THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATION
IN PROMOTING FARM FOOD PRODUCE

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Abstract

Given the numberless ways of promoting farm food produce, communication has become indispensable. It offers all the necessary details required for a product to stay „alive” on the market, such as getting a product known, keeping it on the market, selling it and making it different from other products.

Marketing means more than obtaining a good product, setting an attractive price for it and making it accessible for the target consumers. Companies should communicate both with their current customers and the potential ones. Every company must develop communication and promotion activities.

The communication message must not be ignored. For efficient communication, companies sign contracts with advertising agencies that are supposed to create effective advertisements; employ experts in sales promotion who will develop programmes that will encourage customers to buy and experts in direct advertising who will create databases and contact current and potential customers by mail and by phone; sign contracts with companies specialised in public relations that are to advertise the product and consolidate the company image on the market.

For most companies, the problem is not to communicate, but what to communicate, to whom and how often to do it.

A modern company has a complex communication and marketing system. It communicates with its intermediaries, consumers and various public organisations. Its intermediaries communicate with customers and public organisations. In their turn, consumers communicate with one another and public organisations. At the same time, these groups also establish reverse communication relationships.

Communication and promotion are both essential when marketing strategies are to be developed.

The sender and the receiver are the main participants in a communication process. The message and the communication means are basic communication tools, while encoding, decoding, reaction and feedback are its fundamental activities.

This pattern reveals the key factors of efficient communication. The senders must be familiar with the audience they target and with the reaction they should receive from it. When they encode their messages, they should take into account the decoding manner. The receiver should send its message by using efficient propagation means that allow the message to reach
the target audience. Senders should create their own reaction channels that will allow them to know the receivers’ reaction to their messages.

The basic stages in developing a thorough communication and promotion programme are the following: identifying the audience; setting the communication goals; creating the message; choosing the communication channels, distributing the required promotional budget, deciding upon the promotional mix, evaluating the promotion activities and coordinating the whole marketing communications process.

The sender must have a clear image of the audience. This can consist of potential buyers, people who buy company products as a rule, decision or influencing factors. The audience can also be made of individuals, public groups or the public itself. Its particularities will exert a critical influence on the sender’s decisions regarding what to say, whom, how, where and when to say it.

The marketing specialist may hope to get a reaction of a cognitive, affective or behavioural nature from the audience. This means that he wants either to change the consumer’s attitude or to make him buy a product.

After deciding upon the desired reaction form the audience, the sender should elaborate an effective message. The message should catch the audience’s eye, generate desire and action. Practically, only few messages persuade the consumer to cover the long way from becoming aware of a product and actually buying it.

Elaborating the message involves four aspects: what to say (the contents), how to say it logically (the structure), how to render it symbolically (the presentation form) and who to say it (the source).

The sender should know what to communicate in order to obtain the desired reaction. This involves presenting benefits, motivations, an identification element or reason that could persuade the target audience to consider the product or study it.

The efficiency of a message depends on its structure, namely its conclusions, arguments and presentation order.

The message must have a very convincing presentation form. In the case of printed advertisements, the title, the text, the pictures and the colours are crucial. If the message is radiobroadcast, the sender should choose both the words and the voice qualities very carefully. If it is a TV advertisement or a message to be sent directly, then nonverbal elements such as mimic, gestures, clothes etc.) should also be considered. Messages coming from highly reliable sources are more convincing.

The personal communications channels involve two or more people who communicate directly. The efficiency of this communication type derives from the possibility of individual presentation and direct perception of the receiver’s reaction. There are intermediate channels (sales agents that talk directly to buyers on the target market), expert channels (independent experts who make product descriptions in front of the target buyers) and social channels (neighbours, friends, family members).

Nonpersonal communication channels circulate messages that do not involve personal contact or interaction. These are the mass media, the environment and the events organised on special occasions.

The methods used in establishing the promotion budget are the following:

- **the percentage-of-sales method.** Companies decide upon their promotion expenditures in relation to a certain percentage of sales. The advantages are that the spent amounts vary; the company management can analyse the situation based on the relation between the promotion costs, the selling price and the profit per sold product; and the competitiveness level is stable if the
competing companies spend about the same amount on promotion. However, this method has a logical error as it considers that promotion is determined by sales, when in fact sales are determined by promotion. Through this method the budget is established depending on the available funds, rather than the market opportunities.

- **the available sum method** is one of the easiest ones and is based on everything the company can afford in its promotion activity. Nevertheless, it neglects the role of promotion as a long-term investment and the immediate effect promotion has on the sales volume, which makes long-term planning very difficult.

- **setting the budget by comparing it with the competition’s budget.** This is a purely theoretical method and probably not practised at all.

- **the objectives method** involves the strict evaluation of the expenditures required by communication in a company. This is rather difficult to achieve, as there is no guarantee that the set objectives are the best and costs are not final, but approximate.

The promotional communications methods are applied according to a plan, during a specified interval, under the form of campaigns. Every campaign has its own objectives and message. The promotional mix consists of:

- **sales promotion:** short-term incentives to encourage customers to try or purchase a certain product or service; they include games, quizzes, tombolas, free samples, gifts, coupons, discounts;

- **public relations:** various programmes meant to promote or protect the company’s image and products on the market;

- **sales force:** direct contact with one or several potential customers in order to sell something: commercial presentations and meetings

- **direct advertising:** the use of postal services, telephone calls or any other nonpersonal means to contact people and communicate with well-established customers; materials sent by post, teleshopping, electronic purchase, catalogues;

- **advertising.** Advertising is a communication method involving a complex persuasive process for whose development various tools are used in order to generate psychological pressure on the target audience. Advertising is used to communicate messages that can determine perceptive or behavioural reactions on the part of the audience. The following are the main characteristics of advertising:
  - **public character** – advertising makes the product legitimate so that the buyer feels that his or her choice is understood and accepted by the greater public;
  - **power of influence** – the message can be repeated several times;
  - **the communicator becomes credible** – the companies promoting both their products and their image by advertising are considered strong and successful;
  - **increased expressiveness** – advertising combines images, movement, text and sound;
  - **efficient communication between the company and the numerous consumers spread in different geographic areas** – minimum amounts spent on advertising per unit;
- impersonal character – indirect communication with the target audience through nonpersonal channels (television, radio, press)

After the promotion plan has been implemented, the sender should measure its impact on the target audience. Thus the audience members are asked whether they recognise or remember the message, how many times they have seen it, what parts of it they remember, what they feel about it and what their attitude towards the company and its product is before and after getting familiar with the message. The sender should also collect data about the behavioural reaction of the audience, for example, how many people have brought the product, how many have appreciated it and how many have talked about it with other buyers.

Integrated marketing communications lead to more coherent messages and have a stronger impact on sales. Only one person has the responsibility to unite the images and messages about the company and its products as they result from the numerous company activities. Integrated marketing communications will improve the ability of the company to make contact with the most suitable customers, by means of proper messages communicated in the right place and time.

REFERENCES

