

# IDENTIFYING THE NEEDS FOR INFORMATION OF THE ORGANIZATIONS FROM BUCHAREST, MUNTENIA AND OLTENIA REGIONS<sup>243</sup>

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*Resume: This paper is the result of some marketing researches about organizations informations needs. For identifying the needs of marketing informations of the organizations in the south region of the country, a series of qualitative research where made, totalizing two focus groups and 5 in-depth interviews. From the research were detained aspects about: present informations sources, needs of informations, and utility of a new portal with marketing information named **INFOMARK** and the trust in it.*

*Key words: Marketing research, information needs, organization from Bucharest, Muntenia and Oltenia*

For identifying the needs of marketing informations of the organizations in the south region of the country, a series of qualitative research where made, totalizing two focus groups and 5 in-depth interviews.

The two focus groups took place in the following days Friday the 7<sup>th</sup> of December 2007, at 18 o'clock and Saturday the 8<sup>th</sup> of December 2007 at 10 o'clock, in the marketing laboratory "Prof.univ.dr. C. Florescu" of the Academy of Economical Studies fro Bucharest.

The participants were part of the management personnel, with decision attributes in the marketing domain from different companies from Bucharest (mostly) and from the near by districts.

The fifth in-depth interviews were carried on with the participation of the representations of a non-lucrative organization fro Bucharest, a multinational distribution company from Bucharest, as well as the managers from 3 medium firms from Ploiesti, Pitesti and Buzau. The interviews took place either at the firms' quarters or in one case in ASE.

From the analysis of meaning of the in-depth interviews, were detained the following aspects:

**a) regarding the present informations sources**

- "a sportive Romanian organization can obtain new informations about marketing in sports only from foreign specialized books , from that we can draw the conclusion that the rest of the informations (specially the ones from the Romanian market) are not presenting a highly degree of novelty" (The Romanian Sports an Olympic Committee)
- "at our company level does not exists an allocated budget for purchasing the marketing informations. When it is a obvious need for a specific information, the information is looked in the free sources" (The Romanian Sports an Olympic Committee)
- "the available informations are the ones focused on the price evolutions for: the rough materials, the labor force, the utilities and the offers of our society" (medium firm from Ploiesti)

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- “the firm does not have a well developed marketing department and for that matter the marketing informations are pretty reduced” (medium firm from Ploiesti)
- “in the present the means for obtaining the marketing informations are modest” (medium firm from Ploiesti)
- “our main source of informations is represented by the specialized publications (like books or articles on the internet)” (medium firm from Ploiesti)
- “the informations used by our company are obtained from the next sources: surveys, discussions with clients, specialized magazines, and others sources of informations specialized in economics domain, Internet, participations at exhibits nationals and internationals. The types of informations used are: statistical ones from the National Statistical Institute reports, analysis and previsions of the specialists from the specialized publications, reports and informs from the Owners Organizations – FEPAIUS, worksheets presented by the participants al symposiums from the textile domain” (medium firm from Pitesti)

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**b) regarding de needs of informations:**

- „I especially need informations regarding the sponsorship possibilities our organization could benefit from” (The Romanian Sports an Olympic Committee)
- “The organization might need access to an integrate informatics system, witch ensure the access to different detailed sectorial studies and reports, analyzed and truthful, having as reference the Romanian market.” (medium size firm from Buzau)
- “Would be relevant the informations related to the strategies and policy adopted by different firms from both the Romanian and the international market.” (medium size firm from Buzau)
- “The informations we are in need at this moment are the ones regarding the internal market, the evolutions, and the market shares of the main competitors on the segment. As regards the external market, the dates available at this moment there are some materials available on internet about some synthesis and analyses, but not so recent and without having the certainty of an official source. About the Romanian textile market the most recent data found are from the year 2004-2005, the actual situation being complete change, both on national and on international level”. (medium size firm from Pitesti)
- “A study for which I would clearly pay is a monitoring study of the competition prices” (multinational distribution company from Bucharest)
- “The political-legislative situation in general is at interest to as, but not essential, because here you can not change the economical terms, being in the UE.” (multinational distribution company from Bucharest)

