



Deceptive Practices Used in Contemporary Marketing Communication and their Evaluation from Customer Perspective in Slovak Republic

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ABSTRACT

Satisfying customer needs in order for an organisation to achieve a defined profitability on the one hand and to have satisfied customers on the other has been characteristic of traditional customer-oriented approaches to marketing management. Hypercompetitive market, which is currently functioning at the level of both national and multinational economies, is characterised by the fact that in an effort of marketing managers to operate in markets, more and more deceptive, unethical and misleading practices are appearing. Misleading, deceptive and unethical approaches of marketing management have become a subject of social criticism, while this issue is gradually becoming more and more notable also in academic sphere. Therefore, perception and evaluation of the marketing activities in marketing communication by ultimate customers under the conditions of the Slovak Republic (on the grounds of a research with the participation of a representative sample size of 1,820 respondents) are dealt with in this paper.

Keywords: Marketing Communication, Deceptive Practices, Perception of Deceptive Practices by Ultimate Customers

JEL Classifications: M31, M37

INTRODUCTION

Today, marketing management represents a responsibility for the fact that all business activities performed in the market environment are oriented on business objectives and aimed at achieving an agreement in the issue of satisfying the needs of target markets, which implies a responsiveness to market needs, understood in an effective and profit-oriented manner (Horáková and Švarcová, 2014; Lenhard and Greguš, 2015; Samáková et al., 2013). An integral part of marketing activities is marketing communication as an instrument organisations use to achieve a relatively large amount of defined objectives. Marketing communication applied as a combination of currently used communication mix instruments plays an important role in the processes of affecting purchase decisions of the consuming public (on consumer behaviour trends, see for instance Solarová, 2014; Vilčeková, 2014; Olšovský, 2013; Vilčeková et al., 2013). One of the characteristic features of contemporary marketing communication is the fact that it notably encourages the consumption of ultimate customers and participates in the creation of unsustainable patterns

of consumer behaviour on the one hand, while it (respectively its instruments) can be decisive in the process of spreading the ideas of sustainable lifestyle on the other (Pajtinková and Gubiniová, 2012).

Marketing communication (respectively communication mix or integrated marketing communication) creates a substantial element in the marketing strategy of an organisation (Hesková and Štarchoň, 2009; Kubičková, 2009). Marketing communication instruments are used in order to achieve different objectives, for which responsibility is shared by both marketing managers and managers at other management levels, taking into account the time and place viewpoints (Trel'ová, 2014; Papula et al., 2014; Rózsa, 2008): To develop the awareness of a product; to educate or provide information on products, a brand and/or an organisation; to draw attention (remind) or reassure customers of a brand; to convince a potential customer to try the given product; to reward those customers who have purchased a product; to improve the image of a brand or an organisation; to strengthen or maintain employee morale.

Notwithstanding the given wide range of objectives which can be achieved applying individual marketing communication instruments, marketing communication is a significant subject of social criticism in marketing, even despite legislative regulation of many of its elements in a number of cases (Škrinár et al., 2009; Krošlák et al., 2014). These (negative) aspects of marketing communication, respectively their perception and evaluation by ultimate customers, are dealt with in this paper.

2. THE ISSUE

It is nowadays more and more problematic for managers of organisations to find answers to questions how to maintain or enhance positions in demanding competitive rivalry in the dynamically changing environment (Papulová et al., 2014), while the competitive rivalry is “at the edge of ethics” in many cases. Representatives of the social criticism of marketing argue that marketing communication significantly accounts for the following deceptive practices (Boush et al., 2009): Lying in a form of careful selection of words and sentences, while thus declared statements are untrue; significant digital editing of photographs, videos and other visual presentations; lying in relation to numeric data, calculations, statistical information and results of different surveys; resourceful omission, obfuscation or confusion of information; lying by using a large amount (of scattered) information; activities making an impression that they help create relationship with customers; displaying of fake emotions upon sale and service provision; incomplete or misleading framework product comparison; inadequate requirements in relation to information retrieval, manuals, how to use products; imitation of products and brands and resourceful advertisements confusing such substitute products with their originals; concocted customer characteristics using brand image; reverse product placement in films, television broadcasts and on websites; exaggeration, exaggerated advertisements and meaningless content of messages of marketing communication instruments; apparent and open misleading in relation to product attributes and characteristics and consequences resulting from using such products.

