

The label and package in relationship with the food products communication

Elena CONDREA*, Danut Tiberius EPURE and Anca Cristina STANCIU

Faculty of Economics Sciences, "Ovidius" University of Constanta, 1 Aleea Universitatii St., Constanta, Romania

Abstract. In the marketing activity of a firm, especially in the food industry sector, an important role is owned by the product communication. In the food product management, as in any other domain, the communication can be explicit or/and implicit.

The study presents the role of label and package in the food products communication in a competitive environment.

As in the case of the other product categories, the implicit communication is based on the usage of more language types, like: verbal language, body language, space language and the language of colours and objects.

In the establishment of the adopted communication strategies, an important role is owned by the gathered information; moreover, there is emphasis on the practiced internal and inter-organizational means of communication.

Keywords: communication, food, consumer, language.

1. General aspects regarding the product communication

In the marketing activity of a firm, especially in the food industry sector, an important role is given to the product communication.

The intrinsic product communication follows the action of building an image on the product, as a complex ideal representation.

Throughout the last years a different form of product communication has extended itself, the *extrinsic communication*, which ties the product's purchasing to different advantages which do not depend on the product (gifts, awards, services etc.).

As is the case with any product communication, the communication model is respected in the case of food product communication, which states that there must exist [1]:

- ◆ A message source – a producer and a transmitter for basic codified messages;
- ◆ Messages – elements essential to communication;
- ◆ A message receptor, which receives and decrypts the message;
- ◆ A communication channel system – direct relations, mass-media, meetings, advertisements, etc);

- ◆ A context for the messages' transmission – the socio-cultural environment of the communication, which exists in a certain moment, in certain conditions;

- ◆ Feedback mechanisms – inverted communication, from the receiver (the message is subjected to a secondary codification) towards the source, where the message is subjected to the secondary decryption.

In the establishment of the product communication strategy there must be kept in view:

- **Who must be the source?** – the image about who communicates the message is formed;
- **Who is the target of the message?** – the image regarding the message's receiver is formed;
- **Why is the product communication established?** – the image on the communication's purpose is formed;
- **What will be transmitted?** – the message's contents is established;
- **How will the communication take place?** – refers to:
 - *Through what means does the communication take place?* –the language and channel of communication is established?

- *What is the communication's desired effect?* – the message's efficacy is analyzed (the difference between the desired target and the obtained results);
- *What are the communication's costs?* – the communication's efficiency as a rapport between the consumed means and obtained results.

2. Particularities of the food communication

In the case of foods, the product communication is centred on dimensions tied to quality and price. When we talk about the food's quality we do not refer only to its conformity to requirements, but we consider the nutritional aspect and the innocuity of the product, its psychological and socio-cultural features.

The communication strategy is determined by the organization's management type, by the way in which it conceives and realizes the products' quality, the necessities, respectively the socio-cultural models for food consumption. It must be very well established which are the needs and necessities in what concerns food consumption. The necessities are given by the life requirements resulted from the needs' socio-cultural processing [2].

The product communication can be realized through different means, among which:

- The products' quality's confirmation through testimonies of *representative consumers*;
- The correlation of some of the product's characteristics with certain treatments prescribed by the prevention and/or treatment of some affections;
- The argumentation of the products' quality through the presentation of the great volume of commercialized products;
- The presentation of product brands accredited/certified by internationally recognized organizations which attest/certify quality;
- The presentation of the firm under the "umbrella" of the product's realization [3].

The product communication is subordinate to the production type, as well as the type of management practiced by the organization; there can be two situations: mass production and consumption, respectively personalized production and consumption.

In the first case, respectively the *management of mass production and consumption*, the product communication will emphasise [4]:

- Price;
- The quantity of products delivered at the same price;
- The money saving made through the product's consumption;
- The food's usage by a very great number of consumers;
- The product's production and commercialization for a long time, which demonstrates a high quality level, accepted by the consumers;
- The nutritional value (with all its components) of the product;
- The more efficient use of some products (smaller quantity – more pronounced effect);
- The validity term (products with a longer validity term are appreciated) etc.

