

PROMOTING RESEARCH ON CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR WITH REFERENCE TO THE INFLUENCE OF ADVERTISING ON FOOD PURCHASING

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ABSTRACT: *Alignment with the European Union means trying to adapt and facilitate adaptation depending on the resources of our country. For consumers, it is necessary to inform and educate them in accordance with the EU regulations. Foods must meet the quality requirements of consumers. The requirements are constantly changing. In the past 20 years diversifying and fast renewing, creating of the single market, free movement of goods, elimination of trade barriers by developing common European standards, and introduction of certification has resulted in increased consumer confidence on the quality of the products they purchase from advertising. A marketing research was conducted, through a questionnaire, in compliance with the research methodology, with the aim of highlighting consumers' views on the influence of advertising on purchasing foods. The gap reduction between what is intended to be conveyed by advertising and what is necessary, fair, clear, and consistent to be transmitted through advertising, according to EU regulations, leads to competitive advantage afforded by any producer in any country. In any business it is important to measure the feedback of the activity as well, which often is not done. This study sought and measured the feedback on whether consumers are happy of the message regarding food products purchased, transmitted by advertising campaigns carried in the county of Sibiu.*

KEY WORDS: *consumer, advertising, message, food product, purchase, future development.*

JEL CLASIFICATION: *M31, M37, Q13.*

1. INTRODUCTION:

The European Union has had responsibility regarding the safety and quality requirements of consumers, as evidenced in the past 40 years by developing regulations, standards and monitoring methods to ensure food safety. After Boboc (2006) as the European Union created a single market for goods, internal barriers being

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high, the need for a common policy on the quality of food products is very important. Food crises and health hazards were used to develop these regulations.

According to Boboc (2006) European policy for promoting the quality of food products aimed at establishing a reference framework necessary to improve the quality of food products, the competitiveness of European businesses and citizens' lives.

There is an opinion that in the past decade, the Romanian population is increasingly concerned about the quality and safety of food. Consumers want to be sure that the foods they buy in the stores or they eat in restaurants and fast-foods are appropriate in terms of hygienic and nutritional quality and are produced at a certain standard (Boboc, 2006). From the literature, it appears that when defined, the quality policy must take into account the main objective of the company, namely satisfying consumer requirements. This is reflected in EU policy of consumer protection where in a primary objective refers to taking the necessary measures to enable consumers to make choices based on clear, accurate and consistent information (European Commission, 2013).

Recent research (Diaconescu, Ardelean and Diaconescu, 2007) suggests that free movement of goods becomes a reality. With a common standard for all European countries, a product can reach a much wider market with much lower costs of implementation and testing. Manufacturers benefit by the fact that they can use a larger base of external suppliers with a quality assurance and increased efficiency. According to Olaru (1999) diversification and rapid renewal of supply of goods and the globalization of markets, generated the introduction of new practices to ensure enhancement of consumer's confidence regarding the quality of the product they acquire, through the introduction of certification. The evolution of the number of certificates issued during the period 1994-2014 is shown in (table 1). In 2004, Europeans accounted for 50% of certificates of quality management systems and environmental ones (Maxim, 2009).

Table 1. Certificates issued in Europe, 2004

Country	Certificates issued 1994 ²	Certificates issued 2004 ¹	Certificates issued 2014 ²
Czech Republic	47	10.781	13229
Hungary	58	10.207	6928
Poland	16	5.753	9608
Romania	6	5.183	18987
Slovakia	11	2.008	4604
Bulgaria	-	1.685	5730

Source: ¹Maxim, 2009, p.36-37, ²<http://www.iso.org/iso/survey>

Product certification for the free movement of goods in within the Single Market in Europe will increase customer confidence in the company's ability to deliver the required quality and to maintain this quality. Gradually, the European Union has outlined a common policy on nutrition and food industry directed towards the consumer, and is accompanied by a change in attitude from consumers, reflected in changes in habits and structure of consumption (Diaconescu and Diaconescu, 2000).

