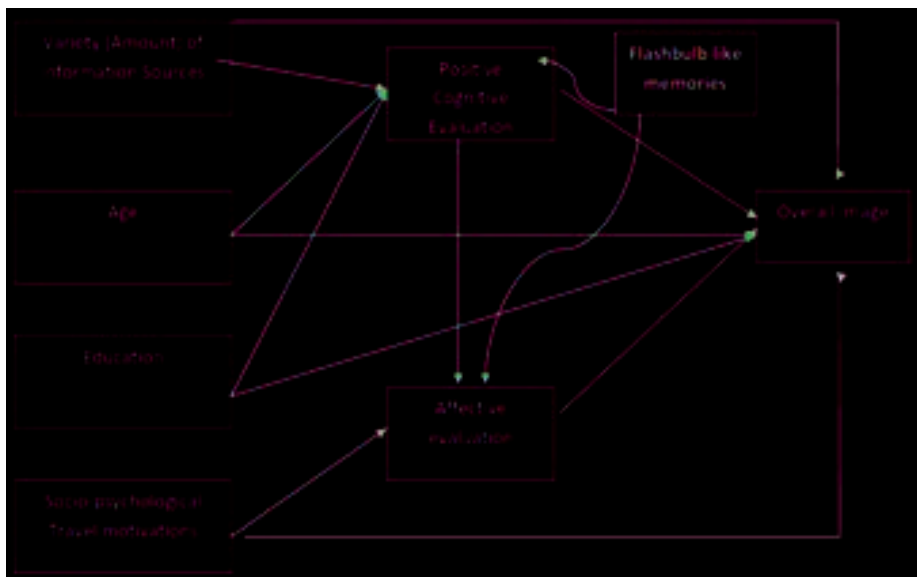


Figure 1. Conceptual model for moderating effects of “flashbulb like memories on cognitive and affective evaluation of antecedents of Destination Image

Source: adapted from Baloglu & McCleary, 1999

Conclusion

Experiential marketing is different from traditional marketing in four different ways (Schmitt 1999), it has focus on consumer experiences, treats consumption as a holistic experience, recognizes both the rational and emotional drivers of consumption, and the methodologies used for study of the situation are eclectic depending upon the objective.

An interesting 'event-experience' cycle operates in the real world; services the events are scripted that creates experience which is used to modify the events and virtual world starts with some form of scripted experience being formulated into events, though in the long run the events leads to experiences and the documented experiences are used to improve on the events.

The proposed model is an improvement over the destination image formation model proposed by Baloglu and McCleary (1999). Here in this paper we conceptualize the role played by 'flashbulb like memories' on cognitive and affective evaluation of the antecedents' of destination image. We propose a positive moderating effect of flashbulb like memories created by spontaneous-surprising events by the tourism management for the tourists.

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Product placement in Romanian music videos

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Abstract. *Product placement (PP) is used as a form of marketing communication strategy. Generally, high profile companies use this technique to increase the awareness of their products. It improves their image among consumers by inserting a product, brand or logo in a video, film, TV production or novel resulting in increasing sales. I have chosen to investigate this topic because nowadays it is a very common practice in Romania. Products are placed in all types of TV productions, but mostly in a persistent way in local music clips of well-known stars. The present paper investigates how PP is implemented in Romania, focusing on the case of music videos. The research reveals that PP had registered a growth, in the same time evolving into a new style of placement.*

Keyword: *product placement; Romanian music video.*

General considerations on product placement (PP)

In our daily life, we perceive advertising all around us: on television, on radio, billboards, magazines, buses, newspapers, on the internet; ad-space is growing by the minute. We see ads all day - long, in our life from the designer clothes that we wear to the flyers placed on our cars and in our mailboxes. But the trend in advertising is to be less advertorial. The idea is to cut the “in-your-face ads” – where the product is the star, for a less aggressive approach - where the product is in the background. These products are visible within the scene, but the product has to fit into, not take over it, - making it more realistic. The television networks are going for this realistic product placement trend, mostly because they know that the audience appreciates to watch a show without the traditional ads from time to time. Another factor that leads to the development of placement is that viewers tend to avoid advertising breaks, increasing - the costs

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of traditional instruments, generated by promotion and by the fierce competition in the market (Balaure, 2003).

