

## Facebook - a Marketing Instrument and Differentiator in Brand Positioning. A Case Study on L'Oreal Paris Romania

by

Tudor Edu, Iliuta Costel Negricea, Alexandru Nicolaica  
Romanian-American University  
Romanian-American University  
L'Oreal Paris Romania

[tudoredu@yahoo.com](mailto:tudoredu@yahoo.com), [negricea@yahoo.com](mailto:negricea@yahoo.com), [alex.nicolaica@gmail.com](mailto:alex.nicolaica@gmail.com)

*Abstract.* This paper addresses the impact of Facebook in the brand positioning approach of an organization. Brand positioning is considered nowadays a goal of the marketing endeavour and a resource. Its versatile construction makes it a desirable and useful tool in the development of any organization. From a business perspective, Facebook can deliver high yields through its instruments, rendered connections between members and fast feedback within specific groups considering conspicuous advantages, such as: the number of users, accessible information, versatile instruments and applications and feedback options L'Oreal Paris was one of the first Romanian brands which considered Facebook for communicating with its customers. Although, since the launching of its page, the competitor brands displayed significant accomplishments with their Facebook profiles, L'Oreal's page fan base increased organically at a satisfactory rate, the company being very attentive in providing proper interactions with the fans. We measured the impact of L'Oreal Paris's Facebook profile on the Romanian consumers through an online longitudinal study performed in 2011 and 2012. We were able to assess the evolution of important indicators, such as: target segment structure, information sources, satisfaction, brand associations and perceptions and purchase decision making influences. Considering this example, it can be stated that Facebook could be used by an organization as an instrument, but also as resource in differentiating a brand from others within a product category. The use of Facebook as a differentiator must be understood as an ongoing endeavour closely connected with the other instruments deemed necessary by an organization.

*Key words:* Brand positioning, Facebook, Longitudinal survey, competitive advantage, Perception

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### 1 Introduction

#### 1.1 Brand positioning- a marketing outcome and resource

The goal of any company should be to achieve a unique position in the minds of the prospects. As individuals are different due to their biometrics, such as fingerprints and iris, and personality, a product should be distinguished easily within a specific category. The products comprised in a category are very often similar in their traits, the value delivered by them being more or less similar. This value is generated by their technical characteristics, the manner of provision, or by the associated services (Bacanu, 2010). If this is the case, what should a company do in order to gain advantage with its offer? The answer is brand positioning. Of course, the first step for a company should be the allocation of a proper name for its offer to

be developed to a desired brand. Positioning does not refer to the way in which the seller wants to be remembered by the target market (in this case we speak about a positioning approach), but what the consumer/user understands about the respective seller or brand (Edu and Negricea, 2012). Positioning represent what you, as an organization, do to the mind of the prospect (Ries and Trout, 2001). The purpose of any brand should be to be perceived in a clear and obvious way in relation to the value delivered to the market for the purpose of maximizing the potential benefit to the company (Kotler and Keller, 2006). It is often said that an offer is purchased because of its brand, the product features being perceived too similar. To position a brand requires making choices, while having a position means people will prefer a brand over another (Manhas, 2010). It is said that the consumer owns the brand, because it will place it in a special

location in the mind (Fishburne, 2010) with or without the help of marketers (Kotler and Armstrong, 2008).

## **2 Literature Review and main considerations**

### **2.1 Brand positioning- being different, being special**

The concept of brand positioning is tightly connected to the concepts of competitive advantage and unique selling proposition. Strategies that are successful identify and achieve an unserved or underserved position in the marketplace (Chen and Green, 2009). It is said that a company holds a competitive advantage if its offer is perceived better than the competitor brands. Nowadays, a great number of companies consider a must to be involved in businesses which render high yields and diversification (Ionescu, 2012). Brand positioning displays how a brand can effectively compete against a specified set of competitors (Jooste et. al., 2008). The unique selling proposition refers to what value a company can offer to a market. The concept of brand positioning or just positioning deals with the fact that an offer should be understood in a particular way by a market. The positioning process is closely connected to the individual's consumption behaviour (Pop et. al., 2000).

