

## **HOW CAN CONSUMERS BE PERSUADED TO PAY MORE THROUGH NEUROMARKETING**

**MIHAI ALIN ANGHEL \***

**ABSTRACT:** *The article aims to analyze how NLP can change consumer behavior, by using Cleopatra technique. The purpose of the case study is to analyze the strategies used by the service staff to influence consumers' behavior through Cleopatra technique. For this, the following specific objectives were set: describing the behavior adopted by the staff, directly linked to the technique mentioned above (SO1); identifying consumer perceptions about their experience in Hard Rock Cafe, regarding the staff's influence (SO2); analyzing quantitative and qualitative variables to validate or invalidate the efficiency of Cleopatra technique (SO3). Following the research, the conclusion was that reversing the informational flow to stimulate a person to gain total trust in a new company or product, leads them to believe that the offer is something they wish or need in their life.*

**KEY WORDS:** *consumer, behaviour, maker, price, Cleopatra technique, NLP.*

**JEL CLASSIFICATION:** *M390, M290.*

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Concerns about explaining consumer behavior arise especially during the postmodern era when thanks to the expansion of the sales market and the increased access to consumer goods, there is a need for effective identification and use of new communication methods and techniques to facilitate sales growth. In this regard, the explanations referring to the process of directing consumer behavior towards an increase of consumption, are given by psychology, sociology, mathematics, anthropology, economy and so on. Therefore, many authors have analyzed the buying process from the perspective of consumer behavior in relation to certain factors, identified both at the individual level and the level of the environment in which the individual lives. Again, numerous authors have set up various series of classifications, structured in several dimensions: cultural, social, psychological, economic.

---

\* Ph.D. Student, Academy of Economical Studies, Romania, [anghel.a.mihai@gmail.com](mailto:anghel.a.mihai@gmail.com)

The cultural paradigm of consumer behavior places the explanation on the following indicators: habits, values, standards and symbols, stereotypes, prejudices, etc, which are perceived according to certain situational contexts in which an individual, group of people or even one organization can find itself in.

In this framework, Hofstede [2011] explains that people develop a social life influenced by certain characteristics of the social space in which they live. According to Hofstede [1996], culture is "the collective programming of the ways of thinking, which distinguishes a group's members from another group's members", and is defined by the following dimensions: distance from power, individualism, masculinity, avoidance of uncertainty and long-term orientation. Social dimensions refer to the marketing macro environment, represented by family, school, social status or organization. From the above, the family is the most influential variable in consumer behaviour.

From both a general and complex perspective of the acquisition process, that a person makes with paroxysmal seriousness, the consumer is simply recognized as an individual who "uses or consumes the product" [Kotler & Armstrong, 1999]. The psychological paradigm integrates the descriptive elements of psychological processes and functions with a regulating role in the behavior and attitudes of individuals in single or collective consumption contexts. It is assumed that psychological factors identify as endogenous variables that explain consumer behaviour [Blyte, 1998]. The marketing process places the explanation around the consideration of psychological factors as agents of consumer behavior changes. In this context, Lindstrom (2011, p. 9) determines that "in the last half of the 20th century, traders and marketers had two ways to examine the effectiveness of their approaches. The first was sales tracking. What do people buy and what can we learn from their purchasing patterns? I call this approach the perspective behind the cash register.

The problem is that this method validates victories and failures without giving explanations. Basically, why these things happen. In other words, it seems that the world has bought Jif peanut butter, although there were discounts on Skippy.". The economic paradigm puts the explanation around micro and macroeconomic theories, so it is thought that the two sectors, both together and separately, manage to influence or even shape consumer behavior. From the microeconomic point of view, the economic factors refer to the purchasing capacity of the company at a certain point in time and have an extremely high contribution to the formation of the purchasing behaviour.

The multidisciplinary approach to the consumer behavior philosophy has led to the emergence of new scientific fields that provide extensive and complex explanations for the factors that influence decisional behavior in the sales process, such as neuromarketing, an ever-changing, interdisciplinary field. Neuroscience offers today many explanations regarding the mechanisms underlying human behaviors and are directed or induced in various fields such as education, marketing, medicine, politics, communication, etc. Although it has undergone numerous critical analyses of efficiency or morality, researchers have run a considerable number of analyzes that have demonstrated that an instrument can have the desired achievements directly proportional to the goals set prior to the experiments.

Neuromarketing is on the border between three key areas: neuroscience, psychology and marketing. Various methods such as the electrocardiogram (EEG), transcranial magnetic stimulation (TMS), magnetoencephalography (MEG), and perhaps the most commercially recognized, resonance imaging, are used in data monitoring, analyzing and "translation" functional magnetic field (IRMf). The purpose of these methods is to analyze and capture in a graphic way the electrical and metabolic activities of the human brain, to identify changes in brain waves as a result of triggering emotion generating mechanisms which, in turn, may install under different conditions as a result of the action of an internal or external factor of the human organism [Zuidgeest, 2017]. Neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) is a branch that ultimately translates the emotional experiences that a consumer has.