For a company it is not enough anymore to provide the right product at the right place to generate sales and get profit. The offer must be communicated to the right segment of buyers for the product to awaken needs and desires. This can create a favorable image of the product and incite a continuous and regular buying (Balaure, 2003).

Product placement can be part of the marketing mix due to the fact that the promotion and communication policies are an essential component of a company marketing communication strategy. Through this approach, advertising is passing on to consumers all the information about the product and the company; in return, together with several other components of the promotion mix (-Balaure, 2003).

Karrh (1998) defines product placement as “introducing free branded products or the elements identifying a mark through visual or auditory means in the mass media programs.” Product placement current form emerged in the 80s of last century.

The legal TV regulation refers to *brand entertainment* as product integration, where the product placement has to share its advertising space with the 30-seconds traditional advertising spot. Both of them have the same purpose and now due to today’s reality based television shows they are used together as a combination (Neer, n.d).

Thomas (2011) names - brand placement – “hybrid advertising”, due to the fact that in the context of entertainment, elements of advertising can be noticed in its structure. He talks about several risks, for example: if a placement is repeated very often in an ad, this can cause irritation among the consumers and generate a negative attitude towards the brand. According to his opinion, the effectiveness of a placement should be measured through: reach, impact and frequency.

In the case of PP in music videos, this type of advertising uses the emotional connection that exists between the costumers and an artist or a band. This is the perfect connection that will bring profit and fidelity for a long period of time. Because, brands want fans and their loyalty and music artists have the perfect number of fans that will do anything for them and more than that, they will buy all that is related to their music idols (Sheehan, 2013).

But, as perfect as this relationship is, at the same time it can become a marketing plan tragedy. By transforming a customer into a “fan”, a brand has to make sure not to destroy the new created emotional connection. One bad step and a disappointed fan can be the brand’s worst advertising, by telling everyone her/his had experience every time she/he is reminded of it in real life and mostly online – on social networks (Pinzaru, Săvulescu, & Mitan, 2013).

PP in Romania music video

On the Romanian market, the true growth of product placement began after the first national soap operas appeared. The PP - is permitted by the Broadcasting Act and can be made for anything except cigarettes and alcohol (Biszok, 2014).

According to the legislation product placement “means any form of audiovisual commercial communication consisting of the inclusion of a product, service or brand or in reference to that, featured within a program, in return for payment or for similar considerations.” The same code says that viewers should be warned about product placement. According to the Broadcasting code (n.d.), product placement has to be signaled at the beginning and end of the program with the white on black background symbol - PP and to resume after each commercial break.

According to the Universal McCann planning director, Victor Croitoru, product placement first started 12 years ago with the first Big Brother production, and began to grow 6 years ago. This boost was due to the local production developed by Pro TV and Intact groups. But it is very low compared to the total TV market and it depends on the low or on the

high interest of those productions advertisers. According to him, Coca-Cola was among the first companies to make such projects. In addition to the usual product placement, Coca-Cola had a sofa in the shape of their traditional red veil, set in the Big Brother scenery. (Biszok, 2014)

PP is common in TV programs, and in recent years has made its way ever more in music videos of Romanian stars. Product placement in videos is a way to escape from advertising slots, and the association between a brand and a celebrity is built very quickly, faster than through advertising spots. It is very important that the public of the music video match the target group of the brand. If in advertising the company who paid for that advertisement is clearly known, in the case of placement this is not a well defined distinction. The product is integrated into the plot, it is naturally used and brand identification is more difficult. For this reason placement was more than once confused with subliminal advertising (Balaure, 2003).

The celebrity endorsement type is defined by Business Dictionary (n.d.) as a “form of brand or advertising campaign that involves a well known person using their fame to help promote a product or service. Manufacturers of perfumes and clothing are some of the most common business users of classic celebrity endorsement techniques, such as television ads and launch event appearances, in the marketing of their products.”

