

# PERCEPCIJA ULOGE MARKETINŠKIH AKTIVNOSTI U KONTEKSTU TRANZICIJSKOG GOSPODARSTVA

## PERCEIVED ROLE OF MARKETING ACTIVITIES IN THE CONTEXT OF TRANSITIONAL ECONOMY

TRŽIŠTE

UDK 658.8:338.24  
Prethodno priopćenje  
Preliminary communication

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### Ključne riječi:

*marketing, marketinška funkcija, marketinške aktivnosti, recesija*

### Keywords:

*marketing, marketing function, marketing activities, recession*

### SAŽETAK

Uloga i važnost različitih marketinških aktivnosti u okviru poduzeća predstavljaju funkciju većeg broja unutrašnjih i vanjskih čimbenika, uključujući one tipične za tranzicijska gospodarstva. Ti su čimbenici integrirani i oblikovani percepcijama menadžera o njihovoj važnosti i pogodnosti u pojedinom trenutku.

Autori analiziraju mišljenja litavskih menadžera o ukupnoj važnosti marketinških aktivnosti u okviru njihovih poduzeća kao i mišljenja o važnosti pojedinih marketinških aktivnosti. Posebna se pozornost posvećuje specifičnostima percepcija među menadžerima i njihovim mišljenjima u razdoblju gospodarske neizvjesnosti i recesije.

### ABSTRACT

The role and importance of various marketing activities within a company is a function of numerous internal and external factors, including those that are typical of transitional economies. These factors are integrated and shaped by managerial perceptions about their overall importance and suitability at a specific moment.

Authors analyze opinions among managers of Lithuanian companies about the overall importance of the marketing function in their companies as well as about the importance of specific marketing activities. Special attention is paid to the specifics of managerial per-

Istraživanje se temelji na ispitivanju mišljenja 346 menadžera uglavnom proizvodnih i trgovačkih poduzeća koja posluju u Litvi. Analiza upućuje na brojne razlike u ocjeni važnosti marketinških aktivnosti na temelju karakteristika poduzeća i njihove osnovne strategije. Istraživanje je pokazalo da je važnost određivanja cijena i komunikacijskih aktivnosti u doba gospodarske recesije u porastu, a potvrđeno je i da postoji pozitivan odnos između menadžerskih ocjena važnosti marketinških aktivnosti i rasta prodaje.

ceptions and opinions during the period of economic uncertainty and recession.

The research is based on a survey of 346 managers of primarily manufacturing and trading companies operating in Lithuania. The analysis showed a number of differences in the evaluation of the importance of marketing activities based on the characteristics of companies and their core strategic idea. The research revealed that the importance of pricing and communication activities is growing during a period of economic recession. It also confirmed the existence of a positive relationship between managerial evaluations of the importance of marketing activities and the growth of sales.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Success of companies depends on numerous interrelated internal and external influences, which are continuously analyzed by academicians and practitioners. However, a very complex nature of the subject requires dividing the issue into more specific aspects.

Marketing function plays a major role in establishing and maintaining contacts between a company and its markets. The scope of marketing activities is rather broad, and the role of various types of marketing activities heavily depends on the characteristics of the market, company and its strategy. On the other hand, their importance and role within the company is heavily influenced by managerial perceptions about marketing. This is noticeable in all companies, but is especially prominent in smaller ones.

In this article authors attempt to analyze the importance of the marketing function from the point of view of top and medium level managers of companies. The importance of the marketing function is researched both as the overall function and in terms of the more narrowly defined specific activities. These evaluations are related to the demographic characteristics of companies and their core strategies (price-based versus quality-based), as well as with their growth. Specific attention is paid to the change of managerial opinions about marketing activities in the context of economic recession.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

There are numerous studies that analyze specific marketing activities and their relationship with certain aspects of other functions within the company. Many of them discuss a relationship between marketing and finance, or model financial outcomes of some specific marketing activities.<sup>1</sup> In other cases, the marketing function is related to some other functions within the company that are perceived as being 'closer' to it, typically – with sales,<sup>2</sup> public relations,<sup>3</sup> new product development,<sup>4</sup> or with the function of operations<sup>5</sup> and

purchasing.<sup>6</sup> One more group of researchers analyzes the linkage between a specific marketing activity and some either internal or external factors: pricing and revenue,<sup>7</sup> cooperation in product innovation,<sup>8</sup> the human resources aspect of marketing<sup>9</sup> etc.