Brand positioning is considered nowadays a goal of the marketing endeavour and a resource next to the 4Ps: product, price, placement and promotion. Its versatile construction makes it a desirable and useful tool in the development of any organization.

This overt position in the prospect's mind can be attained through several means, which could effectively be grouped in elements of the marketing mix, assets, capital and human resources and achievements in various fields. In all situations, the prospects must be able to comprehend the benefits delivered by the brand and/or organization. The positioning strategy affects the positioning success of a brand (Fuchs and Diamantopoulos, 2010).

The marketing mix can help attain a strong position in the prospect's mind by pointing out product features and ingredients, package

attributes, such as texture, design and shape, price levels and variations, distribution types and channels and communication messages and channels, such as captivating ads or communicating in a personal manner (Neagoe and Avram, 2012) with the publics.

An organization can reach out from anonymity through its properties. Especially in services, properties such as buildings and equipment can distinguish one competitor from others. For example, in banking, medical services and ICT (information and communication technology), endowments can create a distinct position in the prospect's mind.

Capital and financial resources can express strength, stability and reliability. In various fields, such as insurance, banking and real estate these resources can represent an overt differentiator and a strong incentive supporting the so-called "uncertainty fear".

The people representing an organization are image builders. They give weight to the customer experience taking part in the encounter with the organization, being the most important element in turning a prospect into a customer. This is specific not just for services but for products as well. An organization's staff and owners and people supported by it, through their work, ideas and achievements can impact favourably or unfavourably on the image and subsequently on the way the organization is perceived.

An organization can distinguish itself through significant achievements in its field or in areas of high interest to a certain market. Prizes, awards, medals awarded to an organization can convey experience and dedication and can influence the perception within a particular market.

Positioning should be understood as a multidimensional concept. An organization will always try to obtain a desired position in the minds of various publics. Although brand positioning is considered to be connected especially to the actual and potential clients, an organization will try to reap benefits through a distinct position within other groups of high interest to it, such as: shareholders or trustees, authorities, suppliers, partners and general public.

An organization will try to acquire the desired position in the minds of the shareholders or trustees. For a company, the most obvious positions are the ones related to the financial indicators. A company should try to express compliance with the business directions and tasks planned by the shareholders. Only such situations can create stability and conditions prone for development. In case of an NGO (non-government organization), the main goal should be the compliance with the principles and views of the trustees in order to ensure the necessary funds for programs and other social endeavours. In both situations, the most important part is born by the executives, because they are in charge with running the organization in compliance with the directives given by the financiers.

Pertaining to authorities, an organization should always try to acquire the position of a law-abiding one in all possible respects, especially taxes and regulations.

Suppliers will always seek for reliable and financially-solid organizations. Acquiring a desired position in relation to suppliers refers to building a relationship based on trust, on-time payments and mutual gains.

An organization works with various entities in order to achieve its goals. These entities, either organizations or individuals, always look for trustworthy partners. They want insurance that they will receive the promise made to them. The proper position in this case would be "reliability". A reliable partner will provide stability and grounds for concrete accomplishments.

The general public should perceive the organization in the best possible way for it. The organization must deliver its promises to the market in ways which are favourable to the local community. Also, the organization should develop programs for the local community, should display concern about important issues and act upon them. The purpose would be to create a position which will prompt the organization as being different in comparison to its competitors.

Positioning is definitely a very important marketing tool and goal nowadays when the business environment is marked by fierce

competition and consumers better informed than ever. Such an environment pushes every provider to distinguish itself from the other ones in the best possible way through the building of a strong and enduring position in the mind of various publics, with a main focus on the consumers but without overlooking the other publics.

## **2.2 Facebook- not just an instrument, but an entire environment**

Before discussing about the meaning and importance of Facebook from a business perspective, the concept of online social network should be approached. An online social network is comprised of a group of computers belonging to individuals and/or organizations. Such a group leads to the creation of an online social space, in most cases under a web format in which the members can create profiles and then share these profiles between themselves (Beal, 2010). The online social networks are of a tremendous importance to businesses because they bring together entities (individuals and/or organizations) with similar backgrounds, preoccupations, needs and desires. An online social network could be an important instrument for variable testing providing a prompt and, in many instances, detailed answer suitable for a great number of business purposes (Stoica, 2011). At present the 10 most important online social networks (based on US market share of Visits, March 2012) are: Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Yahoo! Answers, Pinterest, LinkedIn, Tagged, Google +, MySpace and Yelp (MarketingCharts, 2012).