Some authors notice that around 20% of television commercials feature celebrities with the majority being for soft drinks and athletic shoes. This type of contracts can have a favorable impact on a company stock. They point out various advantages (build brand equity, help people remember ads, make people believe the product contributes to superstar status, stand out) and disadvantages (image change, celebrities become overexposed, celebrities can overshadow brands) for this celebrity endorsement strategy (*The Advantages and Disadvantages of Celebrity Endorsements*, n.d.).

In Romania, at the beginning of this year the National Audiovisual Council (NAC) sanctioned celebrity product placement from Andra's video - „Inevitabil va fi bine” and from the band Vunk - “Aşa, şii!” for the endorsement of Garnier hair dye, Free Way Cola drink, La festa soluble coffe, Myke's Pub, MedLife, Jaz Music Barr and Heineken. According

to Petre Barbu, NAC decided to notify broadcasters MTV, Kiss TV and Music Channel on violation of the audiovisual law art. 31. Paragraphs 4 and 5 on product placement in audiovisual programs by broadcasting video of such artists as Andra and Vunk (Petre, 2014).

This is the only sanction for a product placement in music video registered on the NAC official site. Most of the sanctions regarding music videos are about the messages of their lyrics and the storyline, such as “Toate-s la fel”, Parazitii’s single.

Artists are making tracks under command for commercial purposes. This practice is recent and represents the insertion of an advertisement in lyrics to promote a brand. One of the best known examples of this type - is the song “A Lu` Mamaia!”, Delia’s and Speak’s single, that has the purpose of promoting the Black Sea shore area. The lyrics include many elements which are related to promoting it: carnival type events or print name of the campaign in the specific Mamaia Style. Even Connect-R with Corina are advertising this summer the ice cream Corso in the song “Of Corso” and Mandinga is advertising a beer brand in the song “Viva La Fiesta” (*Ce spun ascultatorii de muzica despre reclama in clipuri*, 2014).

According to MediaFax, a study shows that fans are much less reluctant to advertising messages than one might think. Only 14% are bothered by advertising in videos that are distributed online, on Facebook or Youtube. 1 out of 3 teens think it’s good for artists to promote brands. Nearly half appreciates the brands that support their favorite artist. The categories perceived as being closest to the artists are music and music accessories (56% considered normal advertising messages on this topic), fashion and clothing accessories (46%) free time, pubs, restaurants (43%) and gadgets (37%). The study shows that other categories such as automotive, telecom, food or drinks can be capitalized on online communication such as social platforms of the stars (Micu, 2014).

In Romania, product placement in music clips is one of the most influential type of advertising. As it was shown from the recent study that was conducted by ThinkDigital and Hit Yourself Consulting, Romanian fans are not disturbed by the heavy product placement. It is considered

as a way to get close and personal with their favorite artists by using and buying the brand that appears in music videos.

Methodology of the research

Objectives

Q1: Is there any difference between the brand attitudes and the artist attitudes in music videos? – Could this affect the ethics of product placement?

Q2: Does there exist a difference between how a brand image is portrayed in music videos compared to ad?

Q3: How many brands are placed, on average, in a music video and for how long are they exposed to the public?

Content analysis

Content analysis is a method used to describe and analyze the content of communication. I have chosen this research method because: it is objective and systematic, the documents are analyzed on a clearly stated rules and then applied in a consistent manner, it has a quantitative nature as it aims to identify and count of the size of the text or some specific characteristics and it aims to achieve some detailed explanations on a particular topic of interest.

I conducted the research on, three Romanian music videos: a successful product placement, an over-the-board placement and a poor product placement: the Andra ft. Marius Moga– “*Atâta timp cât mă iubești*”; Connect-R – “*Vara nu dorm*” and Delia & Speak – “*A lu’Mamaia!*”.

These music videos illustrate what makes a product placement successful and what are the risks and difficulties to be overcome. The clips also show the simple product placement type - that the product is seen only for a little time. The selected music clips are one of the most discussed clips in the product placement industry, mostly due to the fact that they created a big buzz amongst consumers and critics.

The main analysis was done through personally watching a couple of times the music videos listed above just to be able to spot out the product placements that appear in the clips. I realize this observation after:

- Reading the information posted about every specific clip and about the product are placed in them, watching the music videos just to verify and identify the placements mention in the online articles;
- Then watching them again, but this time stopping when a product appear and note down the number of products that are shown and the number of time they are seen;
- And watching for the last time the entire music video to be able to observe the attitudes of the product in the specific clips.