Another set of studies cover the strategic and managerial aspects of marketing activities, incorporating a managerial perspective into the picture.<sup>10</sup> Companies achieve significantly greater pay-offs in business performance terms when critical marketing input is harnessed in all areas of the strategy formation process (from goal setting to strategy selection), in comparison with those firms where marketing does not make such a meaningful contribution to strategy formation.<sup>11</sup> In other words, results of the company are better when management clearly realizes the importance and role of marketing within the company. However, studies that would directly measure managerial evaluations of the importance of marketing activities are very rare and often touch on this aspect just indirectly.<sup>12</sup> Research of this issue in Eastern European countries is minimal, and studies in the Czech Republic<sup>13</sup> and Ukraine<sup>14</sup> are probably the closest examples. Authors of this article attempt to partially fill this gap by developing studies of this issue in Lithuania.<sup>15</sup>

The current economic recession has numerous influences on the activities of companies. There are rather controversial arguments about a transformation of the marketing function in the context of changes, and especially – during economic decline.<sup>16</sup> In a number of cases authors discuss changes in specific marketing activities,<sup>17</sup> certain sectors<sup>18</sup> or analyze differences between larger and smaller companies.<sup>19</sup>

Against this background, the study addresses the following hypotheses:

H<sub>1</sub>: various marketing activities have different importance for companies;

H<sub>2</sub>: marketing activities are more important for subsidiaries of large international corporations than for independent companies;

H<sub>3</sub>: importance of marketing activities increases with company size;

H<sub>4</sub>: importance of marketing activities differs depending on the type of company's activity;

H<sub>5</sub>: marketing activities are more important for the companies that have a formal marketing department than for other companies;

H<sub>6</sub>: price management is more important for the companies that base their core strategies on price while other marketing activities are more important for the companies that base their core strategy on quality;

H<sub>7</sub>: marketing activities are more important for growing companies than for companies with stable (including decreasing) turnover;

H<sub>8</sub>: price management and communication activities are more important for companies during economic recession.

Hypotheses H<sub>2</sub> - H<sub>7</sub> include several smaller research questions (or smaller hypotheses), which can be formulated about every analyzed type of marketing activity. However, authors decided to analyze them in a more integrative form, without developing individual hypotheses for each of them.

## 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND FINDINGS

### 3.1. Methodology

It is understood that company characteristics and its core strategy play an important role in setting priorities for all types of its activities, including the marketing function.<sup>20</sup> Therefore the research measures three demographic characteristics of the company: type of the company (independent versus subsidiary), its size (number of employees) and primary type of activities (manufacturing or trade, service companies were not included in this sample). The presence of a marketing department in the company was used as a formal criterion of marketing function formalization within the respective company.<sup>21</sup> Also, managers were asked to indicate the key priority of the strategy: i.e. whether

the company mainly competes on the basis of lower price or superior characteristics (quality) of products.

Data was collected over a period between the autumn of 2007 and the spring of 2009. There were four independent surveys, two of which can be related to a pre-recession period, and two others to the recession.

### 3.2. Sample profile

The survey included interviewing 346 top and medium level managers<sup>22</sup> of the companies that operate in Lithuania (see Table 1).

More than 70% of sample companies were independent enterprises and about one fourth subsidiaries (branches or daughter companies of larger international corporations). More than 30% of respondents represented the companies that primarily concentrate on manufacturing, others – on wholesale and retail trade. Almost 60% of the sample companies were defined as small companies (with fewer than 50 employees), with others being medium sized or large companies. Some 80% of sample companies indicated that their core strategy is based on increasing product quality while others based their strategy on reducing the price of products. The companies with their own marketing department accounted for 55% of the sample.

The interview sets that were conducted during the two periods differ in the number of interviews (205 companies in a pre-recession period and 141 during the recession), but are statistically consistent by the structure of surveyed samples. There was no significant difference among the companies that participated in the research before the recession and during the recession in terms of the existence of a marketing department ( $\chi^2=0.003$ ,  $p=0.953$ ), in terms of the core strategy ( $\chi^2=0.586$ ,  $p=0.444$ ), company status ( $\chi^2=2.855$ ,  $p=0.240$ ), number of employees ( $\chi^2=1.521$ ,  $p=0.468$ ) and in terms of the area of activity ( $\chi^2=3.424$ ,  $p=0.064$ ). This allows a comparison between the pre-recession period and recession

