

PROMOTION AS A FORM OF COMMUNICATION OF THE MARKETING STRATEGY

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ABSTRACT

Permanent communication between bidders and consumers, who are usually spatially and temporarily separated, is a necessity, because prompt and correct information stimulates demand, directs it towards certain products and influences rational consumption, causes changes in the mentalities and attitudes of potential buyers, which will be reflected in the increase in the volume of sold goods and implicitly of the profit, as the sole purpose of the producer. The marketing communication system is the general framework in which promotion takes the form of the promotional mix, based on the four promotional tools: advertising, personal sales, promotion sales and public relations, aimed at presenting the organization, its products and services, at raising awareness of potential customers, and of course, at increasing sales to get more profit.

KEYWORDS: promotion, communication, organization, marketing strategy

1. Introduction

Communication is at the center of everything the organization does and is present in all its activities. *In a broad sense*, communication targets all the variables of the marketing mix together with all the business activities (Delozier, 1976, p. 32). *In a narrow sense*, marketing communication is considered to be a promotional activity related to personal and mass sale, which includes publicity, advertisements, and sales promotion (McCarthy & Perreault, 1994, p. 13).

For Ph. Kotler, the effective communication of the organization depends on how it solves the following issues:

whether to communicate or not, and how much to spend for communication.

The main communication activity of the company is *the promotional mix* – the marketing communications program – which consists of the “specific combination of advertising tools, personal sales, sales promotion and public relations used to fulfill its marketing and advertising objectives”. Nowadays, when both the complexity of the offers and of the bidders, as well as the volume and the structure of the need grow at an alert pace, it is very important for the producer to communicate to potential customers the necessary data so that they know on the one hand the benefits

the producers offer and, on the other hand, to receive their reactions, which are sources of information for future reference.

As a form of communication used to inform, convince or remind the public about the goods, services, image, and community involvement of a person or organization, promotion often has a decisive role in achieving the set goals. Traditionally, the promotion was aimed at attracting new customers. Nowadays it is equally important, if not even more important, to remind customers of the benefits of the sold products as compared to those of the competitors and to convince them of this. Therefore, modern promotion will stimulate, develop and direct the needs of consumers.

Today, nobody questions the need of promoting products, a fact reflected in the structure of the marketing mix, whose most important variable is promotion is (one of the four classical elements). The more flexible and innovative the promotional activity, the greater its impact on a market saturated with advertising.

Hence, in a broad sense, promotion is synonymous with “business dynamics” and designates all research that can drive sales growth. *The Anglo-Saxon term “promotion” designates the broad meaning of promotion, which is one of the four components of the marketing mix (“product”, “price”, “place”, “promotion”).*

2. Promotion – Means of Informing and Attracting Potential Customers

In a narrow sense, promotion is the expression of the specific techniques whose common characters are presented below and which distinguish it from advertising.

Promotion is considered the set of marketing techniques or practices, marketing action, form of communication, aiming at overcoming a sales level by capturing the attention and by attracting potential buyers, through points of sale, information, belief, training and maintaining a customer interested in the product and the manufacturing company.

The essential features of promotion are:

- the direct, immediate, concrete character;
- the presence of an advantage, addition, supplement, etc;
- the ephemeral character;
- the exceptional and unusual character;
- its connection with a defined product;
- its origin (manufacturer, distributor, professional organization) and its various targets (consumers);
- its link to the marketing mix as a whole.

The essence of these attributes can be traced back to Y. Castagnol’s work, which defines promotion as *“a marketing practice consisting of the temporary addition of value to the product or service, which gives a specific advantage to the buyers targeted by a precise and measurable objective”* (Castagnol, p. 1972).

In modern terms, promotion is a complex concept because:

- it is a form of communication that focuses on the promotional mix with a wider sphere than advertising;
- it aims at an immediate and direct change of demand (acceleration, growth, regulation);
- it targets an immediate change in the behavior of the client, distributor, etc.;
- it seeks a positive and temporary change in consumer supply, terms of intervention, distributors, etc;
- the effect of promotion is direct, when it addresses directly to consumers and indirectly to intermediaries.

If we take into account the way promotions are conducted, we distinguish:

- promotional actions performed through the media (e.g. advertising);
- promotional actions at the point of sale (e.g. direct promotion).

Furthermore, if we consider the initiator of promotional activities, we can distinguish:

- active promotion – when the manufacturer is the one who assumes

the responsibility for promotion, which they directly exert on final consumers, in order to create and stimulate the preference for their products;

- passive promotion – when the distributor, the intermediary takes responsibility for the methods and techniques that they use for promotion.