Analysis of music videos for product placement

The music videos analyzed show how product placement is used in this clips and highlights the different types of product placement. The best types of placement, risks and benefits are explained for each artist investigated. I focused on the different ways the product was placed in a music video, how it could be successful or unsuccessful and how they affect the viewer. By highlighting the negative and the positive product placement in these clips, I show how a good placement could generate profit.

To be able to increase awareness and to promote brands, communication experts resort to subtle strategies. When viewing music videos that make them feel good, people let their guard down and alongside the message of the song, in their mind enters any information from the commercial, viewers retain signs and graphic symbols though they are exposed for only a few seconds (Cosmescu, 2013).

Micro-research on Celebrity Endorsement

For the beginning I start by analyzing an example of heavy product placement is Andra's music video ft. Marius Moga – "*Atâta timp cât mă iubști*".



Figure 1. Andra ft. Marius Moga – Atâta timp cât mă iubești – heavy product placement

The music video is directed by Iulian Moga - Marius Moga's brother and the usual person that has done music videos for many of today's Romanian artists. The clip was viewed on YouTube by over 2.301.019 people (MediaProMusic, 2013).

The music video was filmed in five locations: in a house near the Carol Park, at the Beauty District Salons, at the La Brasserie bar and finally at the Fabrica club. The story of the video is seen through the eyes of her lover that captures the moments from a special day: the singer's birthday. From the time she wakes up until the end of the day the artist receives a number of gifts - these representing the product placements.

Table 1. Andra ft. Marius Moga – Atâta timp cât mă iubești. Product placement in the clip

Brands	Time of appearance	Duration	How many times?
Garnier	0:32/0:36/1:30	2's/4's/2's	3
Range Rover	1:03	8's	1
LG G Pad 8.3 tablet	2:21/2:24/2:27/3:17	1's/2's/3's/1's	4
Freeway Orange	2:54/3:04/3:06	2's/1's/2's/	3
DANA	3:17	1's	1

The first product from the five brands used that was placed at the beginning of the clip is the Garnier hair dye. The placement was noticed about three times along the way making the PP a “in your face” type. The product presence is due to the fact that the singer is the new ambassador and the new image of Garnier Color Naturals and Garnier Essentials brands (Teodorescu, 2010). The second product that is featured in the clip is a Range Rover car, which she received in reality as a present from her husband back in 2011 (Deaconu, 2011). The other products that were placed as gifts in the music video are from “Dana” clothes brand, a LG G Pad 8.3 tablet that she gave away to the winner of the contest from her official Facebook (2013) page and that we can observe four times in the last part of the clip. The last but not the least product placement that appears in the music video is the Freeway Orange juice a product from Lidl portfolio used three times, for which the singer and her husband have an image contract (“*Andra și Cătălin Măruță gătesc pentru Lid*”, 2013).

Along side the six number of products are also placed a large number of local artist like Ami, Nicole Cherry, Matteo, Alina Eremia, Dorian Popa, Sorin and Mihai from Akcent, Corina, Piticu from Simplu, Pepe, Red Blonde, Alb Negru, Robert Reamzy, Miky, Adela Popescu and Andreea Banica, two of the artist best friends (*Andra a filmat videoclipul piesei “Atâta timp cât mă iubești”*, 2013). This is a common image movement among Romanian artists.

It is clear that the “in your face” placement is only for the brands that the artist has a direct connection. They represent paid product placements, appearing more than once and having the focus on them although the brands aren’t related to the story of the clip.

Another aggressive product placement example is the music video of Connect-R – Vara nu dorm.



Figure 2. Connect-R – Vara nu dorm. In your face product placement

The video was directed two years ago by Ciprian Florea and was viewed over 13.753.040 times in the YouTube channel (Connect-R/Rappin'On, 2012). The 3:29 time length clip was released in 2012 at the Romanian Music Awards.

