

MARKETING COMMUNICATION EFFECTS ON THE SPECIFIC SEGMENT OF CZECH SINGLES

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Abstract: *The purpose of this article is to present a research on Czech singles from the marketing communication point of view. Article determinates the theoretical concept of integrated marketing communication in the introductory section. Further the results of descriptive and exploratory analysis describes segment from marketing potential perspective. For the purpose of collecting data, the survey method was chosen with the use of online self-administrated questionnaire. The final sample consists of 309 respondents living voluntarily single. The data were analysed by SPSS software. Descriptive statistics showed high persuasive effect of recommendations, competition and sales and loyalty programs. Mobile advertising and promotional events had the lowest effect. Factor analysis disclosed two underlying factors. These factors explained structure in the data and showed important similarities with theoretical categorisation of communication mix.*

Keywords: *Consumer behaviour, Communication mix, Factor analysis, Marketing communication, Market segmentation, Singles.*

JEL Classification: *M31.*

Introduction

Young people get married later and later. They want to first establish themselves in the labour market before starting a family. Therefore the family formation patterns are rapidly changing. This trend is evident among both men and women thanks to gradual approach to equality on labour market in highly developed countries. New life phase forms new segment of *singles*. These persons voluntarily living outside the marriage, independent and self-sufficient tend to behave differently as the customers.

The lifestyle of singles in developed foreign countries has been evident for many years. This issue has been analysed very sporadically from the scientific and practical point of view in the Czech Republic. The target group of singles can be considered as a growing and significant marketing potential in the future.

1 Integrated Marketing Communication Mix Influencing the Segment Singles

Successful segmentation relies on a clear understanding of the market. Knowledge of consumer behaviour is the crucial foundation on which that market understanding is built. Segmentation is a creative process and can be conducted using a range of different variables, each bringing a particular perspective to the dynamics of the market. Segmentation variables are the criteria that are used for dividing a market into segments. The most basic form of market segmentation involves demographic or psychographic criteria, such as age or gender. However, consumers seldom make purchase decisions based solely on demographics or psychographics. Instead, they rely on a wide range of other criteria, such as attitudes or values. Levens, Ennew and Waite [18, 28] indicate that the choice of common characteristics is crucial in determining a successful outcome when segmenting a marketplace, since this effectively defines target markets and thus impacts

on what the organization will be expected to deliver to that market. They divide the types of common characteristics into two broad categories, which give rise to customer-orientated segmentation (demographic, socio-economic, geographic and psychographic) and product-based segmentation. Kotler et al. [14] determine three main segmentation criteria categories: geographic, demographic, psychographic and behavioural. Geographic segmentation requires the division of market into different geographical units such as nations, states, regions, countries, towns or districts. Demographic segmentation means dividing the market into groups according to age, gender, sexual orientation, family size, income, occupation, education, religion etc. Demographic variables are the most popular basis for segmenting of customer groups. Psychographic variables identify individuals' attitudes, opinions and interests to build up a lifestyle profile that includes the consumer's consumption patterns. Thus these profiles are inextricably associated with specific purchasing behaviour. Behavioural variables relate to the behaviour of the consumer. Thus behavioural factors such as benefits sought, usage and the purchase occasion all come under this category. Profile variables are used to characterize the consumer but in terms that are not expressly linked to, or predictive of, an individual's behaviour in the specific market.

There are different methods and techniques to identify market segments, both the acquisition, the analysis and interpretation of data. The basic deductive methods useful for market segmentation include marketing reports and content analysis. Marketing reports provide information about the external environment of the company. The source of this information represents secondary sources, various newsletters, magazines, newspapers, media, internet, statistical data, informal contacts, etc. [17] According to Koudelka [16] content analysis is used primarily for analysis of public documents. There is the analysis of the recorded information in the next phase of this method.

In the case of inductive segmentation there is the use of secondary and especially primary information. Secondary information, if they exist, often do not provide suitable connection between the group of demographic variables and group of other traditional variables. Primary information are decisive segmentation data for many companies. They have a great advantage in the validity of the data. The problems are mainly with the representativeness of the sample and the tailored-made marketing research projects are quite expensive. The method of questioning is mainly used within the primary investigation.