Facebook is a free, vast and sprawling (Guides-about Facebook, 2012) social networking website that allows registered users to create profiles, upload photos and video, send messages and keep in touch with friends, family and colleagues (Techtarget- definition Facebook, 2012). It was initially developed as a social network for Harvard's students in 2004 and one year later it was already covering high schools and other universities. In 2006 it opened to everyone, reaching 12 million users in the same year (Bertolucci, 2012). As of September 30, 2012 the total number of users reached an

astonishing level of 937.407.180 (Minwatts Marketing Group, 2012).

Facebook has been able to gather a tremendous quantity of data due to its ingenious ways to collect data as people socialize. Users insert data in profiles with their age, gender, and e-mail address and some people give additional details, such as their relationship status and mobile-phone number (Simonite, 2012). Facebook provides an array of instruments displayed in a sequential process, a user being offered four types of levels: build a page, connect with people, engage your audience, influence friends or fans (Facebook- Overview). These levels can be used by organizations with a great impact.

From a business perspective, Facebook can deliver high yields through its instruments, rendered connections between members and fast feedback within specific groups considering conspicuous advantages, such as: the number of users, accessible information, versatile instruments and applications and feedback options (Daracreative- Facebook for business). An organization can benefit from using Facebook at least in three ways: profile creation and management, connection and sharing with others and use of network, group and fan pages (Evans, 2009). In order to use these instruments efficiently, an organization must dedicate itself in identifying an adequate name and customizing the profile page, in offering deals to acquire “likes” and encourage interactions to receive feedback and buzz (Weinberg, 2010).

Due to its resources, Facebook can help an organization differentiate from other peers. A consideration in this regard is the establishment and improvement of the customer experience through a rapid feedback, dissemination and support, the principle being that brand owners do not build stories alone but co-create brand performances together with consumers (Singh and Sonnenburg, 2012). As a differentiator, Facebook can be used as a means of communication in the first place. In such a situation, the social platform can be used to commence conversation about a particular topic considering a well-defined target (using variables, such as age, gender, interests, places of residence), a proper strategy, suitable

elements and conditions to be communicated through Facebook, such as creating headlines, communicating extensively about the product and organization and showcasing the best achievements (Lagorio, 2011). Also, Facebook can be used as a means of delivery for services and information or as a proxy, connecting the Facebook page to another page, such as an online shop. In the third place, Facebook can differentiate an organization through its customer relationship management features, allowing the organization to understand, monitor and improve what the customers need, desire and demand. Facebook is the world's premiere social-connection platform, integrating data from individuals' Facebook searches for sharing to other users (Goldner, 2012).

In Romania, the number of Facebook users and the number of Facebook pages have increased significantly in the last three years. At present there are more than 17.000 Romanian brand pages (Facebrands, 2012) on Facebook and over 5.084.260 users (Facebrands, 2012) of Facebook in Romania. According to socialbakers.com, there are 49 categories of entities with a Facebook profile in Romania, covering a wide array, such as companies, NGOs, public figures, schools, writers etc.(Socialbakers Ranking).

### **3. Research methodology and outcomes**

#### **L’Oreal Paris Romania- a comparative study on the impact of Facebook on the brand positioning for 2011 and 2012**

L’Oreal Paris is one of the first Romanian brands which considered Facebook for communicating with its customers. Although, since the launching of its page, the competitor brands displayed significant accomplishments with their Facebook profiles, L’Oreal’s page fan base increased organically at a satisfactory rate, the company being very attentive in providing proper interactions with the fans. This increase proves that Facebook can deliver significant gains, the online social network being efficient in communicating the competitive advantages and values and measuring the outcome.

