Management and Accounting Journal
ISSN: 2997-6707 |
Volume 12 Issue 3, July-September, 2024
Journal Homepage: https://ethanpublication.com/articles/index.php/E2
Official Journal of Ethan Publication

THE ROLE OF MANAGEMENT IN MARKETING RESEARCH FOR WHITE SEA BUCKTHORN FIRMS

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17424207

Abstract
Agricultural enterprises face a complex array of daily decisions spanning research and development, production, marketing, finance, and human resources. Among these, marketing decisions are particularly critical, as they aim not only to attract customers but also to ensure their satisfaction post-consumption. Effective marketing in agriculture requires a strategic approach that integrates both long-term and tactical decisions, guided by comprehensive and accurate information. This study emphasizes the role of marketing research in providing the necessary data to support decision-making processes, reduce risk, and optimize outcomes. By leveraging marketing information systems and insights from marketing research providers, managers can make informed decisions that align with modern marketing concepts and enhance organizational performance. The findings underscore that the integration of marketing research into the decision-making process is vital for agricultural enterprises seeking to navigate complex market environments effectively and achieve sustainable competitive advantage.

Keywords: *Marketing Decision-Making, Marketing Research, Marketing Information Systems, Agricultural Enterprises, Strategic Marketing*

Introduction

Marketing research management for sea buckthorn companies involves specialized strategies due to the specificity of the product. Marketing research should include market analysis, identifying consumer needs and preferences, and assessing competition. It is essential to understand the health benefits associated with sea buckthorn and exploit these aspects in marketing campaigns. Research must also identify effective distribution channels and explore new market opportunities, such as innovative products or untapped market segments.

In marketing research, it is important to understand that the external environment of agricultural enterprises is undergoing profound changes. These changes include technological developments, climate changes, variations in demand in global markets, and changes in government policies and environmental regulations. Understanding these dynamics enables agricultural enterprises to adapt and respond effectively to new opportunities and challenges, thereby maximizing their potential for growth and sustainability.

In today's dynamic economy, information capital is a valuable strategic resource. Over time, the external environment of the agricultural enterprise is undergoing profound changes. The success of an economic agent quickly attracts the attention of many new "players". As competition increases, customers become more demanding in terms of the products they want Kotler (Kotler, 2008). The customer is transformed from a passive factor in the market into an active one that can put pressure on the company. They no longer value the mere availability of products but demand higher quality products. As a result, the customer can no longer be treated as a "given well". An approach like: "we have products, demand is unlimited and customers will come" has started to fail in meeting customer needs and wants Balaure (Balaure, 2002). Attracting and retaining customers has become an increasingly difficult activity that requires special attention. In this market struggle, managers must make decisions about existing opportunities, target markets, market segments served, design, plan, implement and control marketing programmers to achieve high performance. Making these decisions is a complicated process that involves the constant interaction of the elements of the marketing mix (product, price, distribution and promotion). In addition, these decisions also involve interaction with other elements, some of which are beyond the company's control (economic, socio-cultural, natural, political-legislative, ethnological factors) and others which are less controllable (customers, competitors, suppliers, intermediaries, etc.). Strategic decisions in agribusinesses play a crucial role in ensuring long-term success and competitiveness. Krasimir, Kostenarov., Ivan, Boevsky propose in this sense The V-AHP model helps to make strategic decisions in agricultural enterprises, providing a simple set of tools for objective analysis with several criteria, improving decision-making processes for farm management (Krasimir & Ivan, 2022) At the same time the author N.H., Seysebayeva talks about strategic decisions in agricultural enterprises involve the development and implementation of long-term plans, taking into account approaches to resources, entrepreneurial aspects and external/internal factors to ensure sustainable development and competitive advantages (Seysebayeva, 2022). Ukrainian authors Olena, Lemishko, A.M., Blazhevich believe that strategic decisions in agricultural enterprises involve the definition of tools for the development of the management strategy, consideration of agricultural specifics, stabilization of resources and management of financial risks associated with the optimization of the capital structure (Olena, 2022). These decisions involve developing and implementing strategies that consider resource and system approaches, focusing on entrepreneurial aspects and comprehensive coordination (Honcharuk & Tomashuk, 2023). Strategic decisions in agricultural enterprises involve the formation of economic development strategies to increase competitiveness through quality improvements, market expansion and effective management methods, as emphasized in the research. Effective strategic planning is essential for agribusinesses to adapt to market changes, improve product quality and maintain competitive advantages (Zhovnovach, Shatalov, Shatalov & Sokolenko, 2022). trategic decisions in agricultural enterprises involve the creation of effective systems for implementing strategic alternatives based on the competitiveness of agricultural products to ensure long-term market success. The use of strategic management systems, including strategic planning, marketing and analysis, is increasingly recognized as beneficial for achieving strategic goals and ensuring market competitiveness (Nekhai & Kravets, 2023).