Marketing communication has been of central concern of marketing social critics due to the fact that it notably encourages the consumption of ultimate customers and participates in the creation of unsustainable patterns of consumer behaviour in many cases (Southerton et al., 2004). Marketing communication management is therefore quite difficult. Massive criticism has been directed at advertising as one of the most frequented marketing communication instruments, predominantly triggered by social and environmental impacts of advertising. A number of social critics ask (often legitimately), whether an advertisement reliably reflects experience which a customer can have, or has, with a product (Cohen, 1974; Gneezy, 2005; Crawford, 2003). A wide range of marketing communication activities raises questions on how individual instruments (resources invested in instruments versus their return in different forms, for instance an executed transaction, remembering a message content) are used with a view to efficiency and effectiveness, which is predominantly related to direct marketing instruments, sales promotion and (television or print) advertising (Pajtinková and Gubiniová, 2012).

Social consequences of marketing communication are constantly of central concern of a number of subjects, including critics as well as academics. Some argue that marketing communication instruments (respectively advertising) are ubiquitous and so disturbing that they have a capacity to massively influence and shape the values and desires of society, thus making individuals materialistic, cynical, egoistic and shallow people (Parsons and Maclaran, 2011). Such individuals ultimately create a homogeneous global culture, which will be represented by customers with unrealistic stereotypes (Pollay, 1986). Another quite frequented argument is the fact that while marketing as such seeks to ensure and build customer satisfaction, marketing communication often unintentionally results in significant dissatisfaction of customers (Pajtinková and Gubiniová, 2012).

Effective marketing communication builds long-term relationships with customers, which are further strengthened in different phases, for instance during the time of product use, or after the end of product life cycle. Marketing managers leading an organisation’s communication strategy are challenged to respect customer characteristics in marketing communication campaigns and use the strength of individual marketing communication instruments to ensure that they are not related to negative social and ecological communication aspects (Lindstrom, 2012).

3. METHODOLOGY

The objective of the paper is to identify deceptive practices applied in contemporary marketing communication from the perspective of ultimate customers in the Slovak Republic on the grounds of conducted primary marketing research, and compare them to already conducted researches, respectively secondary source of information. The results presented in the paper are based on primary, representative, quantitative and qualitative research, while the main role in the qualitative research is played by motivating factors, which ultimate customers find in currently applied marketing communication instruments (Blašková, 2010; Vetráková and Kolektív, 2011, Hitka and Balážová, 2015; Linhartová and Urbancová, 2012; Zámečník, 2007; Paška and Albert, 2010; Stachová and Stacho, 2013). The research was conducted from September to November 2014 on a sample of 1.820 respondents. The reliability of the results of the conducted research was at the level of 95% with precision of 3%, while the sample size represented 1.820 respondents. The sample comprised an adult population of Slovakia based on gender, age, education, nationality, regional representation and size of seat.

Questionnaire used in the representative research contained a set of questions comprehensively covering the issue of deceptive practices used in marketing management from the perspective of ultimate customers. In order to achieve the objective of the paper, we were evaluating the part to which marketing communication was central. In the first question, respondents had room for providing instances of twelve deceptive practices in marketing communication, and therefore the analysis of this question will represent the qualitative part of the research. In the following question, respondents were asked to identify the instruments they considered trustworthy, while they were presented fourteen

instruments towards which they were supposed to express an approach of complete trust versus complete distrust. The results of this question are confronted with the results of secondary research of different foreign states; we thus compared the approaches of Slovak and foreign respondents. In the last analysed question, respondents were presented a range of answers, or approaches - "it is complied with - it is not complied with - I cannot assess" - to statements of the Slovak Advertising Standards Council related to essential requirements on advertising.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The approaches towards the use of deceptive practices nowadays from the perspective of ultimate customers were divided into two levels: Quantitative and qualitative. From the quantitative view, we provide a percentage share of respondents opining that they agree with the given (deceptive) marketing practice, or have been confronted with it. Table 1 provides a list of the given practices with absolute and percentage representation of respondents' opinions.

