

# Marketing communication of a business subject on the consumer electronics market during covid-19 pandemic

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## Abstract

Most successful companies have established effective marketing communication as a useful tool for selling their products to customers. The research explored the ways of communication of a selected internet subject, its methods of addressing customers and how effective the communication of the specific enterprise is not only during covid19 pandemic. We carried out a SWOT analysis, conducted a questionnaire survey and made detailed comparisons. The results showed that the enterprise uses various communication tools to their maximum potential. The submitted outcomes may be beneficial to individual subjects, with the view to exploring the future trends in the marketing communication of the consumer electronics market. It will also give feedback to individual subject which areas of their communication is worth keeping the same and which ones are meant to be worked on in the future. The analysis also revealed that continuous monitoring of the competition is imperative for companies to move forwards. On the other hand, the research is confined to examining the consumer electronics market only during Covid19 pandemic, which means that the achieved results would be radically different from when the world comes back to normal.

**Keywords:** marketing communication; e-shop; consumer electronics market; online marketing; online marketing communication tools; Covid19

## Introduction

The presented research deals with e-shop marketing communication during Covid19 pandemic. Marketing communications are considered as a process of transmitting information to the target audience that updates all the components of this connection. (Kazanskaya and Kotelnikov, 2020). Online environment favours advertisement,

promotion, public relations, e-mailing or social network marketing. These strategic instruments feature both – pros and cons (Prymon, 2013).

To keep customers satisfied, we need to establish good communication, besides other things. It involves pre-purchase and after purchase services, such as appointing shopping assistants to handle complaints (Mašíňová and Švandová, 2014). Customers' requirements related to the purchase itself should always be dealt with and fulfilled by the appointed personnel.

Online marketing has been witnessing a great consumer boom, as a large number of companies channel their marketing activities predominantly into the digital sphere (Rrustemi, Podvorica and Jusufi, 2020). This is so because consumer behaviour has recently been subject to significant changes, partly due to the millennial generation joining the consumer community. Such an abrupt transition is the most evident by comparing the lifestyle and general characteristics of older generations with peers born into this technological discourse (Escandon-Barbosa et al., 2020).

Covid19 pandemic, which we have been struggling with since last year, was also significantly impactful on marketing communication, compelling enterprises to readily adapt their online marketing strategies to the current situation. The crisis has made a lot of companies and consumers resort to selling and purchasing items via social media (Rrustemi, Podvorica, Jusufi, 2020). Five years ago, people hardly ever bought anything on the internet. Today, the situation is quite different. We can see an increasing number of e-shops and people preferring online purchase. In spite of our reluctant attitude towards this type of purchase in the beginning, nowadays we have been witnessing an increasing number of e-shops and people preferring online purchase. Online shopping has gradually won our trust and has become an integral part of our everyday activities (Kusa and Zazikova, 2018). Moreover, the substantial majority of shops have been closed in the last half-year, so people have had no other choice but to purchase through e-shops. Kucia Mazurek and Kotula (2021) suggest some advantages arising from this situation. Companies can encourage customers in utilizing the online environment and thus assume effective control over the whole process of co-creating values for both – consumers and themselves.

This paper focuses on assessing marketing communication of a selected e-shop. We formulated two reserch questions.

Q1: How does the selected e-shop interact with customers?

Q2: How effective is the communication of this e-shop?

Marketing communication has already been subject to examination using the method of observation and analytical evaluation of websites of hotel chains (Pilar, Slivar and Floricic, 2019). The analysis involved 10 largest European hotel chains assessed by 37 indicators divided into 6 main groups. The research revealed that the internet has become an essential channel of marketing communication. The rapid development of online promotional strategies presents one of the basic elements of success. We can thereby

argue that the internet and online environment has grown in importance in recent years. People much prefer e-shopping to traditional ways of purchasing. Thangavel, Pathak and Chandra (2021) suggest that new generation Z is more eager to online shopping than older age groups. The authors conducted a survey involving 503 respondents using factor analysis of main variables with promax rotation and ANOVA Model. They explored consumers' decision-making processes prevailing in today's generations through the internet. The factor analysis revealed that price, comfort (home) and social viability are the crucial factors of making a purchase.

Our research aimed at identifying basic critical issues relating to an effective use of online marketing tools (Cabiddu et al., 2020). The relevant data were amassed by electronic questionnaires and semi-structured interviews involving 376 respondents. We found out that complexity of individual tools, deficiency in human resources, time and finance, past unsettling experiences and lack of knowledge rank amongst the burning issues of effectively using online marketing tools.