In the clip four product placement can be noticed, two of them being heavily shown more than others. The Wrangler Jeep used in the music video, is one from the Off-road Dobrogea club, for which the script of the clip was specially changed just to be used for a longer time in the scenes – five times with the longest appearance of 7's (Forte, 2012). This was an unpaid product placement. Another product placement was for the Rapping'On Production, the artists own music house production that we see five times. The ROP logo appeared on white t-shirts worn by the artist and a group of children.

Table 2. Connect-R – Vara nu dorm. Product Placement in the clip

Brands	Time of appearance	Duration	How many times?
Off-road Jeep	0:30/0:38/0:47/1:11/3:15	7's/3's/3's/1's/2's	5
ROP	0:42/0:46/1:05/1:43/1:51	1's/1's/1's/3's/1's	5
Pepsi	0:50/2:27/2:34	1's/1's/3's	3
Puma	1:08/1:21/1:40/1:58/2:06	1's/1's/1's/2's/2's	5

The other two products used in the clips are the well-known Pepsi and Puma brands. For big brands like those two the approached is a very aggressive one. The artist is dressed only by Puma and drinks only Pepsi in the music video.

For the last analyses of Romanian product placement in music video, we have chosen the latest clip signed by Delia and Speak – *A lu’Mamaia!* – the song with a neutral single product placement was especially made to promote *Mamaia Area*, this summer.



Figure 3. Delia & Speak – *A lu’Mamaia!* Single product placement

The video is made by Evil Twin Studios, directed by Spike, with Tudor Panduru PDO and is a co-production of HaHaHa and Music Cat Production. The 3:34 time length clip represents the Anthem of *Mamaia Area* in 2014. The music video was released this month and viewed by 2.282.480 times on the YouTube channel (Cat Music, 2014).

Table 3. Delia & Speak – *A lu’Mamaia!* Product placement in the clip

Brands	Time of appearance	Duration	How many times?
Heineken	2:29/2:32	1’s/1’s	2

Of course, due to the fact that it was ordered by the Local administration of Constanța, the entire music video is an advertising of the *Mamaia Area*, done for attracting more tourists. But even so, a product from a well

known beer brand found a place at the end of the music video. This was a perfect placement, being noticed two times only if one is very attentive to the images and knows the beer brand.

The Heineken brand was discreetly placed in the music video due to the fact that the company implemented in Constanța the project “Heineken for Communities” a financing action for civic project (Perhaita, 2014).

As in the “Atâta timp cât mă iubești” clip, the presence of other artists and popular people can be seen. The mayor of Constanța - Radu Mazăre, also appears, as well as the well-known music artist Cabron (“*Delia a lansat clipul pentru “A lu’ Mamaia”! Miercuri dimineață vine la radio, ne povestește de clip și cântă LIVE piesa la Alarma ProFM!*”, 2014).

After the concept of celebrity and advertising in Romanian were discussed a couple of question appeared regarding the type of advertising:

Q1: Is there a popular brand that is an old and familiar contractor among Romanian celebrities?

Q2: Is there a tendency of migratory artists, endorsing different brands of similar market area?

In order to find an adequate answer for the questions mention above, and to observe the association of a music artist with a particular product, I have chosen to analyze a number of 20 well known Romanian artists and the brands they have endorsed in their career.

The artists selected are some of the most popular music celebrities in Romania, as well as a couple of artists who were popular in the 90’s – being seen as a representative of an old generation.

I’ve conducted a research by:

- navigating the internet for each artist selected, with the purpose of finding official connections between them and a brand;
- noting down every brand for which an artist did an endorsement.

Because the idea of celebrity endorsement is not well considered by the Romanian press, I've faced hard time obtaining exact information. The lack of an official data base regarding this type of information may have affected my findings; the accuracy of the information is hard to be verified.