Furthermore, optimizing the capital structure through strategic decision-making is crucial to improving the financial stability and profitability of agricultural enterprises. In general, strategic decision making in agricultural enterprises is a multifaceted process that requires systematic planning, evaluation of alternatives and focus on long-term development goals.

Marketing research helps managers to “link” elements of the marketing mix to these external variables of the business, providing information that mitigates against the uncertainty and uncertainty in which the business operates. Any function within the company needs to take into account what is happening outside the company, in particular, market processes, to guide its own business plans. In other words, gathering accurate and conclusive information on market processes becomes essential for planning profitable and sustainable development. Despite their great diversity, decision-making processes have many elements in common, involving a sequence of activities that constitute a real algorithm of marketing decisions Cătoiu (Cătoiu, 2007).

A typical marketing decision-making process can be explained on the basis of the DECIDE model (Figure 1), which comprises six stages that the decision-maker has to go through: definition of the problem for which a solution has to be found as well as the objectives pursued by solving that problem; enumeration of possible action alternatives; collection of the necessary information and estimation of the results for each of the proposed alternatives; identification of the optimal alternative (variant); development and implementation of the chosen variant; evaluation of the results and correction of certain aspects considered necessary.

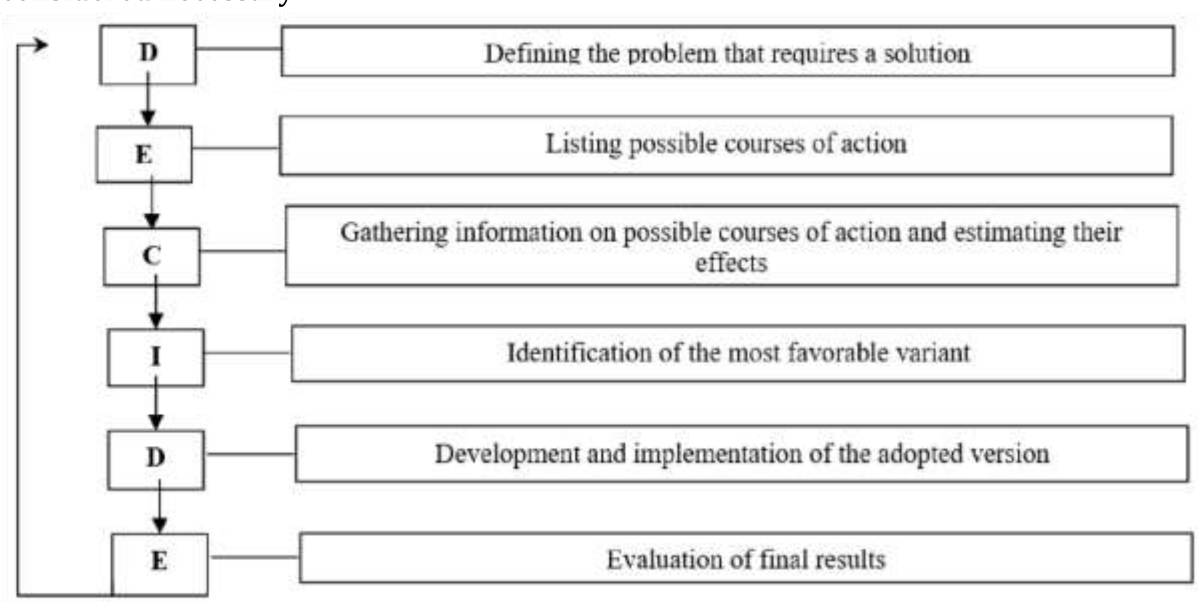

Figure 1. The “DECIDE” Marketing Decision-Making Model

In order to visualize and conceptualize the decision problem as clearly as possible, a decision tree is drawn up, which includes at the root - the problem facing the agricultural enterprise, and in the branches - the possible courses of action (decisions) and the expected results of adopting one decision or another.