The role of promotion lies in the complex content of the concept of promotion, which reveals the fact that the general aim is to influence the behavior of people so as to increase the volume of sales of the goods of the respective producer. That is why promotion carries out a series of economic and social functions that highlight its usefulness, such as:

- providing information to both the buyer and the seller;
- neutralizing unfavorable information that spreads mainly through rumors;
- stimulating demand, which is the immediate direct goal;
- mitigating demand fluctuations, especially for seasonal products;
- product differentiation, especially of brands;
- recalling the benefits of products to loyal consumers;
- counteracting competitors;
- influencing decision-makers at government level;
- influencing public behavior;
- forming an image;
- justifying the prices of goods and services;
- raising public awareness of new products and services created.

The manager is able to define the promotional goals each time and to determine the promotional techniques that will be used to achieve the proposed goals.

Achieving the established goals can only be done if an appropriate strategy in the promotional field is developed in the context of the marketing strategy.

There are two types of promotional strategies:

- the push strategy – aims at passing the product through distribution channels, forcing the dealer to find solutions to sell the product faster. It is mainly used for industrial goods, with the promotional effort especially supported by the distributor, towards which the manufacturer pushes their goods. The producer uses predominantly personal sales and commercial promotion, while the intermediary employs advertising, sales promotion, personal sale.
- the attraction strategy – directly targets the end consumer who needs to be attracted, causing them to make the purchase. It is used predominantly for consumer goods, for which advertising is widely used. If the product is sold, consumers will demand the product through the distribution channel, who will ask the manufacturer, and in this way consumer demand attracts the product to the distribution channels.

3. The Promotional Mix

The promotional mix is represented by the combination of the methods and techniques used in the promotion and coordination of activities in order to achieve the proposed marketing objectives, in conditions of great efficiency.

E. Hill and T. O'Sullivan structure these promotional activities in the form of a pyramid based on public relations, with personal sales at the top. There is a close interdependence between the two within the promotional strategy.

3.1. Promotion Sales

Promotion sales are intended to increase the speed or volume of sales, with a faster and stronger reaction from consumers because:

- it captures the consumer's attention with clear and precise information;

- it generates interest and emotions, providing convincing elements;
- it allows access to the market for products for which other forms of promotion (e.g. cigarettes) are not allowed.

Promotion sales have gained a lot of momentum lately also due to their advantages – attracting customers by offering something, maintaining loyalty, creating interest, attracting intermediaries, short-term effectiveness, flexibility.

Promotion sales also have some inconveniences – their effects are temporary, continuity sometimes lacks.

The choice of promotion sales tools is of great importance, all the more so as their range has been greatly diversified. The most commonly used are: test samples, promotional gifts, fidelity prizes, contests, games, raffle games, lotteries, low price offers, coupons, etc.

The marketing specialist is the one who will conceive the whole action, developing a program that will allow correlation between the use of the most efficient tools in time and space.

3.2. Public Relations

Public relations represent a set of activities used to create, maintain, and influence a favorable activity for the organization. According to the UK Institute of Public Relation, they are “*a deliberate, planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain a mutual understanding between the organization and its public*” (Hill & O’Sullivan, 1998).

This form of promotion is informative, and is actually a personalized tailored communication with a unique and credible message. It carries information through: spokespersons, press conferences, advertising materials, special events associated with sponsorship involvement, donations.

The disadvantages of using public relations are that the life of the message is limited, and they are not controllable.

Only a part of public relations is directly related to sales that generate advertising and are reflected in: press relations, company communications, support for noble causes, sponsorships, public services.

3.3. Personal Sales

As part of the marketing mix, many businesses attach a leading role to the salesperson through which the personal sale is carried out, which is based on direct interpersonal communication and enables direct feed-back.

Personal sales offer specific motivations which the other elements of the marketing mix cannot offer specifically. It is complementary to advertising, but its relative importance depends on the nature of the product and the behavior of the consumer.

Generally, personal sales are the most expensive method of contacting the potential customer, but it leads to a large number of customers because salespeople interact face to face with the potential customers, forwarding them useful information. Customers can see the product, try it and find its advantages directly.

Support, i.e. support for sales force, overlaps with human resources management and aims at: recruiting, preparing, remunerating, motivating and evaluating the activity of commercial agents.

Personal sales are the promotional form that can be best quantified using statistical data.

3.4. Publicity

As the main form of promotion, both quantitatively and qualitatively – through the impact achieved – publicity continues to be confused with communication, promotion or advertising. Publicity is that form of promotion represented by a complex of activities designed to make products or services known or appreciated by consumers/users, or to form favorable attitudes towards an idea, action, theory, etc.

Briefly, the American Marketing Association (AMA) defines advertising as “any non-personal paid form for the presentation and promotion of ideas, goods and services by an identified sponsor”. Consequently, advertising is exclusively commercial, representing a commercial transaction, and the publicity message, whether visual, verbal or written, is directed to the general public rather than to an individual.

Unlike advertising, publicity is widely known, changes the image of the brand, is abstract, but aims to make the product desirable, attracting the consumer.