Consumer demand determines the supply of producers who, in order to survive in the free market, must constantly adapt the performance and prices of products offered to the consumers' requirements. In this way, the consumer has an important role in stimulating competition and helps improve market functioning by the choices they make, rational choices based on the information available. Consumers stimulate those producers who are closest to their needs, and primarily by price / quality rapport (Dinu, 2011), but also those who through advertising give a corresponding message in terms of product quality and the needs of consumers.

Consumer protection is needed in the market economy, but even more necessary during the transition to market economy mechanism, when it should be a priority sanctioning business entities that manufacture products of inferior quality (Dinu, 2011). Consumer Protection in the food industry refers to the defense of incorrect or misleading information to consumers, as reflected by Directive 2000/13/EC on the approximation of the laws of the Member States relating to food labeling, presentation and advertising of foodstuffs (Directive, 2000).

Communication with customers and suppliers on identified risks and control measures will help clarify customer and supplier requirements (Criveanu, Sperdea and Criveanu, 2012).

European policy of consumer protection is based on two fundamental principles, of which one state that action must be taken at EU level to protect the health, safety and economic interests of consumers and to promote their right to information and education (European Commission, 2013). EU law protects consumers from unfair or illegal business practices. In this regard, the following measures prohibiting the use of aggressive sales techniques are applied by the EU, e.g. use of misleading advertising and unfair commercial practices, which have been banned in the EU since 2005 (European Commission, 2013).

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The product was always the center of attention of any marketing activity (Gay, Charlesworth and Esen, 2009). Orientation of activities that the company carries concerning the making products, pricing, fixing traffic routes, and the method of distribution, the promotion framework form the materialization field of the marketing mix. The task of the marketing mix is to serve the 4 groups of variables into action programs with maximum efficiency (Smedescu, 2004). This concept of the four "P" embraces the market outlook of the seller and not the buyer. From the point of view of the buyer, in this era of customer relationships, the four "P" could be better described as four "C" (Kotler and Armstrong, 2008), as shown in (table 2).

In 1989, in Romania, there was a relatively favorable attitude towards advertising. Advertising was the most visible marketing tool that consumers have come in contact in that time. In 2003, a survey on advertising, shows that Romanians are among the most significant consumers of TV shows - 86% of consumers watched TV daily (Vegheş, 2003).

Advertising is a qualitative variable, psychological, with long-term action and, in general, is difficult to measure quantitatively, taking into consideration the effects

that it generates. Advertising is public, optimistic, and partisan, is relatively cheap but also has a character that is profoundly offensive. The profoundly offensive nature comes from printing upon the manufacturer, retailer and consumer the desire of continues action until the actual sale of the product occurs (Marcenac, Milon and Saint Michel, 2006). From the analysis carried out in (table 2) it can be seen that the promotion is what is communicated about the product.

Table 2. The four "P" and the four "C"

The four "P"	The four "C"
Product	Consumer
Price	Customer cost
Placement	Comfort
Promotion	Communication

Source: Kotler and Armstrong, 2008, p. 68

Studies in the mid-90s, along with product development on the Romanian advertising market showed that Romanians, as consumers, appreciate advertising as a source of information regarding different products on the market and as an important element in the decisional process of buying. A study done in 1998 by Leo Burnett & Target, showed that: 38% of Romanian consumers considered advertising a source of information; 33% regarded it as a source where they learn about new products; and 25% appreciated it as a source of news (Vegheş, 2003). 85% of purchase decisions are made at point of sale. In these circumstances, the way it presents the product and the connotations that it suggested is one of the top buying criteria (Marcenac, Milon and Saint Michel, 2006). Therefore it is very important that the message on the food product reflects its features realistically.

Promotional activities can have as an objective the information or stimulation of the act of buying. In the first case it seeks recognition from the market following the creation of a favourable image, and in the second case it aims to increase sales by increasing the number of users, or by increasing the size of the application for each user.

Both objectives can change the position of the company's products in the market, leading ultimately to an increase in sales volume and market share (Anghel and Petrescu, 2003). Informational advertising is heavily used during the pioneering period on the market of a product, where the objective is to generate a primary application. Persuasive advertising becomes important at the competition stage when a firm's objective is to attract a selective demand for a particular brand (Kotler, 2000).