**Table 1:** Sample profile

	Fre-quency	%		Fre-quency	%		Fre-quency	%
<b>Company status</b>			<b>Number of employees</b>			<b>Area of activity</b>		
Independent company	251	73.4	Under 50	203	58.7	Manufacturing	108	31.3
Subsidiary	75	21.9	50-249	88	25.4	Trade	237	68.7
Other	16	4.7	250 and more	55	15.9			
<b>Presence of Marketing department</b>			<b>Last year's sales</b>			<b>Core strategy</b>		
Exists	153	44.5	Grew	271	79.0	Based on price	69	20.3
Does not exist	191	55.5	Did not grow	72	21	Based on quality	271	79.7
<b>Period of time</b>								
Autumn 2007-spring 2008	205	59.3						
autumn 2008-spring 2009	141	40.7						

Source: Research

### 3.3. Correlation among marketing activities

Based on the academic literature review,<sup>23</sup> we defined 42 types of marketing activities that can be important to various companies. All of them were categorized into 6 groups – four of them representing the elements of a typical marketing mix (product management, price management, distribution and communication), others covering marketing planning and marketing research activities. The questionnaire included seven statements about product management, five about price management, three about distribution management, ten about communications and promotion management, seven about marketing research and ten about marketing planning. The answers on a five-point Likert scale about individual statements were grouped into these 6 groups and then analyzed.

Statistical analysis showed that the designed model is relevant and that it measures the identified types of activities adequately. There was a correlation of different levels between the six measured areas, corresponding to the theoretical statement about the overall interdependence of marketing activities (Table 2).

More specifically, it was observed that product management is positively correlated with the importance of all other activities, and that it has the strongest correlation with communications ( $r=0.456$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). The importance of communications positively correlated with the importance of all other marketing functions as well, and had the strongest correlation with marketing planning ( $r=0.520$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and marketing research ( $r=0.500$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Price management had a weak correlation with all marketing functions except marketing research (there was no statistically significant correlation).

**Table 2:** Correlation among marketing activities

		Product management	Communications	Price management	Distribution	Marketing planning	Marketing research
Product management	Pearson Correlation		0.456	0.287	0.221	0.321	0.320
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Communications	Pearson Correlation			0.283	0.270	0.520	0.500
	Sig. (2-tailed)			0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Price management	Pearson Correlation				0.110	0.185	0.099
	Sig. (2-tailed)				0.041	0.001	0.066
Distribution	Pearson Correlation					0.332	0.249
	Sig. (2-tailed)					0.000	0.000
Marketing planning	Pearson Correlation						0.593
	Sig. (2-tailed)						0.000

Source: Research

### 3.4. Importance of marketing activities

Managers evaluated the marketing planning activity as the most important for their companies. The second most important activity was distribution. The difference of evaluations between marketing planning and distribution is  $m_{\text{plan}}=3.9376$ ,  $m_{\text{distr}}=3.8247$ ,  $t=2.401$ ,  $p < 0.05$  (Table 3). Respondents stated that product

management, communications and price management were less important than marketing planning and distribution. Communications were rated as less important than distribution (difference from product management  $m_{\text{distr}}=3.8247$ ,  $m_{\text{commun}}=3.4901$ ,  $t=5.837$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Marketing research was evaluated as the least important activity (difference between marketing research and price management  $m_{\text{research}}=3.1557$ ,  $m_{\text{price}}=3.4507$ ,  $t=4.990$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Therefore,  $H_1$  was confirmed.

**Table 3:** Overall importance of marketing activities

Activities	Mean	Std. Deviation
Marketing planning	3.9376	0.56297
Distribution	3.8247	0.88208
Product management	3.5365	0.51717
Communications	3.4901	0.60066
Price management	3.4507	0.87950
Marketing research	3.1557	0.75306
All marketing activities together	3.5809	0.45020

Source: Research

The analysis by characteristics of companies disclosed more differences. The managers of independent companies considered four of the researched marketing areas (distribution, communications, marketing planning, marketing research) to be less important than did the managers of subsidiaries of large international corporations (distribution  $m_{\text{subsid}}=4.0709$ ,  $m_{\text{indep}}=3.7478$ ,  $t= -2.829$ ,  $p< 0.05$ ; communications

$m_{\text{subsid}}=3.6883$ ,  $m_{\text{indep}}=3.4097$ ,  $t= -3.599$ ,  $p< 0.001$ ; planning  $m_{\text{subsid}}=4.2587$ ,  $m_{\text{indep}}=3.8335$ ,  $t= -6.753$ ,  $p< 0.001$ ; research ( $m_{\text{subsid}}=3.5837$ ,  $m_{\text{indep}}=3.0151$ ,  $t= -6.024$ ,  $p< 0.001$ ). Therefore, the overall importance of marketing activities was found to be higher for subsidiary companies than for independent ones (Table 4). That means  $H_2$  was confirmed, except in terms of product and price management.