The Romanian L'Oréal Paris Facebook page was created on August 13, 2010, reaching 30.000 fans by May 2011, being ranked at that time the 148th out of 13.066 Facebook pages in Romania indexed by [www.facebrands.ro](http://www.facebrands.ro) and the 3rd out of 695 within Health and Personal Care category after Garnier Romania and Vichy Romania. In June 2012, the page had 160.000 fans, being ranked the 78th in the general evaluation amongst the 17.000 pages in Romania and the 2nd after Nivea in the Health and Personal Care category. This positive evolution in the general and category rank and the number of fans is encouraging considering the increased budgets for online social networks considered by other brands within the category and outside.

The impact of the Facebook profile on the brand position is displayed through a longitudinal study which was performed in April - May 2011 and June - July 2012.

### 3.1 Goal and objectives of the study

*The goal* of the study is to identify the position and associations that the audience makes with this brand and the impact of interaction through this channel with regard to brand noticing. The objectives considered in this study pursue to:

1. Identify the specific audience profile and receptivity to the brand: message reception channels, brand positioning, etc.
2. Determine the perception of L'Oréal Paris Romania
3. Determine the habits related to the Facebook usage by the audience
4. Determine the communication and interaction factors that make the profile relevant to the fans
5. Determine the relevance and impact of this channel interaction on the positioning of L'Oréal Paris Romania
6. Emphasise the possibility of reaching a large respondent base (although not representative, it is however a good tool for identifying interesting aspects)

### 3.2 Date of the study and number of respondents

The online questionnaire was elaborated using the specialised website [www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com) and was placed on the Facebook page of L'Oréal Paris Romania on 18 April 2011 and 3 July 2012, the time period for completion of the first questionnaire being 2 weeks and for the second, 7 days. The respondents were rewarded, by drawing, with 50 haircare sets consisting of a 250 ml shampoo and 200 ml Elsève conditioner for the first round, and 20 Caresse lipsticks for the second round. 540 respondents were registered at the end of the 2011 survey. As to the 2012 round, the maximum number of respondents allowed by the platform (1000) was reached in only 5 days. Regarding the July 2012 questionnaire, over 500 respondents completed it on the first day of the announcement. Therefore we can state that the platform is very good when we need to reach a large base of consumers who provide information, and when we need to determine the competitive advantages of a brand.

### 3.3 Data analysis

With regard to the demographic data, the 2012 research suggests a major female presence, 99.6% of the respondents being women, as compared to 91.1% female respondents in 2011; the facebook information shows that the web page fans are 7.4% men and 92.5% women, the rest of 1% did not mention the gender. This aspect shows that at the moment the web page interaction and relevance to men is quite low.

Regarding the age structure, a high number of respondents between 18 and 35 were registered, as opposed to the respondents over 41. However, this is in line with the demographic data reported by the social network, showing that 40.8% of the web page fans are between 18 and 24 years old, 34.7% between 25 and 34, 12.7% aged between 35 and 44 and 0.4% are over 45. This reveals that the page is relevant to the young segment, which has a more significant share among the fans. As compared to the last year's respondents, the 2012 group under 35 years is 10% larger.

Referring to the respondent's educational level, the number of university graduates was higher,

while the post-graduates kept the same participation level. This suggests that the 25 to 30 years old segment is fairly well represented. The next questions of the study were meant to identify the importance of online information consumption and consumer's expectations.

Concerning the users' profile and the favourite information environments, an interesting evolution was noticed, as the online information channels were preferred to the offline channels. Thus, Facebook, as an information environment, was preferred by 85.3% of the respondents in the 2012 questionnaire, versus 74% respondents in 2011. Also, the blogs climbed in the top, as in 2012 they were preferred by 33.8% of the respondents as compared to only 24.7% in 2011. We noticed that television and newspapers (the classic information environments) dropped in the consumer preference ranking, from 72.3% to 65.4% for TV and from 35% to 28.3% for newspapers. However, these are not insignificant values at all. This year's younger average age of respondents had certainly an influence on the responses, but the trends cannot be neglected.