Further, statistical analysis methods that are most commonly applied for analysis at various stages of the market segmentation process, can be mentioned. This is a cross tabulation, analysis of variance, factor analysis and cluster analysis. Gorsuch [10, p. 2] states that the purpose in using factor analysis is the aim to summarize the interrelationships among the variables in a concise but accurate manner as an aid in conceptualization. This is often achieved by including the maximum amount of information from the original variables in as few derived variables, or factors, as possible to keep the solution understandable. According to Brown [2, p. 10] the fundamental intent of factor analysis is to determine the number and nature of latent variables or factors that account for the variation and covariation among a set of observed measures, commonly referred to as indicators. Specifically, a factor is an unobservable variable that influences more than one observed measure and that accounts for the correlations among these observed measures. In other words, the observed measures are intercorrelated because they share a common cause. If the latent construct is partialled out, the intercorrelations among the observed measures will be zero. Thus factor analysis attempts a more parsimonious

understanding of the covariation among a set of indicators because the number of factors is less than the measured variables.

Nowadays, marketers cannot afford to take the risk of failing to communicate effectively with their target segments. Marketing and marketing communications mix are changing. New insights, new tools, new opportunities and new challenges are emerging as the 21st century progresses. Marketing has moved from customer acquisition through customer retention towards customer selection. This is sometimes called as adverse selection. [27]

In practical terms, the process of communicating with consumers and customers (target segment) is called marketing communication [13, p. 1-2]. According to Fill [8, p. 17] Marketing communication is a critical aspect of a company's overall communication mission and a major determinant of its success in a market. Marketing communication is a management process through which an organisation engages with its various audiences. By understanding an audience's communications environment, organisations seek to develop and present messages for its identified stakeholder groups, before evaluating and acting upon the responses. By conveying messages that are of significant value, audiences are encouraged to offer attitudinal and behavioural responses.

Marketers try to improve their communications effectiveness by taking an integrated marketing communication approach and by managing the marketing communication strategy [13, p. 1-2]. Integrated marketing communication is really all about planning in order to deliver consistent message. Effective integrated marketing communication should certainly encourage strong customer relationship, but it does that through effective planning in order to develop an integrated communication programme that will optimize specific communication objectives that lead to a desired behaviour on the part of the target audience. [24]

The integrated marketing communication has been defined in a number of ways, stressing various aspects, benefits and organizational consequences of IMC. According to Kotler [15] the IMC solution calls for recognizing all contact points where the customer may encounter the company, its products, and its brands. Each brand contact will deliver a message, either good, bad, or indifferent. The company must strive to deliver a consistent and positive message at all contact points. Shimp and Andrews [25, p. 12] claims that integrated marketing communication is coordination of the marketing communication mix elements with each other and with the other elements of the brands' marketing mix (product, price, place) such that all elements speak with one voice. Duncan [5] describes integrated marketing communication as process for managing customer relationships that drive brand value.

The various definitions incorporate the same core idea: communications instruments that traditionally have been used independently of each other are combined. The major benefit of IMC is that a consistent set of messages is conveyed to all target audiences by means of all available forms of contact and message channels. [23, p. 8] Integrated marketing communication is a goal worth pursuing because using multiple communication tools in conjunction with one another can produce greater results than tools used individually and in an uncoordinated fashion. There is a synergistic effect of using multiple well-coordinated marcom tools. [25]

The marketing communication mix consists of a set of tools that can be used in various combinations and different degrees of intensity in order to communicate with a target audience. According to Dahln et al. [4, p. 277] the marketing communications mix

provides a menu of communication methods which can be used separately or ideally blended to achieve communication objectives and usually comprise advertising, publicity, sales promotion, packaging and personal selling. Many authors include into marketing communication mix only principal marketing communication tools. Fill [8, p. 20] mentioned five principal marketing communication tools: these are advertising, sales promotion, public relations, direct marketing and personal selling. FitzGerald and Arnott [9, p. 367] also mention five main elements of marketing communications which are advertising, sales promotion, marketing PR/product publicity, sponsorship. But currently there could be also new categories of on-line marketing communication, point-of-purchase displays, outdoor displays, product packages etc.