The communication with the clients, stakeholders and other interested parts is made through undifferentiated means, which transmit standard messages – simple information, evened out regarding the quality and price.

In *the production's management and personalized consumption*, characterized by productions and consumption on small niches, told apart by numerous criteria which are not of strictly economic nature (sex, age, culture, religion, habits, lifestyle, eating style, etc.), the communication will emphasize[1]:

- The conception of special products, addressed to specific food requirements, like: persons with different affections which impose a certain alimentation, small children, elders, sportspeople, persons who make intense physical effort or work in certain environments, pregnant women who do or do not breast feed etc;
- Products from the same food group, but with different characteristics, for consumers with different tastes/needs (olive oil, sunflower oil, corn oil etc.);
- The underlining of the products' variety in comparison with the consumers' special requirements: products with a low number of calories for persons who are on a diet, with high energy value for people who make intense physical effort etc.;

- The presentation of the new food product, improved/enriched with different components necessary to the human organism (vitamins, amino acids, minerals etc.), specifying the fact that it replaces known products of the same type and emphasizing on the new quality elements;
- The refinement of the consumer in choosing foods products;
- Special products for the models fitted for more refined consumption (examples: caviar; skewers; barbecue steaks; cordon bleu; toast; different sauces; salad dressings; schnitzels etc.);
- The presentation of luxury restaurants in which special products are served, for consumers with a higher social status;
- The foods products/half-prepared meals/hot meals which can be served on different occasions: anniversaries, business meetings, ceremonies, conferences/meetings with more participants etc.;
- The products consumed in certain periods of the year, on different occasions depending on religion.

In this case, the communication with the clients presumes varied messages, which are differentiated and adequate for the lifestyle of different consumer groups. The relations with the stakeholders presume, as well, diverse means and strategies for message communication.

Indifferently of the communication type, of the path through which this act is realized, in the product communication there must be taken in consideration the communication's ethical dimension; the message must fully contain the truth, not hide some aspects linked to the product through omission or, worse, through the attribution of characteristics/attributes which are not real [4].

In the food product's management, as in any other field, the communication can be explicit or implicit.

The explicit communication refers to what the concretely used language is effectively transmitted (ex: it is explicitly communicated that the *X product* – *wheat bread* is healthy).

The implicit communication refers to the range of senses which a receiver can decipher, in the explicitly communicated message's decodification process (examples: the message that a product has a high level of nutritive substances which could be interpreted that the *X product fattens*; *the affirmation that the X product is healthy* could determine us to

think that the other similar products are not healthy or even that the respective products is not healthy – if it were, there should not be such an affirmation etc.).

As in the case of other product categories, the implicit communication is based on the use of more language types, like [1, 2]:

Verbal language – are taken into consideration:

- *The express' tonality* – it can induce trust or distrust in what regards the respective message's transmission;
- *The use of metaphors* in the purpose of generating of under-understandings regarding the respective product (example: *the sparkling water X – pearl of sparkling waters* leads us to think that the affirmation “the X sparkling water is the purest and most valuable of sparkling waters”; *the flour Y – the queen of Romania flours* presumes that “the Y flour is the most appreciated flour produced on the Romanian market”);
- *The use of value terms* – *the product X is the healthiest*; *the y product is the only product recommended in...*;

Body language – presents an importance:

- *Body movement* – may emphasize those verbally through: actions, position and movement of the body, the position and movement of the hands, head, etc.;
- *The face's expression* consists of: *mimic, smile and/or look* (may be associated to the verbal language). These expressions of the face and induce different meanings, as: what has been communicated through verbal language is of an increased importance or must not be taken seriously/is not important;
- *The person's behaviour* can give information regarding: the social status of the person who consumes the respective product or to whom the respective message is addressed; the consumers' health; the buying power of potential consumers; the physical capacities of the potential consumers etc.;

The space's language implies six communicational dimensions (size; intimacy grade; height; near-far; inside-outside; the space's arrangement mode).