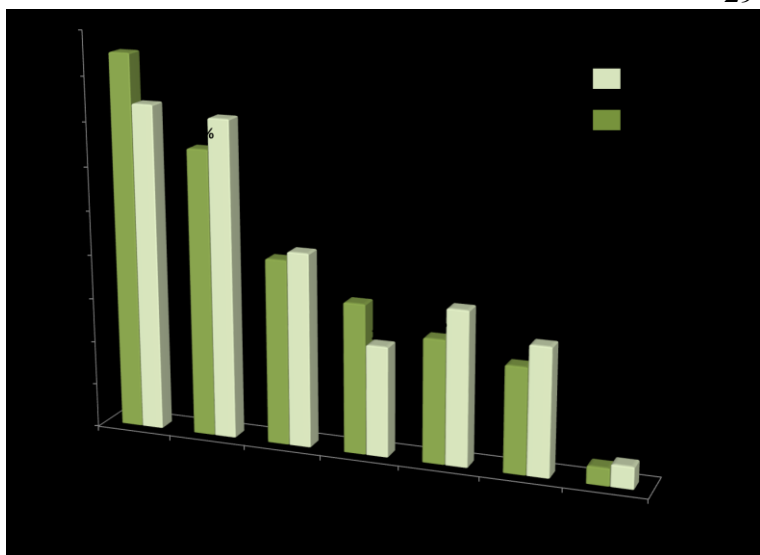


Figure 1- Sources of information used mentioned in 2011 and 2012

After creating the basic profile of L'Oreal Paris Romania facebook users, the research continued with their online consumption habits. Unlike 2011, the 2012 questionnaire showed an already anticipated issue, the increased importance of

the social platform among the online consumption habits. Thus, in 2012, 96.7% of the respondents stated that they accessed the Facebook page daily, as compared to 82.6% in 2011.

Over 79% of the respondents said they accessed over 11 company web pages, while in 2011 59% stated they visited over 15 pages. The purpose of the access was mainly getting in contact with friends. However, in direct relationship with the brand communication activity, one could notice an increased platform access for finding information about products and services, and also a higher interest for promotions (25.9%) – new response as compared to 2011. The main purpose for which the fans read a company web page remained acquiring information about the products, but the percentage was much higher, over 73% of the respondents. Also, obtaining information was the central issue with regard to a company, its activity and the promotion campaigns. Lower interest was noticed for obtaining free-of-charge products or exclusive information.

Over 60% of the fans said they gave up surfing between 1 - 10 other web pages, versus only 29% respondents in 2011, the first reasons being the content which turned boring in time, a personal wall full of messages or too frequent posts of the web pages.

It is clear that the consumer expectations regarding the web page of a brand are related to acquiring information about the respective company and brand, products and promotions. Thus, we have analysed the impact of this communication on the web page fans and their perception of the competitive advantages the brand wants to communicate.

Unlike 2011, the 2012 questionnaire revealed that TV still represented the first contact between the consumer and the brand. However, its weight seemed to be lower compared to the previous year. In 2012, only 39.8% stated they found out about L'Oreal from TV, against 47.6% in 2011. It was uncovered a larger weight of magazines and stores due to visible and impacting promotion, 22% for magazines and 21.8% for stores in 2012, respectively 14.9% and 17.6% in 2011. The internet weight was still small, however, taking into account the

average age of the respondents and the late penetration of this communication channel, one can expect that the first contact with the brand was made through other means.

Regarding the associations, the brand was firstly noticed due to the product quality, as indicated by a large part of the respondents (44% 2012, 40% 2011). In fact, quality is the main feature that makes the consumers buy the products of the brand. In the same line, 98% of the respondents stated they bought the products of the brand so far. Also, 35% associate the brand with its products and cosmetics industry, a part of the company's product portfolio being mentioned. A small number of our respondents describe the brand using the terms *innovation* and *recognition*, while 13% of respondents use other (positive) terms for describing the brand: super, professional, excellent, good, quality/price ratio, my range of products.