**Table 4:** Importance of marketing functions depending on company status

Activities	Company status	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
Product management	Independent company	251	3.5296	0.49813	-0.701	0.484
	Subsidiary	75	3.5769	0.55825		
Communications	Independent company	251	3.4097	0.58628	-3.599	0.000
	Subsidiary	75	3.6883	0.59412		
Price management	Independent company	251	3.4687	0.84062	1.173	0.242
	Subsidiary	75	3.3333	0.99163		
Distribution	Independent company	251	3.7478	0.86200	-2.829	0.005
	Subsidiary	75	4.0709	0.88763		
Marketing planning	Independent company	251	3.8335	0.54930	-6.753	0.000
	Subsidiary	75	4.2587	0.45503		
Marketing research	Independent company	251	3.0151	0.71394	-6.024	0.000
	Subsidiary	75	3.5837	0.72871		
All marketing activities together	Independent company	251	3.5040	0.43084	-5.316	0.000
	Subsidiary	75	3.8040	0.42178		

Source: Research

Evaluations of the importance of certain marketing activities also varied based on the company size. A positive correlation with size was noticed in case of the evaluations concerning communications, marketing planning and marketing research. The importance of these marketing activities grew with an increase in the number of employees in companies. All that resulted in a positive correlation between company size

and a general evaluation of all the marketing activities together – the overall marketing function (Table 5). One of the possible interpretations is related to scarce resources of smaller companies which does not allow for paying more managerial attention to marketing activities.<sup>24</sup>  $H_3$  was confirmed in case of communications, marketing planning, research and overall marketing activities.

**Table 5:** Correlation between marketing functions and company size

Activities	Spearman's rho Correlation Coefficient	Sig. (2-tailed)
Product management	0.033	0.546
Communications	0.108	0.045
Price management	-0.054	0.318
Distribution	0.081	0.131
Marketing planning	0.233	0.000
Marketing research	0.256	0.000
All marketing activities together	0.197	0.000

Source: Research

Differences in the evaluations between manufacturing and trade companies were observed in case of communications, distribution and price management. In general, all marketing activities were less important

to manufacturing companies than to trade companies (Table 6).  $H_4$  was confirmed, except for the activities of product management, marketing planning and marketing research.

**Table 6:** Importance of marketing functions by company activity

Activities	Company activities	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
Product management	Manufacturing	108	3.5422	0.49058	0.171	0.864
	Trade	237	3.5319	0.53004		
Communications	Manufacturing	108	3.3072	0.59993	-3.860	0.000
	Trade	237	3.5712	0.58415		
Price management	Manufacturing	108	3.2551	0.91595	-2.765	0.006
	Trade	237	3.5342	0.84746		
Distribution	Manufacturing	108	3.5799	0.84402	-3.539	0.000
	Trade	237	3.9369	0.87994		
Marketing planning	Manufacturing	108	3.8604	0.55714	-1.746	0.082
	Trade	237	3.9743	0.56393		
Marketing research	Manufacturing	108	3.1063	0.71965	-0.775	0.439
	Trade	237	3.1740	0.76724		
All marketing activities together	Manufacturing	108	3.4750	0.45316	-2.946	0.003
	Trade	237	3.6273	0.44175		

Source: Research

Evaluation of the importance of marketing activities also varied depending on the existence of a marketing department in the company. Managers of companies that have a formal marketing department evaluated the importance of almost all marketing activities

higher than did the managers of companies with no separate marketing department (Table 7).  $H_5$  was confirmed, except when it comes to product and price management type activities.