Table 4. Romanian Celebrity Endorsement

Celebrity	Brand
Alex Velea	Vodafone/Ballantine
Smiley	Pepsi/Cosmote/Vodafone/Romtelecom
Puya	Vodafon/Lay's/
Andra	Garnier/Lidl/Banca Transilvania
Corina	Pepsi/Corso
Connect-R	Corso/COOL/KFC
Antonia	Pepsi/Avon/Benvenuti
Marius Moga	Vodafone/Tocmai.ro/Pepsi/Phillips/Ford
Loredana Groza	Dero/Romtelecom/Avon
Delia	Chio/Dacia Logan/KFC
Ștefan Bănică Jr.	Gillette/Delma/Dero/Carrefour
CRBL	Vodafon/(MEGA)
Chello	Bergenbier
Inna	Pepsi
Holograf	Millennium Bank/ Coca-Cola
Aylin	Carla Szabo/Murmur
Horia Brenciu	UPC
Aurelian Temișan	Lidl/Licurici
Adela Popescu	Oral B/C-THRU/Philips VisaPure/Nivea Deo
Andreea Bănică	Aquatiqa/Dacia Logan

After conducting the analyses I've noticed that the telecommunication company "Vodafone" is one of the brands that have in their portfolio six collaborations with artists, such as: Alex Velea, Smiley, CRBL, Marius Moga and Puya. Not being shy in placing not just one artist but three in one ad (- Cătălin Dobre, 2009). At the same time, Pepsi has collaborations with five artists from the list above: Antonia, Corina, Inna, Smiley and Marius Moga and made ad's in which two artists appear simultaneously. (Pepsi Romania, 2013).

I've noticed that Smiley, is one of the artists who is not shy in changing the brands for which he endorses the product but, he remains in the same area – telecommunication. He is one of the celebrities that had collaborations in his career with brands like “Vodafone”, “Cosmote” and “Romtelecom”.

But I can not say that Smiley - is the only migrating artist from the list. The majority of them, from what I could find, have more than one collaboration with a brand. For example, the widest collaboration portfolio is owned by Marius Moga. He has endorsed along the way products for telecommunication brand, online shopping sites, soda company, automobile brand and electronics company.

From these analyses I can see that on the Romanian market the celebrity endorsement type is a used advertising tool by famous brands and not that well known brands. Using celebrities to maintain, attracted and to appeal to a large number of costumers.

Analysis of PP from 2011 – 2014

Romanian product placement is a new type of advertising that got the eye of national artist. After the huge impact of PP from international stars such as Lady Gaga that changed the customer's behavior, the others artists started to implement their own version of the PP strategy in their music videos.

For my second analyses I will observe the growth of the PP in Romania. In order to do this, I will continue with the qualitative approach. I have chosen a number of five well known Romanian artist and their official videos from the last year (2014). The videos were chosen after the number of visualizations by the public on the artists official YouTube pages.

The analysis was done by:

- accessing the online media for information's regarding every clip from different year;
- at the same time, I did a background research of every artist on the time lapse chosen to analyze;

- to observe the product placement, I've watched all 20 clips and noted on table 5 the number of products placed, the frequency and the duration.

In order for to observe a growth in the utilizations of advertising and how it has changed by transforming itself and adding new meaning with the passing of time. Because I am focusing on the different ways that the PP is used, I have chosen these specific artists.

Research Questions:

Q1. Is there a growth in number for product placements in music videos?

Q2. Does there exist a difference between how PP was used in earlier videos and how it is used today?

Q3. Can we observe a new type of method that arises from the usage of pp?

Table 5. number of products placed, the frequency and the duration

	2014	2013	2012	2011
Smiley	0	3	3	0
	Nemuritorii	Criminal	Dead men walking	Dream girl
Alex Velea	Din vina ta	E marfa tare	Minim doi	One shot
	0	4	0	0
Corina	Autobronzant	Pernele moi	A ta	No sleepin'
	4	2	3	1
Antonia	White horses	Hurricane	Jamaica	Marionette
	0	5	1	0
CRBL	Ușor, ușor	România nu-i jucăria ta	Petre	Kboom
	2	1	0	1

Smiley

He is one of the most successful pop artists, producers and entertainers from the Romanian music industry. From 2009, he is the founder of

the record label HaHaHa Production producing music for many artists: Radio Killer, Alex Velea, Mihai Ristea, Soré, Don Baxter, Cabron, Jazzy Jo, Giulia, Pacha Man, Speak, Brigh, CRBL, Puya, Delia, Wanda, Zero, Elena Gheorghe, Anda Adam, Andreea Bănică, Loredana, Andra, Corina, Cream and Emanuel (Facebook, n.d).

