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1. KEYWORDS

- Clothing apparel company;
- Strategic Management;
- Planning the work;
- Substantiation of the work programs;
- Improving the process of launching new products;
- Efficiency;
- Economic competitiveness;
- Consumer satisfaction;
- Customer loyalty;

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3. INTRODUCTION

Apparel industry in Romania plays an important role in the Romanian economy, the most representative branch of light industry. Throughout the last decade, apparel industry went through a difficult time, marked mainly by the following stages:

- Liberalization of trade in textiles and clothing, which took place on 01.01.2005. The elimination of quotas resulted in a significant loss of exports of Romanian clothing apparel in the EU market;
- The decreasing volume of LOHN contracts. LOHN migration to countries in Asia and Africa has contributed significantly to the decline in the production of enterprises in the apparel industry;

- The onset of the financial crisis and the effects on the national economy; the current period is a turning moment for the Romanian economy, not only for apparel industry crisis, affecting considerably:
 - cash flow and ability to pay undertakings;
 - access to financing;
 - demand for apparel products; generalized decline in the household consumption;
 - workload, the loss of production contracts.

All these factors are elements that threaten the future of apparel and clothing businesses. The current financial and economic situation, more than ever, the economic activity of enterprises should be based on the principle of economic efficiency of each activity undertaken by it with the objective of obtaining the final maximum in terms of rational spending of resources available to the enterprise.

Deliberate restriction of consumption, income and general decline in living standards, difficult access to credit for both households and businesses have led to a drastic decrease in demand for clothing apparel.

Located in the face of these threats from the external environment of the organization, its management can be used to counteract the action of these factors with the weapon of efficiency, through a higher correlation between their efforts and the effects generated by these efforts.

In these circumstances, it appears increasingly stronger the decisive role that the management of the organization plays in terms of decisions and actions implemented to increase the efficiency of the enterprise; management is considered as a determinant of economic efficiency growth. In this thesis, we considered it important to perform an analysis of the realities of enterprise constants investigating fundamentals and its environment. The items which have been identified will be considered as status quo, being able to take the form of:

- constraints (internal resources, market, management policies) to be managed in a manner that would allow the system to improve;
- challenges that must be capitalized in the enterprise to maximize results.

The future business activity will be conducted taking into account the opportunities and constraints arising from its micro and macro environment. Industrial enterprise activity has long been evaluated strictly in terms of production capacity, the

resources they activate in the process of production and the profit obtained; we consider undertaking the activity as part of its overall system, the influence of the working conditions has significant implications in defining the objectives and opportunities for the development of the economic and social unity.

Increasing the performance in general and the economic efficiency in particular, is a fundamental objective for any business clothing apparel. Making performance in management involves developing creativity, adaptation of the functions of management, managerial style, methods and techniques leading to the realities and demands from the external environment, characterized by a deep state of instability. The management capacity to enhance economic efficiency of the activity that leads to increased productivity is the most powerful weapon tool.

That specific increase can only come from what Taylor called, "work smarter", meaning actually to conduct a more effective work without a greater or longer effort.

Peter Drucker emphasized that companies will not be able to survive periods of rapid change unless this "smart work" will make a decisive contribution to solving organizational problems¹. We believe that to meet the intense changes that businesses are forced to pass nowadays, this requires a different approach of the way of reporting by enterprises and to adapt its business to the changing market realities.

From this point of view, it requires switching to a new and creative type of management, whose purpose is to discover and assimilate the innovations in all fields of business, thus favoring the emergence of performance in all its manifestations.

Current dynamics generate profound changes within the enterprise market, so the enterprise had to act immediately in order to survive. Currently, the implementation of change has become the essential element of competitive advantage, inventing and re-inventing all transformation processes that take place in the enterprise and become common reaction forms of management structures to changing environments.

The complexity of the management process binds managers to evaluate the concept of performance not only in terms of productivity and profitability rates but also how economic performance (measurable) contributes to increased customer satisfaction and company employees, imposing diversification measurement of systems performance.

