



The Conception and Design of a Marketing Demand and Supply of the Accounting Information. The Bookkeeping and the Accounting Services in the Marketing Services' Process

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Abstract *The article having as theme "The marketing conception and design of the supply and demand for accounting information. Bookkeeping and accounting services marketing process", brings into the reader's attention the aspects of an intense connection between accounting and marketing in the current context.*

Key words:

Accounting, marketing, policy marketing, marketing mix, price policy, product policy, distribution policy, promotion policy, accounting outsourcing

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1. Introduction

In the last decades, the accounting profession has undergone significant changes. Accountants have begun to perceive the profession as a business activity integrated in the services category (Shenkman, 1989). Therefore, the marketing of accounting began to grow slowly, but surely. Currently accounting literature has begun to accept and even had a positive attitude; open to the field of marketing. The traditional marketing mix of the four policies, product, price, place and promotion and distribution (Kotler, 1991) is becoming more and more discussed in the field of the accounting literature.

2. The Conception and Design of a Marketing Demand and Supply of the Accounting Information

Philip Kotler, an outstanding authority in the field of marketing, broadened this framework to six components of the marketing mix in some contexts, adding to the four policies the political power and the public opinion. This complex version has a particular relevance for accountants, which ones, seen from a certain perspective, are services providers to their customers.

The following is a brief summary of the contents crossing six marketing policies:

- The Product Policy. Products are represented specially by accounting services and maintenance records, review and certification of financial statements, audit services, tax services and management consultancy services etc. Finally, these services converge and result in accounting information.

- Price policy. In this area, it is important to establish the cost of the offered accounting service and the tax collection method. The three pricing methods are based on expenses incurred from the competitive prices on the market and reviewing the prices of along the year. It is possible to offer discounts for client companies resorting to more services.

„Price policy has a very important place in the strategy of the enterprise. It defines guidelines, action lines for fixing the price of enterprise's products”.

- Placement policy. Choosing between going to the client's office or the offices of receiving the client inside of the company's office represents a decision that belongs to this submix marketing. It is important to have spaces (offices) designed to meet customers: these are waiting rooms with appropriate professional atmosphere, parking spaces etc.. But it is important the endowment of a fax and other office equipment. That is the case in particular for larger accounting firms.

- Promotion Policy. The personal contact with the customers is the most important for accounting services firms. Newsletters and brochures are also important and public relations too. The other elements of promotional submix such as after-sales service, prints, advertising through various media, yellow pages and "direct mail" are less used by firms accounting services.

- Public Opinion. Programs in order to establish and maintain relationships with customers, research on customer behavior, evaluating and monitoring the company's image and reputation, providing customer seminars, publication of policy statements about the company's marketing research conducted by

specialized organizations etc. are all marketing activities of accounting firms that may be included in this category.

• Politics and controversies in the field of accounting. Especially in this area should be the focus of the bodies of the accounting profession, with the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, contacts with industry, government and local community representatives, involved in the community's life etc.

An effective marketing process begins with studying the needs and desires of customers and the extent to which these are made by the company. A brief analysis highlights the following elements:

1. Accountants often lose from their sight the purpose for which they are requested by customers. The money, along with methods of saves, retains or make, is, in fact, the central reason that companies and organizations need an accountant;
2. Aid in troubleshooting. In general it is financial problems such as taxes, cash flow, profit down;
3. Aid in preventing problems. This is where successful accountant shines;
4. Experience with the client. This is especially important when the client is important as size. Customers have confidence in someone who understands their type of business. On the other hand, they will not pay for the accountant's education in a particular field. In conclusion, as the accountant knows more about the actual or potential customer, the more his chance to get or keep the client is greater;
5. Attention. This is very important for everyone. We are generally more tolerant and understanding toward those people who seem to take care of us and we seem to pay attention even if not always he/she succeeds in what we want from them;
6. Availability. Many customers have changed their accountant because it was not available in person, by phone or fax when he/she was needed;
7. New ideas. These relate mainly to financial problems, but not only. Everyone needs new ideas about their own business and personal matters. Sometimes people are not aware of this until someone gives these ideas. However, consciously or unconsciously, customers are looking for new ideas from their accountants;
8. Punctuality. This is a necessity. Some accountants work exceptionally well, but since not finish work on time, they lose customers. VAT returns, financial statements, reports and so on must be made on time;
9. Trust and safety. A customer must have confidence in its accountant done and even more to be quiet regarding its work. When the client starts worrying about his accountant's ability, it is a sign that latter he would renounce to this last one soon;

10. Prestige or recognition of authority in the field of accounting. Some customers want a reputable accounting firm or a well known accountant;

11. Following with perseverance. If the accountant says "I'll take care of it" or "I will have to return to work" means that the client is interested in business and following closely. Often-used excuses like: "I was very busy" are not accepted by customers. If the accountant is too busy to closely monitor the client's situation, the latter it will be interpreted as not enough important enough for him;