For example, suppose the enterprise producing white hawthorn is facing a decline in sales of this product. In this situation, the farm management identifies certain alternative courses of action, each with its possible outcomes (Figure 2).

In order to adopt that economically optimal option, the manager looks for answers to questions such as: what is the real reason why sales are declining; what is the most likely outcome for the proposed options; is the expected outcome profitable for the enterprise, etc. Even if the manager suspects the answers to such questions, if they are incorrect and the marketing strategy is based on them, the implementation costs could be too high, causing significant losses to the agricultural enterprise.

In forecasting results, the manager relies on his experience accumulated over time, various reports from the company, previous studies, published data and information obtained directly from consumers. Forecasting possible outcomes is a difficult process, as a number of unforeseen events may occur between the time of forecasting and the actual achievement of results, which are beyond the control of the decision-maker. In order to prevent these unforeseen events, the manager needs to have as broad a view as possible of the company's external environment. In this context, information is seen as one of the basic resources needed to facilitate decision-making. Environmental, market and consumer information are obtained through marketing research. Marketing research, through the information it provides, removes uncertainty from the decision-maker and reduces the risk of wrong investments.

The information obtained through marketing research determines the application of pro-active management in the agricultural enterprise. Pro-active managers, unlike reactive managers, are those who do not wait for changes in the external environment to have a major impact on the enterprise and then react. They make changes in marketing tactics and develop long-term strategies that integrate with new developments in the external micro and macro environment.

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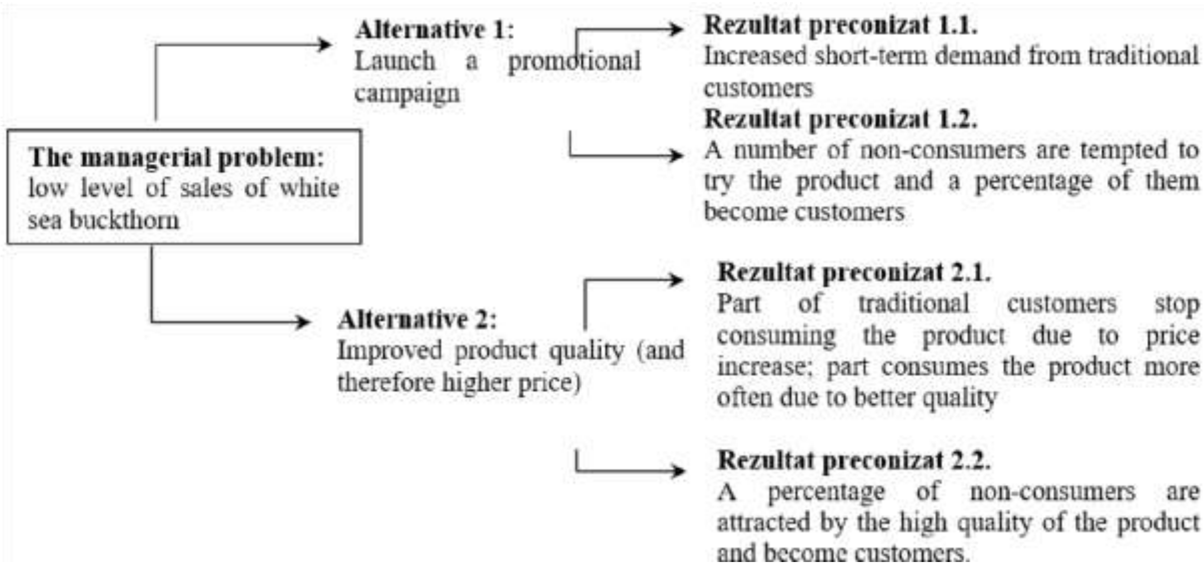

