

---

Dabija D.C., Dinu V., Abrudan I.N., Postelnicu C. (2014), „The Impact of the Marketing Mix and Sustainability on Shaping Consumer Preferences towards Non-Food Stores”, *Transformations in Business & Economics*, Vol. 13, No 3 (33), pp.36-53.

---

---

-----TRANSFORMATIONS IN -----  
**BUSINESS & ECONOMICS**

© Vilnius University, 2002-2014  
© Brno University of Technology, 2002-2014  
© University of Latvia, 2002-2014

---

## **THE IMPACT OF THE MARKETING MIX AND SUSTAINABILITY ON SHAPING CONSUMER REFERENCES TOWARDS NON-FOOD STORES**

### **<sup>1</sup>Dan-Cristian Dabija**

*Department of Marketing Faculty of Economics and Business Administration Babeş-Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca Teodor Mihali 58-60 RO-400591, Cluj-Napoca Romania*  
Tel.: 0040.740.189.659  
Fax: 0040.264.412.570  
E-mail: cristian.dabija@econ.ubbcluj.ro

### **<sup>2</sup>Vasile Dinu**

*Department of Business, Consumer Sciences and Quality Management Faculty of Commerce Bucharest University of Economic Studies 41, Dacia Blvd., District 1, Bucharest Romania*  
Tel.: 0040.745.069.890  
Fax: 0040.21 319.19.96  
E-mail: dinu\_cbz@yahoo.com

### **<sup>3</sup>Ioana-Nicoleta Abrudan**

*Department of Marketing Faculty of Economics and Business Administration Babeş-Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca Teodor Mihali 58-60 RO-400591, Cluj-Napoca Romania*  
Tel.: 0040.752.028.500  
Fax: 0040.264.412.570  
E-mail: ioana.abrudan@econ.ubbcluj.ro

### **<sup>3</sup>Catalin Postelnicu**

*Department of Economics Faculty of Economics and Business Administration Babeş-Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca Teodor Mihali 58-60 RO-400591, Cluj-Napoca Romania*  
Tel.: 0040.749.027.011  
Fax: 0040.264.412.570  
E-mail: catalin.postelnicu@econ.ubbcluj.ro

**<sup>1</sup>Dan-Cristian Dabija**, PhD, is an Associate Professor at the Department of Marketing, the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, Babeş-Bolyai University, Romania. His teaching and research fields are Retailing, International Marketing, Consumer Behaviour and Tourism Marketing. Dr. Dabija has completed his PhD Studies at the Bucharest University of Economic Studies, Romania, and won several doctoral and postdoctoral research scholarships at Romanian and German universities. His scientific output appeared at famous publishers in Romania, Germany and the USA. He presented scientific papers at conferences in Romania and abroad (European Marketing Academy Conference, World Marketing Congress, Annual MBAA International Conference, Annual North American ACR Conference, European Association for Research on Services). Dr. Dabija serves as an associate editor or a reviewer for several journals (Amfiteatru Economic, Romanian Marketing Journal, Ecoforum, Management & Marketing, Marketing Education Review, Economic Research) and was / is a member of the American Marketing Association (AMA), European Marketing Academy (EMAC), European Association for Research on Services (RESER) and The Society for Business Excellence (SBEx).

<sup>2</sup>**Vasile Dinu**, graduated from the Bucharest University of Economic Studies, the Faculty of Commerce and completed a doctorate in economics. He is a professor at the Department of Business, Consumer Sciences and Quality Management, the Faculty of Commerce, Bucharest University of Economic Studies. Dinu Vasile is founder and editor-in-chief of the *Amfiteatru Economic* journal, which is indexed by Thomson Reuters (Web of Science), Category Social Sciences Citation Index; Member in the Consultation College of Associations and Foundations at the Office of the Prime Minister; President of the Association for Consumer Protection „UniversCons” and Member of the European Association for Research on Services (RESER).

<sup>3</sup>**Ioana-Nicoleta Abrudan**, graduated from Babeş-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca, the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration. In 2012 she was awarded a PhD degree in Economics – Marketing. She has held teaching positions of teaching assistant, assistant lecturer and lecturer since 2005, when she joined the staff of the Babeş-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca, the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, Department of Marketing. She is the co-author of 2 books and over 30 journal articles in the field of Marketing Policies, Services Marketing, Retail Marketing and Tourism Marketing.

<sup>4</sup>**Cătălin Postelnicu**, PhD, graduated from Babeş-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca, the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, in 1993. In 1999 he was awarded a Ph.D. degree in Economics, in the field of International Economic Relations, with a thesis on Multinational Corporations. He is an Associate Professor at the Department of Economics and his teaching and research fields are International Economics, International Investments, Multinational Corporations and International Business. He is author or co-author of 24 books and over 50 articles in the specific fields; he graduated from the Institute in the U.S. Economy and Public Policy for Foreign University Teachers with Oklahoma State University, USA, and has been a member of the Academy of International Business. He became gradually involved in several national and international grants and research projects. Dr. Postelnicu is editor-in-chief of a specialized journal published by Babeş-Bolyai University and actively engaged in the editorial activity of other business and economics journals.

*Received:* September, 2014

*1<sup>st</sup> Revision:* September, 2014

*2<sup>nd</sup> Revision:* November, 2014

*Accepted:* November, 2014

***ABSTRACT.*** *A major challenge for any company, regardless of its field of activity, is related to the considerable improvement of financial indicators that determine its activity, such as: market share, turnover, sales volume and value, number of customers, etc. In generating these quantitative indicators, a major role is also played by qualitative indicators, usually represented by consumers' and clients' reviews. These qualitative indicators include satisfaction with companies' services, trust and sympathy displayed, return to the store and positive recommendations of the store to friends, relatives or other people, together with the perceived fairness of retailers' treatment. They represent important vectors not only in generating behavioral success of these stores, but also in attracting and retaining customers.*

*In shaping a favorable perception, a particular role is played by several levers - prices, assortment, store atmosphere, customer service, etc. These, together with awareness, trust, sympathy, and more recently with sustainability issues (orientation towards environment protection, reducing resource consumption, societal orientation etc.) converge towards a better positioning of the companies among target market segments.*

*The literature highlights several approaches to the issues at stake, treated individually and in interrelation, but does not entirely succeed in outlining an appropriate research direction regarding the integration of sustainability issues in shaping customer preferences towards non-food retail stores. Fully understanding the situation, the authors conduct an empirical research in non-food retailing in Romania. The research highlights some important issues, from both theoretical and practical point of view, useful in future scientific researches, as well as in defining internationalization strategies of retailers.*

**KEYWORDS:** marketing-mix dimensions, sustainability, non-food retail, empirical research, behavioural success, Romania, retail stores.

**JEL classification:** L81, M14, M30, M31

## **Introduction**

Today attracting and especially maintaining and binding consumers to the retail store is probably one of the biggest challenges for managers who want to run successful businesses. The difficulty of this approach resides in several aspects, the most important probably being represented by customer imbalance, which displays an increasingly divergent behavior – one customer sometimes prefers to travel hundreds of miles to find the merchandise he wants, while other chooses discount stores. If in a hurry, the consumer is willing to buy at a convenience store that probably charges higher prices, but can sometimes spend a long time in a retail store, carefully comparing offers and trying to maximize his utility (Dabija, 2013).

