INFLUENCES OF SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND MARKETING ETHICS ON BUSINESS RESULTS

Professor Sofronija Miladinoski, PhD.

Faculty of Turizam and Hospitality Ohrid, University "St Climent Ohridski" Bitola, Republic of Macedonia sofmil@yahoo.com

Assistant Professor Katerina Angelevska-Najdeska, PhD.

Faculty of Turizam and Hospitality Ohrid,
University "St Climent Ohridski" Bitola, Republic of Macedonia
k_angel_naj@yahoo.co.uk

Associate Professor Vesna Cilerdzic PhD

Faculty of Business Economics and Entrepreneurship, Belgrade, Serbia

Abstract

Responsible marketers discover what consumers want and respond with the right products, priced to give good value to buyers and profit to the producer. A marketing system should sense, serve, and satisfy consumer needs and improve the quality of consumers' lives.

Marketing receives much criticism. Some of this criticism is justified, much is not. Social critics claim that certain marketing practices hurt individual consumers, society as a whole, and other business firms.

The purpose of this paper is first to understand the concept of social responsibility. Then, it is essential to be able to identify factors that influence the adoption of ethical and unethical decisions. Also an important point is finding different ways to improve ethical decisions in marketing. The paper mentioned some strategies that will contribute positively to solving some social dilemmas.

The paper examines the social effects of marketing practices. It put special attention on the most frequent social criticisms of marketing, the steps which have enlightened companies taken to carry out socially responsible and ethical marketing and some arguments for and against social responsibility and ethics in marketing.

Key words: Social responsibility, marketing ethics, marketing concept, customer satisfaction, marketing practices, social marketing, value marketing.

INTRODUCTION

Every organization is involved in the society and all actions should be carefully undertaken, taking care to protect the interests of its stakeholders and society at large. Responsibility to the community have schools, hospitals, non-profit organizations, foundations, associations, sports clubs, religious associations, cultural and art organizations, especially companies with their business activities. As a result of the impact the company has on all its stakeholders and society, can positively or negatively to use to achieve their economic and marketing goals. Cannot pointed out a single definition, but it can be said that social responsibility of the company constitutes its obligation all their activities and actions undertaken to exercise in order to protect the interests of its various stakeholders. This obligation is determined by the prescribed legal norms or is determined by the ethical norms and principles. Essence of enterprise social responsibility is to be aware of the consequences of their own decisions on society. In order to understand the social responsibility of enterprises and their managers, it is necessary to define to whom they are responsible, or which groups of stakeholders whose interests may be affected by the decisions that managers carry. Stakeholders are all those individuals and groups who are directly or indirectly influenced by the company's work. Every company has a number of different stakeholders who need to take into consideration during throughout of their work. However, the company needs special attention should be paid to: the shareholders (owners), employees, customers, suppliers, competitors, banks and other financial institutions, government, union, community, society in general, the international community etc..

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Despite the fact that the company favors the need for responsibility to different groups of stakeholders, the basic task and responsibility of management is profit and satisfy the expectations of the shareholders through the distribution of dividends. The primary responsibility of the company to **shareholders** (owners) arises from the fact that they exercised a fundamental role in the operation of the business by providing capital that enables enterprise survives and develops. At the same time, managers are held accountable for the survival of the enterprise and its dedication to its growth and development. Managers have a responsibility to the shareholders in terms of meeting their varied requirements, and such variability needs not to jeopardize the achievement of the goals of the enterprise. Thus different views of managers and shareholders can sometimes create conflict situations, especially in terms of the amount of dividend which require shareholders-as opposed to part of the profits to be reinvested. Performance of obligations to shareholders arises because they are the owners of capital, they hire managers to manage their assets and they can make changes in the management structure. Often the shareholders on the other hand can react earnings exercised by managers and that can be very large even though the firm's performance is not at the top level.