The balance between marketing communication tools will vary according to the nature of the overall marketing strategy, the characteristics of the product, the resources of the organization and the nature of the target market. Whatever marketing communication mix is chosen, the effectiveness of the communications process depends on the development of a clear and unambiguous message that is presented to the right target audience, at the right time and through the most appropriate medium. [28, p. 225]

At the beginning of the 21st century Czech customers are more critical and seek complex solutions within their purchasing decisions. Customers look for significant information and the result is the growing importance of interactive media. Due to the current communication technology the customer and the seller are again in direct relation. [3, p. 97] Technologies such as the convergence of the internet, mobile devices, and traditional channels are changing the way companies use marketing tools to communicate with their customers [1]. Marketing integrated communications become electronic, digital, mobile, viral, etc. Companies look for new communication methods and concepts to reach their target groups better. Today we use communication projects that use a variety of new non-traditional media and tools, which can include, for example, guerilla marketing, ambient media, DRTV, mobile marketing, viral marketing, product placement, ambush marketing and other.

Marketing communication via the internet (on-line marketing communication) is gaining importance due to the constant changes and dynamic environment, globalization, but also the development and greater use of new technologies. Sun [26, p. 5] states that online sales, online purchasing, trading electronic is undoubtedly much easier to businesses, to facilitate the consumer. Marketing results was constricted by the level of business and customer communication, and e-commerce created good conditions of effective and efficient communication between the two sides. Undoubtedly the most used Internet contact with customers is the website, e-mail and social media. According to Karlíček and Král [11, p. 182] the social media can be said as the biggest change since the industrial revolution. "On-line social media can be defined as open interactive online applications that support the formation of informal user networks." Fill [8, p. 364] defines social media as a group of Internet based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content. Killian and McManus [12, p. 540] state that the viral nature of social media offers a great opportunity to brand managers who wish to gain positive traction through word of mouth. Unfortunately for brand managers, this same word of mouth can be detrimental to the brand image when consumers feel they have been mistreated.

As global markets are expanding and digital technology is transforming the way organizations communicate with their customers, the importance of communication integration is impossible to ignore. The development of digital technology, the increase

of the role of stakeholders in an organization, the growth of competition in the global marketplace, as well as globalization itself, has created a new communication environment not only within organizations but in the society as a whole. [6]

2 Methods

In order to analyse and describe the segment of Czech singles in the context of marketing communications, we conducted primary research using data from an online questionnaire conducted in July 2015. Firstly we analysed if singles have recognised the effect of certain marketing communication tools (MCT) on their buying behaviour. In other words, what they found most persuasive when buying. Twelve closed questions were asked about MCT effects. Respondents were allowed to answer on Likert scale to express their opinions from Extremely to Not at all. Then the following part explains patterns relating to the marketing communication tools employing exploratory factor analysis (EFA). Factor analysis has numerous applications in marketing research [19]. In this case it is a data reduction through identification of underlying factors without losing any informational value of the data.

Sample initially consisted of 315 responses. These were obtained all around the Czech Republic among singles living voluntarily alone. Participants were contacted by private company providing online data collection through an email database. They filled the data through self-administrated online questionnaire. To match the sample with typological description of the unit of our interest we specified segmentation criteria of participants as single living and financial independent customers.

In any type of survey research, inattentive or careless responses are a concern [21]. We checked the sample for careless responses eliminating 6 respondents who provided answers with zero standard deviation. On 12 item questionnaire it is nearly impossible to provide such indifferent answers and therefore these responses were deleted from the sample resulting in 309 respondents taken for further analysis. Since there are no exact information about population of singles and sample cannot be chosen statistically at random, we used non-probability sampling. According to Mundfrom et al. [22] minimum sample size for conducting factor analysis based on the communalities and variables-to-factor ratio is 260.

Inability to find the singles within the population is extremely repellent for researchers since the segment changes dynamically over time. However, these studies provide valuable information even from the sample characteristics. What is the structure of singles? Who dominates this segment by a socio demographic characteristics? How does it change over time? These are valuable by-products. In this research, female slightly prevailed in the sample. Singles with high school with GCSE dominated and also those aged 26-35 years (Tab. 1). Minimum age was 18, maximum 60 years and the average was 34.12.

Tab. 1: The basic characteristic of the sample

| | | Frequency (n) | Percent (%) |
|------------------|-----------------------|---------------|-------------|
| Gender | Male | 149 | 48.2 |
| | Female | 160 | 51.8 |
| Age | <25 | 83 | 26.9 |
| | 26-35 | 94 | 30.4 |
| | 36-45 | 73 | 23.6 |
| | 46-55 | 45 | 14.6 |
| | >56 | 14 | 4.5 |
| Education | Elementary school | 36 | 11.7 |
| | High school | 98 | 31.7 |
| | High school with GCSE | 117 | 37.9 |
| | University | 58 | 18.8 |

Source: Authors

As Table 2 shows, respondents came from all over the Czech Republic. Prague, Central Bohemia, South Moravia and Moravia-Silesia Region were dominant and also cities with population over 100 001 had the largest representation.