The probability that a consumer repurchases from a particular store, retail chain or retail format (hypermarket, supermarket, discount store, etc.) increases as the store succeeds in getting closer to customers' purchase needs, in inducing him the perception of the visit as an enjoyable leisure activity. For this reason the management of the retail company must develop positive associations in the minds of consumers, which first lead them to visit, then to make purchases, and finally to generate their return to the stores. Only through behavioral success (development and consolidation of a positive image, trust and satisfaction, etc.), the company in question will be economically and financially successful (increased market share, higher turnover and profit, etc.).

Modern consumers are increasingly looking to act sustainably and purchase environmentally friendly goods. Also, more and more people are looking to contribute to reduce human impact on the environment change and foster a favorable climate for future generations by adopting sustainable lifestyles, by participating at various social, economic or political events (Martin, Schouten, 2012). Consumers are interested in adopting sustainable lifestyles not only in order to be able to keep up with the society they belong to, but also because this can

sometimes help them obtain certain services, brands, products or goods easier or cheaper. Thus, consumers manage to combine meeting a fundamental need with a social one, of self-esteem or self-development (Dabija, Pop, 2013; GfK, 2008). Retail companies have quickly realized this new social trend that is intensely sought by customers, emphasizing more and more the specific sustainability activities, such as environmental protection, organic or environmentally friendly products, promoting fair trade products, etc. An important role in the education of customers to choose goods with traceable origins, to recycle, to reuse packaging and to selectively collect waste, etc. lies with retailers.

In the spirit of this approach, this paper evaluates a number of specific levers that are useful in creating clients' preference towards non-food retail stores. This article refers to image of stores from a consumer perspective, to the components of the marketing mix (retailers' attributes), and also to various sustainability actions. The image is measured by the perception on subjective, personal, affective issues („pleasure of purchases”, sympathy for the store, favorable attitude) and on security (safety and trust in store practices). The authors assume that the retail store succeeds in gearing its service to the buyer through six specific dimensions, derived both from both consumer goods marketing mix and from that of services. Thus, the customer will be influenced through the assortment of goods on sale, including the private labels of retail chains, the interior and exterior environment of the store, the price level, the communication efforts, the customer service and the store location.

## **1. Non-Food Retail Stores Marketing Mix**

The number of instruments retailers use to create an image for their store varies between three and ten (Alt, 2009; Dabija, 2010; Dunne, Lusch, 2008; Zentes *et al.*, 2012; Abrudan, 2012). Most authors consider that the retail marketing mix includes assortment, private labels, price and acquisition finance, customer service, communication, store environment, store location, customer loyalty policy. The literature considers that parking, guarantees, products changes, alterations and adjustments, delivery of goods, personal, email, web site and/ or telephone selling, public relations, various logistical issues concerning storage, transport and merchandise management, processes within the distribution centers, etc. can be subsumed under these main dimensions.

Some authors consider that the most important dimension in shaping the success of the retail store or in generating a response from the consumer is represented by assortment (Nevin, Houston, 1980; McGoldrick, Thompson, 1992; Kirkup, Rafiq, 1994). In structuring the assortment, retailers must decide on its size, structure, homogeneity, quality, depth and breadth, decide for each product category and given the relatively limited selling space how many different national brands versus private labels to include, in order to ensure enough variety for the consumer to spend enough time shopping in their stores. Thus, an important element is the attractiveness of the assortment, which can either boost sales or generate avoidance of a store. Finally, an element that should be carefully analyzed refers to the concept of „one stop shopping” (Dabija, 2010; Zentes *et al.*, 2012), which means offering an assortment that is large enough to allow customers to make all the purchases they need in one place.

Besides assortment, another important vector for the retailer is store ambience, the decoration and organization of the retail store interior space. Through this, the retail store communicates and interacts with the visitors. The management of the interior can be considered interior and exterior „packaging” of the store (Timmermans *et al.*, 1982), which makes it more

attractive, and helps shaping its image in the minds of the customers. Ambience is also an excellent source of differentiation and positioning. It must be consistent with the store format and the image the retail chain management is pursuing (Skogster, 2006). Ambience components include architecture, design, general organization of store, store aisles, merchandising, windows design, sound, temperature, cleanliness, store maintenance, noise and background noise, security and safety, information, ease of access and orientation within the store, etc. (Dabija, 2010; Zentes *et al.*, 2012). Meanwhile, store ambience can also include interior and exterior decorations, furniture, materials and textures used, specific odors, which also often influence the time consumers spend in the store.

The most sensitive component, from both retailer's and customer's perspective, is the price (Dabija, 2010). Price includes, for customers, financial aspects (the cost of goods and services purchased, the cost of transportation, of parking, etc.), time and physical, mental or emotional effort required by the search of items that best meet their needs. For customers, the price depends on the opportunity cost, being analyzed in relation to competitors' offer. Customers' perception on the price level is obtained through a process of aggregation of information about prices, perceived quality of products and services, architecture, design, complementary services, location, always compared to those of competing retail units (Zentes *et al.*, 2012). Secondly, price can be discussed in terms of store (retail chain) management. Pricing takes into account the effective use of price as a tool to stimulate store or chain development for increased profit and efficiency of the entire business. The overall price policy and the discounts plan for each year must take into account a variety of factors, including (Zentes *et al.*, 2011; Kotler, Keller, 2012): characteristics of the target market, maximum acceptable price level, price elasticity of demand, present and future economic and competitive situation, legislation, company's financial goals on short and long term, retail format, the image intended to be projected among buyers, the structure and level of costs, etc.

Another fairly important dimension in attracting customers is the service policy that refers to personnel management and its proper training (Dabija *et al.*, 2011) in order to increase the attractiveness of stores and to establish the structure, level and degree of flexibility of complementary services provided to customers (Dabija, 2010). Retail stores managers must properly perceive and understand consumers' expectations, giving them what they want or even more. Buyers usually expect increased attention, care, empathy, professionalism, good knowledge of the goods sold and advice from the personnel. On the other hand, the diversity and especially the quality of complementary services can be an effective basis for differentiation and positioning of shops, retail formats or retail chains. Meanwhile they contribute to increased satisfaction of target groups and to the development and consolidation of a positive image of the services provided (Kirkup, Rafiq, 1999).

The presentation of different types of national and store brands or of the store cannot take place without proper communication. In retailing, this refers mainly to point of sale advertising, considered (Berman, Evans, 2001) a form of sales promotion, and to online, printed or spoken advertising, etc. (Dabija, 2010; Zentes *et al.*, 2012). The stores have numerous opportunities to communicate with consumers. Billboards, posters, brochures, flyers, catalogs, electronic terminals (screens, multimedia billboards, electronic kiosks, etc.) can be placed on store aisles. The store sound system can transmit pieces of essential information. Electronic kiosks can be used to provide information and even to place orders. Loyalty card holders can view personalized offers, can participate in sweepstakes and contests, may receive shopping bags, packaging or gift certificates. Traditional promotional tools are not of a less importance,

but must be adapted to the peculiarities of the retail company and to its goals, and especially to the target buyer profile (Dabija, 2010). Mass-media advertising is rarer, and if used, the local one is preferred. A carefully designed, structured or implemented communication plan will contribute to the attractiveness of the store, to improved financial results, but also to enhanced awareness and image of the retail brand (Zentes *et al.*, 2012).

Location of retail stores, sometimes considered the most important attribute of a retail chain (Dabija, 2010), brings some major drawbacks. As opposed to other policies, it cannot be quickly adjusted, any modification involving major financial efforts. For site selection, store format, management objectives, buyers', competitors', and market characteristics must be considered. It is important to properly define potential clients' perspective on what optimal location means for them, where the store should be located in relation to other existing stores and service providers operating in the area (Zentes *et al.*, 2012).

