

MARKETING COMMUNICATION IN SELECTED E-SHOP

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Abstract: Marketing communication is an important part of any company, as it has impact on customer satisfaction with the products offered. All subjects under review have been operating in the world clothing and fashion market for several years. Effective use of marketing communication of individual subjects was examined using questionnaire survey, structured interviews, SWOT analysis, methods of observation and comparison. The results of the survey showed the importance of using websites as a tool of marketing communication and what shall be done to use them as effectively as possible. The survey identified many strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities and showed that in comparison with other competitive subjects, the situation of the subject under review is the worst, with many problems that need to be solved. In the second case, the subject achieves the best performance, which indicates that its communication with customers is effective and brings the best results, with only a few shortcomings which do not significantly affect the effectiveness of the marketing communication. The results are a contribution for the subjects under review or their competitors. For subjects starting to operate in the same field, this paper can be an inspiration or source of information to raise the awareness of this issue.

Keywords: marketing communication, marketing communication tools, online shopping, social media, SWOT analysis, websites.

1 Introduction

Marketing communication is a universal component of marketing mix (Mamedova, Bezveselnaya, Malakhova, Kozmin, Kornilova, Savinchenko 2019), representing an integral part of any organization, which enables companies to succeed in the saturated market of goods and services and gain competitive advantage. If customers are informed about the specific product or service, they can buy it; however, if companies do not use marketing communication at an adequate level, customers may not have any information about them.

The development of e-commerce increases customer requirements and expectations concerning the quality of the service offered, safety, and general trust in online shopping. Nevertheless, information about products and real experience in brick-and-mortar stores influence the pricing strategy on the internet and customer behaviour in online shopping (Dong, Yang, Shao, Zhong, Li, Qiao 2021). Interest in online shopping is enhanced by reducing key obstacles and increasing trust in e-commerce compared in comparison with other alternatives (Kwarteng, Nabareseh, Pilik 2017). In addition to high awareness, one of the basic functions of the internet is communication and shopping in an entertaining form. Wide deployment of digital technologies and online social networks has revolutionized the way marketers communicate with consumers. The application of various digital platforms and tools of information and communication technologies (e.g. smart phones, social media, mobile apps or electronic billboards) enables organizations to compete with more objective, relational and interactive marketing practices. The adoption of innovative devices and data-based marketing, especially in digital advertising, provides a wide-range and effective reach. As a result, digital marketing launched a creation of well-informed, stronger, and interconnected groups of customers in both real and virtual world (Krishen, Dwivedi, Bindu, Kumar 2021). Marketing communication and tools used by e-shops in trading change quickly together with current trends. Traditional advertising cannot satisfy customer requirements for advertising, which results in user resistance to advertising. This brings great advertising challenges.

The pace of changes is growing and marketing communication must consider these changing effects. Therefore, I must disagree with the conclusion of the research on whether the presence of websites on social networks can be a competitive advantage for any company to certain extent, which was not confirmed (Bacik, Gavurova, Gburová 2017). Currently, companies are making increasing efforts to promote themselves effectively on the internet. Companies operating online need mainly the right presentation for their successful trading. I agree with the

marketing agency INIZIO, which believes that the added value of excellent websites lies in their ability to attract customers and thus bring profit.

The objective of this paper is the evaluation of marketing communication of a selected e-shop. The overall marketing communication of the e-shop is described both in offline and online environment with regard to the changing trends. There will be analysed the tools used in marketing communication of a German e-shop and evaluation of individual communication tools used. To achieve the objective set, the following research questions are formulated:

RQ1: What results does the selected subject achieves in marketing communication by means websites in comparison with its competitors?

RQ2: What levels of effective use of communication tools in marketing communication do individual competitors achieve?