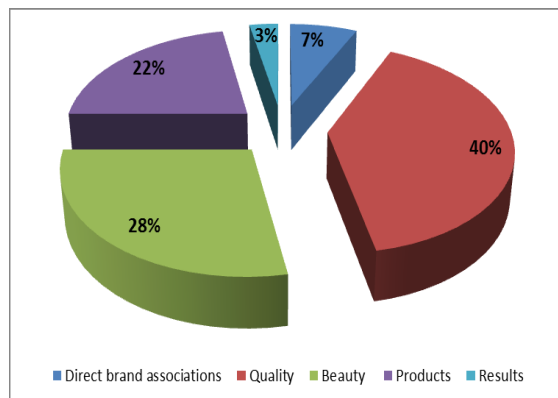


Figure 2- Brand associations- year 2011

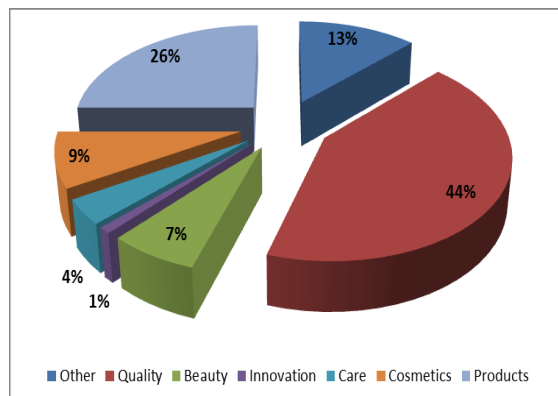


Figure 3- Brand associations- year 2012

Unlike 2011, the 2012 research showed clearly the association of the brand with the ambassadors used for communication. If in

2011, the brand was firstly associated with Andreea Marin, in 2012 Eva Longoria (renowned ambassador) occupied the first position. In fact, the first places in the ranking were taken by the brand ambassadors, against the local stars mentioned in 2011. However, the brand still benefited from the association with these names: beauty, elegance, completion, power, personality, quality, independence, distinction. Thus, one can get to the conclusion that promoting the ambassadors on the facebook page can positively influence the association made by consumers between the ambassadors and the brand.

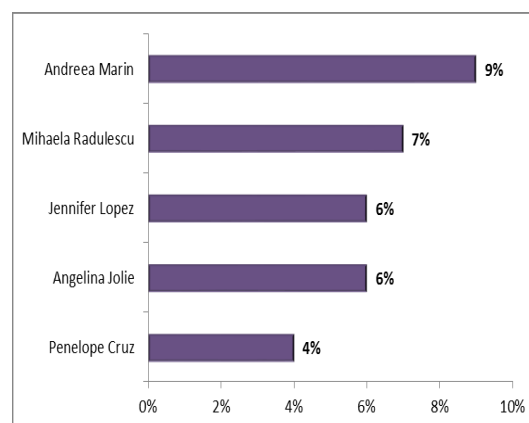


Figure 4- Associations with brand ambassadors- year 2011

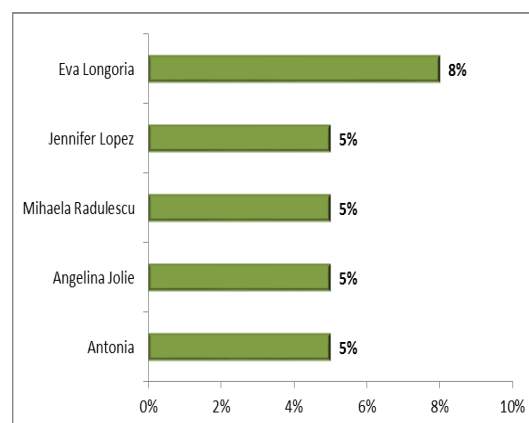


Figure 5- Associations with brand ambassadors- year 2012

Like in 2011, a large number of consumers considered the brand to be representative for the beauty products in Romania, their number being constant. Thus, 92% in 2012 and 95% in 2011 considered it to be true.

Also, the Facebook page visit frequency by its fans has remained constant. Thus, approx. 50%

accessed the page weekly, the daily and monthly accesses varying slightly. Only 12.5% accessed the page daily in 2012 as compared to 2011, and 16% did it monthly, against 11.4% in 2011. This may be due to the big number of Facebook web pages (both in the industry and in other sectors) and some changes made by the social network concerning the display of messages by some company for its fans.

