

Tomasz TROJANOWSKI
Akademia im. Jana Długosza w Częstochowie
tomektrojanowski@poczta.fm

NUTRITION PROBLEMS OF THE MODERN WORLD

Abstract. The subject of this work is focused on the problems of famine and malnutrition in the world. The introduction of the article highlights the existing level of diversity of life on a global scale and common problems of famine mainly in African countries. The following part of the study identifies the causes of famine in the world. The oversupply of products and food waste is highlighted. The second chapter presents the problem of consumerism that occurs among populations of developed and developing countries. It also points to the marketing practices of businesses – advertising in order to induce purchasing impulse among consumers. Sustainable marketing communications is presented as a way to counteract the problems related to food. The final part of the paper is a summary.

Keywords: nutrition, society, famine, consumerism, sustainability marketing, marketing communication

PROBLEMY ŻYWNOŚCIOWE WSPÓŁCZESNEGO ŚWIATA

Streszczenie. Tematyka opracowania skupia się wokół problemów głodu i niedożywienia na świecie. We wstępie artykułu zwrócono uwagę na istniejące zróżnicowanie poziomu życia w skali globalnej i występujące problemy głodu głównie w państwach afrykańskich. W dalszej części wskazano przyczyny głodu na świecie. Zwrócono uwagę na nadmierną podaż produktów oraz marnotrawienie żywności. W rozdziale drugim przedstawiono problem konsumpcjonizmu, jaki występuje wśród społeczeństw rozwiniętych i rozwijających się. Wskazano także na praktyki marketingowe przedsiębiorstw – reklamę w celu wywołania impulsu zakupowego wśród konsumentów. Przedstawiono zrównoważoną komunikację marketingową jako sposób przeciwdziałania problemom żywnościowym. W końcowej części zamieszczono podsumowanie.

Słowa kluczowe: żywność, społeczeństwo, głód, konsumpcjonizm, zrównoważony marketing, komunikacja marketingowa

1. Introduction

One of the most serious problems of the modern world is the great diversity of living standards on a global scale. This diversity manifests itself in many fields; the richest countries are inhabited by extremely wealthy society, while the population of poor countries often suffers from malnutrition or even starvation. Economic growth and the development of technical and technological progress in many regions of the world did not contribute to solve the problems of hungry people on the planet. At the beginning of the XXI century humanity cannot effectively solve the problem of famine and malnutrition in the world. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), two thirds of the world population is malnourished or starving. The problem of famine and malnutrition affects mainly poor countries in Africa, Asia and the Indian subcontinent. The observed increase in consumption in the developed and developing countries mainly in the United States and Western European countries is an example of the irrational distribution of consumer goods in the world. The reason for the increase in consumption in industrialized countries is the change of societies into the consumer societies focused on buying excessive amounts of food. Counteraction to the problems of hunger and malnutrition of the world's population is the implementation among consumer societies the principles of sustainable development. The ideas of sustainable development include the environmental and social areas as well as economic areas which refer to the improvement of the quality of life of societies in order to create opportunities for the development of future generations.

2. The causes of world famine

Discussing the causes of hunger and malnutrition in the world one particular reason cannot be specified. This problem is complex and involves many more issues affecting the causes of hunger. The main causes of famine include¹:

- disasters (droughts, floods),
- ongoing armed conflict,
- political instability (which deters foreign investors),
- high population growth, urban overcrowding,
- bad weather conditions,
- civilizational backwardness,
- high levels of corruption.

¹ <http://www.wos.org.pl>.

Presented causes do not cover all the reasons for the occurrence of famine. According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), currently one and a half times more food is produced than is needed. Still, one in seven residents of the Earth is suffering from hunger². The part of the surplus of food is destroyed due to the high costs of storage. Another cause of hunger in the world is wrong distribution and the division of manufactured food products. Oversupply of food products in developed and developing countries results in increased purchases by consumers. Purchased surplus of food are not consumed rationally and are thrown away. We can point out that the main cause of hunger and malnutrition is not the lack, but the irrational management of food. In countries where people are dying of hunger, are cultivated crops, which are then exported and processed into feed for farmed animals in western countries. Ethiopia in 1984, cultivated cereals intended for European livestock while its population was dying of starvation.