## **2. CONSUMER BEHAVIOR FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF NEUROMARKETING. THE ROLE OF EMOTIONS**

"We have learned more about the human brain in the last 15 years than in all of our previous human history, and the mind, once considered as impossible to understand, is finally at a clear point" [Kaku, 2014]. The aim of neuromarketing is to understand whether a consumer manages to pay attention to advertising campaigns and whether they impact their final decisions [Dooley, 2012]. In the process of understanding neuromarketing and consumer behavior, the general explanations return to a commonplace, which is to meet needs. However, scientific research has shown that the needs perceived by the one who makes the offer are often misunderstood and confused with the willingness of the seller to have a specific need, specifically prepared in advance by the offeror.

The questions that often appear in creating advertising campaigns are: Do we manage to do everything in an honest and helpful way for the consumer? The actions we take will succeed without hurting the customer? Do we help the consumer to buy a product that he will not regret in the future? If the answers to these questions are negative or vague, then the ethics of neuromarketing is violated. [...] reality shows that an ad campaign essentially has little impact. Promoting a product or service that is good for a consumer is not a query for neuromarketing but for advertising. In the end, it is essential to find the answer to the question: Is my product the priority need of a consumer accompanied by the service provided by me? This is the question for neuromarketing, whose answer may appear scarcely in research [Conick, 2018].

Neuromarketing is a field that grows and affects the population in all commercial ways, whether we are talking about private or governmental organizations. The importance of the neuromarketing domain derives from the need to "improve the way in which companies create products and market them to make them more interesting, attractive and valuable to consumers" [Bichis D, 2016]. The virtual non-existence of the present, as a philosophical foundation, is described by Pascal [2008] as follows: "we never think of the present, and when we do, it is just to see what light throws on our plans for the future.". The man, in his conception, rationalizes emotions to meet his needs. In probably the best and most correct way to translate the concept of

reasoning, it can be said that it consists in decision making and the essence of each decision has the purpose of choosing a response option.

The interchangeability of reasoning and decision-making is so obvious that Philip Johnson-Laird's [2008] words will remain eternally immortal: "to decide, think; to think, reason; to reason, decide (on which thing to react to)". Forming preferences is a complex issue because it is subjective. It involves emotions, it is driven by implicit processes, and it changes depending on the context of a situation. However, scientific researchers try to predict the preferences and challenges people have, trying to further understand the decision-making mechanisms in the minds of consumers [Bhushan, 2012].

The process of decision-making is, in most cases, clearly delineated according to the emotional impact (positive or negative) through which a situation causes a reaction to the action manifested on us. When, for example, the glycemic level decreases and the neurons present in the hypothalamus notice the decline, an immediate action follows in a very clear response: the hunger appears and the brain urges the body to eat. Once the person meets the scenario, the brain is accustomed to tightly correlate the challenging stimulus with the most beneficial answer. Thus, the brain develops strategies for selecting responses in order to be able to use this link whenever it is needed, and in the future, the response will come automatically, involuntarily and rapidly [Damasio, 2005]. According to the explanations given by neuroscientist Martin Lindstrom [2011], the images in the neuronal mirror of humans are often delimited by their own vision of the consequences of an action. The decision to love or forgive someone proves the last theorem of Fermat [Weisstein, 2004], that shows very clearly the delimitation between what constitutes practical reason and pure reason.

In agreement with the analysis, rationalizing a situation and making a decision are difficult processes for a person and occur most often in personal life and its immediate social context. The different reactions that a person can have towards the same situation, depending on whether that particular situation happens to them or a close one, shows how calculating an outcome is different when there is no emotional or passionnal connection.

This philosophy appeared in ancient Rome where, during the time of Julius Caesar and Cleopatra, weddings were formalized with the phrase "Ubi tu Gaius, ego Gaia - where you will be Gaius, I will be Gaia" [Preston, 2015]. This Roman declaration, which was the foundation stone between a man and a woman, forced that relationship to be eternal. Although it was a Roman tradition, Cleopatra used this technique to influence Caesar to support her military in the civil war in Ancient Egypt between her army and her brother and husband's army, Ptolemy, in order to rule together in Egypt. Perhaps this was the moment when the technique of structured influence in the rational, emotional and social order was created.

### **3. SOMATIC MARKER HYPOTHESIS**

In the opinion of marketers, somatic markers are "a particular example of feelings generated by secondary emotions. These emotions and feelings were tied, by learning, to the predictable future outcomes of certain scenarios. Upon overlapping a

negative somatic marker over a certain outcome in the future, the combination works as an alarm signal. Conversely, when a positive somatic marker is overlaid, it becomes a stimulus [Damasio, 2005]. In all the decision-making processes that people face on a daily basis, somatic markers can have three types of occurrences: alarm signals, stimuli and shadow actions. The latter uses an "as if" loop. An important aspect to remember is that the somatic marker will never make a decision instead of a person. It has a strict role to help by highlighting features, whatever their nature may be, and quickly eliminating them from future considerations. In a more precise context, the somatic marker can be an automatic evaluation system that weighs heavily on shaping the near future after making a decision [Damasio, 2005].