Based on the results of deceptive practices analysis, we identified that from the perspective of respondents, the most frequented are the following (deceptive practices): Lying in a form of careful selection of words and sentences, while thus declared statements are untrue (63% of respondents), significant digital editing of photographs, videos and other visual presentations (59% of respondents), and exaggeration, exaggerated advertisements and meaningless content of messages of marketing communication instruments (57% of respondents). Percentage representations of these three practices suggest that the differences between them are only minor. The range between practices in the first place and the twelfth place is 52 percentage points, which is quite a significant difference (the practice related to inadequate requirements in relation to information retrieval, manuals, and to how to use products was in the last place, marked by 11% of respondents).

Another step of the analysis of respondents' answers was a qualitative evaluation of the given examples, as the respondents were subsequently supposed to provide examples of deceptive practices they had been confronted with in practice. Table 2 shows examples of deceptive practices provided by the respondents, which can be related to several categories - product, way of distribution, particular marketing communication instrument, industry or business the involved organisation operates in.

We reached a number of conclusions upon evaluating the qualitative part of the research, while practices at the first three places are described in detail. For deceptive practices applying lying in a form of careful selection of words and sentences, while thus declared statements are untrue, answers of the respondents can be divided into several categories. First of all, they are related to a selected way of distributing products and services (for instance phone sale, Internet sale, teleshopping, demonstration events). The fact that these practices are among "problematic" can also be demonstrated by more and more stringent legislation, aiming at strengthening customer protection. The notification obligation of the organisers of sales and presentation campaigns on the website of the Slovak Trade Inspection can serve as an example (pursuant to Act 102/2014 Coll. on consumer protection upon product sales or service provision on the grounds of a distance contract or a contract concluded off the premises of a seller and on change and amendment of some laws), coupled with publishing the contracts concluded at such events (<http://www.soi.sk/sk/Predajne-a-prezentacne-akcie/Predajne-a-prezentacne-akcie.soi>). The second group comprises different product categories, promotion of which is most frequently ensured by these deceptive practices from the perspective of the respondents, who provided examples of food products – organic foods, frozen foods, cereals; drugs and nutritional supplements, for which benefits they do not actually bring are communicated – weight-loss supplements; cosmetics and its most frequently recorded category – wrinkle filler creams, for which their producers declare unrealistic expectations. The

Table 1: Perception of deceptive practices used in marketing communication from the perspective of respondents, respectively ultimate customers (percentage representation)

Deceptive practice	Absolute representation	Percentage representation (%)	Ranking
Lying in a form of careful selection of words and sentences, while thus declared statements are untrue	1.147	63	1
Significant digital editing of photographs, videos and other visual presentations	1.070	59	2
Lying in relation to numeric data, calculations, statistical information and results of different surveys	764	42	4
Resourceful omission, obfuscation or confusion of information	610	34	6
Displaying of fake emotions upon sale and service provision	650	36	5
Incomplete or misleading framework product comparison	600	33	7
Inadequate requirements in relation to information retrieval, manuals, how to use products	200	11	11
Imitation of products and brands and resourceful advertisements confusing such substitute products with their originals	450	25	8
Concocted customer characteristics using brand image	340	19	9
Reverse product placement in films, television broadcasts and on websites	660	36	5
Exaggeration, exaggerated advertisements and meaningless content of messages of marketing communication instruments	1.037	57	3
Apparent and open misleading in relation to product attributes and characteristics and consequences resulting from using such products	280	15	10

Respondents could select more than one option, Source: Own elaboration

Table 2: Examples of deceptive practices used in marketing communication from the perspective of respondents, respectively ultimate customers