Employees are important stakeholders of the enterprise. Minimum obligations that managers have towards employees concerning compliance with specific obligations under the contracts concluded with them and respect their legal obligations relating to the legal provisions for the regulation of the employment relationship. Very often a significant part of the obligations of the employer to employees not subject to the regulation of a specific law, but those issues management companies freely decide. Managers have a legal obligation to give employees salary. Also, they must comply with the minimum legal requirements for safety in the workplace, but can make additional efforts for additional resources and protective measures to enhance the security. In addition to these responsibilities, managers have other obligations to employees who are not regulated by law, and contributing to the success or failure of the enterprise. Such obligations relating to fair and impartial treatment of all employees, respecting their personality, their needs and specific requirements and developing good interpersonal relationships.

Consumers as stakeholders have more requirements to enterprises which are mainly implemented through compliance with the slogan "customers are always right". It can be said that there are two areas that are essential for social care enterprises to their customers such as: concern for the health and safety of those who consume their products and services and care for the quality of products and services. Area of concern for the health and safety of consumers can dramatically affect the company's business results. Another aspect of the obligation of companies to the consumers are accomplished through their concern for the quality of the products. Quality of products and services is primarily important to match the competition, but also a growing number of quality companies in the world see as a form of their responsibility towards the society and customers to provide quality products.

Management of the firm should be addressed to the suppliers according to the principles of fair play. That means on time and in full to meet the obligations of contracts.

For businesses it is important to have a loyal competition. Managers have a responsibility to its competitors in the field of marketing activities that stretch them. The marketing campaign and other forms of presentation of the company to the public may not be used for deposition of the competition and their products.

To banks and other financial institutions managers shall promptly repay the due obligations based on numerous financial arrangements with them conclude.

Responsibility of the managers towards the government consists in the observance of regulations and norms that it brings. Managers should be available to provide financial information about their work, reports on the number and structure of employees, technical and sanitary working conditions and so on, before the competent authorities of the relevant government ministries.

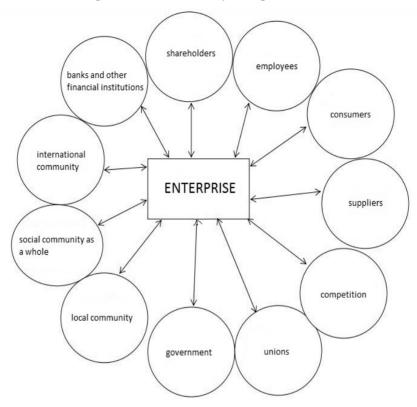


Figure 1 Stakeholders of enterprises

Source: Authors

Unions as stakeholders representing the interests of workers before the management of the enterprise. Management has an obligation to hear union official representatives to consider their demands, to think about possible solutions and to find compromises. Respect for the union and its requirements means respect for employees, as well as gaining and maintaining their confidence that speaks to the social responsibility of the company and it is very important for its business results.

The company and its activities have certain requirements to the local community, but also have certain obligations to the local community in which they are located. They mostly have to provide employment to the local population and thus contribute to the raising the level of living standards in the community, to supply the local market with the necessary products and services, to contribute to the construction of infrastructure, construction of sports and cultural facilities, environmental pollution and so on.

The company is a socially responsible to the community as a whole. Through their work, they must not jeopardize the general progress of the community. Instead, they should participate in the funding of various training programs of education and training that will contribute to raising the quality of the future labor supply; organize humanitarian actions through the deviation of the profits or organizing different events; opening its affiliates in underdeveloped areas, which would contribute to the economic development of the wider community and etc.

Companies have a responsibility to the international community. Does not exist modern enterprises which limited his business nationwide, but are included in the international economic trends through participation in international markets or dispersion of production in other countries. The company which operates internationally has responsibility to act to protect the natural environment, using artificial raw materials in the manufacturing process, will contribute to the preservation of rare natural resources. With its international marketing activities, the company must not offend members of other cultural communities in the countries where it offers products.

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND ETHICS IN MARKETING

The terms ethical and social responsibility in the everyday use very often replace each other, although each term has a different meaning. Social responsibility in marketing refers to the obligation of the company to maximize its positive impact and more to reduce the negative effects of society. On the one hand, ethics relates more to the decisions of individual persons, and on the other hand, social responsibility refers to the impact of the business decisions of the enterprise on society. Therefore, social responsibility can be considered as a kind of contract between the company and society, ethics refers to the implementing rules and moral values that guide the decisions of individuals or groups.