Tab. 2: The characteristic of the sample by region and city

| | | Frequency (n) | Percent (%) |
|---------------------------|------------------|---------------|-------------|
| Region | Ústí nad Labem | 21 | 6.8 |
| | South Bohemia | 19 | 6.1 |
| | South Moravia | 35 | 11.3 |
| | Karlovy Vary | 9 | 2.9 |
| | Hradec Králové | 16 | 5.2 |
| | Liberec | 15 | 4.9 |
| | Moravia-Silesia | 34 | 11.0 |
| | Olomouc | 17 | 5.5 |
| | Pardubice | 16 | 5.2 |
| | Plzeň | 15 | 4.9 |
| | Prague | 45 | 14.6 |
| | Central Bohemia | 37 | 12.0 |
| | Vysočina | 14 | 4.5 |
| | Zlín | 16 | 5.2 |
| | < 1 000 | 47 | 15.2 |
| City by population | 1 001 - 5 000 | 61 | 19.7 |
| | 5 001 - 20 000 | 49 | 15.9 |
| | 20 001 - 100 000 | 70 | 22.7 |
| | > 100 001 | 82 | 26.5 |

Source: Authors

3 Problem solving

Looking at the mean in the Table 3, MC1 recommendations (1.98) are perceived most persuasive from all the marketing communication tools. Despite all the positive impacts of technology, internet and social media and its importance in marketing communication, our findings show strange and alarming results. MC5 Mobile advertising (4.28) through

SMS and MMS is the least persuasive. MC3 Internet banners (3.61) and MC4 Social networks promotion (3.69) score similarly. Interestingly, MC8 TV, Radio and Print advertising (3.26), considered traditional media channel, have better overall mean than these two new media. MC2 promotional events (3.77) within the shops and public space were also evaluated as not persuasive despite the fact that singles seek active lifestyle and spend a lot of time outside their homes.

Tab. 3: Frequency table of the answers

| | Mean | Extremely (1) | Mostly (2) | Sometimes (3) | Rarely (4) | Not at all (5) | Median | Mode | Std. Deviation |
|----------------------------|------|------------------|------------|------------------|-------------|-------------------|--------|------|-------------------|
| | | % | % | % | % | % | | | |
| MC1 Recommendation | 1.98 | 37.5 | 36.2 | 19.1 | 4.9 | 2.3 | 2 | 1 | 0.983 |
| MC2 Event | 3.77 | 4.2 | 8.7 | 26.2 | 27.5 | 33.3 | 4 | 5 | 1.129 |
| MC3 Internet banners | 3.61 | 2.6 | 9.1 | 33.7 | 34 | 20.7 | 4 | 4 | 0.996 |
| MC4 Social networks | 3.69 | 3.2 | 10.4 | 27.5 | 32.4 | 26.5 | 4 | 4 | 1.073 |
| MC5 Mobile advertising | 4.28 | 0.6 | 2.9 | 13.9 | 32.7 | 49.8 | 4 | 5 | 0.858 |
| MC6 Newsletter | 3.77 | 1 | 9.4 | 28.5 | 34 | 27.2 | 4 | 4 | 0.985 |
| MC7 POP | 2.95 | 9.7 | 25.6 | 33.7 | 22 | 9.1 | 3 | 3 | 1.108 |
| MC8 TV, Radio and Print | 3.26 | 6.5 | 14.9 | 38.8 | 25.6 | 14.2 | 3 | 3 | 1.081 |
| MC9 Competitions and sales | 2.56 | 19.1 | 28.5 | 34.3 | 13.6 | 4.5 | 3 | 3 | 1.084 |
| MC10 Print flyers | 2.76 | 14.2 | 27.5 | 33.7 | 17.5 | 7.1 | 3 | 3 | 1.118 |
| MC11 Billboards | 3.97 | 1.3 | 4.2 | 22.3 | 40.8 | 31.4 | 4 | 4 | 0.908 |
| MC12 Loyalty programs | 2.77 | 14.9 | 27.2 | 30.7 | 20.1 | 7.1 | 3 | 3 | 1.143 |

Source: Authors

On our way to conduct EFA, all twelve items were tested for reliability by Cronbach's alfa with the option to show the reliability if item was deleted. MC1 Recommendation identified as one candidate for deletion was excluded from subsequent EFA. The reason is twofold. First the measures of reliability and second our previous research. Recommendation, not only most popular among singles, always tend to form separate category or factor. Both arguments are complementary, since it confirms that MCT1 measure slightly different thing than the rest of the scale.