## **2. Sustainable Development of the Retail Business**

Nowadays, an increasing importance is attributed to the methods and activities through which a business can sustainably develop itself, can help preserve resources and provide future generations with the same advantages and benefits enjoyed by current generations (Coca *et al.*, 2013; Dabija, Pop, 2013; Țigu *et al.*, 2014). In this respect, Dinu *et al.* (2012) state that an important role in protecting the environment belongs to customers through the choices they make when buying products. Thus, 43% of the Romanian consumers consider that environmental impact of a product greatly influences purchase decisions.

A specific dimension of sustainability is represented more intense by the social responsibility measures and actions that, especially for large retail corporations are addressed both at corporate level and at each national and local office (Dabija, 2012). Referring to the social performance of multinational corporations, Dunning, Lundan (2008) extends the spectrum of an organization's social performance to business ethics issues, sovereignty, environmental protection and preservation, showing that it is a driving factor for improving the business environment in which it operates, far beyond the legal restrictions imposed by authorities. Corporate social responsibility is situated between two limits, a minimum one, imposed by the general legislative regulations of a state (required to be met) and a maximum one, resulted from the degree of philanthropy that the company would display (UNCTAD, 1999; Postelnicu, 2005).

Social responsibility is also analyzed in close relation to the retail brand, the literature debating about the „platforms of profitability” (Werther, Chandler, 2005), which work to ensure a certain level of quality of services, consistency and safety of use. In this framework it is mentioned that the quality of the retail brand triggers a virtuous cycle by increasing investment in the process of research and development of new products, advertising and distribution infrastructure. But all these can only be achieved through sustainability actions, which lead to creating loyalty among certain categories of customers. On the other hand, sustainability actions (environmental protection, sustainability of society, etc.) are also seen as an „insurance policy” of the store, which are aimed at influencing consumers and at shaping their attitudes (Werther, Chandler, 2005).

In order to build a reputation on the market and a more profitable corporate image (Pop *et al.*, 2010), many organizations are willing to invest significant funds in sustainability actions, which help the company acquire a relative competitive advantage. Increased employee and

customer loyalty, harmonious relations with local communities, favorable image among target groups, enhanced quality of services, better cooperation with main suppliers, professionally conducted relationships with local interest groups, increased confidence of investors, etc. are important elements in enhancing socially sustainable involvement of the companies and in differentiating services in the minds of consumers. Moreover, a professional offer of services, accompanied by adequate counseling from competent and dedicated personnel, continuous and suggestive communication regarding the level and structure of prices, increase customer interest not only towards the store assortment, but also towards the sustainability actions and measures of the company (Dabija, Băbuț, 2014). By focusing on environmental protection, on resources preservation, on reducing packaging use, etc. the retail company manages to generate sustainable competitive advantages, eventually occupying a higher position in the minds of customers. Of course these social responsibility actions are based on constant communication with customers and on the exploitation of the diversification potential of the product range, thus the success being much closer.

The concept of business sustainability and adaptability of corporate governance to market realities (CSRQuest, 2014) has been more extensively debated lately. For retail companies, providing sustainable governance requires the adaptation of ethical international business standards by creating a dynamic balance between economic and environmental interests and social standards, in conjunction with the expectations of stakeholders (shareholders, partners, suppliers, intermediaries, etc.). In practice, it is the corporate governance that provides the benchmark in building any social responsibility and business sustainability strategy. The authors believe this view to be particularly suggestive of how several global non-food retailers have designed their social responsibility strategies, in the context of international expansion (Țigu *et al.*, 2014).

The various companies in non-food retailing have different definitions of the sustainable approach of target consumer segments. Following a sustainable strategy, Intersport (Intersport, 2014) required all its suppliers to not only meet the standards imposed by the Foreign Trade Association (FTA) and the Business Social Compliance Initiative (BSCI), but also to consistently monitor the full implementation of social standards in all the activities undertaken. Moreover, the company's slogan „Sport to the People“ is associated to the idea of health, dynamism, suggesting customers to become more active and to lead a life in accordance with the principles of sustainability. Through the corporate vision defined, Deichmann strives to integrate its own brand within the concept of „company that serves the population“ (Deichmann, 2014). In fact, Deichmann undertakes specific actions and activities that are designed to help people in general, especially the disadvantaged and disabled, the children in poor communities of Central and Eastern European states like Hungary, The Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland etc. The company supports the fight against cancer or Down syndrome, helping to collect donations for nursing homes, associations for the treatment of leukemia or hemophilia (Turkey), etc. For Praktiker, sustainability departs from the genuinely responsible citizen, a leader of conduct, for which the most important actions refer to education, society and environment (Vosskaemper, 2014). Praktiker successfully involves in donating building materials to poor families at high risk of children abandonment, and electrical equipment under the EuroHabitat program (Social Responsibility, 2014). It has built kindergartens, has recycled electronic waste (Green Day campaign, educational program Metro education), has offered decorating solutions for healthcare institutions (campaign „Color a smile“), has developed a do-it-yourself guide in

a form of technical fact sheets designed to help customers quickly and easily find useful items etc.

Similar actions, specific for sustainability, may be increasingly seen in Romanian retail. For example, the Sibiu based retail chain Ambient supports the Annual International Theatre Festival in Sibiu (Stroe, 2012), with the desire to provide access to culture for all „categories of people” (Ambient, 2014). Meanwhile the company seeks to provide integrated solutions to its customers and partners, competent advice, professionalism, proactiveness, competitive prices and operational and logistical support to conduct specific activities. Dedeman (Dedeman, 2014) promotes socially responsible behavior, based on its own values (seriousness, determination, perseverance, honesty, commitment and diligence), that it integrates with before and after the sale counseling and advice. Dedeman strives to increase the welfare of not only its customers, but also of society at large by funding serious medical cases, sports clubs, school projects, home care services, by donating building materials for cultural and religious sites and victims of natural disasters, scholarships, student awards in school competitions, by renovating centers for street children and the poor, etc. (Paval, 2014). Domo focuses its activity on the new retail concept implemented in the chain (Domo, 2014). The concept seeks to achieve a balance between large and small stores, depending on customer needs, in order to win their loyalty. Focusing on the principle of sustainability of its actions, Domo has developed a series of interconnected brands: Go @ Domo with homeware, Discover @ Domo for premium high-tech products, Digital @ Domo focused on customer care, counseling and specialty complementary services, and Technomarket, which seeks a new experience for visitors: open spaces, high-tech store, retail parks, expanded assortment, minimum operating costs, etc. Sustainability principles can also be found in the company’s vision (Domo, 2014): continuous search of integrated customer solutions, providing the latest and most innovative brands, increasing shopping convenience, growing the importance of quality services, merging technology with accessibility, following „everything under one roof” principle and creating a complex shopping experience to cover multiple needs.

All the actions developed by companies in non-food retail convey sustained contribution in developing local communities, in creating a favorable environment to generate significant comparative advantages, and in building a positive, unique and confident image in the minds of consumers. Such social responsibility actions decisively influence customers, offering them a viable alternative in terms of the contribution and involvement in the preservation of the environment and of the community of origin.