¹ Drucker, P., *Despre profesia de manager*, Editura Meteor Press, 1998, pagina 140

In this respect, we consider that the approach of a performance management style is necessary, approach that will integrate the interests of all the factors that might benefit from the results of the company (shareholders, employees, suppliers, customers, state, and society).

4. OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

From the methodological point of view, **the main objective** of the research is to find ways and solutions to streamline the business activity producing clothing apparel, realizing that only through continuous improvement of processes, procedures, human resources and labor relations can competitive advantages be obtained.

As **secondary objectives**, we found it necessary to consider the following:

- identifying specificity of the Romanian clothing apparel industry and its development prospects;
- assessing opportunities for the improvement of background activity plans and activity programs in clothing apparel businesses;
- identifying and analyzing the main ways to streamline the process of creating and market launching new products of clothing apparel, and improving the process of creating a diversified product mix;
- improving the management ways of sales areas in apparel industry, and methods that can achieve increased customer satisfaction, in order to improve the business of clothing apparel.

During the study, we used a range of research tools to processes occurring in the clothing apparel companies such as:

- market investigation methods (focus group, face to face discussions);
- descriptive and exploratory analysis;
- SWOT analysis;
- qualitative research of a business process (through research type, "mystery shopping");
- case study.

In conducting the research over a hundred books were consulted, along with studies and scientific articles in the field of management, or from other

fields, published by prestigious specialists. Also in this thesis crystallized information is found, due to the professional discussions held with experts of the domain: fashion designers, textile engineers, marketing specialists, foremen and operators who are now working in the apparel industry.

5. THE SYNTHESIS OF DOCTORAL THESIS CHAPTERS

The thesis is divided into eight chapters, in the first chapter I have drafted the main hypotheses of the research:

Until January 1, 2005, when the quota system was eliminated (Agreement on Textiles and Clothing), Romanian clothing industry received a number of favourable factors that have placed it among the EU partners on clothing apparel products.

Among these factors we can mention:

- Reduced labour costs in Romania were the increased attractiveness for Western European companies that wanted to achieve production in LOHN system (accepted name of outsourcing contracts);
- Relative proximity to our country in the European market (the largest market for textiles and apparel) brings the Romanian economy a competitive advantage comparing to Asian countries in terms of the duration of transport of the finished product;
- Romania had market outlets guaranteed by the quota system (in force until 2005) which provided a certain amount of goods to the EU market;
- Romanian apparel clothing industry had a number of capabilities and means of production necessary for the production processing that kept pace with technical developments internationally;
- The existence of a skilled, experienced labour force, able to carry out the technical specifications of quality products required by the European market.

Starting from January 1, 2005 these factors that have been mentioned, could not be the catalyst for this industry, and the removal of quotas has deprived our country of export volumes to the EU market. The niches won by Romania with big efforts have been seized by much cheaper Asian products.

Although Romania has a chemical industry and agricultural sector capable of providing raw materials for textile and apparel, insufficient activity programs and strategies at the sectorial level and the persistence of the crisis in the Romanian economy generated a pronounced decline in the Romanian clothing industry.

In the second chapter I presented the apparel clothing company, as management object and the fundamental cell of the national economy, giving it the following definition:

- The clothing company implies a synergistic action group organized in accordance with certain economic, social and legal criteria, featuring a range of technological tools, specific menus on which work processes are done using the production equipment, forming a whole ensemble of procedures for obtaining textiles, resulting in products and services which are responsible for maximizing the company results when moving within the distribution area.