12. Advice about business. Because the accountants know the most about business and their customer's financial situation, the clients understand the accountants as people they can talk with of from whom the can receive advice concerning their management;

13. Personal advice. Sometimes clients even expect tips for their personal problems;

14. Accountant's behavior or that one of the accounting firm's employee in contact with the customer. Accounting firm employee is the one who, in fact, positively or negatively influences the accounting firm's image;

15. Value. Surprisingly, most customers do not want the lowest price for the accounting services, even if auditing services. What interests them is the value, the rapport value, quality-price;

16. Appropriate communication and understanding. Current and potential customers should feel that they can work with their accountant or with the employees that the accounting company offers them. This does not mean that the client "must like you". Very often anxious and insecure people make a special effort to be appreciated by their current or potential customers. Understanding, good communication and respect are necessary, even if customers do not particularly like their accountant.

17. Not any customer wants all items above. However, each actual or potential client is seeking some aspects of this list in his relationship with the accountants. The marketing process should begin with research existing, i.e. with the analyze how they perceive the company. Customers always perceive an accountant or the accounting firm like offering services from a different way with that in which they perceive themselves. The only way to find out what customers think is that they are asked. The idea of going to the customers and ask them what they think about their work and the company is often troublesome for some accountants. They believe that they are not qualified to judge their work; others feel it is degrading to ask customers what they think.

However, when the research program of the image that customers have about the company is running properly, they get positive results such as:

1. Customers are impressed by the fact that the company is interested in their opinion;
2. Accountants will learn surprising things about how their company is perceived. In that way, positive and negative aspects will come in the light. Favorable points will be highlighted and shown to the customers, while still the negative aspects will be corrected;
3. Some misunderstandings can be corrected, because if not detected, they will lead to further loss of customers.

In a market economy, any organization and, in particular, an organization for profit, it devises its own policy, which designates its future development directions and concrete ways of making its policy that must ensure permanence in the market and especially the overall development.

A key component of the policy is that policy of the marketing companies that offer to their clients the possibility of a prompt real market's signal reception and allows a rapid adaptation to changes in the market with maximum efficiency. Thus, firms can properly assess market parameters and allocate appropriate resources available to real demand; they may refer to uncovered market segments and to comparative advantages over competitors.

Under current conditions, no enterprise can afford to operate without a clear, both short and long term to ensure its sustenance and rationality, its efficiency while the environment becomes more complex and dynamic.

Increasingly more accounting firms adopt marketing techniques. Successful companies provide services desired by consumers in an appropriate manner, at the right time and at an affordable price. Formulating term plans allow professionals to better handle the uncertain future. Regular review of marketing plans is that companies remain aware of market changes and make the adjustments for the needed services. Only when decisions are made about products, place and price the decisions concerning the promotion will be taken. Even though some professionals believe themselves to be above marketing, reality is another.

In 1977, Kotler and Connor suggested that professional accountants must cooperate with three significant forces. These are:

- assaults codes of the professional ethics;
- changing in customers' expectations;
- an increasing competition.

Kotler and Connor went on to consider that most professionals are not well equipped to work with these forces for several reasons:

1. The contempt for the business; few professionals see themselves as businessmen. Many claim to be motivated by providing services to customers and avoid talking about pricing.

2. Association concerning the codes of ethics of the profession; professionals forbid advertising and the direct dialing. Even in countries where they are not forbidden, its influence remained.

3. Equating marketing with selling. Most professionals equate marketing and selling. Marketing is a force with greater amplitude.

When you do not know the concepts and practices of marketing, accountants operate without having the necessary tools to be adapted to a constantly changing environment. Van Doren and Smith (1987) emphasize that professional accountants should recognize the practice as a business and develop a marketing plan and an ethical worth enabling better positioning in relation to customers. This marketing plan provides accounting services firms an objective framework that can be used to assess the market position of the company.

Accounting firms offer consulting, assessment, recording, organization, audit and taxation expertise. They provide some products with special features, in fact some accounting services. The emphasis is on availability, timeliness and ease of recovery orders. Services - are activities, benefits or satisfactions offered for sale that are an essentially intangible nature and do not result in the transfer of ownership of anything (Ph. Kotler). They are characterized by intangibility, inseparability, variability, perishability and lack of property about a certain thing. The intangibility - is the essential characteristic of services that expresses the impossibility of determining with the five human senses. And that is because they are not objects but "experience" which cannot be tested before being purchased.

Because of intangibility, consumers can compare the services in between for the determination of which it is involved a higher risk than buying the products and therefore the price of the service can be justified only by the quality.