**c) concerning the utility of INFOMARK and the trust in it**

- “You can make studies on one theme, on one market, in-depth studies, not only general ones, to see something related to the consumer behavior. And then it is OK.” (multinational distribution company from Bucharest)
- “A firm, lets say in theory understand that ASE in good, but in practice ASE is for students... it doesn't appeal. It is the reason that a firm makes all its research through other firms that are responsible towards yours projects. A firm that didn't deliver or the delivered product isn't a qualitative one I will not pay it, and I can also ask for damages.” (multinational distribution company from Bucharest)
- “I do not thrust it and others will think alike. You do not have the means to control; I say again, the people when they are not paid, they won't do the job right.” (multinational distribution company from Bucharest)
- “Your men are going to teach the ones from that firms how to do it, people that know only theoretical methods, and the other ones having only the practice. Your people being smart will look in the practice and will see how to integrate the practical dates into the theoretical

models that they know, in order to generate new and useful informations.” (multinational distribution company from Bucharest)

Also, from processing the informations resulted from the focus groups some position standing and some interesting conclusions were acquired:

**a) regarding the present informations sources**

- The large companies are making direct researches, are buying the results of general studies. The small and medium firms do not have the money to spend on direct research, they are resuming to the official statistical informations, and mostly one the intern (reports from the selling forces, the sales analysis).
- Another information source is the feedback received from behalf of the clients – informations received from the public relations department (if its' exists), from the sales agents, from the services or form the consumers discussions forum analysis, or the analysis of some blogs.
- “I had the surprise in doing a research for a product and the result to be a really different one that the one resulted from the customers forums and blogs analysis.”
- “There were also decisions taken on the filings and the personal sense of the managers, even if there were dates from research that stated other else. Even thou, those decisions were a real success.”
- “For advertising you can find money, to convince the bosses to spend money on researches is much more difficult.”
- Large companies are having subscriptions to official statistical publications.

**b) regarding de needs of informations:**

- “I am having access to dates about competition, but I would want informations about what's in the consumers mind (the consumer motivations)”
- “I am having good access to informations, and also a peaty good budget for that, I would be interested in informations about the financial stability of the competition, their objectives and strategies, and informations about the political-legislative environment.”
- There is also interest into: Firm image; Consume behavior; Needs, motivations, attitudes; Trends regarding the conduit; Life style;

**c) concerning the utility of INFOMARK and the trust in it**

- Large firms would rather pay a monthly subscription to have access to a portal like INFOMARK, and would give their approval to participate to researches related to general situations in the market;
- They are afraid by the free of charge information and by the intoxication information given by the competition in order to frighten.
- Would be well received informations about failure that took place in the past in order for them not to repeat the same mistake in the future.

Starting from the content analysis of this study, it was pointed out the actual situation of how Romanian organizations collect their marketing information, the necessity of such information and the openness of the Romanian organizations towards market analysis as a starting point in the marketing activity, and the opinion regarding the utility of the INFOMARK portal. The majority of the organizations declared their interest in this project, one of the information solicited in the content of the portal being those related with presenting some theoretical aspects of the marketing activity, new things in the marketing field, studies regarding consumers buying behavior, presenting research methodologies on studying the competition or consumer loyalty.