Problems of the social responsibility of great benefit to contact and consult consumers, industry and government bodies. Also, it is important to investigate whether companies have a policy to resolve the problems related to the social responsibility. Because, if the company's employees justify certain actions that are not illegal and are in line with the positive business practices, then it is likely that these procedures would be acceptable in terms of ethics and the social responsibility.

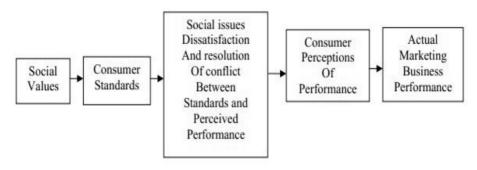


Figure 2 Social responsibility and ethics in marketing

Source: Authors

If the court about the ethical issues and social responsibility, which is based on the everyday experience hold a public debate, and if the result of an agreement between the company and the society, then it means that the solution is acceptable. (Cadbury, 1985, page.33)

IMPACT OF SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY ON MARKETING

Marketing managers are trying to determine what are the acceptable relations, marketing responsibilities and tasks of the organization to society. Becomes more clearly as to the existence of the enterprise and the creation of its competitive advantages on the market, it is more important on long term to act in a socially responsible way, rather than short-term care only for operational costs. (Stroup et al, 1987, page 23) Aimed at achieving its goals enterprise to behave socially responsible, it has to follow the trends and changes in social values. Also, companies must provide supervision mechanisms in order not to make gaps in the daily deciding and in that way to disrupt relations between companies and the public. Management of the company in the creation and implementation of business policy should predict the certain responsibilities for their employees.

The aim of companies to be socially responsible is not really so easily and simply achievable because it requires solving a number of important problems. Therefore marketing managers must be able to anticipate the long-term consequences of their decisions.

Because the society is composed of different groups of people, it is very difficult or even impossible to determine what the whole society requires. Therefore, the enterprise striving to satisfy the desires, needs and demands of a group of people at the same time may disappoint others. It is difficult to achieve such a balance to the satisfaction of all members of society. Enterprise task is to be able to assess the extent to which the members of society are willing to pay to

satisfy their needs and desires. Perhaps consumers want more information about the products, but not willing to pay a price that will include the costs of delivery of such information. Therefore, companies who want to choose a socially responsible way encounter a really complex task.

Marketing receives much criticism. Some of this criticism is justified, much is not. Social critics claim that certain marketing practices hurt individual consumers, society as a hole and other business firms.

MARKETING'S IMPACTS ON CONSUMERS

They have many concerns about how well the marketing system serves their interests. Consumers, consumer advocates, government agencies, and other critics have accused marketing of harming consumers though high prices, high-pressure selling, deceptive practices, planned obsolescence, shoddy or unsafe products, and poor service to disadvantaged consumers.

High prices-Many critics charge that the marketing system causes prices to be higher than they would be under more "sensible" systems. They point to three factors:

- 1. High costs of distribution-a long-standing charge is that greedy intermediaries mark up prices beyond the value of their services. As a result of too many intermediaries, distribution costs too much, and consumers pay for these excessive costs in the form of higher prices.
- High advertising and promotion costs-modern marketing is also accused of
 pushing up prices to finance heavy advertising and sales promotion. Heavy
 advertising adds to product costs but is needed to inform millions of
 potential buyers of the merits of a brand.
- 3. Excessive markups-Marketers respond that most businesses try to deal fairly with consumers because they want repeat business. Marketers also respond that consumers often don't understand the reason for high markups.

High-pressure selling-Salespeople are sometimes accused of high-pressure selling that persuades people to buy goods they had no though of buying. Salespeople are trained to deliver smooth, canned talks to entice purchase. They sell hard because sales contests promise big prizes to those who sell the most. Marketers know that buyers often can be talked into buying unwanted or unneeded things.

Deceptive practices-Marketers are sometimes accused of deceptive practices that lead consumers to believe they will get more value than they actually do. Deceptive practices fall into three groups: deceptive pricing, deceptive promotion and deceptive packaging.