Analysing the causes of famine in the world, one should pay more attention to the practice of wasting food. Every year is thrown away 1.3 billion tonnes of food in the world. This is a one third of the amount of produced food, fit to eat (Organization of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation FAO). 89 million tonnes of food is wasted in Europe (04/2011, European Commission). 20-30% of purchased food is thrown away, two third of that would be suitable for consumption. In Poland is wasted nearly 9 million tonnes of food (Eurostat 2006). These figures place Poland at the 5 position among the most wasting food countries in the European Union – after the UK, Germany, France and the Netherlands. As many as 24% of consumers admit to wasting food (Millward Brown SMG/KRC, 09/2011)³.

Hunger and malnutrition is observed in approx. 30 countries of the world, those are mainly African countries (Kenya, Zimbabwe, Congo, Zaire, Mozambique, Ethiopia, Angola, Central African Republic, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Rwanda, Somalia, Madagascar, Malawi). In addition to the food problems of the African continent are also in Cambodia, Afghanistan and Haiti⁴. In the poor African countries daily intake of 2,200 kcal is not exceeded. In low and medium developed countries such as Guyana, Benin, Botswana, Cameroon, Burkina Faso, Sudan, Gabon, Senegal, Uganda, Mali the daily calorie intake is 2200-2600 calories and is considered to be satisfactory. Rich or normal nutrition, which is characterised by the daily intake of 2600 kcal above occurs in the high and medium developed countries. This group of countries include European countries, United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Israel, Turkey, Singapore, South Korea, Argentina, Morocco, Egypt⁵.

² Ibidem.

³ <http://www.edueko.pl>.

⁴ Fierli I. (red.): *Geografia gospodarcza świata*. PWE, Warszawa 2003, s. 293.

⁵ Ibidem, p. 293-295.

3. Consumerism of societies as the cause of the world's nutrition problems

Consumption is an indispensable part of natural life processes. Impulsive and continuous acquisition of items and services, regardless of their actual value, shelf life, origin, consequences of their production (including environmental effects, for example, decomposition time) – it all involves the phenomenon of consumerism⁶.

The elimination of the problem of famine and malnutrition in the world requires a change in societies attitudes in developed and developing countries, namely consumer societies in terms of shopping and lifestyle. Excessive buying food products that are largely wasted and thrown away, contribute to unfair and improper mode of production and distribution of food in the world.

Stocks of grain in the world are used to feed farm animals mainly cattle, whose meat and meat products are then sold to European and Asian markets with a large profit⁷. For this reason, it is more profitable to produce grain, which is intended to feed the cows, than the production of cereals intended for the people of African countries. The welfare of people lose with the desire to make profits from the sale of beef to rich European countries, Asian and American markets.

In addition to the change the consumer purchase attitude towards more sustainable purchasing decisions, change in the approach of politicians and governments of nations to the problems of famine and malnutrition is required. On the regulations, for example in the production and sale of food, depends the turnover of food products in different countries. Economic considerations and the desire to profit should not be a priority in food policy states. One should first of all take care of the welfare of a man whose life and health is paramount. Several problems of hunger and malnutrition in the world apparently indicate that social values loose with the desire of achieving greater and greater financial benefit from the sale of food to countries where there is an oversupply of food products.

One of the main ways of addressing the problem of famine and malnutrition in the world is to limit excessive purchases of food products made by today's customers. Buying food is not properly thought out and planned in advance. Customers of supermarkets in highly industrialised and developing countries without much thought put large quantities of food into baskets, which then are not consumed and consequently goes in the trash. Purchases are made under pressure from the ubiquitous advertising. Advertising as a form of communication with the outside company aims to influence the behaviour and attitude of the consumer of goods and services, to guide him and lead to the purchase of a particular product. The main purpose of products advertising, including food, is creating the awareness of products brand. This type of advertising exhibit the characteristics of products, its purpose, reliability, and everything

⁶ Zasady zrównoważonej gospodarki. Nauka Ekstra. Biblioteka Gazety Wyborczej, nr 13, 2011, s. 37.