### **3. Customers’ Preference for Retail Stores**

The relationship between the retail company and its buyer is not exclusive because no individual will make all his purchases in one place (Dowling, Uncles, 1997). Literature finds direct links between store image and customer satisfaction (Bloemer, Ruyter, 1997; Wallace *et al.*, 2004), between image and people’s preference (Grewal *et al.*, 1998), between image and repurchase and recommendation intentions (Jones, Sasser, 1995; Bruhn, 2001), between image and repeat purchase (Sullivan, Adcock, 2002; Chao *et al.*, 2007) or between image and all these states (Dick, Basu, 1994; Oliver, 1999). According to the model proposed by Oliver (1999), confirmed by Yavas, Babakus (2009), declarative expression of preference and repurchase and recommendation intentions for a retail unit corresponds to conative loyalty. The proposed model is composed of four components: cognitive loyalty (cognitive assessment of the costs



and benefits of a brand), affective (satisfaction), conative (recommendation and repurchase intentions) and behavioral (number of visits).

Martineau (1958) is among the first authors who speak about retail store image. He considers image the result of customers' perception (more or less subjective) of tangible, functional factors (assortment of goods, prices, credit policies, shop organization, etc.) and intangible, psychological (sense of belonging, warmth, friendship, excitement, interest, etc.) related to a retail unit. Many other researchers have since embraced the same vision. Mazursky, Jacoby (1986) are the first to introduce the idea that the image is the result of integrating perceptions and beliefs about the factors describing a store and the experience (perceptions, beliefs, images and associations) with other stores or retail formats. Dennis (2005) regards the concept of image from retail companies' perspective, defining it as everything being communicated to consumers.

Conceptualization of retail stores image is very difficult (Burt *et al.*, 2007). Consumer perceptions of store image are based on attitudes and opinions, but depend on specific situations and experiences as well, varying among regions, markets and retail formats. They include tangible and intangible factors, functional and psychological attributes, emotional and factual data (Burt *et al.*, 2007). So, although the importance of image is admitted by researchers, the complexity of defining and measuring it has led to differences in its definition and operationalization. There can be identified in the literature two approaches: an attribute based one and a holistic one.

In the attribute-based approach, the image of the retail unit consists of two dimensions: cognitive components (functional) and affective. There are many representatives of this trend, such as: Mazursky, Jacoby (1986), Berman, Evans (2001), McGoldrick (2002), Ailawadi, Keller (2004), Anselmsson (2006), Yun, Good (2007), Swoboda *et al.*, (2009), Beristain, Zorilla (2011), Jara, Cliquet (2012), etc. All of them consider image components the elements of the marketing mix, classified and combined in multiple forms.

Since traditional attribute- based approaches are not able to capture the rich meaning of the image of retail enterprises, researchers propose a holistic vision, which conceptualizes the retail store image as the overall impression of the buyers. Thus, the image of retail store is an amalgam, an impression based on cognitive configuration (Zimmer, Golden, 1988; Baker *et al.*, 1994; Hu, Jasper, 2010; Dabija, 2010). The holistic vision emphasizes that retail store image is not defined as a mixture of dimensions and factual opinions, but as a unit, resulting from the perception of store attributes. In this case, the marketing mix components are no longer simple elements, but antecedents of store image, veritable levers in shaping customer preference.

#### **4. The Goals and Research Methodology**

Departing from the assumption that in shaping customers' preference or in building their affective, conative or behavioral loyalty for a retail store, a retail chain or a particular retail format it is necessary to resort to different ways, levers and techniques (Swoboda *et al.*, 2009; Dabija, 2010). The authors analyze using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) the role played by the specific sustainable development measures and actions and existing retailers' instruments in generating a proper response from customers. The empirical model being tested is shown in *Table 2*. It is the result of extensive previous research, validated in the context of food and non-food retail trade, (Dabija, 2010). The present research includes all the stores that distribute „shopping goods” (Kotler, Keller, 2012), namely electronics and appliance stores, clothing,

shoes and sports goods, DIY, all of them owned by prestigious retailers. To ensure random collection of data, respondents were asked to name at least three non-food stores where they purchase most often these types of goods. Interviewers were instructed to select for further evaluation in the questionnaire one of the shops listed by respondents. Respondents evaluated clothing stores (H & M, Zara, C & A, etc.), sporting goods, apparel and equipment (Decathlon, Intersport, Hervis), boutiques (Debenhams, Bigotti, Bershka, Calliope, CATO, etc.), electronics, and appliances (Domo, Flanco, Altex, Media Galaxy, etc.) and DIY (Bauman, Dedeman, Praktiker, etc.).

Although the intention was to obtain a uniform number of responses for each retail format, due to random selection of respondents, this goal could not be reached. In selecting respondents, operators followed a predetermined sampling plan, based on the quota method, specific for exploratory research (Plăiaș, 2008; Cătoiu, 2009). The variables used were socio-demographic and economic: age, sex, number of people in household, net income/ person (INSSE, 2010). The research was conducted between October 2012 and January 2013 in stores and shopping centers in Transylvania, with the aid of over 100 interviewers.

Transposition of theoretical concepts investigated (assortment, ambience, service, etc.) in terms of quantifiable indicators from clients' perspective was conducted according to specifications found in literature (Keller, 1993; Grewal *et al.*, 1998; Yoo *et al.*, 2000; Chaudhuri, Holbrook, 2001; Sirdeshmukh *et al.*, 2002; Anselmsson, 2006; Dabija, 2010; Dabija, 2012). In assessing assortment, respondents were invited to evaluate the private labels („Store X has a good assortment of private labels“), the quality and availability of items („Store X is always well stocked with store items and I never stand in front of an empty shelf“), but also the variety of lines of merchandise that qualify the store as a one stop shopping destination. Store ambience was evaluated through the facility of spatial orientation („The division of space in store X allows me to easily find my way“), the general ambience offered, the cleanliness and order („Store X is always clean, tidy and neat“) and the ease of shopping.

The price was assessed through several statements that referred to long-term stability, to the right value-for-the-money ratio, to the overall attractiveness of the prices or to the price level compared to other similar stores. While retail store communication was assessed through three dimensions (adequate, informative and frequent communication efforts), service was analyzed through four dimensions: good service, properly trained, friendly and always ready to serve employees and customer support. The last marketing mix component investigated was the location of retail stores, evaluated through accessibility, convenience, proximity to similar units and to customers.

Respondents were also invited to evaluate the sustainable dimensions of retail businesses, of their image and their preference towards retail stores (adapted from Yoo *et al.*, 2000; del Rio *et al.*, 2001; Baker *et al.*, 2002; Sirdeshmukh *et al.*, 2002; Anselmsson, 2006; Walsh, Beatty, 2007; Hälsig, 2008; Dabija, 2010). Sustainability was measured through stores' care for environmental protection („Store X is responsible for the surrounding environment“), for customers („Store X supports charity“), for employees („Store X works diligently to create jobs“), for society („Store X is aware of its responsibility towards society“), preservation of resources („Store X gives up profit to ensure a clean environment“). Meanwhile, there were statements that referred to the components of store image - safe decision („Store X is a safe decision for me“), trust („I trust store X“), sympathy („I like shop X very much“), correct treatment of customers („Store X treats its customers right“) or word to mouth communication („I can always say good things about store X“). Finally, customer preference for a particular

store was investigated through repurchase intention („I will probably shop at store X in the future”), the intention of more frequent repetition of acquisitions in the future („In the future I will buy products in store X more often”), store recommendation intention („I would recommend store X to friends, neighbors or relatives”) and through the preference over other similar units („In the future I will buy at store X more often than at other stores”).

Statements on store X were integrated into a single questionnaire. The respondents were frequent visitors of the stores considered. To facilitate the evaluation, respondents were asked to express their level of agreement (strongly agree - strongly disagree) on a seven step Likert scale. Being an exploratory experimental research, the questionnaire was applied to customers in shopping centers, in public spaces, at work or at their homes. Of over 2,000 questionnaires collected, 1,624 could be validated, out of which 593 responses - 36.51% referred to clothing stores, 214 responses - 13.17% to sports stores, 281 responses – 17.30% to footwear stores, 303 responses - 18.65% to electronics and appliances stores and 14.34% to DIY stores.