With regard to the satisfaction of communication through the web page, most respondents stated they were satisfied or more than satisfied. Although in 2011 a higher percentage of our respondents said they were very satisfied (on average, 10 % more than in 2012), the 2012 study showed a lower percentage of unsatisfied persons with the web page. A positive evolution was noticed concerning the applications, contests (although their number did not increase), information obtained from specialists and message frequency. Also, we can conclude that an increase in the diversity of company facebook web pages leads to higher standards of scrutiny from their users. Thus, we can consider a migration of the fans from *very satisfied* to *satisfied* as being normal in the abovementioned conditions.

We conclude this analysis by assessing the impact of the Facebook page communication on the brand (positive or negative) perception and the product purchase decision. Thus, a small influence was noticed in the positive modification of the image and the consumer's buying desire (the big extent and very big extent responses summed up in 2012 represented 61% versus 68% in 2011), but this influence stayed at very good level.

### 3.4 Conclusions and Recommendations for L'Oreal Paris Romania

Following the comparative analysis of the results for 2011 and 2012, some conclusions may be reached concerning brand perception and communication through this environment; recommendations shall be elaborated based on these conclusions with regard to the communication approach and implementation of the advantages already associated with the

brand or other ones to be implemented in the future, and other actions that affect specific elements of the marketing mix, not only promotion.

We will present below the interpretation based on the obtained data:

*Reaching the male segment:* Although it obtained men's interaction until 2011 (through consistent communication with this segment and various actions in the market), in 2012 this segment seemed to be lost. Thus, there are almost no men among the respondents of the second questionnaire.

*Relevance to the age groups:* Unlike 2011, the 2012 research showed that the brand was more relevant to the younger target group, in this environment. This aspect, which is not bad, can influence the potential customers, who may develop brand loyalty in return. More than that, the favourite information channels of this segment were identified with the online prevailing over the classic channels.

*Quality, the first advantage:* Referring to brand positioning within the active consumers of this channel, product quality is the most relevant and it is perceived as delivering a strong association. In 2012, 44% against 40% in 2011 noticed the product quality. However, the association with beauty decreased, as new key words appeared: innovation, care, cosmetics (which may be similar to beauty).

*The ambassadors of L'Oreal Paris, associated with the brand:* It became obvious that brand positioning by means of internationally successful women was relevant to Romania also. The promotion endeavour through these ambassadors and Facebook page made the target group strike a chord. As compared to 2011, the first brand-personality associations were made with the existing brand ambassadors. Also, elegance, power, beauty, are some of the reasons for these associations.

*More fans satisfied with the approach through this environment, but less impressed people:* We identified an evolution of the perception regarding the interaction through this channel. Although there were fewer fans very satisfied with the management of the interaction, the



dissatisfaction decreased in all categories. This is encouraging, as part of it could be the reason for which a person could give up visiting the web page of a company.

*Influence on the brand perception and purchase intention:* The association between quality and quantity is not accidental. Finally, the positive perception of a brand may influence the wish to purchase the products or services bearing the respective brand. The approach of this channel generated a positive influence in both cases, although to a smaller extent. Even more encouraging is that there were very few people saying that the impact of the interaction was negative, over 90% of the respondents mentioning that their purchase decision was influenced to a certain extent.

Referring strictly to the results related to the constituent elements of brand positioning, the following questions have been raised:

1. Are the brand products perceived as highly qualitative, technological and innovative?
2. Is the brand association with the ambassadors useful for product promotion?
3. Does communication through this environment influence the positive perception of the brand?

Breaking down the results per year, it can be noticed that in 2011 already the brand's products were associated with the idea of *Quality* (40% of responses). Also, the brand relevance in consumer's mind was very strong when referring to *Beauty* (28% of responses). In 2012, one can remark a positive evolution of the product quality perception (44% of responses) which is supportive, as this is a factor that influences the product purchase decision. Although the association with *Beauty* decreased (only 9% of the associations), the association with *Cosmetics was expressed* (8% – the interpretation being related to beauty), and new relevant associations for brand positioning came out (*Innovation and Care*). The association with the products registered a positive evolution also (26% in 2012 versus 22% in 2011) which revealed that their promotion was efficient.