2 Literature review

Market position, identification of target customers, and defining valuable offers are key factors of success. This must be based on deep knowledge of target customers and key stakeholders obtained using traditional methods and analytical big data tools improved by artificial intelligence. In general, such decisions must be based on systematic and objective analysis of developer's skills and strengths of context, and focused on the identification of market segments, where competitive advantage can be obtained using these skills and strengths (Ciaramella, Dall'Orso 2021). Thanks to globalization, many new opportunities and available technologies have appeared, marketing communication has been modernised, and a wide range of business opportunities have been brought to the European single market, which businesses can take advantage of. Changes occur much more often than ever before (Zauskova, Řezníčková 2020). Therefore, it is necessary to find innovative solutions that contribute to achieving the objectives more effectively, create positive changes, or increase the value for customers, in fact improving innovative performance and competitiveness of business.

There are no significant differences in using internet marketing communication tools that would be easier to use and cheaper. Structured interviews show that university marketing managers widely use internet advertising tools, but have difficulty with using marketing tools for public relations and sales promotion (Kisiolek, Karyy, Halkiv 2021). Internet communication have become an efficient and popular tool for market communication, used both for achieving collaborative impact in large-scale marketing campaigns and for carrying out short-term tasks, communication with target audience, maintaining reputation and promotion of the brand.

Using structured interviews, it was found that modern companies often use digital marketing technologies for promoting their products. The purpose is to increase competitive advantages of marketing companies using project management system in digital marketing (Zozulya, Titova, Ciric 2021). Currently, the result in almost all phases of communication is more and more influenced by digital technologies, especially in the internet environment.

It has been specified that digital technologies have already spread even outside the internet space and are currently proactively used in the offline environment, which determines the limits of digital marketing. Keeping up with the situation and being able to make use of it is always difficult, or even impossible for companies. It is not possible if modern methods are not used. A solution which has significantly changed the whole advertising market is program advertising, which enables the best possible adaptation of advertising communication with

consumers (Abaev, Sharkov, Aleshnikova 2021). In marketing communication, it is difficult to separate online and offline advertising channels. Qualitative data collection showed that one of the most effective internet marketing tools is video marketing on social networks (Akhyadov, Goncharov, Makushkin 2020). The communication with consumers uses all possible communication channels based on the customer preferences, despite of the large number of communication channels and diverse consumer requirements.

Social media have become a rich real-time source for various opinion polls and sentiment analyses. The way that envious individuals attribute their failure to undeserved advantages of other people influences the intensity of their malicious envy. Therefore, marketers are recommended to be careful when examining envy as a marketing communication tool a used it only when supposing that consumers will feel benign rather than malicious envy (Ferreira, Botelho 2021). Human emotions depend strongly on sensory perception. The analysis of social media has become a common way to know and understand views, feelings, interests and reactions of people to ongoing events.

Many research results identified social media marketing as a potential tool for reducing marketing costs and increasing efficiency of activities when using online social media platforms (Soeth 2020). The study shows that effective use of social media for marketing communication can arise interest in the brands being advertised or even stimulate the intention for buying the products (Mukherjee 2020). Quantitative research revealed that traditional marketing approaches use media to a large extent, although they are extremely costly for the organizations and are becoming less effective.

Observations have shown that using social media is currently one of the most popular online activities; social media are one of the most widely-used means of communication used almost by everyone. This marketing tool helps online sellers manage their business. In 2018, 2,65 billion people were estimated to use social media all over the world; in 2021, this number is expected to be 3.1 billion, the majority of whom being mostly young people (Ganduri, Reddy 2020). The results of the questionnaire survey showed that marketing communication using social media influences not only consumer interest in buying goods offered by means of social media, such as marketing implemented through Instagram, which is the most frequently visited social network nowadays (Soegoto, Utoma 2019). These results make social media a suitable tool to ensure marketing communication.