The song “Dream girl” was released in 2011 and brought the artist the Best male award at RMA and was number one song for several weeks in Romania. It was viewed by over 6,860,885 people on his official YouTube channel (HaHaHa Production, 2011). In the 3:32 music video, no product is placed.

But in 2012 and 2013 in the music videos “Dead man walking” and “Criminal” I noticed three product placements in each clip. The “Dead man walking” music video was viewed by over 1,690,345 people on the CAT Music YouTube Channel (Cat Music, 2012). In this 4:23 minute clip, products from Pepsi, HaHaHa Production (the artist personal label house) and Supremebeing (jacket) are placed. The products appear more than once in the clip. At the same time, I noticed the familiar faces of other Romanian artists (Alex Velea, Radio Killer, Dox Baxter, Boier Bibescu, Mihai Ristea, Sore, Speakone and Brighi).

“Criminal” music video, was viewed by over 4,945,752 people (HaHaHa Production, 2013), Pepsi alongside Aqua Carpatica and Jacobs are placed. The type of placement is the same as in the precedent year, Pepsi appears more than once in the 3:58 clip.

But this year, as I mention in the first part, a new type of advertising appeared in Romania – the order type of song. “Nemuritorii” is an example of an order song that was made for the “Selfie” movie soundtrack in which the artist is playing. The 4:02 clip that was viewed by over 1,424,986 and the entire clip is based around the movie story line.

Alex Velea

Is a complex artist with good vocal abilities, dynamic sound, dancing and acting skills, that released in 2006 his first album “Yamasha” (Facebook,

n.d.). Although he is a well known artist, in the music videos of 2011 (One Shot), 2012 (Minim doi) and 2014 (Din vina ta) there is no trace of product placement. But the music video “E marfa tare” released in 2013 and viewed by over 5, 827,243 on the YouTube channel (HaHaHa Production, 2013), has a number of four product placements. Pepsi, Mini Cooper, Gusto, and BLVO appear more than once, transforming the clip in a heavy product placement type. Just like Smiley, Alex Velea is another musician that has well known artists popping up in the clip (Smiley, Mihai Ristea, Sore, Jazzy Jo, Giulia, Boier Bibescu, DJ CellBlock, Cabron, Speak and Pacha Man).

Corina

The birth of another pop - Corina, dance and R&B singer was in 2004 with the debut album produced by Marius Moga “Noi Doi”. In 2011 her song “No Sleepin” was number eight on the Romanian “Top 100” and was viewed by over 1,314,397 times on the Ego Italy YouTube channel (Ego Italy, 2011). Although the music clip has a large number of participants and the action does not take place in a single place, I observed only a single product that was placed – the Polaroid camera. This was the beginning of a longtime relationship between the artist and PP.

It was followed by two number three song “A ta” in 2012 and “Pernele moi” in 2013. With a number of placement’s ranking between three and two. With placements from well known brands like Chio, Puma and Facebook, the first clip was viewed for only 925,298 times on YouTube (Ego Italy, 2012). In comparison with the 2,454,445 views that “Pernele moi” music video obtained. Having only two big brands Pepsi and Puma but with more than one placement in the 3:39 time length clip.

Her latest music video “Autobronzant” has been viewed already by over 1,568,430 times on YouTube (RotonMusicTv, 2014). With four product placements of brand like Pepsi, Channel Islands surfboards, Corina Bud clothes and Noon Copenhagen watches in only 3:12. This is just confirming the bond between the artist and PP along the years, becoming more prominent.

Antonia

The R'n'B and soul artist ranked number eight with her 2011 song "Marionette". On YouTube the 4:21 minutes long music video that has no product placement was viewed over 1,213,426 times (Roster Music, 2011).

The first product was placed in her 2012 music video "Jameia" and it featured the Samsung tablet. The song ranked number five in the Romanian charts, being viewed online over 5,197,922 times (ThisIsAntonia, 2012). It was followed by the "Hurricane" music video in 2013, that had PP for products like Avon, Pepsi, Adevarul Books, Apple and Jack Daniel's Tennessee Whiskey. The song was recorded with another well known Romanian artist, Puya, ranked 23 in Top 100.