**Table 7:** Importance of marketing activities depending on the presence of marketing department

Activities	Existence of Marketing department	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
Product management	Yes	153	3.5481	0.51122	0.377	0.706
	No	191	3.5269	0.52552		
Communications	Yes	153	3.6523	0.50324	4.701	0.000
	No	191	3.3616	0.64365		
Price management	Yes	153	3.4219	0.91053	-0.559	0.577
	No	191	3.4754	0.85956		
Distribution	Yes	153	4.0219	0.80902	3.842	0.000
	No	191	3.6649	0.91209		
Marketing planning	Yes	153	4.2111	0.41842	9.198	0.000
	No	191	3.7210	0.56891		
Marketing research	Yes	153	3.4617	0.66800	7.226	0.000
	No	191	2.9102	0.73067		
All marketing activities together	Yes	153	3.7604	0.37196	7.208	0.000
	No	191	3.4377	0.45820		

Source: Research

The only exception was the evaluations of price, which was rated higher by the respondents at the companies that have no marketing department. However, the difference was not statistically significant. Also, there was no difference in the evaluation of product management. This means that the companies that have no marketing department typically see price management as the most important marketing tool. This assumption was confirmed by the fact that as many as 89% of the companies with a marketing department based their core strategy on quality, and this percentage was significantly lower (72%) for the companies that have no marketing department ( $\chi^2 = 13,688$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ). In addition, the relationship between company status and the presence of a marketing department is also worth mentioning: only 35% of independent companies have a marketing department, against its presence in 77% of subsidiaries ( $\chi^2 = 41.244$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ).

A lot of differences were observed on the basis of core strategy (primary attention to price versus other marketing activities, and vice versa). Naturally, the companies that base their core strategies on price also declared a higher importance of price management than did other companies ( $m_{\text{price}} = 3.9145$ ,  $m_{\text{quality}} = 3.3319$ ,  $t = 5.052$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). However, communications ( $m_{\text{price}} = 3.2823$ ,  $m_{\text{quality}} = 3.5475$ ,  $t = -2.867$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), marketing research ( $m_{\text{price}} = 2.9693$ ,  $m_{\text{quality}} = 3.2039$ ,  $t = -2.321$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and marketing planning ( $m_{\text{price}} = 3.7652$ ,  $m_{\text{quality}} = 3.9827$ ,  $t = -2.875$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) were considered to be more important for the companies that base their core strategy on product quality. In general, the overall importance of the marketing function was rated higher by the companies that base their core strategy on quality (Table 8). H6 was confirmed, except as regards product management.

**Table 8:** Importance of marketing activities depending on core strategy

Activities	Core strategy	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
Product management	Based on price	69	3.5680	0.54791	0.500	0.617
	Based on quality	271	3.5330	0.51111		
Communications	Based on price	69	3.2823	0.71409	-2.867	0.005
	Based on quality	271	3.5475	0.56207		
Price management	Based on price	69	3.9145	0.84196	5.052	0.000
	Based on quality	271	3.3319	0.85847		
Distribution	Based on price	69	3.6623	0.88309	-1.783	0.075
	Based on quality	271	3.8745	0.88214		
Marketing planning	Based on price	69	3.7652	0.57849	-2.875	0.004
	Based on quality	271	3.9827	0.55664		
Marketing research	Based on price	69	2.9693	0.77474	-2.321	0.021
	Based on quality	271	3.2039	0.74309		
All marketing activities together	Based on price	69	3.4791	0.50805	-2.153	0.032
	Based on quality	271	3.6098	0.43427		

Source: Research

**Table 9:** Importance of marketing activities by sales growth

Activities	Last year's sales	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
Product management	Grew	271	3.5437	0.48693	1.051	0.294
	Did not grow	72	3.4724	0.59823		
Communications	Grew	271	3.5205	0.59471	1.935	0.054
	Did not grow	72	3.3667	0.61758		
Price management	Grew	271	3.3950	0.90144	-2.227	0.027
	Did not grow	72	3.6542	0.78056		
Distribution	Grew	271	3.8489	0.89396	1.003	0.316
	Did not grow	72	3.7313	0.84489		
Marketing planning	Grew	271	3.9823	0.53311	2.427	0.017
	Did not grow	72	3.7822	0.64310		
Marketing research	Grew	271	3.2134	0.74387	2.396	0.017
	Did not grow	72	2.9767	0.74997		
All marketing activities together	Grew	271	3.6085	0.43277	2.200	0.028
	Did not grow	72	3.4776	0.50358		

Source: Research

All the above discussed factors (characteristics of companies and their core strategies) influence managers' evaluations of marketing. On the other hand, marketing is related to the outputs, for example – sales. This was confirmed by data, showing that higher evaluations of marketing activities are positively correlated with the growth of companies (Table 9).  $H_7$  was confirmed, except when it comes to product management and distribution.