⁷ <http://www.wos.org.pl>.

what points to the advantage of a product over the competitors⁸. Marketing and advertising activities of food companies have a significant impact on the person to whom they are addressed, as well as their surroundings. Under the influence of persuasion and intrusive ads societies are becoming more and more consumption oriented. Slogans induce the purchase of food products without prior thought. Advertising is intended to produce an purchasing impulse among consumers. Due to the harmful nature of certain advertising campaigns, there is a need to create sustainable advertising messages. Sustainable enterprises for which the environmental and social problems, including those relating to famine and malnutrition, are important, will certainly fail this type of advertising campaigns.

4. Countering the problems of food through the sustainable marketing communication

In order to counteract the food problems occurring in the world, marketing activities of enterprises in accordance with the concept of sustainable development, also known as constant development, should be conducted. V. Hauff citing the findings of the Brundtland Commission writes: “sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without the risk that future generations will not be able to satisfy their needs”⁹. A different definition of sustainable development was also formulated, recommended above all for the economy of sustainable development: “sustainable development aims to ensure that all people living today and future generations, sufficiently high environmental, economic and socio-cultural standards, within the limits of the natural strength of the Earth, applying the principle of intra-generational and intergenerational justice”¹⁰. Presented definitions point to take into consideration environmental and social aspects, which include inter alia the problem of world hunger.

Marketing as a driving force of the world economy is mainly accused of contributing to the creation of environmental and social problems. The aforementioned consumerism is, among other things, the result of increased business activity in the area of sales and promotion of consumer goods. In order to limit the negative trends leading to increased consumption, thereby contributing to the formation of food problems, companies should limit to the use of sustainable marketing communications.

Sustainable marketing communication (SMC) is defined as “messages and media directed to any of an organisation's stakeholders for the purpose of achieving the organisation's

⁸ Trojanowski T.: Promotion mix as a presentation tool for organic food in Poland. University of Presov, Faculty of Management, 2012, p. 314.

⁹ Hauff V.: Unsere gemeinsame Zukunft – Der Brundtland – Bericht der Weltkommission für Umwelt Entwicklung. Greven, 1987, S. 46.

¹⁰ Rogall H.: Ekonomia zrównoważonego rozwoju. Teoria i praktyka. Zysk i S-ka, Poznań 2010, s. 44.

marketing and sustainability objectives”¹¹. Marketing communication is sustainable to the extent that it meets the following conditions¹²:

- it contributes to triple-bottom-line value for the organisation, that is, it helps build financial, natural and human capital,
- it takes a whole-system perspective and considers all the organisation's legitimate stakeholder interests,
- it facilitates transparency, accountability and integrity in the organisation,
- it helps move an organisation forward with respect to the four conditions for sustainability as laid out in The Natural Step Framework.

Views on the sustainable marketing communication are also presented by F. Belz and K. Peattie. The authors write that sustainability marketing communications require a holistic perspective that integrates the deliberate promotional communication techniques of conventional marketing management, the interactive two-way communications approaches of relationship marketing and the open approach to disclosure about social and environmental performance that is associated with corporate social responsibility¹³.

The task of sustainable marketing messages is passive presentation of the product offering, which should contribute to making reasonable purchases of food products. Content of marketing messages should be characterised by responsibility, transparency, credibility, should indicate the harmony of values and educate consumers. The features of sustainable promotional messages are in conflict with traditional marketing messages calling for making big amount of food product purchases. The result of an excessive amount of purchases is to increase the profits of enterprises producing food. Sustainable marketing communication is one way of preventing food problems occurring in the world. Irrational purchasing of food as a consequence of persuasive and obnoxious marketing messages results in an uneven distribution of food products in the world.

Manufacturers may have some concerns and reservations regarding the development and implementation of sustainable marketing communications. D. Fuller says, however, that these fears are not justified. The mechanism of creation and implementing sustainable promotional programs is no different from the introduction of the traditional promotional messages. This mechanism consists in introducing an integrated marketing communications program, which focuses on specific recipients, includes realistic goals, presents relevant topics and information, and is cost-effective¹⁴.

Sustainable marketing communication is a combination of instruments of marketing impact on market participants, including consumers, using advertising, direct marketing, sales

¹¹ Martin D., Schouten J.: *Sustainable Marketing*. Pearson Education Inc., New Jersey 2012, p. 185.

