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The Use of Knowledge Management in Marketing Communication of Small and Medium-Sized Companies

Pavel Mráček^a, Martin Mucha^{a,*}

^a Brno University of Technology, Faculty of Business and Management, Kolejní 2906/4, Brno 612 00, Czech Republic

Abstract

The article is involved in the application of knowledge management in marketing communication of small and medium-sized companies. The focus of presented article is given on communication of shops selling outdoor apparel in the territory of the Czech Republic. In consideration of popularity of outdoor apparel among Czech customers small and medium-sized producers and retailers should use their knowledge, should co-ordinate such knowledge purposefully, thus addressing their customers more precisely. The reason of our focus on small and medium-sized companies is also the fact that large store chains, selling sport clothing, represent a strong competition, liquidating both local producers and retailers. Manufacture and distribution of outdoor apparel does not concentrate on consumer market; industrial market represents a strong share, too. Therefore, monitoring of individual markets is rather important, as well as implementation of completely new approaches into the company processes. Based on this fact the authors focus on competitiveness of small and medium-sized companies, which are recommended to communicate with maximal use of knowledge management. Results of the marketing communication research with subsequent connection of the use of knowledge management principles add a new dimension to the area of this focus. Research carried-out in the area of customers in the outdoor apparel segment and knowledge management form the base for the elaboration of this article. The outputs of said article are based on the internal research of marketing communication of suppliers of apparel and retailers active in the outdoor apparel segment in the Czech Republic.

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* Corresponding author. Tel.: +420 541 146 920 ; fax: +420 541 142 458.

E-mail address: mracek@fbm.vutbr.cz, mucha@fbm.vutbr.cz

1. Introduction

The resource searching of competitive advantages forces the companies to develop permanently new approaches. The fact, that about the value of competitive advantage eventuality to a great extent decides all above the sight of the customer, besides the competing business abilities, implies considerable potential of conception of value co-production by the customer. The value co-production is still used very well not only for designs and production of new products. Thanks this the perceived value is increasing, which is brought to it. The space for using also offers marketing communication. It stands also in the segment of outdoor clothing. Here the customer is expecting the definite value, which the bought thing will bring him and is able to co-create on the production. The starting frame of this value co-production is the knowledge of both the producers and the customers. In some cases, on the industrial market, the knowledge of product co-creating, is necessary.

Many producers agree to requests of customers and adjust them to their needs. It is also in the case, which is notable in present days. The customers would like to use the clothing, which was designed for use in the nature in extreme conditions, for common using in the town. By the thing, that outdoor looking cloths are worn and outdoor marks are becoming more fashionable, many producers are coming to market, who are trying to obtain their places in this segment. The outdoor clothing combines technical maturity (used materials and also the final product), high usable value, fashionable trend, image etc. At all of these areas it is possible to use the co-creation by the customers. For the product value increasing are participating suppliers/material producers, clothes producers and sellers. Their marketing communication built on mutual co-operation and the co-producing with the customers can bring synergistic effects notable at customers.

The article was inspired and partly also uses the data from one of the authors' dissertation thesis.

2. Experimental

For the article needs was needed to perform a research in some areas. The first information gaining about the customers rose from the analysis of secondary data. Further the questionnaire was used in the area of customers. For an exact understanding, systematic observation and shopping mystery was used. These methods were targeted to find out, if and how the customers and sellers use their knowledge.

2.1. Secondary data analysis - customers

The Czech people use outdoor clothing also for common everyday activities. The popularity rises mainly from the universality of this clothing. According to the research by the company Ipsos Tabor realized for the company Veletrhy Brno in February 2010, Czech people like touristic trips not only in the frame of the Czech Republic, and that is why they are willing to spend their money for equipment, which is connected with this activity. Significant and more active group, according the research, are young people between 20-34 years and people with higher education. In shopping decision the supplementary criteria have a significant role here. For example, the offer of sold products is important for 44% of Czech people. The closeness of the shop from the place of living is important for 35% of Czech people. 22% of Czech people consider to be important also the customer advantages like vouchers, discount coupon and big price reduction. According to Horák they are not the main reason, but they have some type of attractivity. The Czech people are mostly attracted by advantageous sales. At 67% from them, they are able to influence the loyalty to the shop, where they go shopping (Barometr Cetelem 2010).

2.2. Questionnaire inquiry – customers

The aim of a questionnaire inquiry was to find out, where the respondents buy their clothes the most, where they gain the information about the clothes the most, which factors influence the respondents at shopping the most, perception of marketing communication of particular parts in the relationship of respondents, the relationship of respondents to outdoor, their age and sex. Among the aims of the questionnaire inquiry belongs also the findings of respondent behaviour in relation to outdoor clothes shopping.

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