Deceptive practice	Examples of deceptive practices (related to for instance products, way of distribution or marketing communication instrument, within which the respondents have experienced a deceptive practice)
Lying in a form of careful selection of words and sentences, while thus declared statements are untrue	Phone sale, Internet sale, teleshopping, demonstration events Food products, drugs, nutritional supplements, washing powders, cosmetics Banks, financial advisers, insurance companies, mobile operators Statements related to price adjustments and discounts
Significant digital editing of photographs, videos and other visual presentations	Food products, restaurant facilities; cosmetics, drug-store products; clothes; holidays Internet sale, mail-order sale
Lying in relation to numeric data, calculations, statistical information and results of different surveys	Television advertising, print advertising Cosmetics, drug-store products; drugs, nutritional supplements; food products; passenger cars (fuel consumption) Commercial banks, non-bank financial companies; mobile operators; retail chains Quantifiers (“9 out of 10 people are satisfied”, “on the left from”), “pseudo” discounts; public opinion polls Television advertising, radio advertising
Resourceful omission, obfuscation or confusion of information	Drugs (side effects); cosmetics (creams); food products (percentage contents of an ingredient) Mobile operators; commercial banks, non-bank financial companies, commercial insurance companies Teleshopping; doorstep selling; phone sale Hidden conditions; use of small font; non-provision of all necessary information; two products for the price of one
Displaying of fake emotions upon sale and service provision	Teleshopping; doorstep selling; sales campaigns Financial advisers Food products; drugs, nutritional supplements and medical devices promoted in television advertising
Incomplete or misleading framework product comparison	Mobile operators; commercial banks Food products; cosmetics, drug-store products (toothpastes, washing powders) Leaflet promotion of retail chains Comparing prices of products of different quality
Inadequate requirements in relation to information retrieval, manuals, how to use products	Electronics (manual in other than Slovak language); toys; furniture Lack of information on products without a packaging
Imitation of products and brands and resourceful advertisements confusing such substitute products with their originals	Mobile devices (Apple versus Samsung); clothes, shoes; cosmetics (perfumes) Sales at markets; Internet sale (AliExpress, eBay)
Concocted customer characteristics using brand image	Mobile operators; commercial banks Clothes; electronics (iPhone) Internet sale; teleshopping; sale of clothes via luxurious retail stores
Reverse product placement in films, television broadcasts and on websites	Electronics (mobile devices, laptops); cars; food products, alcohol, cigarettes; clothes in TV shows (“Panelák”, “Búrlivé víno”) and films (James Bond) Coverage of sports events
Exaggeration, exaggerated advertisements and meaningless content of messages of marketing communication instruments	Passenger cars; food products; drug-store products (washing powders, detergents); drugs, nutritional supplements Mobile operators; commercial banks (loan products) Retail chains selling food products (Lidl, Tesco, Kaufland) Teleshopping; sales campaigns Television advertising, outdoor advertising (billboards)
Apparent and open misleading in relation to product attributes and characteristics and consequences resulting from using such products	Cosmetics; drug-store products (washing powders); drugs, nutritional supplements (weight-loss supplements) Doorstep selling; demonstration events Television advertising

Respondents could provide any number of examples, Source: Own elaboration

importance of cosmetics industry results from the fact that it is an industry with significant cultural and financial impact in developed Western democracies. Marketing communication

expenditure is considerably higher than in other industries and businesses. Furthermore, this industry is confronted with two ethical components – deceptive advertising and manipulation of

customers (Parsons and Maclaran, 2011). The third group of the most frequented examples recorded in this type of practices was represented by service providers – commercial banks, commercial insurance companies, financial intermediaries and mobile operators and their promotion of provided services, for instance advertised easiness of a loan provision process, while it is in fact significantly more complicated. The last group declared by the respondents regards applied price adjustments and discounts, for which organisations frequently use expressions like “50% discount today,” “free,” or small font regulating the conditions of sales at reduced prices.

The deceptive practice which ranked second in the quantitative research was related to significant digital editing of photographs, videos and other visual presentations. Examples provided by the respondents can be divided into three categories – promoted products; way of selling products to ultimate customers; and marketing communication instruments use. For the product categories, the respondents listed the following: Food products (shinier fruits), restaurant facilities (retouching of foods offered by fast food restaurants), cosmetics (respondent’s answer that “nobody would buy the product based on actual pictures,”) drugs, nutritional supplements, clothes and travel agencies products (significantly edited pictures in catalogues). A way of product sale, respectively a distribution channel used to deliver a product to an ultimate customer was also recorded for this practice. Internet sale and mail-order sale were declared by the respondents, pointing to (edited) pictures and actually received product (clothes were the most frequented from the product category viewpoint). The particular marketing communication instrument for which the greatest number of examples was recorded was television and print advertising.