After data were collected, the data were systematized, introduced in a data base and tested for validity, reliability and internal consistency using Cronbach’s coefficient  $\alpha$  ( $\alpha > 0.7$ ) and „item-to-total” correlation, KMO criterion ( $> 0.7$ ), the Bartlett test of sphericity (exploratory factor analysis) and indicators of overall model fit. The model is introduced in *Table 2*. For model validation, SPSS analyses and AMOS structural equations modelling were used (Churchill, 1991; Dabija, 2010). Because some of the items considered did not have sufficient consistency, they were eliminated after applying Cronbach coefficient  $\alpha$ , the remaining specific analyses being developed with fewer items (*Table 1*).

**Table 1. The results of data validity and reliability tests**

Dimension	No. of items	$\alpha^1$ > 0.7	KMO <sup>2</sup> > 0.7	$\chi^2$ ; df; p <sup>3</sup>	Eigen-value	% variance
Assortment	5	0.824	0.832	1249.23; 8; ****	2.958	64.45
	4	0.875				
Ambience	5	0.935	0.885	3281.95; 10; ****	3.612	74.23
Price	5	0.922	0.847	3032.19. 20; ****	3.570	78.92
Communication	3	0.915	0.893	2304.52; 17; ****	2.289	90.32
Service	5	0.846	0.857	4337.23; 25; ****	3.365	79.55
	4	0.936				
Location	6	0.899	0.927	3543.77; 19; ****	3.947	64.83
Sustainability	5	0.924	0.904	3102.50; 15; ****	3.754	61.72
Preference	6	0.903	0.895	2955.75; 18; ****	3.944	76.78

Notes: <sup>1</sup> – Cronbach  $\alpha$  coefficient (data validity); <sup>2</sup> – Kaiser-Meyer-Ohlin criterion (exploratory factor analysis) for each dimension; – Bartlett test of sphericity ( $\chi^2$  – chi square, df – degree of liberty, p – probability; \*\*\*\*p < 0.001; \*\*\* p < 0.01; \*\* p < 0.05; \* p < 0.1).

Source: own research.

After the stability in terms of internal consistency of the data collected was ascertained, the non-food retail stores characteristics (assortment, ambience, price, communication, service and location) were aggregated into a single exploratory factor analysis, using oblique rotation, specific for exploratory empirical researches (Walsh, Beatty, 2007). The results revealed that the six dimensions retail stores used to influence customers are clearly identified by respondents, the specific indicators (KMO = 0.966,  $\chi^2 = 23466.889$  \*\*\*\*, df = 377) showing an increased reliability. The first factor extracted (eigenvalue 13.21, explained variance 43.57%) was ambience, the second one location (eigenvalue 3.33, explained variance 9.44%),

the third one communication (eigenvalue 2.86, explained variance 7.69%), the fourth price (eigenvalue 2.67, explained variance 6.98%), the fifth serving (eigenvalue 2.13, explained variance 5.45%), and the last assortment (eigenvalue 1.53, explained variance 4.22%). It may be noted that while the first four factors and assortment have a proportional positive influence on the investigated phenomenon, service has a proportional negative impact, meaning that it contributes less to the proliferation of the phenomenon.

After the exploratory factor analysis confirmed the internal consistency of the investigated dimensions, the phenomenon presented in *Table 2* was modelled with structural equations using AMOS. The model fit was confirmed by obtaining large enough values of the relevant indicators: GFI, AGFI, TLI, NLI, CFI > 0.8, SRMR > 0.8 (Standardized Root Mean Square Residual) and RMSEA > 0.8 (Forza, Filippini, 1998; Ju *et al.*, 2006; Dabija, 2010).

## 5. Research Results

*Table 2* shows that the assortment (0.259 \*\*\*), ambience (0.227 \*\*\*\*), price (0.146 \*\*\*\*) and service (0.112 \*\*\*\*) play a decisive and significant role in shaping respondents' image of the analyzed stores. In fact, the most powerful factor in determining image is the assortment (0.259 \*\*\*), a sign that variety of the assortment leads respondents to more strongly anchor the store in their minds. In the case of shopping goods, customers pay great attention to small details, specific to these products, such as their intrinsic properties, the materials they are made of, warranty or use terms, validity, fashionability, etc. It becomes very clear that the very products that will be purchased are those that contribute the most to anchoring the image of the stores analyzed in respondents' minds, together with stores' own brands.

**Table 2. Vectors in shaping Romanian consumers' preference towards non-food retail formats**

	Non-food retail	$\chi^2$	df	$\chi^2/df$
Assortment → Image	0.259*****	11046.045	1107	5.879
Ambience → Image	0.227*****	RMSEA (≤ 0.08)		GFI
Price → Image	0.146*****	0.061		0.950
Communication → Image	-0.105 <sup>n.s.</sup>	SRMR (≤ 0.08)		NFI
Service → Image	0.112*****	0.0603		0.984
Location → Image	-0,110 <sup>n.s.</sup>	TLI	AGFI	CFI
Image → Sustainability	0.226*****	0.975	0.930	0.967
Image → Success	0.834*****	n.s. - insignificant		*p<0.1
Sustainability → Success	0.102*	**p<0.05		***p<0.01
Respondents	1,624	****p<0.001		

Source: own research.

A strong influence is also played by the ambience (0.227\*\*\*\*\*), meaning the interior organization of the stores. Often, clothing, sports and leather goods stores alter the goods setting, trying to induce clients a spirit of adventure, to make them stoically and passionately search for the items they need or they believe they would need. Of course by doing so, the management of retail company tries to persuade individuals to spend more time in the store, hoping that this will determine them to purchase more products. The choice of warm colors and lighting, broadcasting of pleasant and slow melodies to lure shopping and relaxation, combined, of course, with thematic decoration of shops are just a few examples designed to generate favorable attitudes from customers, to make them feel good and “discover” various goods and

lines of products. Of course, store cleanliness and order also contribute to a positive image of the stores.

Besides assortment and ambience, price (0.146 \*\*\*\*) also plays an important role in shaping favorable image of non-food stores. Due to the size of the financial effort required by these groups of merchandise, consumers spend more time to inform, to compare utility, to search for the best ways to satisfy their needs. As DIY and home decorating products, electronics and/ or appliances and various sports equipment and clothing have a greater impact on consumer budgets or consumer savings than food, and because they will probably be used for a longer period of time, it becomes clear that the consumer will invest more time in seeking for information, in evaluating them and will pay a lot of attention to the articles purchased.

Even if of a lower intensity, service (0.112\*\*\*\*) is also significant in shaping the image of Romanian consumers on non-food retail chains. This situation is somewhat justified, especially since store personnel, vendors, can provide clients with suitable advice on the products, their utility, the manufacturer, the use or the different functions, etc. Personnel advice and help with the purchase decision and with the accurate identification of needs will inevitably lead to shaping a favorable impression on the store. This, in turn, will contribute to the creation of a positive attitude and of course to the return to the unit, to the recommendation of the store to other people, etc.