Planned obsolescence- some products follow a program of planned obsolescence, causing their products to become obsolete before they actually should need replacement but the consumers like style changes.

Shoddy or unsafe products- There are complaints about that many products are not made and services not performed well, that many products deliver little benefit or concerns about product safety.

Poor service to disadvantaged consumers-marketing system has been accused poorly serving disadvantaged consumers. Critics claim that the urban poor often have to shop in smaller stores that carry inferior goods and charge higher prices.

MARKETING'S IMPACT ON SOCIETY AS A WHOLE

According to some authors, marketing system urges too much interest in material possessions. Business has been accused of overselling private goods at the expense of public goods. As private goods increase, they require more public services that are usually not forthcoming. It must be found a way to restore a balance between private and public goods. One option is to make producers bear the full social costs of their operations. A second option is to make consumers pay the social costs

Critics charge the marketing system with creating cultural pollution. The senses are being constantly assaulted by advertising. Commercials interrupt serious programs and pages of ads obscure printed matter. These interruptions continually pollute people's minds with messages of materialism, power or status.

Advertisers are accused of holding too much power over the mass media, limiting their freedom to report independently and objectively. Moreover, because the media receive advertising revenues from many different advertisers, it is easier to resist the influence of one or a few of them. Too much business power tends to result in counter forces that check and offset these powerful interests.

MARKETING'S IMPACT ON OTHER BUSINESSES

Company's marketing practices also can harm other companies and reduce competition. Three problems are involved: acquisitions of competitors, marketing practices that create barriers to entry, and unfair competitive marketing practices.

Some firms might be harmed and competition reduced when companies expand by acquiring competitors rather than by developing their own new products. Acquisition is a complex subject and sometimes can be good for society. The acquiring company may gain economies of scale that lead to lower costs and lower prices.

Large marketing companies can use patents and heavy promotion spending, and can tie up suppliers or dealers to keep out or drive out competitors. Those concerned with antitrust regulation recognize that some barriers are the natural result of the economic advantages of doing business on a large scale. Some firms have used unfair competitive marketing practices with the intention of hurting or destroying other firms. They may set their prices below costs, threaten to cut off business with suppliers, or discourage the buying of competitor's products.

STRATEGIES FOR SOLVING PROBLEMS OF THE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

There are a number of strategies, but four basic thorough help in solving the problems of the social responsibility in marketing, such as:

- Strategy reaction-enterprises that have implemented this strategy allow certain situations or potential problems (for which the company's management could be or could not be informed), remain unresolved long enough, until the public do not be informed about them. The company is trying to solve the problems in motion, continues its business because they are more concerned with the consequences and try to reduce their negative impact.
- Strategy of defense- enterprises that have implemented this strategy try to reduce or avoid additional obligations for certain problems. The usual defense tactics include various legal manipulations and application support of unions that follow the mode of operation of certain industries. This defense strategy often uses lobbying in order to avoid government or legislative measures.
- Strategy of adjustment-this strategy companies apply in cases where its business include responsibility for their actions. Adjustment strategy is commonly used when certain groups organize any actions or in situations where it is assumed that the government will bring some laws that businesses will be forced to achieve certain obligations.
- Active strategy-enterprises that have implemented this strategy take
 responsibility for their actions and without pressure or government
 intervention react to any charges directed towards them. In fact, the
 application of the active strategy involves taking actions that emphasize
 social responsibility in the interest of the common good.

IMPROVING THE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND ETHICS

There are several methods that can be used in attempts to promote social responsibility and ethics in the conduct of the undertakings. Theoretical explanations must be supported by specific actions. Among these methods the following can be stated: follow leaders; ethics specialists; formation of ethical structures; code of ethics; organizing trainings on ethics and acceptance spokesmen.

Tracking leaders as a way to promote ethics and accountability to society means that higher level managers through their behavior must be an example to other managers and other employees. Thus they will enhance a sense of ethics and responsibility of all other employees in the company.

Ethics specialists are individuals which aim is to review and process the questions of ethical character and suggest their proper resolution. These are specialists in business ethics that have full membership in the Board of managers and act as a "social conscience" of the enterprise.