Romanian advertising market had the following evolution: 309 million euros in 2011; 303 million euros in 2012; 305 million euros in 2013; and 313 million euros in 2014 (HotNews, 2015).

Advertising is very diverse and complex, both in the multitude of forms that it has, in the institutions involved and the funds raised (Papuc, 2004). For food products, advertising must be achieved through three major media messaging advertisements. For the three major messaging environments, press advertising, television and radio, there are very specific criteria for selection (Papuc, 2004).

According to estimations of the agency Initiative: The print media has declined steadily from 19 million in 2013 to 17 million in 2014; Radio market decreased slightly from 19 million in 2013 to 18 million in 2014; and TV advertising market increased from 193 million in 2013 to 198 million in 2014 (HotNews, 2015).

For 2013, the European advertising market shows that Romania with 305 million euro investment in advertising is placed in the first part of the top countries in Central and Eastern Europe. In Poland, a country with 38.5 million inhabitants, advertising consumption in 2013 was 1.61 billion euros (TV, internet, radio, print and outdoor). Czech market, a country with 10.5 million inhabitants, has attracted advertising investment of 1.36 billion euros. Poland and the Czech Republic are the most attractive markets in Central and Eastern Europe. In Hungary, a country of 9.9 million inhabitants, advertising amounted at 420 million euros. Markets that are poorer than Romania are: Slovakia 277 million euros, Croatia - 189 million euros, Bulgaria - 179 million euros and Serbia - 155 million euros. The share of the total TV budget consumed from the total advertising investments in Romania, in 2013, was of 63%. In front of Romania is Albania, with 74%, Macedonia, with 71% and Bosnia Herzegovina, with 70%. The TV advertising budget with the lowest market share was of 29%, registered in Estonia. In Poland television has a share of 47%, in the Czech Republic of 40% and in Hungary the share of the total television advertising was of 41%. Print media has high figures in these countries: 35% in the Czech Republic, 21% in Hungary and 13% in Poland. The media in Romania has attracted only 6% of the total advertising budget, the lowest percentage figure of printings in comparison to the other countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

The share of investment in promoting on digital from the total advertising budget consumed in each country is as follows: Poland 25%, Czech Republic 10%, Hungary - 23% and Romania 15% (Forbes, 2016). From specialized literature advertising is a form of persuasive communication, serving to change attitudes of receptors in the sense of purchasing a specific product, whose qualities are real (Papuc, 2004).

In this sense, a marketing research was conducted, qualitative selective and instrumental (Asandei et al., 2010) that points out consumers' views on the influence of advertising on purchasing foods, which can identify reasons behind the purchasing through the influence of advertising. Qualitative research of opinion (Stoica, 2010) involves collecting, channelling and interpreting information based on observation of the reactions and attitudes of consumers (Szente, 2010) of food, and which are influenced by advertising in their purchase.

The article's originality is determined by identifying consumer's opinion regarding food purchase based on advertising, study that has not been achieved, but also the theoretical part designed to highlight the evolution of advertising in Romania in the past 20 years.

3. METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

The study aims to investigate the influence of advertising on consumer views on purchasing foods. The research was carried out based on questionnaires and

included a powerful set of interrelated activities, resulting in several steps taken in their logical sequence, according to the research methodology.

Formulating objectives consisted of stating accurate information needed in choosing the optimal decision for each stage of the marketing research. The objectives were differentiated according to their relative importance for research purposes. The main objectives were differentiated (I, II, III), and related to this, the secondary objectives.

- I. Investigation within a week of the influence of advertising on purchasing foods.
- II. What are the opinions of the subjects related to the influence of advertising on their decision to purchase food?
- III. What is the motivation of subjects on food choice based on advertising?

3.1. Elaboration of research hypothesis

The elaboration of hypothesis started from the idea that the development of assumptions has a significant practical value in designing the marketing research. In establishing the hypotheses of the marketing research, I focused on the information that will be required in the analysis consumer's opinion on the assessment of the influence of advertising on food purchase. Data on population structure by age, sex and area were taken from the National Institute of Statistics - Department of Statistics - Sibiu on 01 October 2015. The study was conducted between January 15 and February 15, 2016, when the pre-testing was also performed (table 3).