Throughout its history, mankind has been in a continuous process of identifying ways that enabled it to its specific needs by using a minimal amount of resources. The sharp increase in energy costs, the enlargement of competitive phenomenon, the imminent crisis of capital and lack of resources have led to a new approach to the transformation of elements from nature into goods and services, approach in which the planning stage has a key role. Thierry Fusalba said: "planning is an unnatural process, it is more fun to do anything else, but the most interesting aspect of the waiver of the planning is that failure comes as a complete surprise, which is rather preceded by a period of concern and depression."²

Through the view of these considerations, a new trend has been created aimed to obtain a centralized control over the use of available resources through the planning process. Setting priorities, capital preservation, and efficiency became the new challenges for the management of any organization. In this situation, companies around the world have entered a new era called strategic planning.

Strategic planning requires that the company's assets are managed in a manner that leads to a maximization of firm performance through the pursuit of sustainable economic activities in accordance with the changing environment. Especially after World War II, national economies planning has become a current and widespread activity, especially among developing countries, having as objective the organization

² Fusalba, T., *Managementul crizei*, Editura C.H. Beck, București, 2012, op.citate, pagina 7

and rationalization efforts in order to meet the initial aims, in a certain period of time. I believe that strategic planning activity has a defining role in any economic activity, establishing its main landmarks of activity for the following years, while making the connection between the daily management of the company and its future work.

In the third chapter I presented the role and importance of economic strategy, determinants of economic strategy development process and the importance of business process management in clothing apparel businesses.

The current period is characterized by increasing complexity of business, due to the development of new technologies, diversification and increased competitive pressure, businesses are forced to make a permanent adaptation of their strategic behaviour. Under these circumstances, the management of the organization will be forced to continuously identify any factors of change from rural company and to integrate them into the decision making process in order to ensure a sustainable future development of the business they run. The author Mina, S³., believes that in order to make decisions in an environment so unstable, management organization will have to adapt to economic and social conditions in continuous changing; under these conditions, the expected outcome is the development of the strategy and identifying ways that will lead to achieving the organization's aim.

In the fourth chapter, I presented the methodology of foundation and the development of operative programs in companies from the apparel industry. The business environment in which these businesses activate, is characterized by a high degree of competitiveness, pressure from other competitors being felt by clothing apparel businesses. In this highly competitive environment, I believe that the successful enterprises will be those which will realize how to exploit in their favour the following aspects: the advantages of their own competitiveness, the ability of judicious allocation of resources in their company and the exploitation of market characteristics in order to maximize results.

In developing strategies inside the apparel industry companies, the increase of their competitive capacity is one of the main priorities established for a long-term, considering the strategic business approach that is useful in two ways:

³ Mina, S.,(2012), *Managing the strategic decision in governmental organization within chaos theory, Managerial challenges of the contemporary society vol.4.* paginile 28-33

- Overall strategic plan;
- Operative plan;

Through the strategic plan the overall objectives of a company will generally be defined, the environment, competition, customers and markets of the company will be analysed and the operational planning serves as the transposition of the objectives in current activity programs.

The design and orientation of programs for an industrial activity is a complex process which has as objective to obtain the business version that will **use the increased efficiency of production capacities and resources of the company**, in order to strengthen and improve the position that it holds in the sector in which it operates.

In chapter five I presented a case study on developing and supporting the programs of activity in SC Jolidon Import Export SRL, a company representative for the apparel industry in Romania. It is very important to specify the fact that all the production in Jolidon Company is made on their own name. The case study highlights a significant amount of data, showing specific processes of the foundation approach and development of the monthly activity program at the enterprise level and production department.

The research for this case study involved analysing certain aspects and operations required for the specific business activity, such as:

- competitive product analysis;
- market and product marketing;
- overall strategy of the company;
- the technical and production company;
- subunits of the enterprise;
- type of production and systems organization of manufacturing processes;
- forecasting future demand for the company's products;
- determination of capacity for scheduled period;
- checking the capacity constraints of the model to optimize production schedules;
- checking the capacity constraints at the enterprise level for the scheduled period;

Proper substantiation of the activity programs at the enterprise level and production subunit requires those steps so that the activity program resulted, will help to improve the efficiency of the company by:

- The use of maximum production capacity, in terms of increased reliability;

- The use of the resource available in the company (raw materials, energy, human resources) with increased efficiency;
- Increasing customer satisfaction by harmonizing existing demand in a given period with the production capacity of the company.

