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## AVOIDING 'MARKETING MYOPIA' IN VOLUNTARY BLOOD DONATION (WHAT IS WRONG WITH THE PROMOTION OF VOLUNTARY BLOOD DONATION?)

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**Background:** More than 45 years ago Levitt coined the term 'marketing myopia' criticizing focusing on the product instead of focusing on consumers' needs and wants: 'People don't buy a quarter-inch drill. They buy a quarter-inch hole.' It is evident that we are still in a search of an elusive answer to a question of what people expect that blood donation can do for them.

**Aim:** Is there 'marketing myopia' in the field of blood donation? We can try to move forward in adopting of marketing perspective in voluntary blood donation by avoiding 'marketing myopia'.

**Method:** Qualitative research. Analysis of core psychological meaning of messages about blood donation based on interviews and focus group discussions with marketing communications experts. Sample: eight marketing communications experts and 33 students of social marketing. Topics of discussion: elements of communication like logos and signs, slogans, blood, blood drop, pictures, found on posters, leaflets, and Internet-presentations from various countries.

**Results:** Talking about needs for blood and blood supply are expressions of transfusion medicine's centeredness on blood instead of centeredness on donors. The psychological meaning of blood as 'offer' is twofold. For recipients blood means life, treatment, healing... happiness. For donors blood means needle, pain... discomfort. Excessive use of red colour can have both positive and negative effect (positive: draws attention, symbolises blood donation; negative: symbolises danger, pain, stimulates fear and other negative feelings). Blood drop often used as pictorial element of blood service visual identity, as personification of blood service or as an illustration (on posters, leaflets, thank you cards, etc.) has a negative symbolic meaning. The fact that majority of blood drops are animated and enhanced in some way only confirms that designers are trying to find a way to overcome that innate negative meaning. Posting pictures of donors during the insertion of a needle or blood drawing process, as well as pictures of bags with blood are examples of self-centredness instead of donor-centeredness. Experts agreed that they'd prefer to see faces of 'victims' ie. recipients.

**Conclusions:** The essence of 'holistic marketing communication' should be other than giving blood (nobody needs to give blood, yet, we offer that to people for decades). In order to be more effective communication should shift from 'marketing myopia' to 'donors' perspective. We shouldn't talk about needs or about giving blood. Moreover, we shouldn't talk about blood at all. We shouldn't use negative cues like needle in the vein, blood drop or too much red colour. We should shift the focus of attention to more pleasurable issues. We should talk about blood recipients. We should stimulate exchange between donors and recipients by stimulating emotional bonds between them. We should be braver: what we are offering, how, when, under what conditions, all should really be defined from donors' perspective. Instead of 'bloody offers and slogans' (like 'Give blood'), we should develop more 'bloodless offers and slogans' (like 'Do something amazing' or 'Give life'). Financial support: Ministry of Science and Technology, Project 149018D. E-mail: ipetrovi@f.bg.ac.yu