Five groups of answers, which basically repeated in the previous practices, were recorded based on an open question within deceptive practices characterised by exaggeration, exaggerated advertisements and meaningless content of messages of marketing communication instruments. The following were represented within product categories: Passenger cars, food products, drug-store products (particular detergents and washing powders), drugs and nutritional supplements. With reference to service providers, the respondents marked mobile operators and commercial banks (predominantly loan products were pointed to). With reference to the way of product distribution, the respondents evaluated teleshopping and sales campaigns (particularly for instance “emotional and false speeches at presentations”) negatively. Retail chains, which predominantly offer food products, were also evaluated negatively by the respondents. In terms of marketing communication instruments, two of them were dominant – television advertising and outdoor advertising, although the answers also included statements like “all current television advertisements exaggerate the attributes of offered products,” or “90% of advertisements are like this.”

It can be concluded upon evaluation of the qualitative part of our representative research that in case of almost all deceptive practices, the respondents identified identical product categories (food products, drugs), industries/businesses (commercial banking,

telecommunications), ways of product distribution (teleshopping, presentation campaigns, doorstep selling) and particular marketing communication instruments (advertising, especially on television). This knowledge could be used by a number of subjects – organisations, which can realise how positively or negatively ultimate customers evaluate their marketing activities not only in terms of marketing communication, but first of all by state, which can create a legislative framework eliminating or correcting such practices.

Another partial objective of the paper is to compare the trustworthiness, respectively relevance of individual marketing communication instruments in the Slovak Republic and abroad (the research of Nielsen agency named Global Trust in Advertising and Brand Messages, with the participation of more than 28,000 respondents on the Internet at the territory of 56 states, conducted in 2012, was selected as a secondary research to which the results of the representative research will be confronted). Table 3 provides data from the processed secondary research of Nielsen agency.

The Table 3 clearly shows that recommendations from an acquaintance were marked as the most trustworthy as well as the most relevant marketing communication instrument for foreign respondents, while traditional, or mass marketing communication instruments like promotional SMS messages, on-line advertising, television and radio advertising, etc. were marked as the most distrusted ones.

The given secondary research was a basis for examining the situation in the Slovak Republic, as the same instruments were selected (respectively they were elaborated if necessary), and respondents were supposed to mark instruments they considered “completely trustworthy” and “completely untrustworthy” on a dichotomous scale. Table 4 summarises the obtained findings.

The results of the representative research conducted in the Slovak Republic show that the respondents place the greatest trust in recommendations of both other customers on the Internet (for instance reviews, blogs) and acquaintances (the results of both researches regarding this aspect are identical), while the least trust is placed on advertisements on social networks, on-line banners and other above the line marketing communication instruments. Similarly to the results of the qualitative research, these could help organisations modify or innovate their individual marketing communication instruments.

Data of the greatest advertisers in the Slovak Republic on the expenditure on above the line marketing communication instruments thus sound paradoxical Table 5.

The last component of the quantitative analysis of the representative research was a finding to what extent the statements of the Slovak Advertising Standards Council related to essential requirements on advertising are complied with according to the respondents. Answers were supposed to range between the following options: It is complied with – it is not complied with - I cannot assess. The given subject was selected, as it is an authority dealing with advertising ethical self-regulation in the Slovak Republic,

Table 3: Trustworthiness and relevance of marketing communication instruments from a global perspective (percentage representation)

Marketing communication instrument	Trust in the marketing communication instrument		Relevance of the marketing communication instrument	
	Complete trust (%)	Complete distrust (%)	A high degree of relevance	A high degree of irrelevance
SMS messages	29	71	31	69
Advertisements via mobile devices (phones)	33	67	33	67
On-line banners	33	67	33	67
Advertisements on social networks	36	64	36	64
On-line advertisements	36	64	36	64
Advertisements in Internet search engines	40	60	37	63
Product placement	40	60	39	61
Advertisements in cinemas	41	59	41	59
Radio advertisements	42	58	42	58
Newspaper advertisements	46	54	45	55
Billboards and other outdoor advertising	47	53	46	54
Advertisements in magazines	47	53	46	54
Sponsoring	47	53	46	54
Television advertisements	47	53	50	50
Solicited e-mail communication	50	50	51	49
Branded websites	58	42	55	45
Editorials in print media	58	42	59	41
Customer recommendations on the Internet	70	30	75	25
Recommendations from an acquaintance	92	8	90	10