Figure 2. The Process of Solving a Problem in the Producing Agricultural Enterprise White Sea Buckthorn

There are a wide variety of definitions of marketing research. One of these definitions, which focuses on the complexity, characteristics and role of marketing research, is the one proposed by Romanian specialists: “Marketing research is the formal activity through which, with the help of scientific concepts, methods and techniques of investigation, is carried out in a systematic way, the specification, measurement, collection, analysis and objective interpretation of marketing information intended for the management of the economic unit, for the knowledge of the environment in which it operates, the identification of opportunities, the evaluation of alternatives of marketing actions and its effects” Cătoiu (Cătoiu, 2009).

Any economic enterprise, selling products or services, needs information about the markets it serves - the actual beneficiaries, potential beneficiaries, inter-business and final consumers of its products, to determine what it should produce, to whom it should offer what it produces and how it should offer its products.

Lest they be completely misguided, almost all agricultural businesses probably conduct some, possibly informal, marketing research. In general, however, a producer, trader or service provider will not be content to study only his own statistics in order to identify the various trends and to determine the attitude he needs to take towards them if he wishes to ensure the conditions for profitable development.

For marketing research to play the role it is intended to play, it must be linked to all aspects of the marketing function. Some marketing research is of an ongoing nature, while others focus on specific investigations linked to the implementation of specific projects. The applicability of marketing research is particularly broad. The scope of research includes the following major areas: the enterprise, the external environment and the enterprise-environment interface. Here are some of the particular aspects that can be investigated through marketing research:

- *research on the internal environment* (the enterprise itself): objectives, development strategies and policies, the enterprise's human, material and financial resources (their volume, structure, quality and availability), its ability to mobilize and adapt them to the objectives pursued, the quality of management activity;
- *research into external environmental factors*: general trends in the economy and the sector concerned, trends in competition and its marketing policy, the legislative and institutional framework, the technological, environmental, social-political, demographic and cultural environment, etc.;
- *market research*: general aspects of the market (market characteristics, structure, capacity and conjuncture, dynamics of market phenomena, spatial dimensions of the market, etc.), different market phenomena and categories (supply and demand, prices and tariffs, exports and imports, market shares, test markets, identification of consumer segments, etc.);
- *consumer research*: buying and product use habits, consumer needs and expectations (in terms of how they arise, their size and hierarchy, the relationships between them and how they are translated into consumption), consumer perceptions of the products on offer and of the company in general and in comparison, with competitors, consumer characteristics, lifestyle and psychographics, factors influencing the purchasing decision, measuring customer satisfaction and loyalty, etc.; – *research aimed at directing marketing-mix policy*:

➢ product research: product attributes, product line composition, product modification, new product concepts, new product acceptance and potential, competitive products, testing of existing products, branding, packaging, instructions for use, etc.;

➢ price research: price levels of new products, price differentiation by product line, pricing strategies, seasonal or special discounts, rebates, etc.;

➢ distribution research: typology of distribution channels and their characteristics, structure of logistics systems, distribution strategies and their costs, services offered to buyers, etc.;

➢ research on promotional activity: structure of promotional activity by form, selection of advertising media and supports, development of advertising messages, planning of promotional campaigns, evaluation of the effectiveness of promotional activity, awareness of the product and the company in general, company image, etc.

