ABSTRACT. Today, more than ever, the business environment is continually changing. Competition intensifies in almost every industry, so companies must develop innovative products and business processes to survive. The Romanian clothing market is a crowded one with a lot of powerful competitors, especially Asian firms with their cheap products. Companies are today aware that they must offer the right product, in the right place, at the right price and at the right moment of time in order to be competitive. In order to survive on this market the Romanian clothing companies should adapt their products offer to the customer needs and wishes, and taking into account the competition.

Keywords: Romanian clothing market, supply on clothes, demand on clothes, customer needs and wishes, customer’s profile

Introduction

The starting point of our investigation was the situation of the Romanian companies involved in the clothing sector after the total liberalization of the world trade with textiles and clothing. The textile and clothing industry is one of the oldest in the world. The oldest known textiles, which date back to about 5000 B.C., are scraps of linen cloth found in Egyptian caves. The industry was primarily a family and domestic one until the early part of the 1500s when the first factory system was established. It wasn’t until the Industrial Revolution in England, in the 18th century, that power machines for spinning and weaving were invented. The Romanian clothing industry has a long tradition and experience from the 19th century, as well as a good fame around the world as its products are present in many countries of the world.

Since 1 January 2005, The WTO Agreement on Textile and Clothing no longer exist. There was implemented a measure stipulated for some time, that is the total abolishment of the quota system for the imports of textiles and clothing. Before the Agreement took effect, a large portion of textiles and clothing exports from developing countries to the industrial countries was subject to quotas under a special regime outside normal GATT rules.

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The total liberalization of the world trade with textiles and clothing opened the way to the imports from Asia as well as to the interest of the big companies for the cheap workforce in these areas. The Asian firms (Chinese, Indian) and the companies from Turkey became powerful competitors on both domestic and foreign markets. China is the biggest player on the European market. China is the most competitive production base for the time being due to an immense oversupply of labor in the rural provinces and young educated workers who make possible the keeping of the wages at very low levels.

**Material and method**

We used for our investigations exploratory, descriptive and causal research. In order to closely identify some problems and the specific ways to solve them it is been used exploratory research. To obtain information about the situation already existing on the market it is been used descriptive research.

We obtain primary and secondary data through:

- two personal (face to face) interviews based on short questionnaires – one for the demand and the other for the supply –; the information we got was neither sensitive, nor threatening; we used clear, unambiguous, structured and unstructured questions; for the clothing supply we got responses from a representative group of 150 stores; for the clothing demand we used for identifying the representative sample STATGRAPHICS soft; for a standard error of ±0.03 the sample was 1068 Romanian people;
- statistical data and published studies;

The main goal of the first conducted study was to identify the attitude of the Romanian people regarding the acquisition of clothes. The questionnaire is structured in two parts: the first one contains eight questions which give us basic information like:

- The main reason of buying clothes;
- The place where these clothes are bought;
- The appreciation of the importance of some aspects which determine the acquisition;
- The fashion genre preferred by the Romanians;
- The appreciation of the quality of the products made in: Romania, China, Turkey, U.S.A. and E.U.;
- The suggestions of the Romanian customers regarding the improvement of the clothes made in Romania;
- The average monthly amount spent on clothes;
- The opinion of the Romanians regarding the recognition of Romanian brands at national level.

The second part of the questionnaire includes questions used for the classification of the respondents:
The main goal of the second conducted study was to identify the characteristics of the supply on clothes. The questionnaire is structured in two parts: the first one contains questions which give us basic information:

- The clothing style for sale in Romanian stores;
- The targeted market segment for stores;
- The criteria on which the supply is established;
- The brands for sell in the store;
- The made in country for the clothing offered for sell;
- The appreciation of the clothes made in Romania;
- The income of the target market segment;
- Methods for pricing the products.

The second part of the questionnaire includes questions for the classification of the respondents – in this case the stores:

- The type of the store: representing a Romanian producer or a foreign company;
- Monthly turnover of the store;
- Size of the store;
- The location of the store.

**Results and discussions**

Analyzing the respondents’ answers we could create the Romanian clothing customer’s profile:

- Due to the fact that the clothes are strictly necessary products all the people regularly become a customer. The percentages of the women and men buying clothes are almost equal. The customers form urban areas spent more on clothes that the people from rural areas;
- The majority of the Romanian customers of clothes has a high-school degree;
- The biggest segment of the population (40%) earn between 400 and 1000 RON per month;
- For 57% of the Romanian costumers the need represent the main reason for buying clothes;
- Almost 70% of the costumers prefer specialized stores for buying clothes;
- Only a very small percentage (4%) of the Romanian customers are using the Internet or the catalogs as an alternative for buying clothes;
It can be noticed that the material from which are made the clothes represent the most important criteria in buying decision for the Romanian customers;

- The product design and price represent the second most important criteria in the decision of buying clothes;
- The Romanians are preferring the classical, casual and sport clothes;
- The clothes made in the U.S.A. and European Union have an image of best quality products;
- The Romanians consider the staff made in China and Turkey having the lowest quality comparing to the medium quality clothes made in Romania;

- Most of the Romanians (36%) spend monthly between 50-100 RON for clothes;
- The majority of the Romanian costumers spend 53.11 RON per month for buying clothes and a half of the Romanian customers spend on clothes less than 70.93 RON, and the others 50% spend over this value;
- The opinion of the customers is that the notoriety of the Romanian brands is at a very low level;

Analyzing the respondents’ answers we could create an image of the supply on clothes from the Romanian market:

- In most of the stores there are casual clothes for sell;
- The elegant style is the second most sold type of clothes;
- The clothes for women are present in almost all the stores, followed by the clothes for men and children;
- The most important aspect used to establish the supply is the clothes’ brand;
- 68% of the stores are sealing their own brand/brands;
- In most of the stores are sold clothes made in UE; (excepting Romania), or made in Romanian factories
- 62% of the respondents consider that the clients have a good or a very good opinion regarding the clothes made in Romania;
- 46% from the stores consider that they are the target for people with big income;
- The price doesn’t anymore differentiate the company from the competition;
- The frequently used method by the stores to establish the prices for their products, is taking into account the costs, 45% of the stores used it;
- We found out that one third (33%) of the stores belong to a Romanian manufacturer and the other two third (66 %) represent a foreign brand;
- The most of the companies (39%) have a monthly turnover under 100,000 RON;
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- A percentage of 17% of the stores declare that they have a monthly turnover over 300,000 RON;
- The most of the stores (35%) have areas over 90 m²;
- A small percentage of the stores have an area smaller than 30 m²;
- The actual tendency regarding the emplacement of the stores is that the stores are placed in a mall or in a shopping center.

Conclusions

The domestic market seems lost for the Romanian companies in the face of the Asian imports especially after the total liberalization of the world trade with textiles and clothing. There is no market in Romanian at this moment for the domestic products. Too many products are manufactured that the domestic market cannot absorb. The specialists maintain that, unless one has a network of shops, one cannot adapt the price of the products according to the market conditions, cannot withdraw a product that does not sell; all in all, one does not have many chances.

The Romanian companies must adapt their product offer, taking into account the customers specific needs and wishes and the characteristics of the competition. The most important suggestions made by customers to improve the clothes produced in Romania are:
- To improve the design;
- To have more models;
- To find all the measures;
- To adapt the products to the current fashion tendencies;
- To improve the quality of the raw materials;
- To improve the quality of the execution.

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