The existence of the somatic marker is synonymous or compatible with the presence of personal behavior that persuades a person to create certain theories about his own mind and of those around him. This overall general exposure is also applicable over the choice of actions whose immediate consequences are negative, but which ultimately produce positive results [Damasio, 2005]. In essence, a present sacrifice is a loss or a negative effect, but it can lead to a later or long-term benefit. Although in the beginning, the somatic marker triggers an alarm signal, the stimulus may be much more intense and can help the person to accept the option. For example, accepting wage cuts in a time of economic crisis, in order to keep the job, can be a stimulus strong enough to not have a high level of regret. The immediate outlook is negative, but the thought of an advantage or benefit in the future creates a positive somatic marker that completely cancels out the tendency to decide against the immediate painful option.

This phenomenon can be noticed in every life aspect, for example when we are talking about accepting ten difficult years in the medical school while having the perspective of becoming a doctor. A clearer explanation of the reason why people often have different conclusions about the same subject is due to the key components that are happening instantly, schematically, structured, and rapidly in our minds. Every action that prompts a person to pay a cost (financial or emotional) involves calculating the benefit. Before choosing an answer to a problem, projections of possible negative outcomes may occur. This situation generates a relatively unpleasant sensation. Considering the possibility of a negative outcome and the sensorial trace that this effect leaves on a person, the effect is called the somatic marker [Damasio, 2005]. By acting as an alarm signal, the somatic marker draws our attention whenever we are making a choice that results in a negative result.

The idea of a financial investment in a business is perfect until the possibility of losing the money also appears. It may also be very common a situation in which the signal transmitted by the somatic marker is strong enough that the person is convinced to choose another option, so they can choose the lesser evil of an action. The cost-benefit analysis is still topical even when facing a situation with a possible negative conclusion. This analysis will be carried out only after the number of options has been drastically reduced. When the options have been brought to a clear and finite number, the somatic marker automatically increases the accuracy and efficiency of the decision-making process. The absence of the somatic marker only reduces them [Damasio, 2005].

## 4. METHODS OF PERSUASION AND INFLUENCE

Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (IRMf) is a tool that is increasingly used in researching and analyzing neuronal reactions when a person comes into contact with a stimulus from the outside environment. Functional Connectivity (FC) is a very variable feature, being placed in a very fast and changing time scale, depending on the stimuli to which a person can react. This view, repeated repeatedly by neuropsychological technicians, has transformed the psychological activity into understanding human psychic processes as tools of use to conviction and even consumer persuasion [Valsasina, 2019]. This view, repeated on countless occasions by neuropsychological technicians, has transformed the psychological activity of understanding human psychic processes as tools that can be used to convince and even persuade consumers [Valsasina, 2019].

The field of neuro-linguistic programming attracts more and more researchers who have identified and explained communication methods based on persuasion and manipulation processes, called Metaprograms [Charvet, 2019]. Meta-programs are used by Charvet in a general system called Lab Profile, open to new techniques applicable in various contexts.

Objective performance is mostly influenced by the quality of the offer, rather than promises made before or during the making of that offer. Relational marketing demonstrates how the presence of communication relationships or engagement in a social context is much more important in service provision or in proposing to join a new market. When relationships are built with a single person and not with an impersonal message representing a company, the consumer is prone to create, subjectively, a positive emotion towards the entire company. Therefore, if a representative of a company has the attitude of presenting itself to the customer instead of the company, thus generating the feeling that in that communication the only thing that matters is the employee-client relationship, the consumer attributes this positive emotion to the entire company, assigning that opinion of the employee to the whole company [Palmatier, 2006].

### 4.1. Cleopatra Technique

In the research and modeling of the consumer behavior, some elements from the Meta Programs of Lab Profile are connected. This research proposes that the new behavioral analysis model to be named the “Cleopatra Technique” (after the name of Ancient Egypt’s queen who has conducted negotiations with Julius Caesar during the Civil War). She has realized a negotiation process based on empowering the emotional component, recognized in the NLP literature in the category of Meta Programs. In essence, Cleopatra refers to reversing the informational flux in order to stimulate a person to gain total trust in a stranger (which adapted to the modern world can be correlated to gaining trust into a company or product). The Cleopatra Technique approaches firstly the rational part of the brain, switching then to the emotional part and ending up to the side of the brain which is in charge with the needs of a person (keeping the last one at the end specifically to make respondent understand its importance).

When talking about an influence system, whether it is in the commercial sphere or in the organizational one, it is very important to identify the subjects of the communication and separate them. By observing a standard communication, there will always be an emitter and a receptor. If, by taking one example, the emitter has the purpose of selling a product or he just wants the receptor to accept his offer, in 80% of all attempts the emitter will face the same obstacle: receptor will be declining the offer. However, the emitter has the duty to adapt his sale methods by using Neuro Linguistic Programming techniques, because in most cases it is not possible to use an EEG helmet to read the receptor's mind.