Consequently, we used Bartlett's Test of Sphericity to verify correlation in the data set. The computed value of χ^2 distribution (1098.805) indicates p-value of 0.000. Therefore we can conclude that there are correlations between variables. Then we conducted Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test to indicate appropriateness of factor analysis application.

Value of the KMO measure of sampling adequacy is 0.868. Minimum value for this test is 0.5 [19]. In conclusion both tests showed that the data are suitable for conducting EFA. We measured reliability of the scale by Cronbach's alfa test which showed satisfactory value of 0.850.

For a factor extraction we conducted Kolmogorov-Smirnova and Shapiro-Wilk tests to identify how the data are distributed. Results showed significant non-normal distribution. Therefore the principal axis factors extraction method has been conducted. For a rotation of the factors we used Oblique-rotation method (Direct Oblimin). Matsunaga [20] suggests that any exploratory factor analysis should employ an oblique-rotation because almost all phenomena that are studied in social sciences are more or less interrelated to one another and complete orthogonal relationships are practically rare. Number of factors has been determined based on Kaiser criteria, where components with eigenvalue over 1 are included. Two factors were identified and the distribution of variables on each factor is showed in EFA Pattern matrix in Table 4. All coefficients below 0.35 were manually suppressed for better visual interpretation of the factor loadings.

Tab. 4: EFA Pattern matrix

| | Factor | |
|---|--------|-------|
| | 1 | 2 |
| MC4 Social networks | 0.777 | |
| MC11 Billboards | 0.747 | |
| MC3 Internet banners | 0.744 | |
| MC5 Mobile advertising | 0.666 | |
| MC8 TV, Radio and Print | 0.525 | |
| MC6 Newsletter | 0.434 | |
| MC2 Event | 0.407 | |
| MC9 Competitions and sales | | 0.779 |
| MC12 Loyalty programs | | 0.752 |
| MC7 POP | | 0.520 |
| MC10 Print flyers | | 0.446 |
| Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring. Rotation Method: Oblimin with Kaiser Normalization. | | |

Source: Authors

From a closer look at the variables we can assume that first factor is connected with push forms of marketing communication dominantly used as a form of advertising. Second one is connected with actual value proposition. MC9 Competitions and sales as a category of sales promotion in communication mix are highly effective form of urge call to stimulate sales. The same applies for MC10 Print flyers which are commonly used for messages connected with sales and limited offers. MC7 Point of purchase materials and displays are often used as well for special or limited offers and MC12 Loyalty programs represents another mode of sales promotion. At this point we can clearly identify underlying factors as highly similar to theoretical categorization of communication mix.

Conclusion

The purpose of this article was to describe and explore the segment of singles from marketing point of view. The analysis for the purpose of this paper was based on the number of 309 respondents. The selection of the respondents was restricted to people who

live single and are financial independent. Young singles aged from 26 to 35 prevails in the sample. Considering the education, high school GCSE graduates are the most represented group.

Recommendations have the highest persuasive power for singles. Research also showed high popularity of competition and sales, print flyers, loyalty programs, POP. Which all scored below the average of 3. On the opposite scale, events and mobile advertising have been evaluated as the lowest persuasive.

Factor analysis showed underlying latent factors and through its ability of data reduction we were able to divide a marketing communication instruments by two main factors. Our findings demonstrate similarities with categorization of communication mix tools as we know it from theoretical concepts introduced by leading marketing authors.

From a business practice perspective, integrating communication based on factor two will be highly effective when communicating to the segment of singles, since the variables has relatively higher scores on admitted persuasiveness than those loaded into factor one.

The segment of singles is growing yet this development does not always result in positive consequences. As the results from our research implies more and more young people live this life phase. Inspired by the cult of career building some of them expect particularly more from the labour market then the market can offer. Therefore any failure in career development can have impact on one's overall satisfaction as well as on general unemployment particularly in jobs which does not offer great opportunities for career development.

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