It is interesting that communication carried out by non-food retail chains (-0,105<sup>n.s.</sup>) and their location (-0,110<sup>n.s.</sup>) do not have a significant impact in defining their images. This is even more unexpected since DIY stores, electronics and appliances or clothing stores, etc. invest considerable efforts in running advertising campaigns to inform consumers on prices, on the introduction of new types of products and brands or on other actions of retailers. The lack of significance of this dimension can be the result of bombing the client with a lot of information by all retailers, and now consumers simply avoid paying them any attention. Paradoxically, many retail chains try to focus on price vector in their communication activity and not on product quality or uniqueness, which may cause some distortion of individuals' perception.

The lack of significance for location may be more easily understood because, in general, to make purchases in DIY, electronics and appliances or clothing stores, the client must be willing to travel sometimes significant distances. Of course that each individual seeks to somehow optimize the route towards his favorite store. He is willing to travel longer distances and make purchases there precisely because he cannot find those products elsewhere.

*Table 2* shows that the image anchored in respondents' minds contributes to shaping the preference of the Romanian consumers for the non-food retail formats investigated (0.834\*\*\*\*) both directly and indirectly through actions aimed at sustainability (0.102\*), in which case the effect is much lower in intensity and impact. In other words, once a positive image on the store is anchored, the customer is able to properly perceive specific sustainability efforts and actions undertaken by these retail chains, whether they relate to the preservation of resources, reuse of packaging, selective collection of different materials, support to various charities and social activities, finding the best ways of meeting customer needs and employee satisfaction, etc. As the level of sustainable involvement of the retail chain varies, it seems clear that the degree to which it can shape customer preference will differ substantially. Once an image is anchored among target market segments, it will directly contribute to the awareness of retailers' various sustainability actions. As shown in *Table 2*, the impact of retailers' image on sustainability issues (0.226\*\*\*\*) has a direct and positive influence, a sign that the two dimensions are interrelated, depending on each other. Vice versa, the various sustainability actions can

contribute to the creation of a positive or negative image as well. The present research has departed from the idea that the actions concerning sustainability can be more clearly perceived as soon as customers have formed a suitable image about the stores. In turn, sustainability contributes to shaping behavioral success of these chains by determining customers to post favorable or unfavorable responses.

## **Conclusions**

In shaping customers' preference and attracting them to the stores, retailers resort to various levers through which they attempt to determine favorable responses. Setting up a rich assortment of store and national brands, along with the uniqueness and diversity of the products sold, a pleasant and attractive ambience, the cleanliness and order of stores, and especially the availability of attentive and helpful staff are extremely important in developing a relationship with customers, in binding them to the stores, persuading them to repurchase and recommend the retail chain. Being bombarded with a huge amount of information through advertising, the 21<sup>st</sup> century consumer is extremely careful and fastidious in choosing those products that can adequately satisfy him. Therefore, attractive packaging, attentive merchandising, favorable prices or reliability of the products are no longer enough. They also need to contribute to reduce pollution, to protect the environment, etc.

In fact, nowadays, addressing retail business activity can no longer take place without considering the specific dimensions of business sustainability – focus on environmental protection, preservation of resources, society, external customers and the optimization of their needs fulfilment, respectively on internal customers - employees. All these issues need to be properly acknowledged, both by store management and by customers. The management of the companies may use them to efficiently and effectively act upon customers and these, in turn, need to be able to perceive them and make purchases in those retail stores and chains that highlight such sustainable business practices.

For the management of these stores, the existence of both a favorable perception on the units themselves and of awareness regarding the efforts and the various activities that circumscribe a sustainable orientation are significant vectors in generating customer behavioral loyalty. In fact, it is important and meaningful for any retail company to not only sell products, but to sell more and more of these items, if possible to a larger number of customers, eager and happy to buy more and more frequently. Thus, the sustainability measures are and remain an important element in consumer loyalty, in determining them to prefer the store, recommend it and its products to others, revisit the retail chain and of course to increase the amount spent.

As highlighted in the research (*Table 2*), while some of the retailing marketing mix components (retailers attributes) significantly and positively contribute to outlining clients image towards various non-food stores (assortment, ambience, service or prices), the other dimensions investigated (store location and communication) do not have a significant influence in anchoring this image. In turn, the image contributes both directly and significantly and indirectly through specific sustainability actions to shaping customer preferences towards the examined retail units. In fact, once a positive image is anchored, customers can more clearly realize the efforts aimed at environmental protection, resource preservation, etc., so their preference for a particular magazine is enhanced.

The present research shows some limitations as well, which, if properly addressed, can turn into real development prospects of the study. On the one hand, only non- food retail formats

have been studied. In the future it would probably be useful to investigate both food and non-food retailing. Also, even the present research could be deepened and refined by performing a comparative analysis on the different retail formats included in the sample, thus highlighting the perception and especially the specific levers through which stores can act fairly and competently on the client. Additional research can be done to highlight the behavior of consumers in rural areas versus those in urban areas, thus enabling to better delineate some specific clusters of preferences and attitudes.

## References

- Abrudan, I.N. (2012), „Determinants of Shopping Centers’ Image for Romanian Consumers”, *Marketing from information to decision*, Vol. 4, pp.11-30.
- Ailawadi, K.L., Keller, K. (2004), “Understanding retail branding: conceptual insights and research priorities”, *Journal of Retailing*, Vol. 80, No 4, pp.331-342.
- Alt, M.A. (2009), *Studiu privind aplicarea marketingului în comerțul cu amănuntul*. Universitatea de Vest, Timișoara, Facultatea de Economie și Administrarea Afacerilor, [Study on the application of marketing in retail, in Romanian].
- Ambient (2014), available at, [www.ambient.ro/companie/viziunevalori.aspx](http://www.ambient.ro/companie/viziunevalori.aspx), referred on 28/09/ 2014.
- Anselmsson, J. (2006), “Sources of Customer Satisfaction with Shopping Malls: A Comparative Study of Different Customer Segments”, *International Review of Retail, Distribution and Consumer Research*, Vol. 16, No 1, pp.115-138.
- Baker, J., Parasuraman, A. Grewal, D., Voss, GB. (2002), “The Influence of Multiple Store Environment Cues on Perceived Merchandise Value and Patronage Intentions”, *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 66, No 2, pp.120-141.
- Baker, R.G. (2002), “The impact of the deregulation of retail hours on shopping trip patterns in a mall hierarchy: an application of the RASTT model to the Sydney Project (1980–1998) and the global vacant shop problem”, *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, Vol. 9, No 3, pp.155-171.
- Beristain, J.J., Zorrilla, P. (2011), “The relationship between store image and store brand equity: A conceptual framework and evidence from hypermarkets”, *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, Vol. 18, No 6, pp.562-574.
- Berman, B., Evans, J. (2001), *Retail Management. A Strategic Approach*, 8<sup>th</sup> Edition, Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Bloemer, J., de Ruyter, K. (1997), “On the relationship between store image, store satisfaction and store loyalty”, *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 32, No 5/6, pp.499-513.
- Bruhn, M. (2001), *Orientarea spre clienți. Temelia afacerii de succes*, București, Economică, [Customer orientation. The foundation of a successful business, in Romanian].
- Burt, S., Johansson, U., Thelander, A. (2007), “Retail Image as Seen through Consumers’ Eyes: Studying International Retail Image through Consumer Photographs of Stores”, *International Review of Retail, Distribution and Consumer Research*, Vol. 17, No 5, pp.447-467.
- Cătoi, I. (2009), *Cercetări de marketing – Tratat*, Uranus, București, [Marketing research – Treaty, in Romanian].
- Chao, P., Fu, H.-P., Lu, I.-Y. (2007), “Strengthening the Quality–Loyalty Linkage: The Role of Customer Orientation and Interpersonal Relationship”, *The Service Industries Journal*, Vol. 27, No 4, pp.471-494.
- Chaudhuri, A., Holbrook, M.B. (2001), “The Chain of Effects from Brand Trust and Brand Affect to Brand Performance: The Role of Brand Loyalty”, *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 65, No 2, pp.81-93.
- Churchill, G.A. (1991), *Marketing Research: Methodological Foundation*, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition, The Dryden Press, Fort Worth.
- Coca, V., Dobrea, M., Vasiliu, C. (2013), „Towards a sustainable development of Retailing in Romania”, *Amfiteatru Economic*, Vol. 15, No 7, Special Issue, pp.583-602.
- CSRQuest (2014), available at <http://www.csrquest.net/>, referred on 20/09/2014.
- Dabija, D.C. (2010), *Marketingul întreprinderii de comerț*, Risoprint, Cluj-Napoca, [Trade marketing company, in Romanian].
- Dabija, D.C., Abrudan, I.N., (2012), „Empirical Research on Complementary Services in Romanian Grocery Retailing”, *Revista Economică (Journal of economic-financial theory and practice)*, Vol. 3, Supplement, pp.122-128.