Although the 2013 music video had five product placements, this year clip for the "White horses" has not even, one product place in the background. This being a dramatic change.

CRBL

He is a singular artist, being a singer, choreographer, dancer, actor, producer and music director. His music videos have, as his songs, different meanings. From the single PP (Nike) for the song "Kboom" in 2011 that was viewed over 1,283,023 time on YouTube (Cat Music, 2011) to the double PP for his latest song "Ușor, ușor" - Can-am Spyder and Rubik cub seen over 953,871 times on YouTube (Cat Music, 2014) – CRBL is getting comfortable with the Romanian placement strategy.

With clips filmed in places that have a certain meaning for the artist, as "Kboom" in his home town – Pitesti, CRBL is known to do everything for a reason. For example, the 2012 manifesto song "Romania nu-i jucăria ta" viewed over 230,556 on YouTube (Cat Music, 2013) and that sends a strong message to all Romanians had products such as: rugby club, Stejarul Buzau and Kendama.

Findings

We observe that every artist has had at least a product in his/her music video along the years. In 2011, as I've noticed in my second analyses, the placing of products was at the beginning and artists were shy in using this type of strategy. The placement was none or just one and hard to be notice by viewers in 1 second appearance in a 4 minute clip.

In just one year the PP can be observed at three of my five artists. And by 2013, the placement was at its peak, with examples of 6 product placements appearing more than once in a single clip of some Romanian artist. 2013 has been the PP year in Romania music videos, product popping up for more than 1 second.

This year the ordered songs appears in the Romanian music industry with advertising clip, as the new music videos. The PP frequency registered a low usage in comparison with earlier years. But of course, as I have mentioned before, there are faithful artist with music videos containing at least 1 product placement. Corina, can be seen as one of them with a grow of product placement, from just one placement in 2011 to four placements in 2014.

At the same time, I've noticed a well known brand always present in music videos from the start till now. That is the big soda brand that still has the grip on the PP advertising strategy, appearing more than once and having more that 1 second of fame.

Regarding my third research question, we are witnessing a new placement that has grown alongside PP - the celebrity placement. I did not just observe the products that are placed in a clip but, at the same time, a huge number of other artists that are popping in an alert way. Having artists like Smiley, Alex Velea and CRBL, that want to show their viewers a big, happy gang that are behind them every time.

Conclusion

In the successful product placement of music videos such as Delia & Speak – A lu'Mamaia!, the placement was a simple one, that recreated a feeling of reality when we saw the Heineken logo somewhere in the background of the scene. Because they were not the main focus of the scenes and they could be observed just for a couple of seconds the product placement was a successful one that brought benefits to the company image and to the sales of the product.

The unsuccessful product placement examples, are the ones that look more as an advertising clip for the products from clips such as Andra's – Atata vreme cat te iubesc. The excessive number of placements in a music video can create a negative response from viewers because it looks more like they are forced to buy the product.

In the case of various product placements such as in Connect-R – Varanu dorm, the mix of placement that appears around the clip can be a successful one but at the same time can have a low rating on sales for a specific product; it depends on the actual placement. In this case, there were financial and legal reasons to use those products, and the majority of placements that were made, were in fact successful.

The research questions show that there is a difference between the product placement and the artist. Because when it comes to bad placement, or forced product placement, sometimes the attitude had nothing to do with the story of the music videos.

When it comes to the number of brands that are used in a music video, in the case of Romanian clips, that number varies from five to four, only in the neutral product placement case, there was just a product. The main products appear two or three times in a music video, transforming the placement in an aggressive – in your face type.

Another characteristic of the Romanian music video is the well used trend of having all the artist of a specific music house production in the same

clip. This is very clear that they want their production to become an idol for the listeners that transmits the image of a happy family to their fans.

Even the Romanian videos have a global audience with a huge number of consumers touched by it. Following the marketing plan of low cost and the credible message supported by celebrities that are often considered true role models we cannot questioned the effectiveness of product placement. But we should not forget that product placement is a method of promoting the today marketing area and in Romania it is used as hard and “in-your-face” way as possible.

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