From most of the conducted surveys, researchers have analyzed very carefully the parts where consumers explained, or even detailed why they refused the offer. No matter if we talk about the selling of electronic devices, transport services or a job offer, people end up saying that they weren't convinced by that offer. In other words, they have brought in sight the lack of the most important emotion in human communication: trust. If we talk about a person, a company, a brand or a governmental institution, the achievement of having trust is the key to opening the door for consumer towards a product or service. To create a connection and to be possible to set up trust between emitter and receptor, it is necessary for some steps to be taken in order for the process to have a positive outcome.

The information flux inside the human brain has been analyzed for many years from one point of view. As medical researchers discovered, the human is the only being on Earth that has three brains which work simultaneously. These three brains are the Cerebellum (Reptilian Brain – In charge with basic needs), Paleocortex (Emotional Brain), Neocortex (Rational Brain). Cerebellum, recognized in NLP – reptilian brain, represents the starting point. While presenting various biological responsibilities like breathing, sleeping or stocking memories, it has 5 main general characteristics of activity: food (needs to find food to function), water (needs to hydrate to live), survival (needs to find shelter and identify threats), reproduction (needs to have offspring for the species to live on), social relations (needs to be part of a group or community to evolve). Paleocortex, or the Limbic System, is the brain that receives information through neurons from the Cerebellum and transforms it into an emotion. This is the place where the famous effect of Fight, Flight or Freeze is created. Depending on the type of event people are exposed to, the reason for why they present joy, fear, love, disappointment is because of the Emotional Brain. In the left hemisphere the Amygdala is responsible with all negative emotions.

In the right hemisphere, Nucleus Accumbens, known as the center of desire, is the place where all positive emotions are created. Once the emotional process is finished, the information is being received by neurons and transported further. Neocortex is the rational brain that is receiving information sent by Paleocortex and has the responsibility to find a way of dealing with emotional information and transforming it into rational thought. The bigger the emotion, the more questions the rational brain starts to ask, because an unanswered question is like an unsolved puzzle, a fact that is unacceptable for the Neocortex. That is why if a positive emotion, like the desire of buying a product or starting a new love relationship, is not satisfied, it first acts like a positive somatic marker, stimulating the person. However, the Paleocortex waits for the final answer from

Neocortex and if that need is not met or doesn't have an answer, the Emotional Brain send negative feelings like disappointment or sadness, which leads people to take unfortunate decisions, going even to the extent of giving up on that desire.

The brain activity can be simplified and translated as following: Step 1 – Reptilian brains emits a need (I am hungry). Step 2: Paleocortex takes that information and transforms it into an emotion (I would eat a hamburger). Step 3: Neocortex receives that emotion and transforms it into a rational thought (I will go to McDonalds). Looking through the eyes of the receptor, life is simple, every person is having this information flux every day. Things are not that easy when looking through the eyes of the emitter or the salesperson. The reason why that specific sale is or becomes very hard to close is because of the lack of pre-sale preparation. Since a very young age, people are familiar with the demand – offer formula, therefore the somatic marker is highly active from the first second people recognize that someone is trying to sell them a product or service. Even if we talk about childhood period, when relatives promise to the child that if he cleans his room (demand), he will receive something very nice in return (offer).

In everything that human communication represents, the demand – offer report is and will always remain the reference point, because humans are complex beings that are seeking simple solutions. However, the biggest problems an emitter has in a sale process is underestimating the receptor and telling him directly that he needs that specific product or service. Jordan Belfort [2017], recognized on a global scale as the "Wolf of Wall Street", specifies in his book "Way of the Wolf", the fact that the receptor will accept an offer he receives, if he will be the one deciding if he needs that product or he needs that specific sales person to offer a product or service. This need will only come if the receptor will have trust in whoever is making the selling.

NLP founders Richard Bandler and John Grinder recall at each seminar the importance of giving the person with whom you communicate the time needed to process the information, no matter how simple it may be. With a more passionate vision, Bandler reinforces the argument that it is more important to carefully choose the verbs you use in questions, while Grinder, which is the mathematical mind behind the NLP, suggests that the first step is to set the order of questions for getting the desired and anticipated results. Following the numerous studies made by the above mentioned, over the past 10 years, many followers of the NLP practices have emerged, who have created the emotional translation systems. From Roger Bailey's Meta programs and Rose Charvet's Lab Profile system to David Snyder's emotional manipulation, studied, developed and named by the author as "Cleopatra Technique." Snyder, an NLP master and psychologist has discovered in his research of the human brain that for a manipulation to be successful, it should be applied in the reverse direction of the information flow of the three human brains. If the normal process is need - emotion - reason, we want, from the point of view of the seller, that our product or service becomes a need (because a need is placed in the cerebellum and it is forever memorized).

