

ОЦІНКА КООРДИНАЦІЇ ЕЛЕМЕНТІВ КОМПЛЕКСУ МАРКЕТИНГУ. РЕЗУЛЬТАТИ ДОСЛІДЖЕННЯ

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Стаття присвячена одному з ключових аспектів маркетингу, який полягає у впливі на цільовий ринок інтегрованого складу елементів комплексу маркетингу. Мета статті – представити результати дослідження рівня цієї особливості маркетингової діяльності на основі опитування 840 польських підприємств, проведеного відділом маркетингу економічного університету у Краківі. Результати свідчать про середню та добру оцінку координації інструментів комплексу маркетингу (де оцінка в групах великих підприємств є більш високою) та появи статистично значущих зв'язків між оцінкою ступеня координації „маркетинг-мікс” та, зокрема, оцінюючи значення окремих елементів у цьому складі, стратегію виграшу клієнтів або оцінку ступеня адаптації підприємств до сучасної ринкової економіки.

Ключові слова: маркетинговий менеджмент, маркетинг-мікс, координація елементів комплексу маркетингу.

ASSESSMENT OF THE CO-ORDINATION OF MARKETING TOOLS. RESULTS OF RESEARCH

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The paper is devoted to one of the key aspects of marketing, namely the impact of integrated marketing mix activities on the target market. The results of the research on the level of this feature of marketing activities is presented in the paper. The survey was conducted in year 2013-2014 on a sample of 840 Polish enterprises by the team of Marketing Department of the University of Economics in Cracow. The results of the survey indicate an average and good evaluation of marketing mix tools coordination (the evaluation marks are bigger in groups of larger companies). They also demonstrate statistically significant relationships between the assessment of the degree of co-ordination of marketing mix and the scores attributed to the significance of particular tools applied for that purpose, the strategy of winning customers used by the companies or the assessment of how much companies are adapted to the contemporary market policy.

Key words: marketing management, marketing-mix, co-ordination marketing mix.

Formulation of the issue. The impact made on the target market by the integrated group of tools which constitute marketing mix is one of the key, irrefutable aspects of marketing. Co-ordination of marketing activities is prerequisite for reaching synergy effect within this area. It is also the basic premise that inclines the management of companies to analyze the market forces and marketing assets so that to elaborate a reasonable mix of marketing instruments which will prove efficient and effective [3, p.23]. The analysis presented in this paper is the result of a research conducted by a team from the Institute of Marketing at Cracow University of Economics. The research focused on describing how deeply the marketing concepts and the rules of conduct of companies operating on the market are rooted in their practice, within the period of development of market economy in Poland. Assessing the degree of co-ordination and the importance of the marketing mix constituent elements within the activity of companies operating on the Polish market has become one of the many issues that were tackled in the research.

The analysis of the recent research and publications. In the theoretical considerations about the gist and the rules of marketing activity, one of the primary assertions is the principle that the target market should not be impacted by individual, separately considered instruments but by their properly harmonized composition called the marketing mix [10; 2; 4, pp. 21-26; 20, pp. 57-59; 1, pp. 10-13; 7, pp. 51-66]¹. Whilst the structure (number and character), hierarchical relationships, the importance of individual instruments in the composition are flexible and conditioned by many internal and external factors (both in theoretical description and economic practice), the need to coordinate them into a coherent whole remains unchanged – it expresses the essence of the conceptual construction (conceptual category) of the marketing-mix. It is indispensable to evoke synergy, an effect desired by each company, i.e. reaching the final result of the conducted market operations greater than the sum of results generated by each constituent part separately. Through co-operation and synchronization companies generate surplus benefit which becomes a prize necessary for gaining competitive advantage.

The need for co-ordinating the elements of marketing activity has been diversely formulated in the considerations on marketing:

- it is expressed as a component part of a mandatory feature of marketing i.e. planned shaping the market with a set of marketing tools which are consistent with the objectives and harmonized (action aspect of marketing) [12, pp. 22-23; 11, pp. 8-9]². It comprises, as a functional entity, a group of activities engaged both in the production sphere (creating an offer) as well as in trade (sales, communication with the market);

- it is identified with the rules for the construction of marketing-mix, becoming mostly apparent in the systemic rule. All instruments are treated as subsystems which have to be jointly designed and implemented. The integration rule indicates the whole system must be internally consistent³ [1, pp. 394-418; 11, pp. 969-1063; 21, pp. 46-47; 5, pp. 287-295];

- it is defined as a rule of conduct which constitutes the very gist of marketing (the concept of marketing conduct), apart from customer orientation and striving to reach the set objectives [6, p. 27]⁴;

- it is perceived as a stage of marketing process following market research; a conscious selection of the target market and positioning of their offer [13, pp. 14-16; 17, pp. 44-46];

- the harmony of marketing instruments is perceived as a set of utilities expected by the customers once they decide to co-operate (transaction activity) with a company [18, p. 28].