Establishment of ethical structures- Ethical structures actually consist of various authorities and bodies called committees. Their basic function is to advocate for the practical application of ethical thinking. Companies in every market economy should have such bodies, and as an important are ethics committee and the person responsible for ethical issues (ethics ombudsman).

- Ethics Committee is a group of employees assigned to supervise the company's ethics. The Committee provides solutions to contentious ethical issues. Ethics Committee assumes responsibility for disciplining those who violate ethics to raise the general ethics of the organization.
- Person responsible for ethics (ethics ombudsman) has been officially
 designated person who is responsible for the conscience of the company,
 which discovers and investigates ethical complaints and highlight and
 communicate top management potential ethical failures.

Another form within the ethical structures in the enterprise is the establishment of open lines (hot lines), which can concern all stakeholders to respond in terms of the ethics of business decisions made by management of the company. In addition, safety must be guaranteed the entities who called these hotlines in order to express dissatisfaction with the performance of managers.

Code of Ethics – Necessity for business to be based on ethical norms and values in companies forcing managers to prepare codes of ethics as a way to institutionalize ethical values in the enterprise.

By its character code of ethics is a formal act which serves as a guideline for decision-making behavior and ethical manner by employees in an organization.

Code of Ethics contains three essential elements:

- Values and principles that should be nurtured in the enterprise;
- The manner in which employees are expected to behave;
- Behavior that would not be tolerated by the top management of the company.

The creation of a code of ethics is initiated by the top management and must cover all organizational structures. It is not enough to initiate the adoption of the Code, but even more important is that to support this Code through its own reward its observance and individuals to respect, and to apply disciplinary measures for violations of those values.

Organizing trainings on ethics-It is about procedures for focusing on the theory of ethics and practical exercises to solve ethical problems. Training and ethics training programs can be organized in the framework of formal management education or they are organized as exercises for employees. Thereby solving the cases can be set individually or through group work. In both cases encourages ethical reflection and decision making.

Acceptance spokespersons-Call those employed by the company that determined the unethical behavior of some managers and therefore react to the owner, senior management, ethical structures in the enterprise, to the public media, public interest groups or to the appropriate authorities. This way of promoting of ethics creates a mismatch between the managers in terms of its existence. Some encourage its existence, and for others it is an opportunity to undermine their reputation.

All these ways of promoting ethics and corporate social responsibility have their advantages and disadvantages, and modern companies need to exercise one or more of them.

ENLIGHTENED MARKETING

The philosophy of enlightened marketing holds that a company's marketing should support the best long-run performance of marketing system. Enlightened marketing consist of five principles:

- Consumer oriented marketing means that the company should view and organize its marketing activities from the consumer's point of view.
- Innovative marketing-its principle requires that the company continuously seek real product and marketing improvements. The company that overlooks new and better ways to do things will eventually lose customers to another company that has found a better way.

- Value marketing-According to the principle of value marketing, the
 company should put most of its resources into value-building marketing
 investments. Enlightened marketing calls for building long-run consumer
 loyalty by continually improving the value consumers receive from the
 firm's marketing offer.
- Sense of mission marketing-means that the company should define its mission in broad social terms rather than narrow product terms. When a company defines a social mission, employees feel better about their work and have a clearer sense of direction.
- Societal marketing-following its principle, an enlightened company makes
 marketing decisions by considering consumers' wants and interests, the
 company's requirements, and society's long-run interests. The company is
 aware that neglecting consumer and societal long-run interests is a
 disservice to consumers and society.

Companies should try to turn all of their products into desirable products. The challenge posed by pleasing products is that they sell very well but may end up hurting the consumer. The product opportunity is to add long-run benefits without reducing the product's pleasing qualities.

MARKETING ETHICS

Ethics is a moral evaluation of certain decisions or actions as acceptable or unacceptable from the point of view of the generally accepted principles of conduct. Ethics in marketing consists of all moral principles that determine good and bad behavior in marketing. Most of the basic ethical issues formalized in laws and rules of behavior that adapt one's behavior to the standards of society. At least that is expected of enterprises is to uphold the laws and rules of conduct. However, it is very important to emphasize that ethics in marketing beyond the legal provisions, ethical decisions in marketing, or, the persistence in mutual relations to cherish mutual trust.