The modern company is required to produce value for its stakeholders: the shareholders, employees, customers, other beneficiaries of its work, to engage in increased social responsibility in the community where they work and conduct an activity whose negative impact on the environment to be realistically minimized. In other words, its mission is to achieve performance in its various forms.

Any organization is created to fulfil a task or a function; for businesses, the fundamental purpose of their existence and that of their work is to obtain economic performance. Managing a business, unlike a non-profit management, will base any decision or action that you think will perform the desired purpose: achieving economic performance.

A company will not be able to provide goods and services desired by consumers, with the price at which they agree to pay, sooner or later, will fail. Under these conditions, characteristics and quality of the product and its associated services are essential components of the marketing of the product, the company's performance is defined by mixing: price, quality, delivery time, payment facilities and services associated with product sales.

Being efficient means doing things more efficiently than your competitors, to lead a struggle to improve management practices and systems. I believe that the concept of performance means the ability of an enterprise to be competitive in the industry in which it operates, creating a more efficient process that ensures its continuation and development of long-term business. More than any time in the period of economic and financial crisis that affected Romanian business activity, identifying success of factors, generating and measuring them is crucial for any economic management.

We believe that in the current circumstances, will survive and achieve performance only those organizations that will be able to adapt and accept changes. That is why, I presented in the following chapters, the interdependence of activities to improve the management company and the achievement of its performance, embodied especially in the economic efficiency activity.

Under these conditions, clothing apparel enterprises are forced to constantly adapt to restrictions of business activity, characterized by a high degree of competitiveness.

We believe that management should focus clothing enterprises on one goal: to increase individual and organizational effectiveness through continuous improvement of individual skills and organizational parameters, providing superior value of their products and services. The main objective of the business management is to create and improve performance. Performance management focuses on continuous improvement of all processes and activities occurring within the organization, addressed in an evolutionary manner, the proposed objective is to obtain business excellence.

In the following chapters we investigated ways to improve business management apparel industry, focusing on the following research hypotheses:

- increasing the economic efficiency of the company by improving business creation and marketing of new products and improving the process of creating apparel clothing in a varied product mix; in competitiveness stifling conditions on the target market of the company, which is replete with similar products in terms of functionality and technical-quality parameters, a company can create value only in a manner of highly satisfying consumers' needs. An enterprise can be successful provided it manages effectively and differentiates their offer in relation to the competition. In the case study conducted, I have presented solutions to improve their product differentiation identified at the manufacturer of lingerie and swimsuits, Jolidon;
- enlarging the economic efficiency in the apparel clothing company through the improvement of the process of marketing the products. In this context I presented a case study on the effectiveness of sales management area and the measures taken to improve the economic efficiency of this process, carried out in the shops under the brand Falla, a manufacturer and marketer of apparel clothing with national coverage;

- raising customer's satisfaction – an essential factor of efficiency in the sale process of apparel clothing. Peter Drucker said that the main objective of a business is to create and keep a customer network. In current conditions, characterized by fierce competition among bidders, we believe that those undertakings that will know how to provide a product market performance (in terms of its features, quality, price and service sales that accompany it) will gain something more important than a certain market share, namely its consumer loyalty. Consumer attachment to the product or service must be cultivated and maintained permanently by identifying ways to reduce the index of infidelity among its customers.

The case study within the network of shops Jolidon reflect overall efficiency generated by improving services addressed to consumers, by improving human resource activities; In this case there was improvement in the sales force within the network of shops. We evaluated the quality of customer service and satisfaction perceived by them, through the use of qualitative research techniques such as the approach known as “mystery shopping.” Based on these reports, a set of measures has been adopted, which will contribute to the improvement of service quality and sales techniques, generating a positive impact on increasing customer satisfaction in relation to the company and its products.