Source: A Nielsen Report - Global Trust in Advertising and Brand Messages. April 2012

Table 4: Trust in marketing communication instruments from the perspective of respondents, respectively ultimate customers (percentage representation)

Marketing communication instrument	Trust in the marketing communication instrument	
	Complete trust (%)	Complete distrust (%)
Advertisements via mobile devices, SMS	24	76
On-line banners	24	76
Advertisements on social networks	27	73
Products placed in TV shows, series, video clips	32	68
Advertisements in cinemas	31	69
Television advertisements	35	65
Radio advertisements	37	63
Advertisements in newspapers and magazines	44	56
Billboards and other outdoor advertising	34	66
Sponsoring	55	45
Solicited e-mail communication, newsletters	52	48
Websites of companies	63	37
Recommendations of other customers on the Internet (for instance reviews, blogs)	87	13
Recommendations from an acquaintance	97	3

Source: Own elaboration

to identify with one of four statements and decide whether they perceive this state in the given manner, i.e. whether the Slovak Advertising Standards Council is succeeding in achieving the defined objectives. Table 6 shows a percentage representation of answers to individual statements.

Quite pessimistic approaches of the respondents, recorded in the evaluation of deceptive practices used in marketing communication, were confirmed in the evaluation of general advertising requirements. With regard to the large proportion of respondents opining that the general advertising requirement related to abusing the trust of consumers or taking advantage of a lack of their experience, knowledge or their credulity is not complied with, we can assume that trust to advertising as a traditional marketing communication instrument is not at a required level (repeatedly confirmed finding Table 4).

Data from 2013 Annual Report of the Slovak Advertising Standards Council were used to objectify the subjective assessment of respondents' answers. In 2013, the Arbitration Committee of the Slovak Advertising Standards Council was assessing 121 advertisements overall, in relation to which 222 complaints were filed, while compared to previous years, the overall number of assessed advertisements does not have a significantly increasing tendency. It can be concluded from the viewpoint of qualitative grounds of the complaints that the most frequented reasons for complaints filed in 2013 was infringement of the provisions related to the decency and social responsibility in advertising. What complainants criticised about the assessed advertisements were presentations breaching the general standards of morality and decency, self-serving display of human body (especially female) without any relation to promoted products or services and to goals of such advertisements, especially

especially aiming at ensuring and enforcing that fair, polite, decent, legal and trustworthy advertisements are released at the territory of the Slovak Republic. The respondents were supposed

Table 5: The greatest advertisers in the Slovak Republic in 2014 (monitored advertising based on official price lists, in thousands of EUR)

Company	Advertising expenditure	Monitored volume in media					
		Television	Magazines	Newspapers	Radio	Outdoor advertising	Cinema advertising
Slovak Telekom	51,810.2	43,299.2	1,518.6	2,034.1	1,598.7	2,558.9	800.7
Orange Slovensko	41,812.9	33,589.1	2,364.9	2,034.5	937.7	2,553.2	333.5
Henkel Slovensko	26,576.6	25,662.3	825.7	18.3	17.0	53.5	0.0
Telefónica Slovakia	21,733.8	17,944.7	970.9	974.8	544.3	1,280.4	18.8
Unilever Slovensko	20,620.8	19,159.5	1,118.2	5.2	46.1	227.9	63.9
Lidl SR	20,575.3	14,672.2	823.3	4,393.4	522.3	157.7	6.3
Slovenská sporiteľňa	18,963.8	16,355.7	430.2	827.0	101.8	1,249.1	0.0
Nestlé Slovensko	17,245.1	16,701.6	346.2	12.6	123.9	39.1	21.7
Tesco Stores SR	14,373.0	11,930.5	605.0	731.6	437.7	639.8	28.4
Poštová banka	13,865.3	11,919.7	197.6	1,051.2	193.7	503.1	0.0