In other words, the buyer has to come to the conclusion that he needs a product/service to buy it. The same system is applicable whether we are talking about a new method of teaching of a professor or the desire to approach a stranger to make them fall in love with the emitter / vendor in a 5-minute conversation and accept the offer without judging the consequences. Therefore, the Cleopatra technique succeeds in neutralizing

the somatic markers through the willingness of the consumer / consumer to trust the person they communicate with. The three brains respond to questions or comments that concern only their areas of expertise. To be successful, the neocortex must be the first brain stimulated with rational information, the paleocortex with emotional details, ending with the cerebellum, where it is necessary for the respondent to access the box of his own memory and to share that thought. The most important factor is that the Cleopatra technique is the way to gain the full trust of the correspondent, so in a 5-minute conversation or less. there should be no information about the sale that the emitter wants to do. The Cleopatra technique is divided into 3 branches, one for each brain.

The first two (rational and emotional) are also divided into two steps that must be covered. The reptilian brain branch has only one step that depends 100% on the conversational evolution up to that point. The neocortex should be approached with the question "What?" covering the Location-Situation. If that conversation takes place face-to-face, the branch called "Location" is not approached. If the conversation is carried on the phone or online, it is necessary to specify the location even if it is obvious. The way this branch is put into motion is by directly asking where the person is or was and what the purpose of the visit was. Although it may seem very clear why the person is in that place and what his goals are, the vendor's specification stimulates the rational brain of the possible buyer.

The Neocortex does not have a previous emotion to process, on the contrary, it finds itself in front of questions that may seem simple and lacking any load that may seem dangerous. After the receiver answers the two questions, the transmitter makes the transition to the second branch, the emotional one. The Paleocortex responds to the question "How?", deciphering and inducing that the original reason for the presence of the receiver in that place comes from a hobby and passion (Step 2) that he also has. Therefore, the answers given from the questions related to the Location / Situation will be interpreted as the possible existence of a constant hobby with an activity in that place and which may have produced a passion that makes that person to have a passion related to that activity. Although there are companies or areas of activity where it can be said that it is difficult, if not impossible, to develop a hobby or passion for that industry, NLP demonstrates that if the idea is correctly framed, it is very easy for someone to have such a passion, or be induced to have it. After the transmitter receives his answers for the emotional branch, he passes into the final stage, the reptilian brain. The cerebellum has many important features, mentioned above, but when referring to the Cleopatra technique, we will just mention some of the most important ones.

The Reptilian Brain is responsible for storing memories, creating needs and developing social relationships. These 3 important functions are crucial to finish the Cleopatra technique. The cerebellum answers the question "When?" Therefore, the transmitter will have to ask if the receiver assimilates that passion previously specified with a beautiful childhood memory. If things have gone so far, so good, the receiver is in a comfortable mental state because it has channeled his thoughts from a rational neutral reaction to a positive emotion (willing to share a passion) and can now relate everything to a beautiful childhood moment. When the person begins to tell the memory, the transmitter knows that at that moment he won the person and, very likely, the future

offer. This is explained by the fact that when the receiver gets into his memory, the reptilian brain is active, therefore his needs are open, especially those social needs.

Due to the fact that the receiver was able to open up even to a stranger, in a positive emotional state, with the center of needs open and eager for growth, the cerebellum will insert the person in the category of people with whom he enjoys having conversations. Because he feels joy when talking to this person and can easily tell him personal details and even stories from his childhood, for the receiver, the interlocutor has become so pleasant that he wants to repeat the experience because he feels he can trust that person.

Cleopatra's technique succeeds in neutralizing the somatic markers and bypassing a person's protective shield rather than penetrating it.

## **5. CASE STUDY. BEHAVIOURS AND ATTITUDES OF THE CONSUMERS BY USING THE CLEOPATRA TECHNIQUE.**

The purpose of the case study: to analyse the consumers' behavior influencing strategies used by staff employed to serve clients at a coffee shop based on the use of Cleopatra technique.

Specific objectives:

SO1: Description of the behavior adopted by the service personnel in the context of having specific behaviors that are subject to the Cleopatra technique variables.

SO2: Identifying the Consumer Perceptions of the Hard Rock Cafe Experience based on how the staff of the coffee shop behaved.

SO3: Analysis of the quantitative and qualitative results to confirm or invalidate the effectiveness of the Cleopatra technique.

Research hypotheses:

I1. There is a link between products, prices and services in choosing a specific cafeteria.  
I2: There is a direct correlation between products, prices, services and the somatic markers.

I3: The Service Pattern confirms the presence of Meta Programs as a means of influencing the final price paid by consumers.

I4: Language Programs influence the consumers' decision of how much they need to pay with up to 30% more than they need.

Operationalization of concepts:

- Independent variables: somatic markers
- Dependent variables: consumer decision-making,
- Type of research: qualitative and quantitative.
- Research methods: questionnaire-based survey and direct participatory observation and structured interview.
- Research Tools: Structured Interview Grid, Observation Sheet, Structured Quiz Questionnaire.

Analysis and recording unit:

- Analysis Unit: Consumer Group, Clients of Hard Rock Cafe.
- Recording unit: the consumers with ages between 18 and 50 years.