Table 3. Population structure-Sibiu County

Population	Total	Male	Female
Total	463598	226145	237453
Urban	313678	150623	163055
Rural	149920	75522	74398

Source: INS, 2015, p.35

3.2. Determination of sample size

To determine the sample size, I started with the concept of proportion that describes the community investigated. The formula used to determine the sample is:

$$n = z^2 * s^2 / e^2$$

where:

n – the size of the sample; z - coefficient associated to the probability of guaranteeing the results of the research (confidence level) set by the researcher (its value is taken from statistical tables); s - standard deviation in level of the sample determined at the level of a given variable; e - the margin of error.

The probability for guaranteeing the research results is 95%, the confidence level is 0.05, in a margin of error of $\pm 5\%$, a standard deviation of 0.30, where the coefficient associated to the probability of guaranteeing the research results is $t = 1.96$

according to appendix 1- the statistical table from (Cătoiș et al., 2002), and to number n, 139 consumers, representing the sample size.

3.3. Determining the structure of the sample by means of quotas

Using the method of quota, a sample has been constructed to serve for obtaining information. The method of quotas is a non-random sampling method. The method of quotas allows the construction of a sample within which individuals will be included whose geographical, socio-demographic, behavioural, and economic characteristics will be very close to those of the reference population. The sample structure will replicate in percentage the structure of the researched community. The sample of 139 consumers is determined according to the stage of determining the sample. The number of people included in the sample by age, was calculated in percentage (table 4).

Table 4. Total population studied by age

Age	Total population studied	(%)	Number of persons included in the sample
20-29 years old	64886	17.62	29
30-39 years old	77505	21.05	28
40-49 years old	72978	19.82	24
50-59 years old	59550	16.17	23
Over 60 years old	93235	25.32	35
Total	368154	100	139

Researched population was calculated, in percentage (table 5) based on area of origin.

Table 5. Total population researched by area of origin

Area of origin	Total population studied	(%)
Urban	313678	67.66
Rural	149920	32.33
Total	463598	100

Researched population was calculated, in percentage (table 6) by gender.

Table 6. Total population studied by gender

Sex	Total population studied	(%)
Male	226145	48.78
Female	237453	51.22
Total	463598	100

The number of persons included in the sample was also calculated, for example, women in urban category, between 30-39 years old, we will have the following calculation: 139 (sample size) * 51.22% women* 68.66% urban area *

21.05% age group = 10. According to calculations made with the method of quotas, has been completed the date in (table 7).

Table 7. Determination of quotas based on age, origin and gender

Population	Male 48.78%		Female 51.22%		Number of persons included in the sample 139
	Urban area 66.60 %	Rural area 33.39 %	Urban area 68.66 %	Rural area 31.33 %	
Age					
20-29 years old (17.62%)	8	8	9	4	29
30-39 years old (21.05%)	9	5	10	5	28
40-49 years old (19.82%)	9	5	10	4	24
50-59 years old (16.17%)	7	4	8	4	23
Over 60 years old (25.32%)	11	6	12	6	35

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In order to process all the data, I used Microsoft Excel.

1. *Determination of the number of people who believe that buying food is influenced by advertising.* From the evaluation of the questionnaires, it appears that 88% of subjects considered that food purchase is influenced by advertising, and 12% of respondents believe that buying food is not influenced by advertising, so it is important to assess consumer's opinion on the influence of advertising on purchase of food products. The aim is to identify consumer's opinions on the influence of advertising when they purchase food.

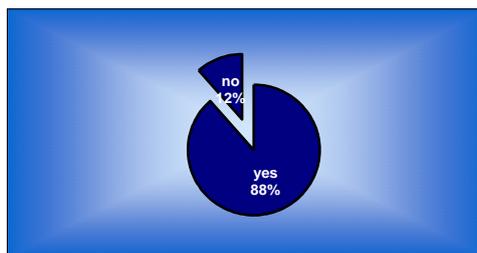


Figure 1. Distribution of the percentage of consumers who purchase food influenced by advertising

2. *The frequency with which consumers are influenced by advertising to purchase food, within a week.* Among the interviewed subjects, 49% responded that, once a week they purchased food being influenced by advertising, 14% have purchased

food twice a week being influenced by advertising and 37% of subjects bought food products several times a week being influenced by advertising.