Source: TNS Slovakia, s. r. o., Bratislava. In: Trend TOP v reklame a médiách, Júne 2015 (Trend TOP in Advertising and Media, June 2015)

Table 6: Evaluation of general advertising requirements from the perspective of respondents, respectively ultimate customers (percentage representation)

Deceptive practice	It is complied with (%)	It is not complied with (%)	I cannot assess (%)
Advertisements cannot include statements or visual presentations breaching general standards of decency and morality, they mainly cannot include elements undermining human dignity	25	44	29
Advertisements cannot be designed as abusing the trust of consumers or taking advantage of a lack of their experience or knowledge or their credulity	8	64	25
Advertisements cannot unreasonably use the motive of fear, create a feeling of fear and present a product as a suitable means of fear elimination	24	36	37
Advertisements cannot endanger the reputation of advertising as such or reduce the trust in advertising as a service provided to consumers	19	41	37

Source: Own elaboration

with regard to selected communication medium, its availability and accessibility to all age categories, including children and youth. In relation to social responsibility of advertising, many complainants criticised advertisements which offended religious feelings of consumers and undermined Christian belief in their view. The greatest amount of advertisements was assessed on the grounds of complaints pointing to infringement of the provisions related to trustworthiness of advertisements. Complainants were predominantly pointing to advertisements providing information in an unclear, not understandable or ambiguous manner, containing possibly misleading information, or lacking information necessary in order for consumers to make a qualified decision.

We can conclude on the grounds of the aforementioned that the results of the primary research correspond to the findings of the Slovak Advertising Standards Council. Moreover, we would like to point to the fact that ultimate customers make an insufficient use of their right to complain, and it would be suitable to build an awareness of this right.

5. CONCLUSION

In spite of an increasing number of market driving forces and the fact that market environment has become hypercompetitive, marketing is overlooked and marginalised in many cases. One of the causes can be the fact that “side effects” of marketing have defeated the defined key effects. Can this situation be improved? Several variables in the customer – organisation –

society relationship need to be rethought in order to compensate. Marketing used to be declared a representative of customers in organisations, however, in fact, it represented (also using unfair practices in many cases) an organisation of customers by means of endless innovations, aggressive marketing communication, etc. Marketing does not work in its traditional concepts any more, which is why it is necessary to identify with a new view of it. According to Kotler, the contributions of marketing include the facts that it has improved the quality of life, played an important role upon creating markets and products, increasing comfort and general enriching of life (Sheth and Sisodia, 2005). The boundary between a healthy, rational, responsible and sustainable approach to marketing and a moment when such an approach becomes harmful is questionable.

The objective of the paper was to identify deceptive practices applied in contemporary marketing communication from the perspective of ultimate customers in the Slovak Republic on the grounds of conducted primary research, and compare them to already conducted researches, respectively secondary source of information. Conclusions we have reached suggest a quite negative perception of contemporary marketing communication. Sophisticated selection of words and sentences, while thus declared statements are untrue; significant digital editing of visual presentations; and exaggeration and meaningless content of messages of marketing communication were identified as the most frequented deceptive practices by the respondents. Based on this knowledge, we were further evaluating deceptive practices from

the qualitative viewpoint and we found out that the respondents perceived them most significantly in relation to selected product categories (for instance food products, drugs, and nutritional supplements), service providers (mobile operators, commercial banks), particular marketing communication instruments (television advertising) and selected distribution channels (personal selling, teleshopping). From the perspective of trust to individual marketing communication instruments, we reached a conclusion that Slovak respondents placed the greatest trust in recommendations, while traditional marketing communication instruments were ranked at the bottom (the same state as the state abroad was recorded upon comparison). The aforementioned is paradoxical with regard to the fact that the greatest advertisers in the Slovak Republic are focused on the traditional marketing communication instruments. Pessimistic approaches of the respondents were also recorded upon evaluating general advertising requirements elaborated by the Slovak Advertising Standards Council, while the results of our research correspond to its findings, as the respondents do not feel that the general advertising requirements (for instance fairness, decency and trustworthiness) are sufficiently complied with and that non-compliance with them is adequately sanctioned.

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