Summary: Hard Rock Cafe, coffee shop that most people visit more for its food and concerts than for its coffee. It entered the Romanian market in 2008 and it is also on an upward trend in 2019, in 2017 managing to reach a turnover of 4 Million Euros. Being in a fierce competition with places such as McDonald's or the Ikea Restaurant, Hard Rock Cafe offers an experience that is as simple as it is important. Employee services may seem normal if their communication methods are not listened carefully as soon as one enters the café. From the point of view of the philosophy of the organization, the company wants customers to order more, but also more expensive products, and waiters want to get the maximum possible tip. In view of these two matters, the company sets much higher prices than similar competitors, leaving the rest of the responsibilities with the employees who come in direct contact with customers.

By making a simple comparison between Hard Rock Cafe and McDonald's, we can compare two types of burgers that the two places offer. McDonald's comes with a Big Mac proposal at a price of nearly 10RON, while Hard Rock Cafe proposes an Original Legendary Burger at a value of nearly 55RON.

Considering the extremely high prices that they offer, with some products even at 500% difference, Hard Rock Cafe still has an upward trend in sales. If we have in mind the fact that the opening of the cafe at the beginning of the World Economic Crisis, I believe it can be said that they have found the recipe for success and customer retention.

### **5.1. Analysis and research results interpreting**

The direct participatory observation allowed the snapshot of behaviors of consumers and service staff. During the first interaction with the first employee, the customer is approached warmly with the phrase "Welcome to Hard Rock Café" - this approach touches in just 5 simple words the first step of the first branch, the Location. The conversation continues with information about the existence or non-existence of the reservation (Situation). Although it seems like a discussion that takes place in any location with a similar field of activity, it is all part of a more complex strategy that will be detailed below. After the customer had the chance to go through the menu, the waiter comes to the table, but makes certain gestures specific to this café.

Some waiters choose to lower their body next to the table, so they are at the same level as the customer, others lean on the wall, or even sit on one of the free chairs at the table. Such gestures are meant to create to the consumer a warm feeling regarding the waiter. In fact, the waiter emphasizes in the clients' mind the "Location" in order to continue the style of the conversation that started at the entrance or even to reset it. Once he finds his place, the waiter says he came to take the order, stressing once again the "Situation." At times, when the waiter feels he could influence the order with opinions and recommendations, he starts to ask questions about what the customer prefers to eat and then he offers some options. This is done exactly for trying to get the customer to order a meal that the customer consumes more often, no matter where he's eating.

The convenience of ordering something familiar triggers positive emotions, a contextual hobby in a café and the passion of having something familiar and safe. For those who are trying something new, it's the same. There is a habit of risk and a passion to experience, which the waiter can identify and work with. Psychologically, such a

moment increases the amount of endorphins, dopamine and serotonin. In other words, the client gets happier. The Cleopatra technique stops here, initially. The customer pays the bill and, depending on the quality of the services and products, leaves a tip or not.

Shortly after visiting the place, customers receive an email asking for feedback, starting with asking how beautiful or pleasant the experience was at the café. From another perspective, the way of asking the questions and the choice of verbs in the questions suggests very subtly that the experience was beautiful, all that remains to do for customers is to declare how much they liked it. This method succeeds in convincing many consumers that their emotional state was a very good one, and they even begin to convince themselves that the visit to the café had a better quality than others, although it may not be so. The results of the Cleopatra technique are seen at the second visit of the customers they pay to Hard Rock Cafe.

*Conclusion:* Cleopatra technique, applied in the long run, influences the experience of the customers when they visit the place. This confirms the research hypothesis (I1) that "There is a link between products, prices and services in choosing a specific café-like place."

The quantitative research aims to identify the factors that determine the decision-making process. The method used to generate the NLP questionnaire, which follows "How" consumers respond and not "What," the research will be done using the constant sum scale based on the mechanical step. Following the quantitative analysis, 60 consumers of the Hard Rock Cafe coffee shop were questioned, and 43 forms could be considered eligible to be processed. The results of the questionnaire showed 60% out of the total of 43 forms were female and that 70% of the respondents are aged between 23 and 40 years.

As the average age group places the respondents in the adult group, it has made it possible to have a neutral evaluation of Hard Rock Cafe's competitors because customers have admitted that they have also visited competing venues. Following the analysis of the questionnaires, research reveals what is the order of importance for the consumers' satisfaction in a Hard Rock Cafe-like location: services, products, prices, in that specific order. Therefore, respondents are prone to choose a place if the services are satisfactory and if the products are of good quality. Depending on the budget, the price is last, in most cases. In view of this first analysis, Objective 1 "Is there a link between products, prices and services in choosing a café-like location?" is confirmed and the research can continue.

The second part of the questionnaire analysis is aimed to verify the existence of a link between products, prices or services and the existence of somatic markers in the decision-making process. Considering the responses received, respondents said that although other venues have very good products at affordable prices, services are of poor quality. So, the decision was to look for other places. Instead, referring to Hard Rock Cafe, they mentioned that although prices are much higher than their competition, services and products are of high quality and that they are determined to come back.