Ethics is related to certain people and therefore differs from person to person. Although some enterprises often act according their own interests, there must be some standards of acceptable behavior according that will direct all marketing decisions. Companies must behave in accordance with clearly defined moral principles which will be based on ideals such as respect, justice and trust. (Robin et al, page 44)

Consumers often as unethical marketing activities consider: false advertising, confusing sales tactics, discriminatory pricing deciding, conscious selling harmful products etc. Therefore, consumers often refuse to cooperate with enterprises dealing with such business activities. If the enterprise in future acts contrary to accepted moral principles, in order to fulfill their own interests but to the detriment of others, than marketing exchange becomes difficult, or even impossible. (Loucks, 1988, page 4)

Conscientious marketers face many moral dilemmas. The best thing to do is often unclear. Because not all managers have fine moral sensitivity, companies need to develop corporate marketing ethics policies-broad guidelines that everyone in the organization must follow. These policies should cover distributor relations, advertising standards, customer service, pricing, product development and general ethical standards.

One philosophy is that such issues are decided by the free market and legal system. Under this principle, companies and their managers are not responsible for making moral judgment. Companies can in good conscience do whatever the system allows. A second philosophy puts responsibility not in the system but in the hands of individual companies and managers. This more enlightened philosophy suggests that a company should have a social conscience. Companies and managers should apply high standards of ethics and morality when making corporate decisions, regardless of what the system allows.

The future holds many challenges and opportunities for marketing managers. Technological advances in every area provide abundant marketing opportunities. However, forces in the socioeconomic, cultural and natural environments increase the limits under which marketing can be carried out. Companies that are able to create new customer value in a socially responsible way will have a world to conquer.

CONCLUSION

Social responsibility obliges the organization to maximize its positive impact and minimize the negative impact on society. Ethics in marketing refers to the moral assessment of individuals, that is, determining what is right and what is wrong in certain decision making situations. So, the social responsibility refers to the final consequences that marketing decisions adopted by enterprises will affect society.

Every organization, whether it is a business entity or other organized community of people is required, along with the realization of their own interests through activities undertaken to protect and promote the welfare of society as a whole.

Several forces are driving companies to practice a higher level of corporate social responsibility: rising customer expectations, changing employee expectations, government legislation and pressure, the inclusion of social criteria by investors, and changing business procurement practices. Companies need to evaluate whether they are truly practicing ethical and socially responsible marketing. Business success and continually satisfying the customer and other stakeholders are closely tied to adoption and implementation of high standards of business and marketing conduct. Companies that are able to innovate new solutions and values in a socially responsible way are the most likely to succeed.

Ethics in marketing and social responsibility of the enterprise act simultaneously, because the company that creates culture which is acceptable moral philosophy by the society often makes decisions that positively affect the society.

In order, the business of the company to be more efficient, it's necessary on time to be recognized what the buyers, government institutions, competitors, and society in general want or expect from social responsibility.

There are four strategies that seek to solve the problems of the social responsibility: Strategy of defense, of reaction, of adjustment and active strategy.

There are several methods that can be used in attempts to promote social responsibility and ethics in the conduct of the undertakings. Theoretical explanations must be supported by specific actions. Among these methods the following can be stated: follow leaders; ethics specialists; formation of ethical structures; code of ethics; organizing trainings on ethics and acceptance spokesmen.

Ethics in marketing indicates the moral principles that mark what is proper behavior and what is not in marketing. Many marketing decisions could be estimated as ethical or unethical. Ethics is very important when making marketing decisions, but also is one of the most contentious and often mistakenly understood categories in marketing.

Good marketing is about satisfying and developing a long-term relationship with the customers. Caring about your customers not only results in profits (or achieving your organization's objectives if an organization is not-for-profit), it is the ethical thing to do. Deceiving customers may help a firm's profits in the short-run, but is not the way to build a successful business. The same goes for social responsibility. A firm has to care about all stakeholders: customers, employees, suppliers and distributors, local communities in which they do business, society, and the environment

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