Irrespective of the one or another way of looking at the issue of instrument integration, the importance of co-operation and shared responsibility for a company which is led by the concept of marketing consists mainly in the fact that it is a set of decision variables (dependent on a company) which a company can manipulate, suiting them to its own needs and the external conditions. In certain circumstances (external intervention) variables cease to be dependent, which calls for some special adjusting measures to be applied by a company [8, pp. 79-88; 19, pp. 177-179].

¹ It is worth mentioning that even though all the extensive elaborations on marketing highlight the need to apply marketing –mix instruments and give much space to detailed descriptions of its constituent parts (marketing-mix instruments), yet very few of them present an in-depth analysis of the gist, prerequisites and the ways of forming that composition.

² Apart from such features as customer orientation (a philosophical aspect of marketing), observation of the environment (cognitive aspect), systematic research of the market (information aspect), determining the targets and plans for operation (strategic aspect), varied impact on the market (segmentation aspect), proper organizational structure (organization aspect), subordination to a social system (social aspect).

³ In line with the priority rule of marketing mix placed before the production and commercial activity, there are the rules for the hierarchy of structure marketing mix which indicates starting ordering the system from the product, the rule to individualize accordingly to the external and internal conditions (primarily to the expectations of the market).

⁴ In another approach, these principles are related to the logic of marketing process, or even marketing management. The set of principles includes a proper choice and shaping of a company's market, market research, marketing-mix, planning of market operations, monitoring the efficiency of marketing activity. See e.g. [14, p. 23].

The objective of the paper. This paper is aimed to present the results of a research on the degree of co-ordination of marketing-mix elements in companies operating on the Polish market. The diagnosis was made by means of self-assessment of people responsible for marketing management within the companies included in the research which allows verifying the research hypothesis.

H1. A significant majority of companies (2/3) operating on the Polish market highly value the level of coordination of the applied marketing tools (very high or high scores);

H2. The scores attributed to the level of co-ordination of the applied marketing tools are inversely proportional to the size of companies;

H3. The scores for the level of co-ordination of the applied marketing tools are statistically significantly related to other decisions regarding marketing instruments;

H4. There are statistically significant relations between the assessment of co-ordination of marketing-mix instruments and the descriptive features of the researched objects;

H5. There are constant (independent of the size of the enterprise) relationships between the assessment of the degree of coordination of used marketing tools and other marketing decisions and activities of enterprises.

Presentation of the research corpus. The research was divided into two stages: within the first stage, information was collected among 422 “Large” companies hiring more than 50 staff (pursuant to the generally accepted classification of medium and big companies). In the second stage, 418 “Small” companies hiring fewer than 50 staff were surveyed (in line with the micro– and little company classification). To run random matching of entities to the sample, a hybrid method of respondent selection was applied (companies and their representatives). Primary data were collected by the distributed questionnaires, with the application of an on-line questionnaire format [9, pp. 21–28]. The research corpus allows presenting and analyzing the scores reached by all companies included in the research, and then across various sizes of companies. Table 1 shows the data grouped in two sub-sets, consistent with the breakdown of companies into various sizes: (Large (L) – Small (S)). Such breakdown was directly imposed by the subsequent stages of the research. Further, a more detailed spread of data was presented, diving the companies into Big (B), Medium (M) Little (T) and Micro (Q) ¹.

The change in the market situation that occurred after the geopolitical breakthrough in Poland and the resultant adoption and widespread acceptance of the marketing business concept – also confirmed by the results of the research conducted in the part devoted to key success factors [15, 16] – allowed to hypothesize that companies striving to respect the principles (the features, the process) of marketing have reached a condition that allows a very positive assessment of their use. Therefore, they were asked to self-assess the degree of coordinating instruments that make up the marketing mix they use (Table 1).