Public relations represent a versatile tool for marketing communication, which is widely used by managers in their business activities. It requires knowledge of marketing, journalism, and deep knowledge in the area of the internet. In order to remain competitive, companies must invest in the knowledge and skills of managers so that they are able to upgrade their competencies and manage public relations (Zavadsky, Satanova, Hvizdova 2017). Initially, marketing expert perceived public relation techniques as another tool to grant a greater specific instrumental relevance over time. On the other hand, scholars in the area of public relations tried to separate it from marketing to have an individual position in the area of communication (Fernandez-Souto, Vazquez-Gestal, Ruas-Araujo 2020). Working with public is a priority for management. It should not be just a one-off act but a long-term and well-planned process.

The importance of marketing knowledge is examined in relation to choosing the application of sales supporting tools in order to meet marketing objectives of supply. In the age of digital and holistic marketing, knowledge is a determining factor in consumer decision-making related to buying (Hes, Regnerova 2018). Recent boom of e-shops and network advertising tools clearly showed the power of new technologies and solutions in the area of business and marketing. The application of facilities and services of the internet are proposed to be used to fill in the

gap and obtain further information on customer behaviour and activities in real stores (Chojnacki, Rykowski 2019). The information could be used as a basic input for various marketing tools, including the aforementioned referral systems, instant advertising, promotion, and discounts.

Currently, there are three times as many e-mail accounts, such as Facebook and Twitter accounts. Many leading brands all over the world believe that e-mail is the channel for expanding your business, with SMS as excellent support (Jain, Kumar, Rawat 2018). Many marketing trends come and go, but e-mail and SMS still remain.

To answer the formulated questions, the following selected research methods and techniques are used: study of publicly available internet resources for selected subjects, method of observing communication processes of selected subjects, the method of interviewing using a structured questionnaire. The last methods used is comparison and SWOT analysis, which use the collected information to identify strengths, weaknesses, threats, and opportunities.

3 Material and methods

3.1 Material

For the analysis of marketing communication, sufficient amount of data is gathered in order to apply the selected methods, which enable finding the answers to the research questions. The data for the overall analysis of marketing communication are available on various websites. For data collection, I will use the following websites: eTail Connect, Ecommerce Germany news, Corporate.AboutYou, Jobs.smartrecruiters, LiveHire, MediaGuru, and Youtube channels belonging to online stores. All websites used contain the information about marketing communication of e-shops A, B and C.

The success of marketing communication created by them is examined based on the number of people who express their opinion by clicking on "like" as well as based on positive and negative comments. Moreover, there will be used the direct click-through rate, number of re-tweets, number of readers, reviews, visits to e-shops, participants in events, or number of products bought.

For the purpose of the paper, a group of ca. 300 respondents actively shopping in these stores, which will be selected from my Facebook friends. The respondents are at the age of 20 – 50 years. I will try to get feedback on whether and how they perceive the e-shop's attempts for marketing communication, and whether they feel influenced by this communication.

The questionnaire will be created using the website survio.com and I will try to make the online structured questionnaire as interesting for the respondents as possible. I will use 20 closed filtration questions, which will be responded using compiled answers. In the introduction of the questionnaire, the respondents are politely addressed and asked to fill in the questionnaire, the contents and purpose are clearly presented, and the respondents are provided with the instructions on how to fill it in, along with the specification on the approximate time necessary to fill it in.

As for the structure of the questions, the first part of the questionnaire contains a few filtration questions focused on the specification of the customers of online shops and in which online store they shop most often. Thanks to the same number of male and female respondents, it will be possible to find out who uses these services most often. The questions need to be interesting in order to attract the attention of the respondents. The following part includes 17 key questions that will specify which market communication the respondents encounter most often, which one they would appreciate if dissatisfied, how they perceive it or whether they even feel influenced by it.

In addition, I will find out whether the respondents perceive any promotion of the given e-shops on the networks mediated by influencers and what is their attitude to this means of communication. These questions, however, require more focus on responding. The final part of the questionnaire will contain less important questions. Finally, I will thank the respondents for the time they dedicated to filling in the questionnaire and mention the way they can contact me.