This demonstrates that Hard Rock Cafe's services and products have become an incentive to return to the café. Therefore, both negative and positive somatic markers are confirmed. Consequently, the second objective of the quantitative research "Does the correlation of products, prices and services confirms or invalidates the hypothesis of

somatic markers?" is confirmed. In the third part of the questionnaire evaluation, the objective was to research and identify the Meta Programs and, if they exist, if they influence or not the consumer decision making in the process of making the final payment.

Having in the questionnaire the typology of structured responses as a response method based on the mechanical step, the statistical calculation of the results showed that the responses responds especially to the Lab Profile system, which originates from the Meta Programs. Moving forward with the analysis, research has shown that the main reason for which consumers decide to pay large amounts of money, superior to the final bill, is due to the special services offered by Hard Rock Cafe. No matter what services the consumers refer to, the fact that they ranked first in terms of importance shows that verbal and non-verbal language, as well as the constant attitude of employees, have the most important factor in the process decision-making. Therefore, "The Service Pattern confirms the presence of Meta Programs as a way of influencing the final price paid by consumers and the cycle of experience is caused by the Cleopatra technique.

Even if the first three hypotheses of quantitative research have been confirmed, the research wanted has assessed the satisfaction evaluation versus the importance of products, prices and services, to discover the link between the impact of emotional reactions on the final price offered by the consumer. It has been proven through a bi-dimensional matrix that the services occupy a superior position both in terms of importance, but also in terms of satisfaction in terms of time consumed and products at the Hard Rock Cafe café. Therefore, having been fully satisfied with the criterion of the highest importance (services), consumers have come to the conclusion that the tip they have to leave should be higher than the one they would offer in other places, which adds up, on average, to a tip between 15% and 30% of the bill. To explain the effects of coffee shoppers' behaviors on their consumers, the research in question aims to investigate customers' opinion through in-depth interviews, on the perception of the importance they place on employees' services.

The size of the question "How?" is a very important component because, here, the process described in NLP context comes in place, that can interpret and, eventually, explain the final reactions. In-depth interviews were conducted with people who are consumers of Hard Rock Café's services. It is important to note that interviewees were informed about the purpose of the investigation and that confidentiality regarding data was ensured. The research was conducted with types of phrasing such as: "Subject A, Subject B, Subject C, etc.". The investigation also pursued the way respondents recognize the determining factors that lead to the payment of considerably higher amounts of money than in other locations, and whether verbal and non-verbal languages were a factor influencing the final decision of consumers in relation to the price of the final offer marked on the tax bill.

The analysis and interpretation of the results from the in-depth interviews was done through the method of hypothesis decoding (I2) and the selection of the answers according to their frequency. Regarding the factors influencing the prioritization of Hard Rock Cafe at the expense of other venues, the respondents considered that the services provided by local employees produced the incentive necessary to choose the café over other competitors. With regards to the perceived price of the product compared to similar

products offered by competitors, respondents believe that prices are much higher but directly proportional to the services and products found in Hard Rock Cafe, which gives more satisfaction. Employee attitude is also perceived as the main differentiator in the market.

The previous experiences have influenced the consumer's subsequent behavior, the respondents appreciating that the services have triggered the return to the café, which confirms the hypothesis of the somatic makers. Following the interview, the surveyed respondents said that at the second visit they left a higher tip, up with about 30% compared to the first visit. Curiously, most have visited the site often before the questioning, which leads the author's analysis to interpret these answers as fables of their own consumer imagination. Being hard to believe that most people remember the tip they left in the past, they can connect their experience in the cafe changing their own perception of what they have done by imagining what decisions they would have taken now if he had just paid the bill. Therefore, it is easy to understand that the tip has existed and even in a high amount, over the 10% that are usually paid in restaurants from Romania. With an average of answers, it can be estimated that the average of the tip is about 20% of the total value of the bill. In conclusion, we can appreciate that there is a direct correlation between products, prices, services and the somatic markers, which confirms the I2 hypothesis of the research.

The results of the investigation allow us to consider the following factors that influence consumer behavior (SO2): high quality and differentiation of services in the market, correlation of price level with the quality of products offered. This, in the context of the I3 hypothesis, supports the explanation that "the service pattern confirms the presence of the Meta Programs as a way of influencing the final price paid by consumers."

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

C1: The results of the quantitative analysis have generated considerable insights into the ratio between the importance of service quality in terms of an emotional impact on the consumer, and the client's decision to provide a better net final amount than that offered in a local competitor of Hard Rock Cafe. Therefore, the connection between the emotional experience triggered by the attitude of Hard Rock Cafe employees expressed through Cleopatra Technique and the final financial decision taken by the consumer choosing to pay up to 30% more is confirmed.

C2: The conclusions of the in-depth interview were extremely enlightening about the consumers' attitudes and reactions. Drawing an axis of knowing the details of the local vs. perceived prices, consumers were keen to pay more after the experience with the local staff. The price-quality ratio is considered a clear and desirable threshold in the light of the fact that prices are correct for products that, although like other places, are accompanied by a totally different and refreshing service. Consumer responses were revealing, and research has shown the link between non-verbal communication and its influence on methods of purchasing, consumption and monetary reward.