Regarding the ambassadors, the 2011 results were not encouraging. The first associations of

the brand were made with local personalities who had no previous ties with brand communication at all. The brand ambassadors occupied only the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> positions in the first 5 associations. In 2012, a substantial and hopeful change occurred in this respect. Thus, the first two positions of the associations were occupied by the brand ambassadors. We can assume again that the communication model of this competitive advantage was perceived by consumers in a positive way, the audience making a stronger association between the brand and the personalities used in communication.

Thus, the two brand positioning constituent elements, highly important in creating the competitive advantage, showed a positive perception evolution amongst the consumers viewing the brand on Facebook. This proves the efficiency of the promotion approach of these elements, and the fact that the approach of this environment is relevant to the brand.

Regarding the overall perception of the brand, in 2011 the results revealed that over 65% of the respondents were positively influenced by the approach used in this environment. In 2012, only 53% stated the same, however there was a good evolution with regard to the negative impact. In 2011, 1% of the respondents stated that their perception was negatively influenced, while in 2012 only 0.2% of the respondents stated the same thing. It can be mentioned that the result may be affected by the congested communication in this environment and consumers' exposure to the promotion campaigns of other brands. The latter may develop higher exigency regarding the brand communication method.

Thus, if the associations centred on the individual elements of the respective brand positioning have positive evolutions, it is more difficult for the overall perception to be influenced. Certainly, it is unknown to us if the perception of the individuals declaring no change in their assessment is not already positive.

Last but not least, a large majority of both years' respondents stated that their product purchase decision was influenced by the communication through this channel. In 2011,

45.4% of the respondents said that the purchase decision was influenced to a great extent, 23% to a very large extent, 25.7% to a small extent, 3.8% to a very small extent and 2.1% say it was not influenced at all. There were some changes in 2012, when only 11% stated that the purchase decision was influenced to a very large extent, but 50% stayed however in the area of a substantial influence. Nevertheless, 9% said that this did not happen. The cause might be the fact that the promotions were not communicated in 2012 at the same extent as they were at the beginning of 2011. In the context of a busy year in terms of promotional pressure, there was an attempt to avoid brand depreciation through aggressive promotion. However, it is encouraging that over 90% of the respondents stated that the purchase decision was influenced in 2012 also.

#### 4. Conclusions

The evolution recorded in the main indicators displays with certainty that Facebook as an environment helped the company to improve its position in the consumer's mind. Facebook through its features and amenities assisted L'Oreal in increasing the brand visibility and differentiating itself from its competitors. The scores for 2012 are better than the ones of 2011 in all aspects.

Considering this example, it can be stated that Facebook could be used by an organization as an instrument, but also as resource in differentiating a brand from others within a product category. The use of Facebook as a differentiator must be understood as an ongoing endeavour closely connected with the other instruments deemed necessary by an organization.

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## Authors description

Tudor Edu is a Lecturer at the Romanian-American University in Bucharest, Faculty of Management-Marketing. He teaches Strategic Marketing, Consumer Behaviour and B2B Marketing courses and seminars at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. He holds a PhD in marketing and he has over 12 years of practical experience in marketing strategies and tactics in the IT field. He has participated in over 15 collaborative research projects since 2000. His areas of interests are: international and domestic marketing strategies, consumer behaviour, market segmentation and market positioning. He is a member of the Marketing Association of South Africa.

Iliuta Costel Negricea is a Lecturer at the Romanian-American University in Bucharest, Faculty of Management-Marketing. He teaches Marketing Basics, Marketing Policies and Strategies and Electronic Marketing courses and seminars at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. He holds a PhD in marketing and he has over 8 years of practical experience in marketing strategies and tactics in the Constructions field. His areas of interests are: marketing strategies and tactics, consumer behaviour and online marketing. He is a member of the Marketing Association of South Africa.

Alexandru Nicolaica is the New Media & Market Intelligence Manager at L'Oreal Romania. He has been involved in online marketing research and advertising for more than four years. He holds a master's degree in business marketing.