Data showed that the managers of growing companies typically evaluated marketing planning ( $m_{\text{grow}}=3.9823$ ,  $m_{\text{stable}}=3.7822$ ,  $t= 2.427$ ,  $p< 0.05$ ) and marketing research ( $m_{\text{grow}}=3.2134$ ,  $m_{\text{stable}}=2.9767$ ,  $t= 2.396$ ,  $p< 0.05$ ) as more important than did the managers of the companies where sales were stable. On the other hand, price management was more important to the companies with stable sales than to growing companies ( $m_{\text{grow}}=3.3950$ ,  $m_{\text{stable}}=3.6542$ ,  $t= -2.227$ ,  $p< 0.05$ ). Authors assume that higher evaluations of some marketing activities (others remaining equal)

may be responsible for the growth of the respective companies. This corresponds to findings of previous studies.<sup>25</sup>

### 3.5. Changes of evaluations during economic recession

The managers rated the importance of marketing activities differently before and during the economic recession. It was observed that communications ( $m_{\text{before}}=3.4063$ ,  $m_{\text{during}}=3.6118$ ,  $t=-3.244$ ,  $p< 0.05$ ) and price management ( $m_{\text{before}}=3.2366$ ,  $m_{\text{during}}=3.7621$ ,  $t=-6.301$ ,  $p< 0.001$ ) were more important to companies during the economic recession than before. The overall importance of the marketing function was higher during the recession as well (Table 10).  $H_8$  was confirmed.

**Table 10:** Importance of marketing functions by period of time

Activities	Period of time	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
Product management	Pre-recession	205	3.5087	0.49764	-1.207	0.228
	Recession	141	3.5770	0.54359		
Communications	Pre-recession	205	3.4063	0.62293	-3.244	0.001
	Recession	141	3.6118	0.54632		
Price management	Pre-recession	205	3.2366	0.99453	-6.301	0.000
	Recession	141	3.7621	0.54788		
Distribution	Pre-recession	205	3.8180	0.88128	-.0169	0.866
	Recession	141	3.8344	0.88631		
Marketing planning	Pre-recession	205	3.9180	0.57617	-0.780	0.436
	Recession	141	3.9661	0.54397		
Marketing research	Pre-recession	205	3.1698	0.76368	0.419	0.675
	Recession	141	3.1352	0.73956		
All marketing activities together	Pre-recession	205	3.5362	0.47153	-2.297	0.022
	Recession	141	3.6458	0.41025		

Source: Research

In all other types of marketing activities the change during the recession was insignificant and requires further analysis.

## 4. CONCLUSIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The objective of the research was to analyze the importance of various marketing activities through the opinions of managers of various companies. Authors concluded that the study allows the drawing of some preliminary conclusions that outline possible directions for future research at the same time.

First of all, the research instrument was tested and proved its relevance to the measurement of managerial opinions about marketing importance in various economic conditions. It can be used in further research in other contexts (other countries, different types of companies etc.).

Second, a number of rather concrete differences in the evaluation of the importance of marketing activities were observed on the basis of company characteristics as well as on the basis of their core strategic idea. The most important ones include:

- the managers of subsidiaries of international corporations evaluate the majority of marketing activities higher than do the managers of independent companies;
- larger companies evaluate the marketing function as being more important than do smaller ones;
- communications, distribution and price management were found to be more important activities

for trading and service sector companies than to manufacturing companies;

- the presence of a formal marketing department in a company indirectly indicates managerial attention to the marketing function; the formal department is more frequently present in the subsidiaries of international companies than in local independent companies;
- marketing research, marketing planning and marketing communication activities were more important to the companies that base their strategies on product/service quality, while price management is the exceptionally important activity to those that base their strategy on low price.

Third, there is a positive relationship between the evaluations of the importance of marketing activities and sales growth.

Fourth, research allowed disclosing of the impact of economic recession on the evaluations of marketing activities. The importance of pricing and communication activities during the recession period is growing.

At the same time, the study has certain limitations. Its major limitations are related to the sampling procedure and sample size, since probability sampling was technically not possible. Also, it would be ideal to reach the same respondents in all four surveys that were performed in different periods. Since the survey was performed in just one country, it is unclear to what extent the observations and conclusions are applicable to other countries with different business conditions. Nevertheless, authors believe that the findings presented here may serve as empirical background for further theoretical discussion and broader empirical studies.

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