– *Public opinion research*.

In addition to the aspects mentioned above, marketing research also involves extensive analysis and short-, medium- and long-term forecasting to inform marketing programmers and all marketing activities and to evaluate marketing performance Timiraş (Timiraş, 2012).

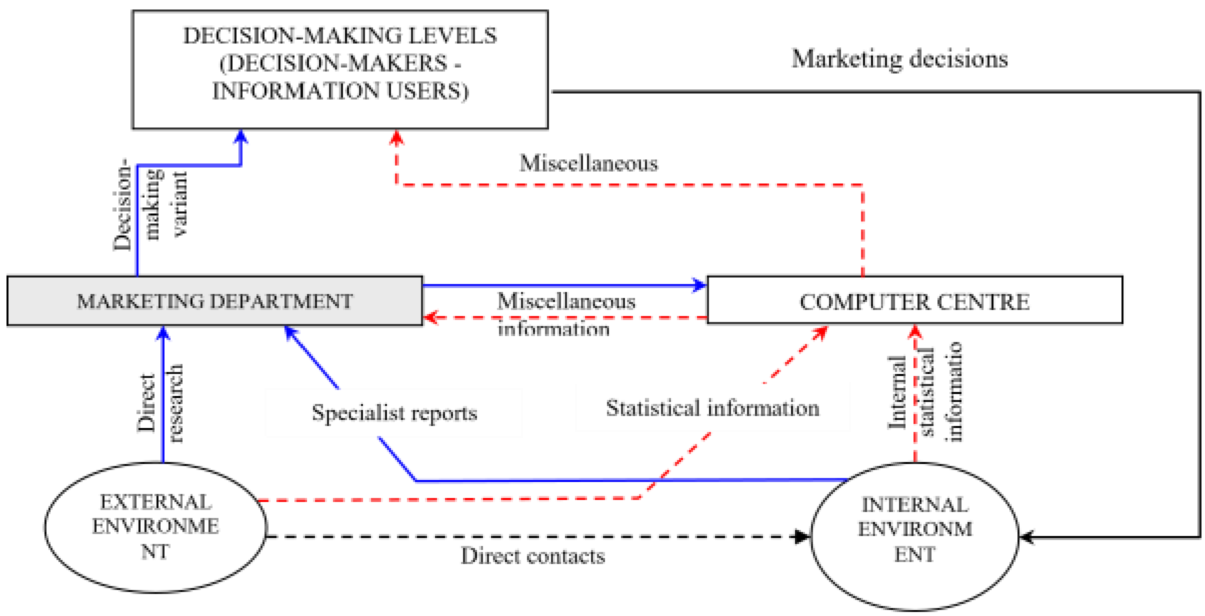

Figure 3. The Role of the Marketing Department in the Decision Support System

There are certain differences between research on industrial markets and research on consumer goods markets. In the case of industrial markets, purchasing decisions are made in a completely different atmosphere from the one in which these decisions are made by the public consumer. Products sold to industry for production purposes tend to be, by their nature, strictly technical, with even the simplest products being assessed by the buyer primarily from a technical point of view. In studies of industrial markets, the researcher needs to understand the buyer's reasoning and terminology. In the case of the various specialized markets, the researcher must be not only an engineer but also a marketing specialist. His first duty is to bear in mind that industrial purchasing decisions are rarely the responsibility of a single person, and he must therefore put a great deal of skill into choosing and making contact with the most competent people to find out their opinion of the product under study. Finally, he must know the practices and subtleties of business and have the talent to observe, question and interpret.

Research on the consumer goods market is conducted in different ways, although the marketing researcher has basically the same objectives. His job is to gather information from different levels to help management develop plans. This information can be gathered through interviews, personal visits to homes, letters, on the street, in shops, by telephone or at various public meetings. The scope of the surveys can be limited to a neighborhood or can extend across a city, region or nationally, covering the whole public or only certain categories of the public.