Table 1

Assessment of the co-ordination level of marketing-mix instruments across various sizes of companies (data in %)

Group of companies	Assessment of the degree of marketing tools co-ordination					Total
	very high	high	average	low	very low	
All (L+S) N=825	6.3	39.4	44	8	2.3	100
Large (L=B+M) N=415	8.4	43.9	38.5	7.5	1.7	100
Small (S=T+Q) N=410	4.2	34.9	49.5	8.5	2.9	100
Big (B) N=98	13.3	51.0	32.7	3.0	0.0	100
Medium (M) N=317	6.9	41.7	40.4	8.8	2.2	100
Little (T) N=309	3.2	38.5	46.0	9.1	3.2	100
Micro (Q) N=101	6.9	23.8	60.4	6.9	2.0	100

Source: Author’s own elaboration

¹ A common, generally accepted classification was followed according to which Big (B) companies hire over 250 people, Medium (M) between 50 and 250, Little (T) from 10 to 50, and Micro (Q) below 10.

The results indicate a reasonable, moderate level of optimism about self-assessment of the actual relationship between the classically distinguished (assuming also some other) marketing-mix instruments. Only every sixteenth entity from all respondents assesses the degree of coordination at a very high level, and about 2/5 at the high and medium level. Just over 10 % of all enterprises rated the degree of coordination low or very low. Thus, the optimistic view expressed in H1 has not been confirmed – only 45.7 % of all researched entities formulated a definitely positive rating (very high and high), and a comparable group (44 %) average rating. It is worth noting that this result is statistically significantly different for enterprises of various sizes¹.

Companies classified as Big (B) twice as often (compared to the result of all companies) evaluate the coordination of marketing-mix instruments very highly, while Little (T) companies by half less often. More than half of Big companies (B) assess it at a high level, and in the case of Micro-companies (Q), less than 1/4 of them make such assessment. Almost twice as often as Big Micro-companies (Q), they assess the level of coordination at the medium level. Only a few Big companies have scored low ratings, and none of them rated the integration of marketing-mix elements at a very low level, which was the case with several Medium (M), Little (T) and two Micro (Q) companies. These distributions show that the assessment of marketing-mix instruments coordination depends on the size of a company (H2 hypothesis confirmed). The larger the company, the more optimistic the assessments are. In the case of Big companies (B), the total rate of positive (very high and high) ratings reached 64.3 %, which (moderately) positively confirms the first of the research hypotheses (H1). For this group of companies In the case of Micro enterprises (Q), the total positive rating (very high and high) amounts to only 30.7 %.

The analysis included relationships between the valuations of the degree of co-ordination of marketing-mix instruments and other data on the views, activities and characteristics of the researched entities (total of 70 variables). Research results indicate a few statistically significant relationships among those variables².

The only statistically significant relationship within each group of companies (Big, Medium, Little, Micro) regarding the degree of co-ordination of marketing-mix was found in terms of company adaptation to modern market economy. Within the group of all companies which assessed their co-ordination as very high, one third would consider their adaptation fully satisfactory, and over a half more than average (Table 2). Over one third of entities considering their co-ordination level high would rate their adaptation level fully satisfactory, and two fifths of such entities considered their adaptation level more than average. The reverse structure of that relation is apparent in case of low scores of marketing-mix tools co-ordination and the ratings of adoption to the requirements of the market. The same character of relation was found for each group of companies in terms of their size.

The most apparent correlation (within the group of Big, Medium and Little companies) was found in the rating of co-ordination of marketing-mix instruments and the ratings of importance level of individual instruments. The higher co-ordination level found, the more apparent was the key importance of one, or at least two basic instruments of the marketing-mix. The lower co-ordination rating, the less distinctive is the rating of the dominant importance of individual elements of that composition. An exemplary distribution of those relations for group Big companies is presented in Table 3.

An interesting relationship was found between the assessment of marketing-mix co-ordination and the strategy for winning customers applied by the companies. The researched companies (within three distinguished groups; Big, Medium and Little) are convinced about the need for the implementation of a strategy promoting high quality of a product. Amongst the companies that considered the level of co-ordination very high, the indications choosing that strategy are dominant (approx.. 90 %). That percentage

¹ Commentary to the results signaled just those differences which radically depart from the distribution values of results reached for the group of all companies (considered an average result for all researched entities) The author accepted 10 % of the average assessment result (for the whole population) as a determinant factor.