Therefore, advertising is just a component of promotion and communication, with a narrower sphere.

Advertisements are only a component of publicity, no doubt the most important in all aspects (quantitative, qualitative and structural), but it is not the only one.

As a result, publicity has a broader scope, alongside advertising, and includes free advertising that is delivered through the dissemination of information that increases consumer confidence in the product as well as the prestige of the company through: conferences, articles, reports, posters, etc.

Several Anglo-Saxon or Latin terms are used in the marketing literature. Thus, we associate with those who differentiate between publicity and advertising, because these distinctions can be made and operated with.

There are several objectives of advertising and, depending on their purpose, they can be systematized in:

- information objectives – aimed at:
 - informing the market about the existence of a new product;
 - suggesting new uses of the product;
 - communicating the price change;
 - explaining the functionality of the product;
 - describing the available services;
 - correcting false impressions;

- reducing buyers fears;
- creating the company image.
- persuasion objectives, directed at:
 - attracting consumers’ preferences towards a brand;
 - encouraging their orientation;
 - changing the way the attributes of the products are perceived;
 - convincing purchase;
 - convincing to accept a commercial visit.
- reminder objectives, targeted at:
 - recalling a future need;
 - reminding of the place of purchase;
 - keeping the product in the attention of the buyers;
 - maintaining the buyer well-informed about the product.

Publicity formulas can be applied by means of specific tools, that have become techniques and means of advertising, with a wide diversity, the most frequent being: advertisements, posters, catalogs, packaging, press, radio, television, cinema, exhibitions, fairs, etc.

The means by which paid and impersonal communication is made to attract attention to a product or service to influence buyers for buying and using it is called advertising.

It is the main form of paid publicity, a classic method of promoting products, which takes the form of a “message paid by a sponsor, in most cases mediated by means of mass communication and has the function of convincing a certain audience” (Moldoveanu & Miron, 1995, p. 17).

The ad has the immediate goal of attracting attention, determining and triggering the purchase decision as quickly as possible and changing customer attitudes.

It has several functions, the most important being:

- raising awareness about the existence of the product;
- disseminating credible information about the product or service in question;

- waking up interest in a product;
- influencing consumer preferences to achieve their loyalty;
- stimulating purchase decision.

The ad is used on a very large scale because it has proven its usefulness since launching a new product – when the familiarizing instrument was built, with the aim of sensitizing and stimulating curiosity and desire, so that the consumer's attention be maintained through loyalty, sympathy and finally repositioning the product image, moving to other qualities, improving the product, etc.

Several types of advertising are used, their classification being based on a number of criteria. The most important criteria are:

- the information channels and technical means of realization that distinguish advertising: graphics – by printing; by light effects; live radio – radio; combined – television, cinema; by displaying products – showcases, exhibitions; through services and bonuses offered to the buyer;
- the receptor sensory organ – differentiates advertisements: visual – newspapers, catalogs, prospectuses, calendars, parades, demonstrations, fairs, exhibitions, panels, packaging; auditory – radio; audiovisual – televisions, movies;
- the geographical area – differentiates between: local, regional, national, global;
- the sponsor – differentiates the ad sponsored by: manufacturer, intermediary, other agents.

The advertisers are also of great diversity, according to: the nature of the products, the receiver and their degree of culture, etc. The most commonly used advertisers are: shops, exhibitions, fairs, buildings, constructions, means of transport, sports halls, stadiums, newspapers, magazines, radio, television, cinema, etc.

The quality of advertising, materialized in the degree of fulfillment of the objectives

for which it is used, depends largely on its message and its channels of transmission.

The effectiveness of advertising depends on the extent to which the commercial attracts and retains attention, can be memorized, is persuasive, surprises by its content and form, captures through utility or solutions offered, etc.

Experience has shown that running advertising campaigns in which the advertisement occupies the central spot leads to better results.

4. Conclusions

The marketing communications system is the general framework for promotion, aiming to present the organization, its products and services, to raise awareness of potential customers and, of course, to increase sales to obtain a higher profit.

Promotion is one of the action areas of marketing, being expressed through a set of activities and means of informing and attracting potential buyers to points of sale in order to meet their needs and desires and, implicitly, to increase the economic efficiency of the activity of the producing entity.

As a form of communication used to inform, convince or remind the public of the goods, services, image, community involvement of a person or organization, promotion often has a decisive role in achieving the established marketing objectives.

The four components of the promotional mix: advertising, personal sales, promotion sales, and public relations are used by organizations according to their specific situation. It is not necessary to use all components simultaneously, but a combination of those tools that bring great benefits at low costs is advisable.

Even though many variants of the promotional mix appear in practice, in fact, all promotion methods and techniques are grouped into four categories: advertising, sales promotion, public relations, and personal sales.

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