- Dabija, D.C. (2012), "Organizational culture and reputation - vectors in shaping successful retail brand value", in: Tăchiciu, L., Ionciă, M., Iosif, A. & Pantelescu, A. (eds), *The 22<sup>nd</sup> RESER International Conference – Services and Economic Development Local and Global Challanges*, European Association for Research on Services, p.240.
- Dabija, D.C. (2013), *Cercetări de marketing aplicate în comerțul de retail românesc*, Editura ASE, București, [Marketing research applied Romanian retail trade, in Romanian].
- Dabija, D.C., Pop, C.M., Bodog, S. (2011), „Study on the impact of the personnel policy in retailing”, *Journal of Electrical and Electronics Engineering* (JEEE), Vol. 4, No 2, pp.25-29.
- Dabija, D.C., Băbuț, R. (2014), “Empirical Study on the Impact of Service, Communication and Corporate Social Responsibility on the Image of Romanian Retail Brands”, *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences*, Vol. 109, pp.906-912.
- Dabija, D.C., Pop, C.M. (2013), “Green marketing – Factor of Competitiveness in Retailing”, *Environmental Engineering and Management Journal*, Vol. 12, No 2, pp.393-400.
- Dedeman (2014), available at, [www.dedeman.ro/ro/valori.html](http://www.dedeman.ro/ro/valori.html), referred on 18/09/2014.
- Deichmann (2014), available at, <https://www.deichmann.com/DE/en/corp/verantwortung.jsp>, referred on 18/09/2014
- Del Rio, B., Vasquez, R., Iglesias, V. (2001), “The Effects of Brand Associations on Consumer Response”, *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, Vol. 18, No 5, pp.410-425.
- Dennis, C. (2005), *Objects of Desire. Consumer Behaviour in Shopping Centre Choices*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan.
- Dick, A.S., Basu, K. (1994), “Customer Loyalty: Toward an Integrated Conceptual Framework”, *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, Vol. 22, No 2, pp.99-113.
- Dinu, V., Schileru, I. and Atanase, A. (2012), „Attitude of Romanian Consumers Related to Products’ Ecological Labelling”, *Amfiteatru Economic*, Vol. XIV, No 31, pp.8-24.
- Domo (2014), available at, [www.domo.ro/despre\\_domo](http://www.domo.ro/despre_domo), referred on 18/09/2014.
- Dowling, G.R., Uncles, M. (1997), “Do Customer Loyalty Programs Really Work?”, *Sloan Management Review*, Vol. 38, No 4, pp.71-82.
- Dunne, P.M., Lusch, R. (2008), *Retailing*, 6<sup>th</sup> Edition, Mason, OH, Thomson South-Western.
- Dunning, J.H., Lundan, S.M. (2008), *Multinational Enterprises and the Global Economy*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, USA, Edward Elgar Publishing Ltd.
- Forza, C., Filippini, R. (1998), “TQM impact on quality conformance and customer satisfaction: a causal model”, *International Journal of Production Economics*, Vol. 55, pp.1-20.
- GfK Roper Consulting (GfK) (2008), Green Gets Real... Curent Economic Environment Subduing Green Enthusiasm but Driving Practical Action, available at, [www.gfkamerica.com/newsroom/press\\_releases/single\\_sites/003698/index.en.html](http://www.gfkamerica.com/newsroom/press_releases/single_sites/003698/index.en.html), referred on 18.3.2014.
- Grewal, D., Krishnan, R., Baker, J., Borin, N. (1998), “The Effect of Store Name, Brand Name and Price Discounts on Consumers’ Evaluations and Purchase Intentions”, *Journal of Retailing*, Vol. 74, No 3, pp.331-352.
- Hälsig, F. (2008), *Branchenübergreifende Analyse des Aufbaus einer starken Retail Brand*, Wiesbaden, Gabler, [Cross-sector analysis of building a strong retail brand, in Germany].
- Hu, H., Jasper, C. (2010), “A Revisit of the Theoretical Model of Store Image and Its Application to Chinese Consumers”, *Journal of International Consumer Marketing*, Vol. 22, No 2, pp.81-93.
- Intersport (2014), available at, <http://www.intersport.com/about-us/csr>, referred on 20/09/2014.
- INSSE (2010), Romanian Statistical Yearbook 2010.
- Jara, M., Cliquet, G. (2012), “Retail brand equity: Conceptualization and measurement”, *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, Vol. 19, No 1, pp.140-149.
- Jones, T.O., Sasser, W. (1995), “Why Satisfied Customers Defect”, *Harvard Business Review*, Vol. 73, No 6, pp.88-99.
- Ju, T.L., Lin, B., Lin, C., Kuo, H.J. (2006), “TQM critical factors and KM value chain activities”, *Total Quality Management*, Vol. 17, No 3, pp.373-93.
- Keller, K.L. (1993), „Conceptualizing, Measuring and Managing Customer Based Brand Equity”, *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 57, No 11, pp.1-22.
- Kirkup, M., Rafiq, M. (1994), “Managing Tenant Mix in New Shopping Centres”, *International Journal of Retail and Distribution Management*, Vol. 22, No 6, pp.29-37.
- Kirkup, M., Rafiq, M. (1999), “Marketing shopping centres: challenges in the UK context”, *Journal of Marketing Practice: Applied Marketing Science*, Vol. 5, No 5, pp.119-133.
- Kotler, P., Keller, K.L., (2012), *Marketing Management*, 14<sup>th</sup> Edition, Boston, Prentice Hall.