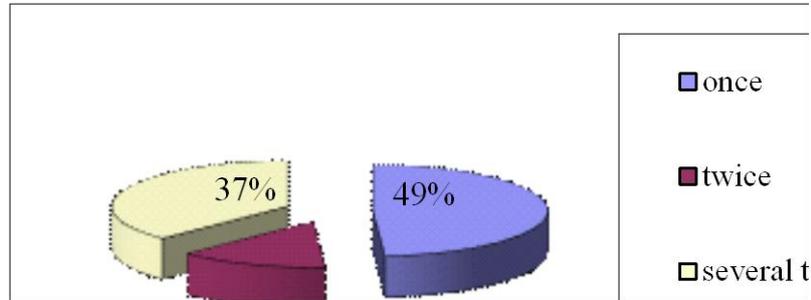


Figure 2. Distribution of the percentage of consumers based on the frequency with which consumers purchase food being influenced by advertising, within a week

3. *Determination of the opinion of the subjects regarding the importance given to the message broadcasted through advertising for the food products purchased.* The subjects, in proportion of 5%, are very satisfied with the message transmitted by advertising of the purchased food products, 48% are satisfied with the message, 19% do not know how to appreciate the importance of the message transmitted by advertising on the food products bought, 14% are not to satisfied, and 14% are not satisfied with the message received through advertising for the purchased food products.

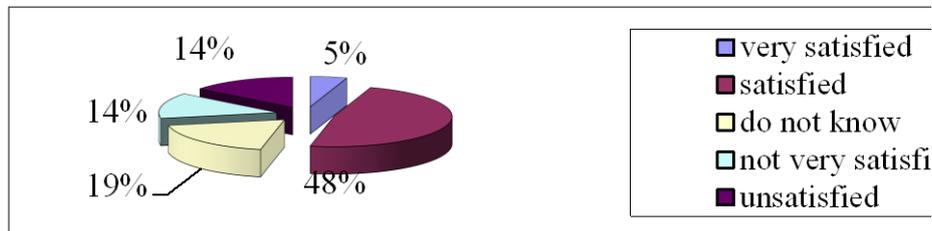


Figure 3. Determination of the opinion of the subjects regarding the importance given to the message broadcasted through advertising for the food products purchased

Satisfaction measurement means to determine how satisfied the consumer is of the purchased product (Datculescu, 2012).

4. *An assessment of subjects' opinion on whether there must be a link between the transmitted message by advertising and the food purchased.* To this question 80% of the subjects answered that, in a large extent, there should be a connection between the message transmitted by advertising and the food products bought. Only 9% of the interviewed do not know how to answer this question, and 11% of them consider that a link should exist in a small extent between the advertising and its message and the product purchased.

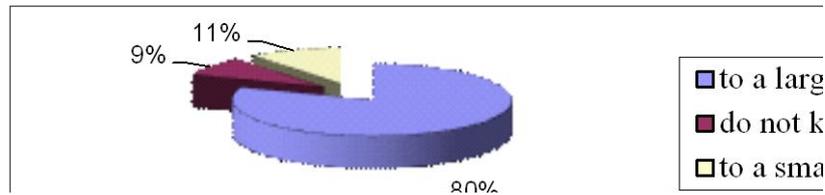


Figure 4. An assessment of subjects' opinion on whether there must be a link between the transmitted message by advertising and the food purchased

5. *Assessment of subjects' opinion on whether they consider the information transmitted through advertising to be sufficient or not.* To this question 32% of subjects answered that to a large extent, they consider the information transmitted through advertising to be sufficient. Only 16% of them stated that they do not know, and 52% consider that the information is not sufficient enough.

