

SMART MARKETING THE KEY TO SMART CONSUMPTION?!

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Abstract. The present paper introduces the interlinked concepts of “smart consumption” and “smart lifestyle” as key components of smart marketing. Smart marketing is humankind’s bet for a sustainable future; because its goal is to change the collective consciousness of societies worldwide, by making consumption and lifestyle choices based on sustainable development principles.

Keywords: smart marketing, smart consumption, sustainable development.

INTRODUCTION

The increase number of diseases caused by irrational nutrition has “forced” even marketers to react. Thus, we are witnessing the rise of a new marketing era regarding the food industry, one that is based on responsible food consumption. Statistics say that: *“in 2011, the number of overweight or obese citizens reached 1.5 billion. At the same time, one billion people are suffering from malnutrition and another billion from hidden hunger.”* [7]

Given those alarming statistics, marketers try a different approach towards consumers. In its attempt to fulfil the creed of truly improving the quality of life, marketing proposes various strategies that need to be applied in order to achieve this goal. These strategies are all based on living a better live in harmony with sustainable development. So, today’s companies must take into account the changes and challenges that this postmodern era presents. Only a solid strategy can ensure success on the long term, because it features a series of characteristics highly distinct from those of the competitors. These differentiator’s makeup the company’s *“strategic architecture”* which ensure competitive advantage. The competitors attempt to imitate this *“strategic architecture”*, makes them face high costs thus forcing them towards an approximate imitation that generates medium profits at best.

FROM SMART MARKETING TO SMART CONSUMPTION

Professor Philip Kotler warned for a while that *“there are two kinds of companies: those that change and those that disappear”* (Kotler, 2008, p. 13). Change becomes the leitmotiv that structures the future marketing vision. Even in the case of companies that enjoy the benefits of tradition and success, there is the necessity of remodeling in order to meet the challenges of postmodernity. In this respect we can recall marketing 3.0 that for the moment raises the bar to the highest level demands; but also taking into account the concept of *“sustainable development”* and translate it into practice by companies.

Smart marketing help’s the successful implementation of the concept of *“sustainable development”* by triggering a chain reaction. Thus, smart marketing triggers smart consumption but also a smart live stile and smart markets. As a consequence, we are talking about a system. Smart consumption is useless unless it is combined with a smart live stile. For example you can eat healthy food and have a sedentary lifestyle – that’s not ok; smart marketing advocates for integrating into a functional system both smart consumption and smart live stile. Not least, the presents of smart markets is a must in order to achieve the smart marketing goal - increased quality of life. The 4P model is highly suitable to smart marketing; therefore we can have smart product, smart price, smart place

and smart promotion. The term “*smart*” means achieving in increasing the quality of live thru sustainable development. Considering the fact that rising temperatures and shifting rainfall patterns caused by climate change already have a serious and undeniable impact on water resources all over the world; freshwater becomes a focus point for smart marketing and smart consumption. While water pollution remains considerable (even in Europe) and is mainly caused by: intensive agriculture, mining activities, industrial and domestic water use [6]; some companies like The Coca-Cola Company think ahead. The marketing strategy of The Coca-Cola Company is an example of smart marketing that leads to smart consumption:

“Our global system is becoming more efficient in its water use by reducing the amount it uses per liter of product produced, even as production volumes increase. We are recycling wastewater, sometimes returning it to nature cleaner than required by law. And our system is replenishing, or balancing, the water used in our finished beverages—an estimated 35 percent so far, with an ultimate goal of being water neutral by 2020 through projects intended, among other things, to protect or conserve water resources or to bring safe drinking water or sanitation to people in the communities we serve.” [5]. Jonas Grauel from the Hamburg University in Germany, speaks of “*ethical consumption*”, given that our food choices heavily impact the environment [4]. Thus, launching the big question for both companies and consumers: “*being authentic or being responsible?*” It is a known fact that for instance animal products like meat and dairy place a heavy burden, as raising livestock requires large amounts of feed, water and energy. And if we are to take into consideration that our world population is estimated reach approximately nine billion by the year 2050, then it is clear that smart consumption will play a vital part in the conservation of our ecosystems.