- Martin, D., Schouten, J. (2012), *Sustainable Marketing*, Pearson Education, Prentice Hall.
- Martineau, P. (1958), "The Personality of the Retail Store", *Harvard Business Review*, Vol. 36, No 1, pp.47-55.
- Mazursky, D., Jacoby, J. (1986), "Exploring the Development of Store Image", *Journal of Retailing*, Vol. 62, No 2, pp.145-165.
- McGoldrick, P.J. (2002), *Retail Marketing*, Berkshire, UK, McGraw-Hill Education.
- McGoldrick, P.J., Thompson, M. (1992), *Regional Shopping Centres*, Hampshire, Avebury.
- Nevin, J.R., Houston, M. (1980), "Image as a Component of Attraction to Intraurban Shopping Areas", *Journal of Retailing*, Vol. 56, No 1, pp.77-93.
- Oliver, R.L. (1999), "Whence Consumer Loyalty?", *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 63, No 1, Special Issue, pp.33-44.
- Paval, D. (2014), *Politica de CSR*, available at, [www.responsabilitatesociala.ro/companii/dedeman.html](http://www.responsabilitatesociala.ro/companii/dedeman.html), referred on 20/09/2014, [CSR Policy, in Romanian].
- Plăiaș, I. (2008), *Cercetări de marketing*, Risoprint, Cluj-Napoca, [Marketing Research, in Romanian].
- Pop, N.A., Văduva, S.A., Dabija, D.C., Fotea, I.S. (2010), "Consumers Perception of Corporate Social Responsibility – Empirical Study in Romanian Retail", *International Journal of Social Ecology and Sustainable Development*, Vol. 1, No 4, pp.1-9.
- Postelnicu, C. (2005), *Firmele multinaționale la început de mileniu*, Cluj-Napoca, Risoprint, [Multinational companies of the millennium, in Romanian].
- Responsabilitate socială, (2014), available at, [www.responsabilitatesociala.ro/companii/dedeman.html](http://www.responsabilitatesociala.ro/companii/dedeman.html), referred on 20/09/2014.
- Sirdeshmkh, D., Singh, J., Sabol, B. (2002), "Consumer Trust, Value, and Loyalty in Relational Exchanges", *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 66, No 1, pp.15-37.
- Skogster, P. (2006), "Tenant Reasons to Choose a Particular Space in Finnish Shopping Centres", *European Retail Digest*, Vol. 51, pp.12-14.
- Stroe, M. (2012), *Prima masă rotundă pe tema responsabilității sociale corporatiste la Sibiu – Partea I*, Rețeaua Socială RSC, available at, [www.actionamresponsabil.ro](http://www.actionamresponsabil.ro), referred on 15/09/2014, [The first roundtable on corporate social responsibility in Sibiu - Part I, in Romanian].
- Sullivan, M., Adcock, A. (2002), *Retail Marketing*, London, Thomson.
- Swoboda, B., Berg, B., Pop, N.A., Dabija, D.C. (2009), "Store Image of Grocery Retail Formats in Romania - Relevance of Store Attributes", *European Retail Research*, Vol. 23, No 1, pp.101-124.
- Timmermans, H., Van Der Heijden, R., Westerveld, H. (1982), "Cognition of Urban Retailing Structures: A Dutch Case Study", *Tijdschrift voor Econ. en Soc. Geografie*, Vol. 73, No 1, pp.2-12.
- Țigu, G., Țuclea, C.E., Vrânceanu, D.M., Vasile, D.C. (2014), "The Social Responsibility of Retailers through the Eyes of Students of a Commerce Faculty – a Qualitative Approach", *Amfiteatru Economic*, Vol. 16, No 35, pp.73-87.
- United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) (1999), *World Investment Report 1999. Foreign Direct Investment and the Challenge of Development*, New York, United Nations.
- Vosskaemper, G. (2014), *Praktiker, Politica CSR*, available at, [responsabilitatesociala.ro/companii/praktiker-romania.html](http://responsabilitatesociala.ro/companii/praktiker-romania.html), referred on 28/09/2014.
- Wallace, D.L., Giese, J., Johnson, J. (2004), "Customer retailer loyalty in the context of multiple channel strategies", *Journal of Retailing*, Vol. 80, No 4, pp.249-263.
- Walsh G., Beatty S.E. (2007), "Customer-Based Corporate Reputation of a Service Firm: Scale Development and Validation", *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, Vol. 35, No 1, pp.127-143.
- Werther, W.B., Chandler, D. (2005), "Strategic Corporate Social Responsibility as Global Brand Insurance", *Business Horizons*, Vol. 48, No 4, pp.317-324.
- Yavas, U., Babakus, E. (2009), "Modeling patronage behavior: a tri-partite conceptualization", *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, Vol. 26, No 7, pp.516-526.
- Yoo, B., Donthu, N., Lee, S. (2000), "An Examination of Selected Marketing Mix Elements and Brand Equity", *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, Vol. 28, No 2, pp.195-211.
- Yun, Z.-S., Good, L. (2007), "Developing customer loyalty from e-tail store image attributes", *Managing Service Quality*, Vol. 17, No 1, pp.4-22.
- Zentes, J., Morschett, D., Schramm-Klein, H. (2011), *Strategic Retail Management*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Wiesbaden, Gabler Verlag.
- Zentes, J., Swoboda B., Foscht T. (2012), *Handelsmanagement*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, München, Vahlen.
- Zimmer, M.R., Golden, L. (1988), "Impressions of Retail Stores: A Content Analysis of Consumer Images", *Journal of Retailing*, Vol. 64, No 3, pp.265-293.

## **RINKODAROS KOMPLEKSO IR PASTOVUMO ĮTAKA FORMUOJANT KLIENTO TEIKIAMĄ PIRMENYBĘ NE MAISTO PREKIŲ PARDUOTUVĖMS**

**Dan-Cristian Dabija, Vasile Dinu, Ioana-Nicoleta Abrudan, Cătălin Postelnicu**

### **SANTRAUKA**

Pagrindinis iššūkis bet kokiai įmonei, nepriklausomai nuo jos veiklos srities, yra susijęs su įmonės finansinių rodiklių, lemiančių įmonės veiklą (rinkos dalis, apyvarta, pardavimų apimtis, klientų skaičius) pagerinimu. Formuojant šiuos kiekybinius rodiklius, pagrindinį vaidmenį atlieka kokybiniai rodikliai, kuriems paprastai atstovauja vartotojų ir klientų atsiliepimai. Šie kokybiniai indikatoriai įtraukia pasitenkinimą įmonių teikiamomis paslaugomis, rodomą pasitikėjimą ir užuojautą, apsilankymą parduotuvėje dar kartą, teigiamas rekomendacijas draugams, artimiesiems ar kitiems žmonėms bei matomą prekybininkų sąžiningumą. Jie yra svarbūs vektoriai, kurie ne tik generuoja šių parduotuvių elgsenos sėkmę, bet taip pat pritraukia ir išlaiko klientus.

Kuriant palankų suvokimą, ypatingą vaidmenį atlieka keli svertai – kaina, asortimentas, parduotuvės atmosfera, klientų aptarnavimas ir t.t. Pastarieji kartu su sąmoningumu, pasitikėjimu, užuojauta, o dabar dar ir su tvarumo klausimais (orientavimasis į aplinkos apsaugą, išteklių vartojimo sumažinimas, dėmesys visuomenei ir t.t.) susijungia dėl geresnės įmonių padėties tikslinės rinkos segmentuose.

Literatūroje išskiriami keli požiūriai į nagrinėjamas problemas, traktuojamas atskirai ir kartu, tačiau nevisiškai pavyksta apibrėžti tinkamą tyrimo kryptį, susijusią su tvarumo klausimų integracija, aiškinantis, kokioms ne maisto prekių parduotuvėms vartotojas teikia pirmenybę. Straipsnio autorius atliko empirinį mažmeninės nemaisto prekybos Rumunijoje tyrimą. Tyrimas atskleidžia kelias svarbias problemas, žvelgiant tiek iš teorinės, tiek iš praktinės perspektyvos, kurios bus reikšmingos būsimiems moksliniams tyrimams, bei apibrėžia mažmenininkų internacionalizavimo strategijas.

*REIKŠMINIAI ŽODŽIAI:* rinkodaros komplekso aspektai, pastovumas, mažmeninė nemaisto prekyba, empirinis tyrimas, elgsena grindžiama sėkmė, Rumunija, mažmeninės prekybos parduotuvės.