Communication with e-shop managers was using e-mail addresses, mostly in English. This allowed me to obtain information that could not be included in the questionnaire. The results obtain will be analysed in order to find out whether the communication channels are used effectively or not.

3.2 Methods

After gathering the data collected by means of studying communication channels and websites of individual e-shops, the level of their communication is compared. The comparison focuses on the evaluation on technical, content, and formal aspects of the web.

The method of comparison of the monitored competing subjects enables the detection of problems, comparison of website traffic, which is carried out using key words and Google Analytics or Omniture. These tools are used to analyse the information on web users and sources through which the users get to the communication channels of the given e-shops. This analysis shows the behaviour of users, performance indicators, or the effects of potential website modifications. The Google Ads advertising system provides information on using keywords, performance, or potential webs. The loading speed of websites is one of the technical factors, which plays a role in whether the customers will or will not visit the website. This can be carried out using the WebPageTest or Pingdom, which provide the information on the loading and suggest how to optimise the loading speed.

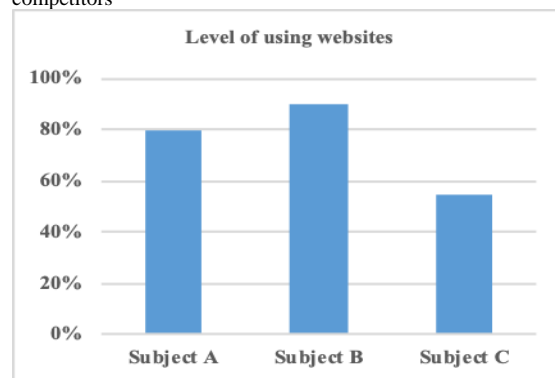
Available reviews on the selected e-shops will be analysed in terms of the customer satisfaction of the services offered and used means of communication.

Based on the data obtained by means of studying electronic channels and data from the questionnaire survey, SWOT analysis will be performed and the findings on strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of marketing communication and their amount for individual e-shops will be compared with other competitors.

4 Results

First, Google Analytics was used for data collection. All three subjects and their websites were analysed using this application, which provided me with the information on which company uses its websites effectively and which one does not, or which website modifications affected marketing communication. Graph 1 shows a comparison of all three subjects and the level of using their websites (in percentage).

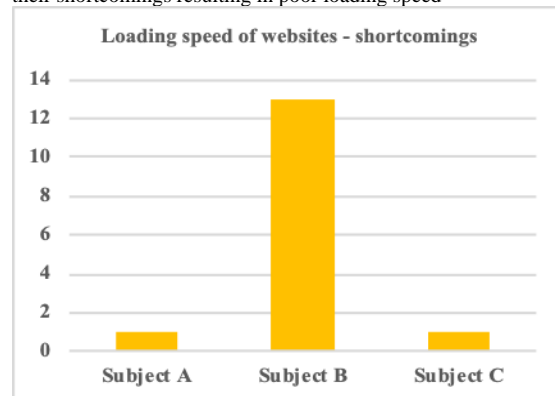
Graph 1: Comparison of using websites by individual competitors



Source: Author.

The following part of the research focused on the effectiveness of consumer websites, mainly on their loading speed, since low loading speed may discourage customers from visiting the given website. Due to its availability on the internet, WebPageTest was used, as using its services is free. This way it is possible to obtain the information of web's efficiency for all e-shops being compared. The overall loading speed was determined based on the data obtained, specifically their average. The comparison is shown in Graph 2, which also presents the security score, first time byte, compression of transfer, compression of images, static content caching, efficient use of CDN, and the so-called keep-alive request.

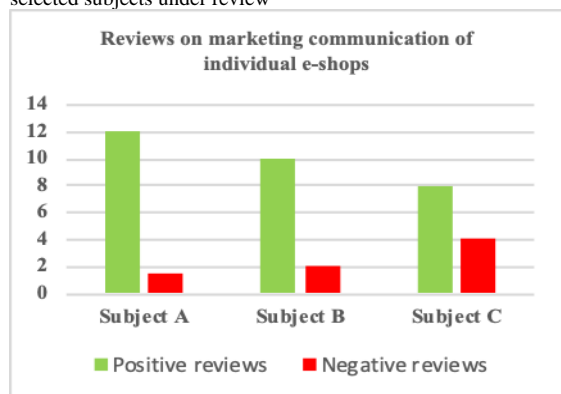
Graf 2: Comparison of individual websites of the subjects and their shortcomings resulting in poor loading speed



Source: Author.

Publicly available reviews play an important role in customer decision-making concerning the use of the given e-shops. However, I will not attach particular importance to them, as it is not clear whether potential positive or negative reviews are based on real experience. On the websites of the given e-shops, I found reviews concerning marketing communication and tools used. The lowest number of reviews was found for Subject C; therefore, the same number of reviews had to be considered for Subjects A and B, starting from the latest date of their publication. By comparing the reviews of individual subjects, it was found that Subject A has the highest number of positive reviews and the lowest number of negative ones; it can thus be considered the most successful subject in terms of positive and negative reviews. Graph 3 below shows the number of positive and negative reviews to the used marketing communication to the overall number of 14 reviews considered. Another possible direction of the research can be aimed at reviews focused on defamation of e-shops, adoration from anonymous users, or so-called fake reviews.

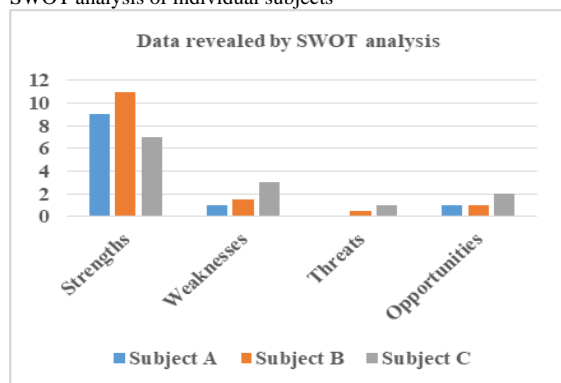
Graph 3: Comparison of positive and negative reviews on selected subjects under review



Source: Author.

The final part of the research is based on the data obtained using the questionnaire survey. A total of 154 respondents participated in the survey, all of them being active customers of the given e-shops. For these responses, SWOT analysis was used to identify strengths and weaknesses of marketing communication, as well as potential threats and opportunities. The results of this analysis were compared using the comparison method, which showed that the results of Subject B are the best in terms of all the SWOT analysis data, while Subject C has the highest number of opportunities for improving its marketing communication and thus increase better awareness of the brand.

Graph 4: Comparison of amount of data obtained through SWOT analysis of individual subjects



Source: Author.

5 Discussion of results

Based on the data and findings obtained, it is possible to answer the research questions formulated in the introduction.

Which results does the selected subject achieve in the marketing communication using websites compared to its competitors? Subject B achieves the best results in terms of the level of websites effectiveness. Specifically, its websites are used to 91 %, with only a small number of detected shortcomings. No website modifications have been in the last six months; therefore, I was not able to detect any positive or negative effects on the marketing communication. The results of subject are very close to Subject B. In contrast, the comparison of results shows that the effectiveness of using websites is relatively low in the case of Subject C; however, thanks to website modifications in the last year, it has grown to more than 50 %. The success rate increased by 23 % (to 68 %). This shows that Subject C started to update regularly its websites, focusing more on the customer wishes and needs. The websites have been redesigned to improve their clarity make shopping easier and faster for customers. Several premium brands have been added, such as GAP or Tamaris; in terms of sizes, "over size" category has been added and in commercials, plus-size models now appear.

This research includes world-famous, foreign, large enterprises with similar marketing communication and similar orientation on clothing and fashion market. The results show that websites have a great influence on customers, which is also confirmed by Daries, Cristoval-Fransi, Ferrer-Rosell (2021) in their research focused on the existence of websites of golf courses in Catalonia and to which extent their customers are influenced by them.

Free internet application WebPageTest provided the information on the loading speed of the given e-shops' websites and the results helped answer the first research question. A Score 1+ is the best rating which can be achieved in the test. Subject A was identified as a subject with the best results in the website loading speed. The total security score was 4, first time byte was 1, the score of requests with keep-alive option not enabled was 1. The score of transfer compression was 1, image compression 2, static content caching 4, effective use of CDN 6. The subject thus achieves the lowest results, but the effective use of CDN is activated. In the last case, Subject C achieves the same average results as Subject A. The security score was 6, which is the lowest score of all subjects under review. First byte time was 1, keep-alive 1, transfer compression 1, image compression 1, static content caching 3. Subject C, however, does not use the effective use of CDN, which is one of the biggest shortcomings that need to be solved, as it enables to increase the website loading speed to the maximum. What should Subject B focus on to improve its ratings? It is definitely the security score, which is very high, as well as the first time byte and static content caching. Focusing on solving these shortcomings would significantly increase the website loading speed and could ensure the satisfaction of all customers who visit the given e-shop's websites.

Finally, this research question concerns also positive and negative reviews publicly available on the given e-shops' websites. In terms of the ratio of positive and negative reviews, the research revealed that Subject A achieves the best results, while Subject C the worst ones. Reviews on the e-shops are thus another issue that needs to be dealt with; customer needs should be met even beyond expectation and thus achieve the best reviews. Available reviews often influence customers when they decide on whether to use the given e-shop or not.

Marketing communication of companies is currently about the communication by means of digital technologies; it is very important and essential for the company. The same conclusion was made by Mamedova, Bezveselnaya, Malakhova, Kozmin, Kornilovi and Savinchenko (2019). Marketing specialists should focus on all aspects that influence the communication with their customers by means of websites and strive for achieving the best results, keeping up with the times and fast-changing trends.

What levels of effective use of communication tools in marketing communication do individual competitors achieve? On the basis of the aforementioned data, I expected Subject C to have the worst results, which was confirmed. The questionnaire survey and structured interviews with the managers brought enough information about the marketing communication and it was thus possible to carry out the aforementioned SWOT analysis, whose results showed that Subject C has the lowest number of strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities that can be used to its advantage.

The answer to the question on the level of effective use of communication tools in marketing communication the individual subjects achieve is thus clear. In terms of effective use of marketing communication, Subject A achieves the best results, followed closely by Subject B. Most shortcomings were recorded in the case of Subject C; these shortcomings need to be resolved.

The research results provided the answers to the formulated research questions. They could be beneficial for the individual subjects that focus on marketing communication and can be an inspiration for research on the level of effective use of marketing communication. Moreover, the results could be beneficial for further research on this issue. Subject C, which was compared

with other subjects in all the aforementioned aspects of communication, is recommended to focus on these shortcomings and increase the public awareness on the brand.

6 Conclusion

The objective of the paper was to analyse the current marketing communication of selected internet e-shops operating in the clothing and fashion market and to answer the research questions formulated in the introduction.

The objective of the paper was achieved. In the chapter Results, all available data were processed and using the comparison methods, the results of the individual competitors were compared in terms of the effective use of websites. Using the average value, the individual websites' loading speed was calculated; there were also mentioned the factors that influence the average values and the results were compared with other subjects. The questionnaire and structured interviews provided the information on the perception of the marketing communication with customers and its use by individual subjects. Subsequently, it was possible to carry out SWOT analysis and comparison of the results obtained, which was presented in Graph 4.

In the previous chapter, Discussion of results, the results obtained were analysed and processed in more detail. I tried to interpret the results and express my view to this issue. I pointed to the strengths of the subjects and also their shortcomings. I made recommendations on what to focus on and what shall be dealt with to improve the communication and achieve better results. Finally, I mentioned the possible benefits of the research results and to whom it may help.

The main research limitation consisted in the fact that the subjects cannot provide information on their costs incurred on marketing communication due to trade secret. Therefore, I could not deal with the issue of funds spent on marketing communication.

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Primary Paper Section: A

Secondary Paper Section: AH

Annexes

Annex 1

Questionnaire survey on marketing communication of selected e-shops

Dear Sir or Madam,
 within my study at the Institute of Technology and Business in České Budějovice, I carry out a questionnaire survey focused on marketing communication of selected e-shops, which is necessary for my seminar work in the course of Methodology of Diploma Work. I would like to ask you for filling in a short anonymous questionnaire with 20 questions. Please select and circle one option only for each question. Filling in the questionnaire should not take more than 15 min.

I also ask you to relate your answers to the period before the COVID-19 pandemic.

- 1) **What is your gender?**
 - Man
 - Woman
- 2) **Which age group do you belong to?**
 - 15 – 20 years
 - 21 – 25 years
 - 26 – 35 years
 - 36 – 45 years
 - 45 and older
- 3) **Which group of respondents do you belong to?**
 - Secondary school student
 - University student
 - Employee
 - Unemployed
- 4) **Which region do you live in?**
 - The City of Prague
 - Central Bohemian Region
 - South Bohemian Region
 - Pilsen Region
 - Karlovy Vary Region
 - Ústí nad Labem Region
 - Liberec Region
 - Hradec Králové Region
 - Pardubice Region
 - Vysočina Region
 - South Moravian Region
 - Olomouc Region
 - Zlín Region
 - Moravian-Silesian Region
- 5) **In which e-shop do you like to shop?**
 - Zalando
 - AboutYou
 - Zoot
- 6) **How often do you shop in these e-shops?**
 - Once a week
 - Once a month
 - Once a year
 - Less often
- 7) **What is the average amount of money you spent per shopping?**
 - Less than 500 CZK
 - More than 500 CZK
 - More than 1,000 CZK
 - More than 2,000 CZK
 - More than 5,000 CZK
- 8) **Where do you most often encounter this communication?**
 - On TV
 - On the internet
 - On social networks
 - On billboards
 - On the radio
 - In leaflets
- 9) **Are you satisfied with this marketing communication?**
 - Yes
 - No
 - I don't know
- 10) **If you evaluate marketing communication rather negatively, choose the most relevant reason:**
 - Negative influence of advertising
 - Promotion of alcohol or other types of addiction
 - Social irresponsibility
 - Youth abuse
 - Promotion of sex
 - Manipulation with people
 - Imposing views
- 11) **How do you perceive the influence of marketing communication?**
 - Positively
 - Negatively
 - I don't know
- 12) **How can a commercial arouse your interest?**
 - Inventiveness, originality
 - Humour
 - Music – If I like the music, I watch the whole commercial
 - Not possible, I never watch commercials
- 13) **Where do you think the influence of advertising is the strongest?**
 - On TV
 - On means of transport
 - On the internet
 - In the street
 - In shops
- 14) **Are you influenced by marketing communication when shopping?**
 - Yes
 - No
 - I don't know
- 15) **Do you encounter promotion of brand by means of influences on social networks?**
 - Yes
 - No
 - I don't know
- 16) **Are you satisfied with this type of promotion?**
 - Yes
 - No
 - I don't know
- 17) **Do you visit the websites of the aforementioned e-shops?**
 - Yes

No

18) In general, are you satisfied with their websites?

- Yes
 Ne
 I don't know

19) Are you satisfied the search there in terms of the clarity and loading speed?

- Yes
 No
 I don't know

20) How does this website meet your expectations?

- 20 %
 50 %
 80 %
 100 %

Thank you for your time and answers

If you are interested in the topic of this questionnaire and wish to contact me, please use the email danamadzarova@survio.com.