C3: Conclusions of the case study: Cleopatra's technique worked in terms of the positive reaction of consumers to the services provided by Hard Rock Cafe employees

and is likely to create loyalty. Therefore, if there is a concert in the café and the ticket prices are high, it is very possible that the event is sold out (which happens every time). In 2017, Hard Rock Cafe had a number of 100 concerts, meaning that the café had concert every 4 days.

C4: Neuromarketing is an attractive and revolutionary field in providing explanations about the consumer's behavioral process. Certain techniques with which it operates have explanations derived from the mechanisms of human neurophysiology. The Cleopatra technique can successfully explain consumer behavior. Within this framework, providing and transmitting different stimuli with cortical / impulsive sensitivity facilitates the induction of objectively behaved behaviors according to the seller's requests.

## REFERENCES:

- [1]. **Belfort, J.** (2017) *Way of the wolf*. London, available on-line at Hodder & Stoughton General Division
- [2]. **Bhushan, V.; Saha, G.; Lidsen, J.; Shimojo, S.; Bhattacharya, J.** (2012) *How we choose one over another: predicting trial-by-trial preference decision*, available online at <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0043351>
- [3]. **Charvet, S.** (2019) *Words that Change Minds*: Institute of Influence
- [4]. **Conick, H.** (2018) *What are the ethics of Neuromarketing?*, available on-line at <https://www.ama.org/marketing-news/what-are-the-ethics-of-neuromarketing/>
- [5]. **Damasio, A.** (2005) *Eroarea lui Descartes*. Bucureşti: Humanitas.
- [6]. **Dragolea, L.; Cotirlea, D.** (2011) *Neuromaketing – between influence and manipulation*, Polish Journal of Management Studies, p. 79-89
- [7]. **Dooley, R.** (2012) *Brain influence: 100 ways to Persuade and Convince Consumers with Neuromarketing*, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons Inc.
- [8]. **Hofstede, G.** (1996) *Managementul structurilor multicultural*. Bucharest: Economică.
- [9]. **Hofstede, G.** (2011) *Dimensionalizing Cultures: The Hofstede Model in Context*. Online Readings in Psychology and Culture, 2(1)
- [10]. **Kaku, M.** (2014) *The Future of the Mind*, New York: Doubleday
- [11]. **Hostede, G.** (2011) *Dimensionalizing Cultures: The Hofstede Model in Context*. Online Readings in Psychology and Culture <https://doi.org/10.9707/2307-0919.1014>
- [12]. **Kotler, P.; Armstrong, G.; Saunders, J.; Wong, V.** (1999) *Principile marketingului*. Bucureşti: Teora
- [13]. **Laird, J.** (2009) *How We Reason*. Oxford University Press, Oxford Scholarship
- [14]. **Lindstrom, M.** (2011) *Buyology*. Bucureşti: Publica
- [15]. **Nelson, B.** (2012) *Codul Emoţiilor*. Braşov: Adevăr Divin
- [16]. **Pascal, B.** (2008). *Pensees*: Paris: Flammarion
- [17]. **Palmatier, R.; Dant, R.** (2006) *Factors influencing the effectiveness of Relationship Marketing: A Meta-Analysis*., available on-line at <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1509/jmkg.70.4.136?journalCode=jmxa>
- [18]. **Preston, D.** (2015) *Antoniu şi Cleopatra*. Bucureşti:Corint
- [19]. **Rosca, C.** (2018) *Afacerile McDonald's în România au ajuns la 150 mil. euro, cel mai bun din istorie* Available on-line at: <https://www.zf.ro/companii/afacerile-mcdonald-s-in-romania-au-ajuns-la-150-mil-euro-cel-mai-bun-an-din-istorie-17174812>

- [20]. **Hostiuc, C.; Rosca, C.** (2018) *Cafeneaua” cu cele mai mari venituri din România: Hard Rock Café a ajuns la afaceri de 4 milioane de euro*, available on-line at: <https://www.zf.ro/companii/cafeneaua-cu-cele-mai-mari-venituri-din-romania-hard-rock-caf-a-ajuns-la-afaceri-de-4-milioane-de-euro-17321647>
- [21]. **Valsasina, P.; Cruz, M.; Filippi, M.; Rocca, M.** (2019) *The use of dynamic approaches to characterize resting state functional connectivity in demyelinating, neurodegenerative and psychiatric conditions: from stationary to time-varying analysis*” available on-line at <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fnins.2019.00618/abstract>
- [22]. **Zuidgeest, T.; Lintner, S.** (2017) *The 5 Best Neuromarketing Insights of 2017*. Available on-line at <https://newneuromarketing.com/the-5-best-neuromarketing-insights-of-2017>
- [23]. **Wesstein, E.** (2004) *Fermat's Last Theorem*, available on-line at <http://mathworld.wolfram.com/FermatsLastTheorem.html>