To carry out their research projects, marketing researchers rely not only on economic disciplines directly related to production and marketing, but also on other sciences, such as sociology and mathematics, to

draw up the plans on the basis of which they will collect and analyze certain types of information and carry out their research.
The role of marketing research has been influenced over time by developments in computer technology. At first, research was designed to provide the information needed by customers in a given situation (ad hoc research). Gradually, marketing research has moved from occasional projects to permanent systems that meet information needs in a permanent and integrated way.

Figure 4. Classification of Marketing Research Providers

The information obtained from internal reports and marketing research carried out is part of the company's Marketing Information System (MIS). The MIS can be defined as a set of various specialists, equipment and procedures that collect, analyze and distribute in a correct and timely manner the relevant information needed by the company's management to base, execute and control decisions. Figure 4 shows the role of the marketing department in a company's decision support system.
Although managers can obtain the information, they need to make decisions using a SIM, the system has certain drawbacks: it is based on reports, it has a rigid structure, it is cumbersome to use, requiring specialist software, it offers limited possibilities for presenting information, it takes into account a limited number of options, etc. To overcome the limitations of SIM systems, a new decision-making information system, the Decision Support System (DSS), has been developed, which has a computer at its core and can be accessed by managers whenever they need information to make decisions.

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Depending on the type of research required, capacity and resources available, users (beneficiaries of research) can draw on internal research project potential or call on external providers capable of offering full or limited research services. Figure 4 shows a classification of marketing research providers:

There are usually three parties involved in the marketing research process: the research performers (researchers), the beneficiaries of the research results (customers, users) and the bearers of the information (respondents).

Professional ethics rules specify the rights and obligations of each of these parties, creating a coherent framework that ensures a level playing field for participants and society at large.

International professional organizations (American Marketing Association, European Society for Marketing and Opinion Research, World Association for Public Opinion Research, Marketing Research Association, etc.) have developed *codes of ethics* in the field that promote honesty, professionalism, fairness and confidentiality in order to promote the interests of clients and the public.

The client must provide the researcher with correct information about the purpose of the research and how the results will be used. No results should be disseminated as long as they cannot be substantiated by the data collected from the study. It is also unethical for a client to request a research proposal for the purpose of obtaining free advice or for the purpose of delivering that proposal to a competing marketing research firm.

For *the researcher's* part, the researcher must conduct the research objectively, without personally influencing the results. He must provide the client with all information obtained, techniques used and procedures employed in the research. Aspects that would call into question the quality of the research or the results obtained (for example, a low response rate for certain consumer segments) must not be hidden or avoided. The researcher is not allowed to use the information obtained for personal purposes and must keep the data confidential. It is common practice for a marketing research provider not to accept requests for research from two competing companies at the same time.

The respondent has the right to volunteer to participate in research projects, the right to anonymity or the right to confidentiality of the data they provide. They must also be treated with respect and have the right to be informed about the purpose of the research. Once these rights are respected, the client who has decided to participate in the study must provide accurate data and be cooperative and honest.

Conclusion

In today's dynamic economy, gathering accurate and conclusive information on market processes becomes essential for planning profitable and sustainable development. Despite their great diversity, decision-making processes have many elements in common, involving a sequence of activities that constitute a real algorithm of marketing decision.

Information in economic activity is considered to be one of the basic resources needed to facilitate the decision-making process. Environmental, market and consumer information are obtained through marketing research. Marketing research, through the information it provides, removes uncertainty from the decision maker and reduces the risk of wrong investments.

For marketing research to play its role, it must be linked to all aspects of the marketing function. Some marketing research is of an ongoing nature, while others focus on specific investigations related to the implementation of particular projects.

In the process of marketing research, it is necessary to promote honesty, professionalism, fairness and confidentiality in order to protect the interests of clients and the public.

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