¹² *Ibidem*, p. 185.

¹³ Belz F., Peattie K.: *Sustainability Marketing*. John Wiley & Sons, UK 2010, p. 193.

¹⁴ Fuller D.: *Sustainable Marketing*. Sage Publications Inc., California 1999, p. 264.

promotion, personal selling and public relations. Sustainable promotional messages have the following characteristics¹⁵:

- means of promotion (communication channels through which marketing message reaches the audience) and forms of promotion (means of messages in the medium) are environmental and society friendly,
- marketing messages promote the activities of companies that contribute to sustainable development,
- management of promotional activities (planning, organising, directing and control) is based on the principles of sustainable development.

Food industry companies by creating sustainable marketing communications can significantly contribute to preventing a serious social problem which is hunger and malnutrition. Rational marketing messages urging consumers to maintain sanity and moderation in purchasing, can significantly reduce the negative phenomenon of hunger in the world. Pressure of expanding market share that lies on manufacturers of various kinds of consumer goods, the desire to profit from the sale may not be the main purpose among food producers. The task of those who are responsible for the marketing activities of the company is to build marketing communication based on the altruistic, social, economic and environmental benefits, which constitute the fundament for sustainable development¹⁶.

Conclusions

Economic and technological development of societies, which takes place in the modern world, ignores the question concerning the problem of famine and malnutrition in poor regions of the world. One can get the impression that social problems such as poverty, hunger, poverty and exploitation are ignored and not given the proper attention. The desire for quick earnings and profits take precedence over social problems.

The problem of famine and malnutrition in the world have to be faced by all the inhabitants of the Earth. Solving this problem should involve not only the governments of different states, politicians or chairman of various social organisations, but primarily consumers themselves. On the behaviour of buyers of goods and services largely depends the reduction of negative phenomenon of famine. Changing consumer society into a sustainable society is a one way to reduce the number of hungry people in the world. In addition to changing the attitude of buyers, we should also pay attention to the use of freshwater resources. In some places and regions of the world water supplies are running out. H. Rogall

¹⁵ Pabian A.: Greenwashing i astroturfing. Zielona dezinformacja w działalności promocyjnej. „Marketing i Rynek”, nr 4, 2014, s. 106.

¹⁶ Emery B.: Sustainable Marketing. Pearson Education Limited, Edinburgh, 2012, p. 229.

indicates that 1.2-2 billion people have to function without clean drinking water. According to forecasts by the UNEP (United Nations Environment Programme) in 2025 three-quarters of humanity will be living in regions affected by water scarcity. Therefore, we have to reckon with a marked decline in yields and seriousness of the problem of famine¹⁷.

Bibliography

1. Belz F., Peattie K.: Sustainability Marketing. John Wiley & Sons, UK 2010.
2. Emery B.: Sustainable Marketing. Pearson Education Limited, Edinburgh 2012.
3. Fierli I. (red.): Geografia gospodarcza świata. PWE, Warszawa 2003.
4. Fuller D.: Sustainable Marketing. Sage Publications, Inc., California 1999.
5. Hauff V.: Unsere gemeinsame Zukunft – Der Brundtland – Bericht der Weltkommission für Umwelt Entwicklung. Greven, 1987.
6. Martin D., Schouten J.: Sustainable Marketing. Pearson Education Inc., New Jersey 2012.
7. Pabian A.: Greenwashing i astroturfing. Zielona dezinformacja w działalności promocyjnej. „Marketing i Rynek”, nr 4, 2014.
8. Rogall H.: Ekonomia zrównoważonego rozwoju. Teoria i praktyka. Zysk i S-ka, Poznań 2010.
9. Trojanowski T.: Promotion mix as a presentation tool for organic food in Poland. University of Presov, Faculty of Management, 2012.
10. Zasady zrównoważonej gospodarki. Nauka Ekstra. Biblioteka Gazety Wyborczej, nr 13, 2011.
11. <http://www.edueko.pl>.
12. <http://www.wos.org.pl>.

¹⁷ Rogall H.: op.cit., s. 502.