The language of things and colours – have a special significance in comparison with the company's cultural particularities [5].

Generally, these language types complete each other in the product communication, each having its role and importance in the transmitting and receiving of the message regarding the specified product.

In any product communication, the transmitted message is decrypted by the consumer, most of the times, through the consulting of his personal situation. The explicit communication is received through numerous and diverse implicit elements. In this case, an essential role is played by the trust in the message. In most of the cases, this trust is won through [2]:

- The language's sincerity – it is recommended that in the message does not contain very precise aspects, sometimes exaggerated (example: *the x product is more efficient than the y by 69%*), not to negatively promote other products, not to present vague arguments, impossible to verify;
- The recommendation of a firm recognized for the attesting/certification of the quality regarding the respective product's quality;
- The specification of the producer, especially when he is recognized on the national and/or international market;
- The specification of famous users (restaurant chains, certain consumer groups, especially for aliments suited for diets/with a special destination etc.).

3. Communication strategies on the food chain

In the establishment of the adopted communication strategies, a very important role is held by the gathered information: regarding the product, about the clients, about the organization targeted in a general manner, regarding the respective organization's employees.

Moreover, the accent is put on the means of internal communication (formal and informal communication) and the practiced inter-organizational means.

The organization's internal communication refers to the ensemble of activities which imply an exchange of messages within the organization, between individual persons, as well as between groups. The internal communication can be formal (official) and/or informal.

The formal communication refers to the processes of creation, transmission, receiving and applying of the messages generated by the organization's management and which move around on official channels. The official communication can be done **from top to bottom** (the messages leave from the leadership level to the employees) and **from bottom to top** (created by feedback, which contains information linked to the mode of receiving and execution of the messages received from the top leadership by the organization's inferior levels).

The formal internal communication can be directly done (**face-to-face**) or indirectly (through the means of audio-visual).

The informal communication consists of the processes of creation, broadcasting, receiving and use of the messages in optional, spontaneous, preferential relations, generated by the gathering of people in an organization.

This type of communication can be used by the organization's general management or any other level, in the completion/verification of the information gather on formal ways.

The informal communication expresses the organization's psychosocial status, its needs, opinions, spontaneous reactions toward the messages which made the object of the formal communication, the employees' preferences, dissatisfaction etc;

In employees' briefing can be done through one or more methods/techniques, as:

- ◆ SWOT analysis;
- ◆ PEST analysis;
- ◆ The Porter model (the 5 forces' model);
- ◆ The sociometric analysis of the relationships within the workgroup;
- ◆ The focus-group analysis [3].

Comparing the two types of internal communication which can be met in an organization, we can say that in the case of formal communication there are transmitted messages regarding the employees' life within the organization, where as the messages transmitted through informal communication are connected to the everyday life of the employees, within and outside the organization.

The interorganizational communication, as the internal one, is a permanent preoccupation of the organization's management, is the result of an efficient leadership and beneficial for the

organization. The strategies followed in this type of communication depend mostly on the type of management practice within the organization in cause.

Referring to the client's information, indifferently if it is regarding organizations or final consumers (persons), this can be done on several ways, among which:

- ◆ Communication through images;
- ◆ Communication through "histories";
- ◆ Information upon the product's quality;
- ◆ Benchmarking [5].

4. Conclusions

The communication is possible only through an exchange of knowledge/information. The food communication is centred on dimensions connected to the product's quality, its nutritional value (with all its components: energy, hygiene, biological, sensorial and aesthetics), price.

In the food's management, as in any other field, the communication can be explicit or/and implicit.

The simple relations of execution and control existing on the level of the food industry's sector's units have been replaced with practices which are linked to the competence's negotiations, which imply complex communication processes.

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* E-mail address: elenacondrea2003@yahoo.com

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