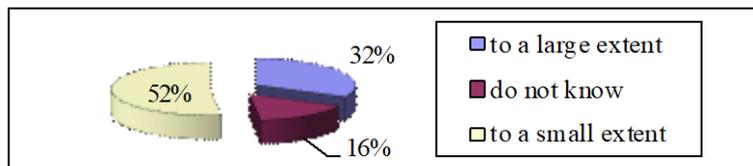


Figure 5. Distribution of subjects' percentage according to their opinion about the sufficiency of the information transmitted through advertising

6. *Assessment of subjects' opinion on whether they consider the information transmitted through advertising are understood after the visualization of the message.* From figure 6, we can see that 45% of subjects consider that the information provided by advertising about the food are understood after a single viewing of the message, 19% of respondents consider that the information provided by advertising about food products are understood after viewing two times the message, and 36% of respondents considered that the information submitted by publicity on food products are understood after viewing several times the message.

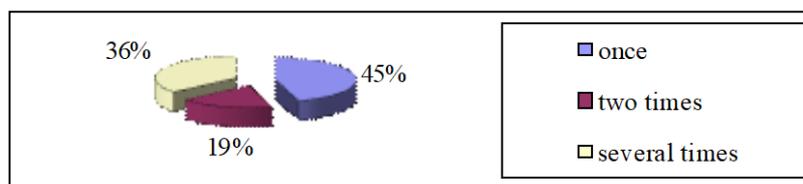


Figure 6. Distribution of subjects' percentage according to their opinion on whether or not the information transmitted by advertising is well understood after seeing the advert

7. *Evaluation of subjects' opinion if they consider that for the interpretation of the message sent by the advertising made for food products is required additional documentation.* From figure 7 we can see that that 20% of respondents do not know

whether for the interpretation of the message sent by advertising carried for food products is required additional documentation. 49% of respondents consider that for the interpretation of the message transmitted by advertising carried for food products is required additional documentation to a large extent, and 31% of subjects consider that to a small extent, for the interpretation this message there is need for additional documentation.

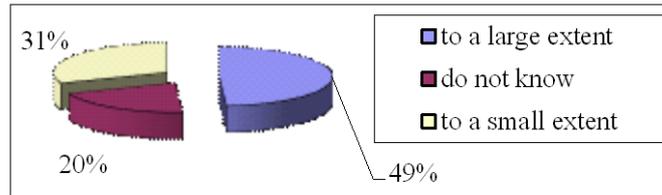


Figure 7. The distribution of the percentage of consumers based on whether or not they consider that for the interpretation of the message transmitted by food advertising additional documentation is needed

8. Evaluation of subjects' opinion on acquiring food influenced by advertising. The figure 8 shows that 25% of respondents consider that they often purchase food based on the advertising done. 14% of subjects responded that they do not at all purchase food products based on the advertising, and 61% of subjects rarely purchase food based on the advertising.

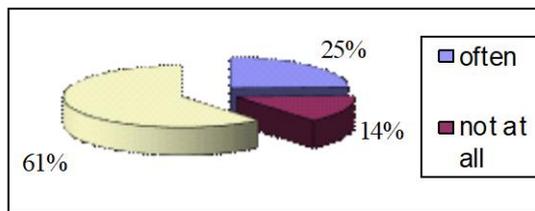


Figure 8. Percentage distribution of consumers based on their opinion if the food purchases are based on the advertising

9. Evaluation of subjects' opinion if they have ever purchased the food without taking into account the advertising made for the products.

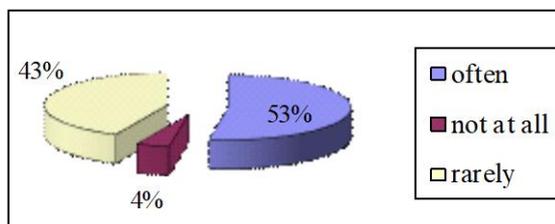


Figure 9. Percentage distribution of consumers based on their opinion if they have bought the food without taking into account the publicity made for the products

From figure 9, we can see that 53% of respondents bought the food frequently without taking into account the publicity made for the products. 4% of respondents answered that they did not purchase at all the food without taking into account the publicity made and 43% of subjects rarely bought the food without taking into account the advertising for that product.

10. *Evaluation of subjects' opinion on the reasons that led to the purchase of food without taking into account advertising.* From figure 10, it appears that 24% of subjects did not answer this question. 18% of the subjects said that buying food without taking into account advertising is because they already knew the product. 7% of subjects responded that they were influenced by the organoleptic characteristics of the product. 7% of respondents indicated that they bought the food on the recommendation of others, while 44% of respondents indicated other reasons.