The managers mentioned the utility of forecasting the market and its potential from the buying intentions for the next 3-5 years, at local and regional level, demographic indicators, consumption, the amounts of money spent in different kind of goods, consumer profiling and market segmentation using different criteria, retail audits. Other information needed is that related to participating to fairs and expositions (the way a fair is chosen, number of presentation tables, etc), the way a visual identity manual is created, the way the strategy of export is chosen, the distribution channels. There considerate useful statistics related to

import and export in the same branch, studies regarding the profile of audience of the communication mediums. In addition, they need data by which they can verify the potential success of the future projects. The marketing objectives are based mostly on the previous performance of the company and to the market trends and less on the achievements of the industry. The sources for information used by the managers in assisting the marketing decision process are: previous experience, the internet, the company site ( contacts, no of visitors), specialized publications ( newspapers and magazines), professional associations, market studies, market observations and competition observations, statistics ( INSSE), company partners ( clients, distributors and suppliers), internal reporting procedures, Finance Ministry web site, web sites of Commerce Chamber, golden pages, yellow pages, e- auction, fairs and exposition, specialized books. Most of the respondents say that the information they have is insufficient. The main printed journals read by the managers are Săptămâna financiară, Capital, Ziarul financiar, Wall Street. The web sites of governmental institutions are less utilized because they tend to be vague and hard to interpret.

The information about competitors are obtained from the clients (in one case, for obtaining the information the company gave a discount to the client), from the internet (with the fact that the internet research consumes lot of time and energy because of the unstructured information) or direct from the competitors. Information about clients and suppliers is obtained from Golden Pages, the internet using search engines, outdoor panels. Most of the interviewed companies do not realize market surveys or if they realize some in house studies, they make them in a rudimentary matter. Only big companies realize such studies in a professional way. However, all the companies consider that market surveys are necessary. The information necessary to forecast is obtained from the press or other internal sources (sales evolution). The manager understands the necessity and utility of forecasting in sales and in consumer behavior. The internet, the fairs and expositions internal and international provides much of the information about new technologies, but also the external partners or suppliers. The companies consider as a necessity the existence of sectorial databases regarding the European funding opportunities, in the financial and accounting field. Most of the companies, especially small ones, don't have a marketing strategy or a marketing plan, don't have a budget for marketing data, but they are willing to invest 3-5% from sales in this area ( with a condition that sales have to rise in the future). The respondents suggested that the portal should be divided into domains and sub domains of activity, a search engine being also useful. The portal has to offer information to managers about their suppliers, competitors, distributors and legislative trends. In addition, information about macroeconomic indicators on the sector of activity and geographical area, theoretical information about marketing strategies and practice of marketing should be present on the portal. The managers also mentioned newsletter as an important instrument to keep them informed about the latest information put on the web site. The participants agreed that the portal will work much better if the access to the database should be made on a subscription, because the maintenance team will be in this way motivated, and the information will have a better quality. In many cases, and, in special, in small firms, marketing values are not known, they do not have a corporate culture, and marketing information when they exist is incomplete or not useful. A good point is the fact that the majority of the companies are aware of the necessity of developing marketing activities. The companies want to find more information regarding the market ( domestic and abroad), some of the companies developed forms of collaboration with companies from the same industry and they are willing to set a budget for developing the marketing activity in the company.

The companies are interested also in the trends of the market in which they operate, on the consumer behavior and factors that influence it, for these activities, they are willing also to set a budget. From all the interviews conducted, the idea of realizing a web portal was very good received. If the marketing activity in the companies that participated at the discussion the things are not that clear, all the participants agreed that it is important to be informed, in detail, when they have to make a decision regarding the development of their business.

Big companies make their own market research; buy results of some general survey. SME's do not spend money on market research; they use only official statistics, and mostly internal data (sales force reports, sales analysis). Another source of information is the feedback received from the clients, information received by the client service department (where it exist), from the sales agents, from service or by analyzing the users forums, or blogs.

Big companies are willing to pay a monthly subscription in order to have access at an internet portal like INFOMARK, and they would participate at studies regarding general situations of the market. However, large companies are reluctant in using a free portal. The free information is considered of poor quality and

they consider it as a way in which competition wants to scare them. They consider useful information of company failures, things that went wrong in the past, in order not to make the same mistake.

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