RESEARCH REGARDING THE IMPACT OF SMART MARKETING ON SMART CONSUMPTION AND SMART LIFESTYLE

In the following rows will be revealed some of the results obtained from a marketing research. The subject of this research is based on how smart marketing impacts smart consumption and smart lifestyle. The aim is to identify the percent of consumers that have changed their consumption habits and lifestyle under the influence of smart marketing. The research method was the survey and the instrument used was the questionnaire. The questionnaire development was centered on the research objectives and hypotheses. Also, the pretest phase was conducted on a sample of 25 respondents that were not included in the final sample. After this stage, the final structure of the questionnaire was obtained. The implementation of the questionnaire was done in the period starting from the first of October and ending at the beginning of November, on a number of 150 subjects. The multistage random method was used in establishing the final sample. Thus were elected, by drawing, subjects from Cluj-Napoca. The following rows briefly present few results of the marketing research:

1. When subjects where asked if their eating habits have been considerably changed by viewing a type of marketing promotion; 85% of the interrogated subjects said: “yes”. (Fig. 1)
2. When the subjects where asked if they ever heard about the concept of “smart consumption”, 93% of the interrogated subjects said: “no”. (Fig. 2)
3. When the subjects where asked if they are aware that if things don’t change regarding the production and consumption of food, then future generations will be affected; 90% of the interrogated subjects said: “yes”. (Fig. 3)

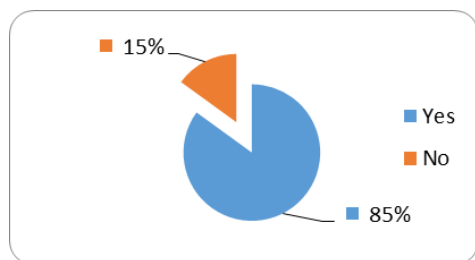


Fig. 1

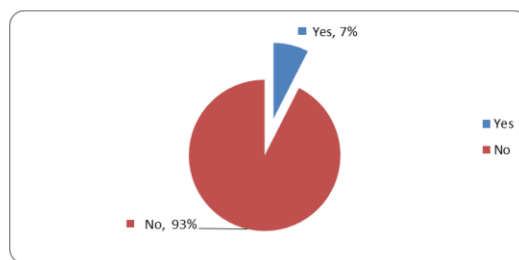


Fig. 2

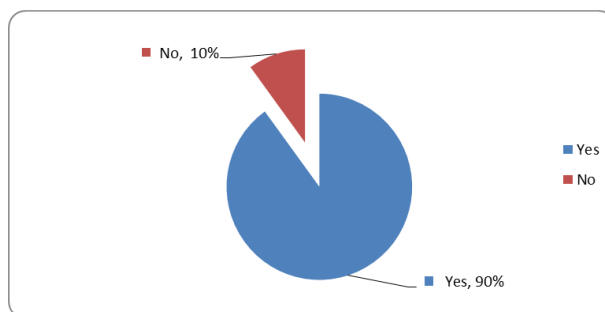


Fig. 3

CONCLUSIONS

The main challenge of smart marketing is to successfully implement into the minds of consumers the values of sustainable development, thus guiding them towards smart consumption and a smart lifestyle. In order to achieve this, smart marketing must win the collective consciousness of societies worldwide. The presence of a collective consciousness in the postmodern era is tightly linked to the two main vectors that shape today's world: *technology and globalization*. The fact that globalization is an inevitable condition of human action (Beck Ulrich, 2003) is yet another proof of the power of collective consciousness. From here we witness the impressive geographical expansion as well as the increasing density of international trade interaction, thus the output of globalization (Beck Ulrich, 2003). But globalization would not exist without the successes of technology.

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