The performance of an enterprise is all that contributes to improving the torque *value- cost*, with no exception⁴. Achieving performance within the organization requires a continuous transformation activity of the inputs into outputs at a high level of effectiveness and efficiency, which is the premise to obtain products and services that are characterized by a high level of competitiveness, capable of supporting the sustainable development of the enterprise activity.

At the end of the thesis I presented the main conclusions resulting from scientific study that I have made.

6. LIMITS AND PERSPECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

Research limitations and future research directions

⁴ Popa, V., *Managementul și măsurarea performanței organizației*, Editura University Press, 2005, pagina 3

In any scientific research, in addition to the results, there are a number of inherent limitations that may initiate further research to deepen the investigated domain. For this research, we can mention the following issues that have limited the accuracy and generalization ability in the activity of clothing enterprises of the results obtained throughout the study:

- limitations related to **sample selection** of clothing apparel company whose activity has been studied;

- in this research, we analysed the activity of companies producing clothing which have internalized all the production process, from the design phase, product design, cutting, manufacture, packaging and sale. It was not the subject of this research work, those clothing apparel companies operating under contract (LOHN system), so we could not generalize the results on this type of businesses;

- also, the conclusions and proposals resulting from the research are mainly obtained from the analysis of the businesses which own clothing stores. Conclusions regarding the improvement in retail sales area and improving human resources in their stores, are not applicable for businesses that do not have their own retail.

- limitations related to the **way of getting access to the information** needed to carry out this research;

- due to the reluctance of management companies (not just clothing apparel) to provide information about technical, commercial, financial or human resources applicable for the related work performed (other than those listed in the publications of governmental institutions), I felt a real difficulty to achieve research, due to the lack of such information;

- the purpose of the research is to make a contribution to improving business management apparel industry. Thus, it is difficult to improve a procedure, process or employment relationship if you can not have access to specific information. Subjected to any process improvement, it must first be known the mechanisms which govern the relations as essential elements in initiating approach, in order to improve it.

- limitations related to the **selected research methods**.

For qualitative methods, including limits established, we can mention:

– referring to the focus group research, which was conducted on a group of 400 people in a total of 20 cities. It is possible that some answers are insincere or complacency, the results of the investigation cannot be generalized, these having rather strict meaning on the interviewed subjects;

– considering the “mystery shopping” research, we should note the following limitations:

a) subjectivity of the evaluator; This grant marks the aspects analysed according to predetermined criteria, but the degree of bias associated with this approach is relatively high;

b) the evaluated individuals can record full marks if repeating the initial evaluation, through the imminent control element felt by the employees undergoing the evaluation. Therefore, it is recommended to sustain this type of evaluation at regular intervals, as a way to assess current practice in the organization, leaving the field of “imminent control”.

Based on these limitations of the research, as well as **perspective**, we can identify a number of research directions. What we can say for sure is that no matter the activity field, research should never stop, as there are many opportunities for enrichment of the current state of knowledge. First, some of the research limitations enumerated above can be transformed into research perspectives of other scientific studies, thus creating the possibility of deepening the close-up view in the studied field.

Although this research was referring to the business of clothing apparel, the results can be used to improve the management of other types of businesses.

We believe that an important direction of research is to determine the impact it will have in setting smart clothing product range which will be manufactured by clothing enterprises, and additionally forming the results of the company. Intelligent clothing or as it is called “the processing clothing ” is no longer considered a gadget, but a product that can revolutionize the market in the near future apparel. Smart clothing is made of „classic” yarns (cotton, wool, polyester) which are embedded with microchips, conductors and other micro-equipment.

Thereby, clothing acquires new features: in addition to the basic function, it will have the communication function (telephone, internet), the organizer of the

activity - which can store and process information, the security warning - allowing the holder signalling the existence of magnetic fields or radiation dangerous to human health. We believe that this line of research on extending its product range with this type of clothing and placing it into production if it proves viable, has a high degree of relevance in the light of possible benefits to the clothing apparel business.

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