

SOCIALLY FOCUSED MARKETING

Issues of socially focused marketing, its new objectives and goals continue to be a subject of academic discussions at present.

The concept of socially focused marketing was first introduced in the activities of US companies, and then European companies.

This concept was implemented primarily through incentivizing the sales of goods with the so-called 'social component'.

It should be pointed out that there is a significant difference between socially focused marketing and charity: this type of marketing is designed to achieve commercial objectives, such as boosting sales, increasing profits and raising the company value, but with an eye towards serving the public interests.

This means that, in pursuing a socially focused marketing strategy, a business undertaking should keep in mind both physical and spiritual needs of its customers (i.e., the need to address social issues, participate in social life, as well the need for self-identification). As a result, the business undertaking creates its favourable image and achieves consumer loyalty, i.e. establishes positive associations with the company, develops its relations with public organizations and cooperation with the local authorities. All this helps to increase the company's sales and corporate value.

It should be emphasized that attention to customers' interests and participation in addressing social issues yields benefits for the society, as it improves the quality of life and increases the amount of funds available for social spending (i.e. public health care, environment protection, etc.). In their turn, consumers by buying the social programme goods at the same price satisfy their physical and spiritual needs.

Surveys made by Western sociologists have confirmed that more than 70% consumers are willing to purchase products sold under a socially focused marketing programme. According to Russian researchers, Russian consumers approve of such programmes and are prepared to participate in them, provided that the product price and quality are unchanged and there is transparent reporting, a thing which is to be found in socially focused marketing.

The socially focused marketing strategy seeks to take into account the

qualitative elements of man's needs and development.

Another important feature of such strategy is forgoing the "average" approach in favour of the one tailored to the needs of as many buyers as possible. A similar approach is found in the Customer Relationship Management (CRM), a system widely adopted and used in today's business world. The undertaking's socially focused marketing strategy is to be viewed as a strategy intended to meet the demands of an individual and family and to promote all-round social development, which means that the undertaking should have a customer-oriented philosophy and culture designed to enhance efficiency of marketing, sales and post-sale services.

It should be emphasized that a socially focused marketing strategy should not be seen narrowly as temporary financial assistance provided to people through certain low-price programmes, etc. The term "socially focused" implies a broader understanding of the needs of customers, which are not related only to material, financial and similar benefits, i.e. are not connected only to low prices.

So, for example, IKEA chain stores promote family values by making their buyers feel at home, inviting them into interiors where they can touch and use all objects, offering them a cup of coffee or tea and providing a place for their children to play and rest right on the premises, carrying out special events, for example, workshops for parents to teach them various activities for their children. This helps build customer loyalty and successfully sell goods which are, in effect, no different from others.

Broad adoption of socially focused marketing strategies promotes implementation of socially significant goals, primarily, social support to the population.