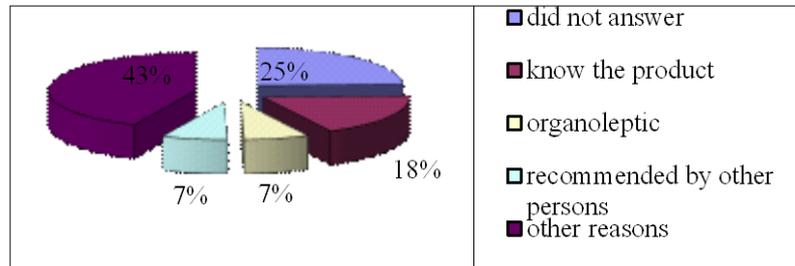


Figure 10. Percentage distribution of consumers based on their reasons for the purchase of food without taking into account advertising

11. *Evaluation of subjects' opinion on the decency of advertising made for food products.* From figure 11, it appears that 50% of subjects consider that that advertising made for food products is decent to a large extent, 20% of the subjects said they do not know and 30% of respondents consider that that advertising made for food products is not so decent.

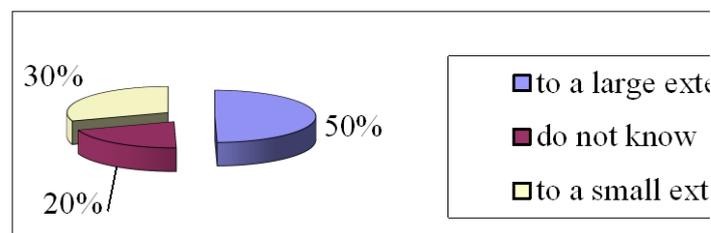


Figure 11. Percentage distribution of consumers based on their opinion on the decency of the advertising made for food products

12. *Evaluation of subjects' opinion on the loyalty of the advertising made for food products purchased.* From (figure 12) it appears that 18% of subjects considered to a large extent that the advertising made for food products is fair, 35% of respondents answered they did not know and 47% of subjects considered to a small extent that the advertising made for food products is loyal.

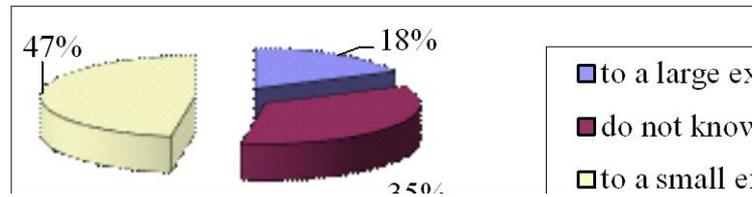


Figure 12. Percentage distribution of consumers based on their views on the loyalty of the advertisement made for food products

13. Evaluation of subjects' opinion on truthfulness in advertising made for the food products purchased. From figure 13, we can see that 6% of subjects consider that the advertising made for food products is truthful to a large extent. 21% of respondents considered that the advertising made for food products is truthful. 24% of subjects stated they do not know whether the publicity is truthful or not. 39% of subjects considered the advertising of food products purchased to be less reliable, while 10% of respondents considered that the advertising is not truthful.

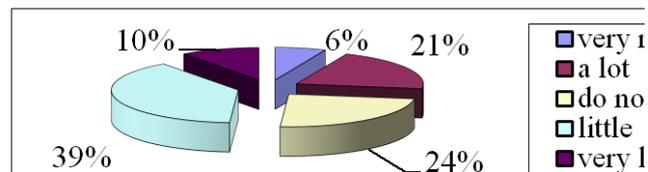


Figure 13. Percentage distribution of consumers based on their views on truthfulness in advertising made for the food products purchased

14. Evaluation of subjects' opinion on the characteristics of food products purchased required to be transmitted through advertising.