It can be taken as sample these accounting firms or freelancers' accountants whom's price policy has certain peculiarities. Paradoxically, preparing the bill is an important part of the marketing program. This is expected by the customer with the enthusiasm with which it is expected a visit to the dentist. A series of monthly bills, lower grades are preferable to a ball at the end of the contract or, worse, a few months after the contract has ended. This has a positive effect on cash. Customers also forget or do not really know everything they do consulting firm. It is therefore important to carry out a descriptive bill which is psychologically pleasing as a result: the final amount seems small compared to the work described.

In the four marketing policies, price has a special place. In the accounting services marketing, pricing the fee is

otherwise. Whether accounting consulting firm's principle that the services offered on the market are the same and only at the lowest possible price, we can differentiate the competition or believe that reputation, employees and labor quality are more important and price is just the one of the many factors taken into consideration by the potential clients. In most cases, a very low priced firm is not selected, this being regarded with suspicion by potential clients.

There are numerous articles written and discussions about using advertising by accountants. Even if there are authors who are against it, there are many followers of advertising. Regulations usually follow the specialists. For accounting services, promotion is quite limited. An important activity to promote accounting services firms is the holding of seminars, sponsorship or simply their participation therein. Preferably that the company which provides accounting services to have one or a few people who will love and be good at "support seminars" on accounting issues. If none of the employees do not have such skills, at least some seminars can be sponsored with speakers from outside the company, such as a certain authority in the field of accounting. It is important to match audience with the debated topic. For example, a program offered by banks on the subject of how to interpret the financial statements of customers who apply for loans can be extremely effective and leads to customers of participating banks accounting firm recommendation.

Other good examples of target segments are insurance agencies, legal consultancy offices, and companies involved in a particular field. It is good that more seminars succeed over a relatively long period of time. One seminar may involve extremely high costs without leading to the estimated results.

Publication of articles in publications other than those of their own company is also an effective marketing activity. If one of the company's objectives or short term is to develop a professional image and a high reputation, then the publication of these articles can be considered a marketing tactic.

A program of conferences or a discussion program also could be a marketing objective of an accounting firm. Conferences can address groups of professionals or can be general discussion. The professionals will improve considerably to the accountant or professional reputation, but marketing will impact quite low. Instead, general speeches addressed to current and potential customers and reference groups can have a substantial marketing impact.

Inside of the accounting profession is very important the accounting firm's quality as a member of a professional group. Although it has to do too much marketing, because to act in a professional group, reputation is

very important to be developed, in improving technical skills and establishing professional contacts.

To develop a program in order to attract potential customers is a marketing strategy well known. Target potential customers must be selected from lists drawn up by managers and business partners. You should not select too many potential customers, so a consulting firm will be able to cope with the workload. For each selected potential client it will be needed to prepare a dossier containing all sorts of information about it. Later, they will receive service offerings.

In Romania, the accounting offices have the ability to perform a diverse range of works derived from the following basic formulation:

- A maintenance or supervision of accounting and the preparation or verification and certification of the balance sheet;
- According assistance concerning the organization and bookkeeping;
- An economic and financial analysis and economic evaluations;
- Accounting and legal expertises;
- Other works with financial, accounting, tax, administrative and informatics;
- A mandate for the censor.

As a single work, the organization and bookkeeping assistance, it is quite rare. First, because few directors ask to accounting and financial advice, and secondly, because most of them believe that this paper is taken into consideration inside of the accounting work.

Economic, financial and patrimonial evaluations are works with a lower level of expression in specific accounting works. This is because such works are executed by other professionals. Economic and financial analyzes required, usually as a result of a third-party application that the client enters in the business entity. Often analysis is required solely to assist in decision making by management. Regarding the economic evaluations, the appearance on the market of professional associations' specific works made for them to disperse.

In the framework of the accounting expertises the most important place is taken by the accounting expert legal accounting expertise, even if they occupy a fairly low as a share in all the work. The majority of the potential beneficiaries of accounting services call the professionals on the services market due to legal requirements for traffic accounting information. Lack of education in the use of accounting information has an impact on relations with professional accounting service recipients. In addition, these quantitative aspects predominance in presenting accounting information can reduce the informational value of the summaries, as a result of maintaining the state monopoly on normalization.

Foresights on advertising ethics personal accounting professionals have direct impact on the marketing of office procedures. Body of Expert and Licensed Accountants has legal competences to conduct or authorize advertising in the accounting profession. The personal advertising about professionals in accounting is prohibited.

This paper aims to signal the need for accounting professionals in Romania in order to change professionals' attitude in tackling this job. Replacing it with a marketing attitude could be the key to a marketing success for the accountant and the accounting consulting firm.

3. Conclusions

All of the foregoing refers to a marketing services production and rendering of services by auditors to their clients and managers seen as accounting entities. But it is a limited perspective that would identify the desires and needs of managers with those of other accounting entities groups, i.e. those of the real users of accounting information. Marketing truly ethical and fair for everyone should take into account all the categories involved. In the chapters that follow are some considerations regarding creative accounting at the motivations behind it and how accountants can create images of organizations wanted by their managers .

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