Mobile instant messaging refers to a service using quick sending of messages via mobile applications such as Meebo, Google Talk, BlackBerry or Messenger. This concept was thoroughly analysed by Marino and Lo Presti (2019). Their research monitored the use of mobile service by consumers. The survey focused on how customers view the utility and usefulness of this new communication channel. The results show that customers regard Mobile instant messaging as an effective tool of customer care.

The research further proved that not all people are fond of communicating via the internet. Portuguese company BRABBU carried out an analysis focused on the communication through social networks by interviewing employees. The research questions was formulated as follows: do people think that social networks help, or prevent business. Rodrigues et al. (2018) suggested that social networks can heavily contribute to good communication, yet they may not fully substitute the human factor. The authors concluded that it is necessary to reach an agreement between younger and older generations.

In the state of Illinois, an online research regarding the use of social media was conducted. The survey involved managers of agricultural markets and special crops cultivators, revealing that Facebook, Instagram and Twitter were the most utilized platforms. This analysis demonstrated that social networks are an essential tool for customer relations, marketing strategies and business promotion (Tao et al., 2020). Social networks, if used as a digital marketing instrument, have great potential to attract people to popular brands, products or services.

Wibowo et al. (2021) explored the influence of social media on marketing communication. The study comprised 413 online questionnaires which were further analysed and assessed by SmartPLS 3 – professional statistical software with graphic user interface for modelling structural equations using partial least square path modelling. The results showed that the marketing activity on social networks and customers' experiences are highly impactful on the customer relationship quality and satisfaction.

Rajkovic et al. (2021) proved that social media creates consumers' loyalty to the company. The authors carried out research amongst social network users in Beograd, determining social networks as a key instrument of online communication. The amassed data were processed by covariance structural equation modelling. The analysis proved that social media offer space for creating loyalty to a company and trust between consumers. The outcomes also indicate a correlation between loyalty and purchasing purposes, both relating to the consumer's willingness to be informed.

Youtube has become the largest global communication channel of digital video information and communication technology. It is a number-one worldwide distribution channel via which companies target their brands to younger markets using effective marketing communications (Duffett, 2021). The study focused on detecting the influence of the marketing communication through Youtube based on traditional attitudinal relationships. The research involved multistage method of collecting a sample and structural equation modelling. The survey found out that Youtube marketing communication had a favourable impact on all conventional attitudinal relationships.

The product price, credibility of the website and communication with the retailer via chat include the strongest factors affecting the decision on a purchase through an e-shop (Zavadsky, Satanova and Hvizdova, 2017). The survey explored consumers' opinions on the effectiveness of public relations on the internet. The study comprised detailed questionnaires and four hypotheses involving 357 respondents throughout different age and social groups.

Smartphone applications have recently seen a great boom, including games and online streaming in particular. These gaming programs create complex interactive audio-visual online marketing (Liao and Chiu, 2021). The research involved 1020 respondents divided into 3 groups using big data analytics and cluster analysis and association rules. The survey was instrumental in deciphering preferences and principles of individual gamers. With this knowledge, companies tailor offers exactly to these specific needs.

Almost all websites use chatbots, which facilitate communication and customer support (Arsenijevic and Jovic, 2019). Chatbots are designed to solve basic problems, encourage purchase or send online leaflets. The authors carried out research related to behaviour, habits and expectation of respondents using different communication channels. The emphasis was put on carefully monitoring the utility of chatbots. The results indicated that chatbots are best applied providing simple and easy-to-get information. On the drawbacks, respondents fear chatbots which have already disclosed false information. Organizations should thereby consider employing chatbots not only in the event of problems with customer communication, but also to keep up with an increasing number of consumers.

User experience involves techniques and methods for designing websites. This set of behaviors lays out components of the homepage space in a way that is logical and intuitive. User interface comprises the visual aspect of websites including everything that can be seen and worked upon. Kadir et al. (2020) closely investigated these two methods.

Their research involved questionnaires based on the snowball technique to examine knowledge of 30 experts from the design industry and structured interviews with 9 randomly chosen people, to find out their perspectives. The study concluded that 60% of design experts recognize the necessity of this new approach. Understanding user experience has increasingly become a hot issue within the paradigm of the market design, as it helps designers reveal critical factors including user's preferences, context of the use, function of the product and their mutual relationships (Yang et al., 2019). Martin Laudát also confirms the imperative of unconventional approaches to designs in his public lectures.

Kindness in communication goes a long way, as it directly reflects business results (Kemp et al., 2021). The authors analysed endeavours of companies to approach and interact with consumers interviewing their respective owners. The research explored how small enterprises exploit storytelling to interact with customers, boost income and gain reputation. The results show that a good story about their label can raise the product value.

The best method to test the research questions involves data collection from websites of a specific subject. