

Green Brand Positioning as a Strategy to Guide the Green Marketing Mix: A Perspective on the Organic Food Supply Chain

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Abstract

This paper aims to establish the coordinates of the green brand positioning, as well as the influence exerted on the marketing mix. The research method used was the in-depth individual interview, conducted among specialists from certified organic companies that have in their portfolio an organic food brand. The research was conducted among manufacturers, processors, distributors and retailers. The results showed that the decision on brand positioning influences the other marketing decisions, but differences were found depending on the type and size of the company. The 4Ps contribute to the communication of brand positioning, but the product is the central element. The current situation on the Romanian market makes the price variable to be decisive in influencing the purchase decision, while communication is essential due to the necessary information and education effort. Last but not least, the main objective of distribution is to facilitate consumer access to this product category.

Key words: green brand positioning, green marketing strategies, green marketing mix, organic food

J.E.L. classification: M31, Q57, M10

1. Introduction

Through the place it occupies at the level of marketing theory, brand positioning can be seen as a result of previous processes, market segmentation and targeting, and as a synthesis of the vision regarding the elements of the marketing mix. Thus, once it has been established how each component of the marketing mix supports the chosen positioning, they must be harmonized to be part of a coherent approach, materialized in the form of a marketing program capable of generating the desired position for the brand on the market and in the minds of consumers.

This approach can be quite complex, especially for companies that do not have a broad vision on the integration of marketing practices internally. The approach becomes even more difficult in the context of green marketing, many marketing tools need to be adapted to this perspective. In addition, the mission of these companies is often more difficult given their presence in underdeveloped markets.

Therefore, the challenges for companies operating in this field can be multiple and sometimes difficult to manage. That's why it is essential to have a better knowledge of the green market and current practices in the field of brand positioning, from the perspective of multiple types of participants, characterized by different levels of development, but which have in common the involvement in green marketing.

2. Literature review

2.1. Green brand positioning

A green brand involves a set of attributes and benefits associated with a low negative impact on the environment and creating a positive impression on consumers by increasing their concern for the environment (Hartmann, *et al.*, 2005, p.10). The complexity and particularities specific to the

green brands determined the development in the specialized literature of an independent concept, green brand positioning, along with several other concepts in the field of brand management and more.

Green brand positioning involves "an active communication and differentiation of the brand from its competitors through its environmentally sound attributes" (Hartmann, *et al.*, 2005, p.10), but also through its specific benefits and values. Along the same lines is the opinion expressed by Suki (2016, p.2895) who considers that the green brand positioning is achieved through green attributes integrated in active communication campaigns, which could induce a more positive perception of green brands amongst consumers.

The complexity of the concept is underlined by Rex and Baumann (2007, pp.572-573) who opine that brand positioning is the most tangible discrepancy between green and conventional marketing. Noting the complexity of the concept, Huang (2014, p.254) believes that the green brand positioning is "part of brand identity and value proposition about a firm's environmentally sound attributes that need to be actively communicated to the target customers". Therefore, to achieve the desired position for a green brand, communication must be used to create a distinct identity in the minds of consumers.

2.2. The impact of the green brand positioning on the green marketing mix

Positioning, the last stage in the process of forming the marketing strategy (Mooradian, *et al.*, 2012, p.33), is the synthesis of the segmentation and targeting activities previously carried out, giving meaning to the whole strategic planning approach. As a specific tool for strategic marketing, positioning guides all decisions regarding the marketing mix, providing coherence and consistency to all activities. In this sense, "the marketing mix can be seen as a tactical detail of the organization's positioning strategy" (Wilson & Gilligan, 2005, p.354), while "the positioning strategy is the essence of the marketing mix" (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2007, p.171).

In the field of green products, the environmental performance of any organization that adopts a green position must correspond to the rhetoric and expectations of consumers. All corporate activities must support this projected image, otherwise the organization will be "punished" by disillusioned consumers and the media (Polonsky and Rosenberger, 2001, p.24). Therefore, without being supported by relevant and tactically credible activities, the green brand positioning has no market value. In this sense, Bahl and Chandra (2018, pp.2-3) emphasize the need for a relationship between the green brand positioning and the variables of the marketing mix, which can be achieved by explaining in detail the concerns related to the natural environment (Leonidou, *et al.*, 2013, p.155).

Green marketing mix refers to green product development and the execution of pricing, distribution and communication, which is specifically aimed at promoting or preserving environmental welfare (Sohail, 2017, p.231). Each element of the green marketing mix is created and executed to help reduce negative effects or create a positive impact on the natural environment (Jain and Kaur, 2004, p.188; Eneizan, *et al.*, 2015, p.821).

2.3. Green product

A green product can be defined as a product that seeks to protect or enhance the natural environment by conserving energy and/or resources and by reducing or eliminating the use of toxic agents, pollution and waste (Ottman, *et al.*, 2006, p.24). Lin and Chen (2016, pp.281-282) believe that among the attributes of green products should be found: eco-friendliness, harmlessness to the human body and avoidance of experimental testing on or killing of animals. Also, a green product is certified as such by a recognized organization (Gurau & Ranchhod, 2005, p.548).

The product can be the object of positioning, along with the brand or organization, it is placed in a perceptual space represented by its market, subjectively defined in turn by the consumer. On the other hand, "positioning is a crucial determinant for the potential of the product on the market and for its ability to differentiate itself" (Doyle, 2008, p.125). In connection with the company's product strategy, positioning allows continuous development of the manufacturing range, as close as possible to the exigencies of demand (Pop, *et al.*, 2000, p.159).

2.4. Green price

The green price “accounts fully for the economic, environmental and social costs of a green product’s manufacture and marketing while providing value for customers and a fair profit for the business” (Martin and Schouten, 2012, cited in Pomeroy, 2017, p.13). Therefore, pricing for a green product is one of the most complex green marketing decisions, given the difficulty, on one hand, of determining the actual costs of the product (lower limit) and, on the other hand, of estimating the willingness of the target audience to pay that price (upper limit) (Chamorro, 2003, p.146).

Green products are often priced higher than conventional products (Polonsky and Rosenberger, 2001, p.24; Peattie and Crane, 2005, p.36). Therefore, “the price of green products is a premium price” (Eneizan, *et al.*, 2015, p.822), practiced based on the existence of attributes that are, to a greater extent, green (Dean & Pacheco, 2014, p.14). Consequently, in many cases, price acts as a barrier to purchase because the consumer is not willing to spend more money to buy green products (Ginsberg and Bloom, 2004, p.80; Peattie and Crane, 2005, p.36).

Price valences, as a tool used in positioning a brand, are best highlighted in the method of determining the price based on the perceived value, the starting point being the establishment of a price that supports a certain positioning of the product. In the discussed context, the price can have an active role, being an element of product positioning, or a passive role, being an instrument that supports the chosen positioning (Vrânceanu, 2006, p. 30).

2.5. Green distribution

The green distribution involves choosing marketing channels in a way that minimizes damage to the environment (Arseculeratne and Yazdanifard, 2014, p.133; Eneizan, *et al.*, 2015, p.823) and physical distribution, to ensure the availability of green products to those customers interested in the issue of environmental protection (Stoica, 2020, p.4455).

Distribution is a key element in attracting the right customers for green products. Moreover, Singh and Pandey (2012, p.26) believe that customers will not look for mainly green products, so they should be distributed through the main outlets, so that they are not only available to a small niche market.

To successfully position a brand, “the firm must be concerned with elements such as the basic design of the marketing channel, the types of middlemen and the extent of market coverage in selected target markets” (Kabadayi, *et al.*, 2007 cited in Darling, *et al.*, 2009, p.520). In addition, if the positioning offers a promise as to when and where the customer benefits from the brand that is the subject of the positioning, then the distribution strategy acquires special importance and must be configured according to the positioning strategy.

2.6. Green marketing communication

Considered a new type of communication approach (Ries & Trout, 2004, p.15), the concept of positioning emerged five decades ago, when it was proposed by Al Ries and Jack Trout, in the field of advertising and promotion. Thus, we can consider that this variable of the marketing mix has the strongest implications in the field of positioning, through it ensuring the transmission of specific messages, including those related to product, price and distribution.

Marketing communication “involves how a brand should be positioned through messages” (Percy, 2014, p.29), “as well as the media strategy employed to reach the target group” (Belch & Belch, 2018, pp.58-59). In this regard, the specific activities of marketing communications must be integrated to provide a consistent message and to achieve the desired positioning (Keller, 2009, p.146).

If we refer to a green brand, the intensity of the communication made by an organization through messages about environmental concerns, whether or not they are correct, has a significant effect on the desired position of the green brand. “Therefore, the choice of marketing communication options and media channels, as well as messages with a stronger or less strong green character, brought together in an integrated communication strategy, play a key role in

influencing consumers' perception of the green brand” (Stoica, 2021, p.388). In this regard, we must keep in mind that promoting sustainable behavior “is a type of marketing intervention that encompasses a wide array of communication actions that encourage and motivate consumers to adopt positive attitudes towards sustainable consumption and engage in purchasing and consumption behaviors that support sustainability” (Bălan, 2021, p.13).

3. Research methodology

The purpose of this research is to identify the methods to substantiate the positioning strategy at the level of different participants in the supply chain, as well as the means of operationalizing the elements of the marketing mix used in defining and communicating the position of the green brand.

The method of gathering information was the in-depth, semi-structured individual interview. The target population consists of Romanian companies that have organic certification granted by an accredited certification body. The target population includes producers, processors, distributors and retailers, which have in their portfolio a green brand that represents the range of certified organic food. The research was conducted among professionals holding management positions.

During the information gathering stage, 25 interviews were conducted: 13 producers/processors, 7 distributors and 5 retailers, out of which 2 specialized retailers and 3 general retailers. To guarantee confidentiality, the interviews were coded as follows: IP - organic food producing/processing companies; ID - organic food distribution companies; IR.S - organic food retailers; IR.G - general retailers. The interviews were conducted between November 2020 and February 2021.

4. Findings

4.1. Green brand positioning in the field of organic food

Brand positioning is seen by the interviewed specialists as a necessary step to differentiate it from the competition, even if they evaluate the competition in this market as somewhat reduced, especially from local brands. Several differences were identified, depending on the place occupied by the company at the level of the supply chain, but in some cases also depending on the size of the company or the particularities of the activity.

In the case of *producers/processors*, the differences observed depend on the size of the company:

- SMEs - are concerned with how they can differentiate themselves from the competition, but in a few cases these concerns manifest through a strategic approach. Usually, the positioning is done through the product and less at the brand level.
- Large enterprises - have an important position on the market of conventional products, but in recent years they have also entered the organic food market, with the help of a brand extension. In this case, the positioning of the green brand does not differ fundamentally from the parent brand, but only involves the addition of positioning variables specific to organic production (“pure taste”, “product without food additives, artificial colors, flavor enhancers”, “healthy product”). However, the marketing mix is strongly adapted, especially the marketing communication. Positioning is based on a mix between traditional and green attributes/benefits, the aim being to define a position that attracts a large audience and to make the green product more than a niche product.

In the case of *international green brand distributors*, the implementation of the positioning strategy involves adapting to the local market, especially in the field of marketing communication. Without the specific involvement of manufacturers in identifying and creating the differentiating elements, some distributors believe that the green attribute is enough to support the brand positioning: „*Entering the niche of green products, whether premium or low-cost, we see that there is not a very big difference between them. A product cannot be more green than another. Either it's green or it's not*” (ID2).

In the case of *retailers* that have a private green brand in their portfolio:

- Specialized retailers - positioning for their brand is often similar to that created for the retail brand. The private brand products are a representation of what the retailer wants to offer its customers, sometimes in a more accessible form than the rest of the brands available in the stores' network.
- General retailers - in their case, the private green brand is seen as a premium brand compared to the rest of the brands in the portfolio, which aims to attract as many customers as possible. The green brand also helps to support some pillars of corporate brand positioning, especially in recent years, when sustainability has become a concern for a growing number of players in the retail market.

At the supply chain level, we notice certain differences in terms of the degree of specialization in formulating the brand positioning strategy. Thus, producers (especially SMEs) are more specialized in the production activity, which leads them to rely on certain specific characteristics of green products. As for retailers and distributors, who are not so close to the production process, the brand positioning is based on more general elements, some of which are specific to conventional products. Such an approach is also explained by the fact that these companies want to transform organic food into mass products, so they have a different approach in defining and communicating brand positioning.

4.2. Green brand positioning - orientation strategy of the green marketing mix

The decision-makers have options that range between a positioning based mainly on traditional positioning variables (specific to conventional products) and a positioning where these variables are unimportant, those specific to green products being the ones that dominate. Between these two extremes, there are various other options for using a combination of available positioning variables.

In the case of a positioning characterized mainly by green elements, some of the attributes exceed the standards imposed by the legislation in force (Regulation EU 2018/848). Therefore, the company's efforts are focused on adding more green attributes or features, to be able to differentiate itself from the rest of the green brands. All these efforts are reflected in higher costs and, inevitably, are also found in the price set for the consumers. The price is considerably different from the price of the conventional competition and is higher than the price of green products that meet only the minimum criteria required by current legislation. The creation of a superior green product, with a premium price, determines the decision-makers to focus on marketing channels where it could be represented at its true value or could be delivered as such to consumers. That is why, as a rule, specialized stores are preferred, but the use of direct channels is also a frequently considered option. Direct contact with the client offers the possibility to have a personalized communication, this being an opportunity to offer a unique experience and to pass on the brand values. In all this context, communication has the role of communicating a message adapted to each micro-segment, by using channels and techniques adapted to communicate with small groups.

Instead, brands that are being positioned based on a small number of green elements target the whole market and therefore try to achieve an association with traditional attributes. The products are developed taking into account the minimum standards required by EU legislation in the field of organic farming. This strategy often does not allow the company to charge a premium price, so, as a rule, a lower price is adopted than that charged by premium green brands. In some cases, the price may reach the level of prices of conventional products (in particular, compared to premium conventional products). As a result of these decisions regarding the pricing strategy and the characteristics of the product, extensive distribution is preferred, especially in hypermarkets and supermarkets, but also in convenience stores in big cities or even in certain areas of a city. The communication is specific to a mass-market brand, which is usually a practice of manufacturers who are also market leaders in conventional products. Advertising is used because it has the power to influence a large number of customers, being effective in supporting the whole effort to launch a wide range of green products.

4.2.1. Green product

The green products “*must be adapted to the target segments*” (IR.G1), but they also need to be developed in accordance with the desired positioning. Instead, the other elements of the marketing mix must be “*adapted to the product policy*” (IR.G2).

The level at which the company is located in the supply chain determines a series of particularities, because the degree of involvement in the production and product development activities differs.

In the case of *organic food producers/processors*:

- Rigorous selection of organic ingredients/raw materials, to reflect the desired quality of the finished products, but also to support the attributes to be emphasized by brand positioning;
- Choosing the necessary processing methods and technologies, so that the desired attributes can be developed and supported (integral product, non-heat processed product etc.);
- Intensifying the concerns in the direction of procuring raw materials at the local level, so that the ingredients of Romanian origin predominate or even are found entirely in the finished product. Also, in this direction, we note a concern to provide raw materials from countries with a good image and which are recognized as countries with a tradition in organic farming.

In the case of *international green brand distributors*:

- Building a green brands portfolio, which can ensure the turnover necessary for the “survival” of the company on the green market (in most cases);
- Selection of green products to meet the requirements and exigencies of Romanian consumers, but whose attributes/benefits can ensure differentiation from brands/products on the local market. In this case, we refer to international green brands developed mainly for a certain international market, which must find a place on the Romanian market, taking into account the fact that there is no possibility to adapt the product policy;
- Concentrating the activity in the direction of listing new products based on the novelties from the portfolio of international producers, as well as delisting non-performing products. These decisions are easier for distributors because the costs are lower than for producers/processors.

In the case of *retailers that have in their portfolio private green brands*:

- Development of their range of green products in the direction of generating significant sales volumes. In this respect, retailers focus mainly on the launch of basic products, which are likely to have a higher demand;
- Products are mainly based on compliance with the minimum requirements imposed by law, so that they can generate lower costs (very rarely innovative products);
- Integration of the range of green products in the general direction of sustainability defined at the organizational level.

4.2.2. Green price

Setting the prices for green products is a constant concern, but not in all cases has a strategic approach been taken in this direction. Some experts consider that “*the disadvantage of green products is related to high prices*” (IR.G1), therefore, “*product pricing is complex and depends on the local and even international market, the levels of market prices for the same products or for similar products, as well as the company’s expectations*” (IP12). Thus, pricing is a sensitive and complex issue, due to the impact on the consumer and, implicitly, on the success of a green brand on the market.

Depending on the company's place in the supply chain, the approach regarding the pricing policy may be based on different coordinates, but this is also influenced by the company's vision on the green market and the green brand in the portfolio.

Local manufacturer/processor of organic food:

- *Which have an exclusively organic production*: as a rule, these producers/processors charge higher prices than private green brands and, in many cases, even higher prices than international green brands. The analysis of the interviews shows that this practice is not a result of a decision to choose a premium positioning. Pricing starts from a preliminary assessment of

costs, especially production costs, but also takes into account the prices charged by competition in that food category, both organic and conventional. The lack of savings due to high production and/or the use of modern production technologies determines these operators to set prices above the level of those practiced by the competition (for which there are benefits due to the achieved economies of scale). If we expand the market area and refer to conventional products, then the gap increases considerably.

- *Traditional producers of conventional food, present also on the market of organic food:* mainly, these companies desire to make organic food as accessible as possible to a large category of consumers, so that they become mass products and companies can benefit from the advantages of industrial production. Even so, there is a price difference compared to conventional products, and even compared to private green brands. Although the advantage of these producers is that they use the same technology and resources as in the case of manufacturing conventional products, the price difference is mainly due to raw material costs. At the level of the entire portfolio, these producers consider the green brand as positioned premium, compared to the conventional range. Their main purpose is to cover as many market segments as possible within the same product category.

Distributors of international green brands do not have much flexibility in setting the pricing policy, being forced to start from the commercial conditions negotiated with the international producer. Given that distributors want to distribute the brands in their portfolio on a mix of marketing channels to ensure the desired financial results, their main concern is how they set the price and discount grid according to marketing channels (and/or forms of trade) and the price positioning practiced by the retailer. Regarding this subject, a significant number of distributors are reluctant to use certain marketing channels, especially those represented by general retailers (due to the commercial conditions required). In addition, even if these companies are more concerned with B2B sales, they are still involved in how the price policy impacts the final consumer, especially since they have also developed direct marketing channels. In terms of brand positioning, most of the time the manufacturer is not so interested in how the pricing policy is implemented in small markets, such as Romania, but rather in generating a certain volume of sales.

Retailers owning private green brands: in general, their purpose is to create an alternative to the rest of the brands available on the shelf (*„it is more than obvious that price plays an important role, no matter how much you try to communicate about products and to say what all the attributes are”*- IR.G3). Their portfolio consists mainly of basic products for which a much more affordable price can be sustained than the rest of the competition. The desire is that green products *“become accessible to a large category of population and not to a smaller segment, with a lot of money”* (IR.G1). That is why, compared to the competition, private green brands usually have the best value for money.

In general, it was found that positioning approaches matter less in setting the pricing strategy. As a general rule, the green product is more expensive than conventional ones, the difference between them is due to a combination of factors. It should be noted that there are few cases in which organic operators manage to set their prices of conventional products, due to competitive trading conditions offered by international producers (e.g. plant-based beverages), modern manufacturing technologies (e.g. pasta), or low production costs (e.g. wine).

4.2.3. Green distribution

Distribution is seen as the way in which the green brand can fulfill the promise of the availability of its products to final consumers. Therefore, the distribution ensures the level of convenience desired by the target audience, the products can be easily purchased (*“Distribution has an important role, so that the consumer can find the desired product at hand”* - ID7).

Usually, companies are concerned about the presence of products in their portfolio in the place desired by the targeted customers, while a small number of specialists say that they are influenced by the positioning chosen for the green brand when selecting marketing channels.

Distributors of international green brands are more concerned with ensuring the availability of products to as many consumers as possible, which will help them achieve a sustainable sales volume. It is important to note that none of the distributors mentioned that the manufacturer

imposed restrictions on listing the brand on certain marketing channels. However, there are cases in which the international manufacturer has developed different brands for both specialty stores and general retailers. In this situation, clearer directions for the distributor are drawn. In addition, international green brands have found their place in major store chains in recent years, due to the involvement of retailers in the development of the area of organic, dietary and healthy products.

In the case of *exclusively organic food producers*, the situation is somewhat different, because they use more diverse marketing channels. A significant number of manufacturers consider that the place of the green brand is not in the hypermarket and supermarket, it is not a suitable sales space for “*a product that has a story*” (IP8) („*We considered our products to be special and therefore did not want them to reach the common shelves of supermarkets*” - IP6). They prefer working with specialty stores or selling through direct channels. Specialized stores, perceived as having an important range of healthy products, are considered to be more suitable („*The fact that we sell in health food stores, for us is a plus for our image, we like the fact that we are seen as something healthy after all*” - IP7).

On the other hand, *traditional producers* of conventional products, which also have in their portfolio organic food, usually use the same distribution network, being advantaged by the position held in the total market. Therefore, the placing of green products on the shelves of modern retail is easier to achieve than in the case of other producers. Their interest is to mass distribute green products, wanting to expand the consumer segment of these products. However, unlike the conventional alternative, the green brand is present in organic, naturist, “plafar” type (medical herbs store) stores, groceries. In this situation, the product mix chosen for each form of trade is essential.

As in the case of producers, in the case of *retailers* we must make a distinction between general retailers and specialized retailers. Thus, in the case of *general retailers*, their brand is distributed exclusively in their network, while in the case of *specialized stores*, in addition to distribution in their stores, it is also distributed in other retailers (their network cannot generate a significant volume for sales). In the case of general retailers, the green brand has the role of attracting other categories of public and/or to meet evolving needs, and to create a point of differentiation for the respective network of stores. The aim is also to highlight the retailer's constant concern for a healthy life and care for environmental protection (“*Green products are a flagship for a retailer's product ranges*” - IR.G1).

Over time, the sale of organic food has evolved from a limited number of store chains, 15-20 years ago, to an extensive network of retailers concerned with developing this domain. If at the beginning the green products were found in a great diversity only in specialized stores, of “plafar” type stores or were available through direct channels, in the last years the big networks also began to intensively expand this range of products. However, some local entrepreneurs also point to a common practice of large modern retail networks, namely that the success of a local brand causes some of them to develop a similar product under their brand, and the most often to delist the local product.

4.2.4. Green marketing communication

“*Communication must be adapted to the target segment*” (IR.G1), therefore, „*for each target consumer a different message and different channels are required*” (IP11). The complexity of communication derives from the diversity of micro-segments of consumers to be attracted, with different interests and motivations, but which in the end, together, represent the consumers of a certain green brand. Each category of consumers is “*more sensitive to some details*” (IR.S2), and the company must identify those elements of interest and incorporate them into messages capable of generating the desired change in behavior.

We note two different approaches in terms of marketing communication for green brands:

- Mass communication for a green brand: „*It is important to have as much visibility as possible and then 360° campaigns still work, even if they are old school, with a greater focus on online, if we talk to young people, or in-store, if we talk with seniors*” (IP11);

- Communication to micro-segments: „*The difference is that you can't necessarily use high-coverage channels, such as TV promotion. It is not necessarily relevant for a green product or comparable to the targeted communication that you can do mainly through the online environment*” (ID3).

Even if the choice of certain communication techniques and media are influenced by the available budget, it should be mentioned that the product also has an extremely important role. Thus, if we refer to basic green products, mass communication may be more appropriate. Instead, for a specialized green product with low demand, it is advisable to choose more personal communication channels. However, it is possible to find on the market different approaches to communication for products in the same category (but positioned differently from a price perspective).

If companies that prefer mass communication for the green brand try to achieve 360° communication, other companies are limited to a small number of communication techniques and channels, through which they want to target smaller segments, but in a more personal manner. Thus, mass communication is more specific to large producers (with conventional production) and, in some cases, to general retailers. The aim is for the messages to reach as large an audience as possible, among which to convince a large number of consumers to change their behavior,

It is important to make some additional clarifications regarding in-store marketing. Many specialists are keen to a double placement on the shelf in the large retail areas owned by general retailers: both in the shelf dedicated to organic food, and also in the shelf dedicated to the respective category of food products. This practice aims to “open the interest” for organic food and among those consumers who are not interested in organic food and, automatically, the chances of them reaching the shelf of organic food are significantly reduced. However, this practice is mainly specific to producers who have both conventional and organic food in their portfolios. They also state that such a strategy must also have the support of retailers, in the context of limited sales space.

We note a concern of small producers in the direction of building brand equity, being aware of the importance of cultivating certain values and building all actions around these values. As a rule, they do not prefer mass or aggressive communication, but rely more on personal, transparent and fair communication. Many of them exclude the possibility of producing under the retailer's private label.

5. Conclusions

Green brand positioning is an extremely complex subject, especially in the niche market, marked by several problems and a still low level of consumption. The difficulties encountered in obtaining a significant volume of sales have led many entrepreneurs/specialists to improve in the direction of finding additional attributes and benefits through which to differentiate their offer (in addition to organic certification), to succeed in “reaching” as large an audience as possible and to gain a higher place in the minds of consumers. However, important steps are still needed to develop and communicate the green brand positioning strategy through a strong adapted marketing mix. Therefore, the strategies and tactics of the marketing mix may be different, depending on the intensity of the green elements integrated into the brand positioning strategy.

In conclusion, it is essential to specify the main limits of this research. Due to the exploratory nature of this research, the results cannot be generalized to all certified organic companies that have in their portfolio an organic food brand. However, we appreciate that this research has included a significant number of specialists (relative to the size of the market), thus we believe that the results can be a solid basis for future research in this direction. Also, the researcher's subjectivity, manifested involuntarily, can have a certain degree of influence in terms of data collection, analysis and interpretation.

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