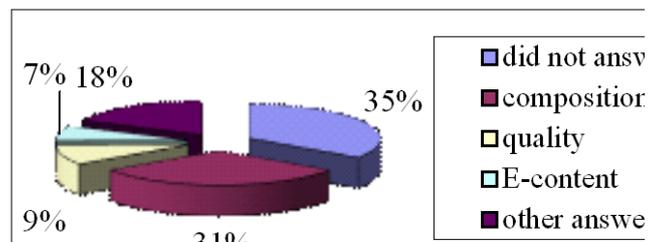


Figure 14. Percentage distribution of consumers based on their opinion of food products purchased characteristics that need to be transmitted through advertising

From figure 14, we can see that 35% of the subjects have not responded to this question. 31% of the subjects said that the advertising should transmit more information about the composition of the food products. 9% of the subjects said that through advertising should transmit more data about the quality of products. 7% of the subjects said that by advertising should be transmitted more data about the E's contained in food products, and 18% of subjects mentioned other responses.

15. *Subjects' opinion evaluation on factors influencing the purchase of the food through advertising.* From figure 15, we can see that 60% of subjects purchase food after the advertising done to its composition. 19% of respondents purchases food because of the advertising of the packaging/package. 21% of respondents answered that they purchase the food product after they see the advertisement done for the producer.

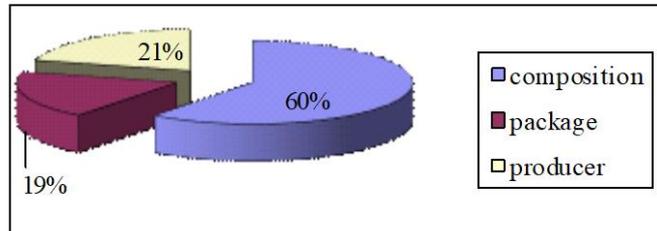


Figure 15. Percentage distribution of consumers based on their view on the factors that influence the purchase of food through advertising

5. CONCLUSION

For Romania, food products should be the focus of any marketing activities, especially in the advertising business centre. In terms of theory, advertising is equal to communication. In 1998, 38% of Romanian consumers considered publicity a source of information, and in 2015, after the study conducted, for instance, only 5% of consumers are very satisfied with the message transmitted by the advertising of food products purchased. Romanian advertising market had the following evolution: 309 million euro in 2011, 303 million euros in 2012, 305 million in 2013 and 313 million euro in 2014.

From evaluation of the questionnaires it resulted that 88% of respondents considered that buying food products is influenced by advertising. 49% of respondents considered that a once per week food purchase is influenced by advertising. 80% of respondents considered to a large extent that there must be a link between the message transmitted by advertising and food purchased. 52% of respondents considered that the information transmitted through advertising is not sufficient enough. 45% of respondents considered that the information provided by advertising on food products are understood after a single viewing of the message, 19% of respondents considered that the information provided by advertising are understood after viewing twice the message, and 36% of subjects considered that the information provided by advertising on food products are understood after viewing several times the message. 18% of the subjects said that buying food without taking into account advertising is caused by knowing the product. 50% of respondents consider that food products publicity is to a large extent decent. 18% of respondents considered to a large extent that the food products' publicity is fair. 6% of respondents considered that the advertising done for food products purchased is truthful.

For the consumer, after the assessment of his opinion on the influence of advertising on purchasing foods, it is very important to communicate more information

on food products, information like: Composition of the food; The quality of the food; The content of E components and the effect on consumer's health; and The effect of the composition of the food on consumer's health.

These aspects are necessary to constitute the prerequisites of development of the advertising activity after a certain model, for food, because food is what stands at the base of the European consumer's health.

As the percentage of consumers is very low, for example, 5% of respondents are very satisfied with the message transmitted by publicity done for the food products purchased, 19% do not know how to appreciate the importance of the message transmitted by the advertising of food products, so there must be a series of measures implemented, like: Development of guidelines through which to bring into attention regulations, standards and monitoring methods to ensure food safety; Creating a counselling centre in terms of food quality; Development of advertising; and Reducing risks to health and safety in the EU by implementing a mechanism for cooperation and more effective market surveillance.

Future research directions should include other countries in Central and Eastern Europe on to find out consumer's opinion regarding the advertising activity with the aim to stimulate purchases of food, but also to identify whether today we have a European consumer informed and educated in accordance with the European Union regulations.

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