² It was assumed that a statistically significant correlation is when for Pearson's Chi-square probability the probability of rejecting the hypothesis of the lack of dependence between the variables studied is less than 0.05, and the V-Cramer coefficient assumes a value > 0.3.

is declining more and more (which suggests that the researched companies are implementing some other strategy) in line with the dropping level of assessment of marketing-mix co-ordination (up to one third of indications at a very low level of co-ordination).

Table 2

Valuation of co-ordination level of marketing-mix instruments in relation to the rating of company adaptation to the modern market economy (data in %, N = 821)

Level of marketing-mix instruments co-ordination	Degree of company adaptation to modern market economy				Total
	fully satisfactory	more than average for the sector	average (relative the sector)	unsatisfactory	
very high	32.69	46.15	17.31	3.85	6.33
high	28.00	39.69	28.00	4.31	39.59
average	12.50	22.78	50.83	13.89	43.85
low	4.55	7.58	53.03	34.85	8.04
very low	16.67	0.00	44.44	38.89	2.19
Total	19.37	29.23	39.71	11.69	100.00

Source: Author's own elaboration

Table 3.

Valuation of the co-ordination level of marketing-mix instruments in relation to the importance rating of distribution as a constituent instrument (data in %, N = 94)

The level of marketing-mix instruments co-ordination	Importance of distribution as an instrument of marketing-mix composition				Total
	key	important	less important	hard to tell	
very high	72.73	18.18	9.09	0.00	11.70
high	12.24	59.18	22.45	6.12	52.13
average	19.68	41.61	25.81	12.90	32.98
low	0.00	33.33	33.33	33.33	3.19
Total	18.09	50.00	23.40	8.51	100.00

Source: Author's own elaboration

In addition, the research proved that many other statistically significant relationships may be found for each researched group of companies. What is interesting, they are not common for all (or even the majority of) the distinguished groups of companies. Such relationships can be noted in connection with regarding various activities and behaviors as crucial factors for the success of a company, the form of organizing marketing in a company, the types of plans for developing the company and its marketing activity, product development and market development strategies applied to increase the sales, the declared opinion about the contemporary concepts of marketing management (relationship marketing, partnership marketing, values), or the opinions about factors hampering pro-market development of a company. What is interesting, no permanent correlation was found between the researched problem, and other, excluding the size, objective characteristics of a company, such as dominant activity, end users, differentiation of customer needs, market volatility, competition, competitive structure of the market, market dynamics, company position, sales in the revenue of a company, status and structure, legal status, equity and owner's supervision, employment, range of activity, type of activity, financial condition, book value to market value.

Hence, it may be asserted that the application of the principle that requires co-ordinating marketing-mix instruments is not determined by the descriptive features of market entities, and is therefore the result

of their independent decisions and actions. When the co-ordination is weak, market entities may not find excuses claiming that they are somehow incapacitated in taking such measures. Thus, the ability to compose marketing-mix whilst observing the postulates of co-ordinating and integrating the constituent tools depends to a large extent (if not solely) on their awareness and efficiency. First and foremost, it depends on the adopted, and then consistently implemented orientation of market activities.

Conclusions. The analysis of the presented research material allowed verifying the research hypotheses. Therefore, it defined the actual (interesting from the cognitive point of view) character of co-ordination and the significance of marketing-mix instruments in companies operating on the Polish market:

- less than a half of all companies positively assess (very highly or highly) co-ordination of marketing-mix instruments. H1 has not been proved;
- the assessment of marketing-mix co-ordination is dependent on the size of the assessing company (H2 has been proved). The larger a company, the more optimistic is the assessment of marketing-mix instruments co-ordination;
- the hypothesis about the connection of the assessment grade for the co-ordination of the applied marketing tools with other decisions about marketing instruments has been proved (H3). There is a proven relationship with the assessment grade of the importance of individual marketing instruments;
- the hypothesis about the relationship between the assessment grade of marketing-mix instruments co-ordination and the researched descriptive features of companies has not been proved (H4);
- the hypothesis asserting constant (independent of the company size) relationships between the assessment of the degree of coordination of the applied marketing tools and other decisions and marketing activities of companies (H5) has been partially confirmed; only one such constant (in three separate groups of the surveyed companies: Big, Medium, and Little) was found to be dependent on the strategies used to win customers within the researched enterprises. In addition, many other dependencies that are not permanent have been identified. i.e., occurring only in the selected groups of the researched entities.

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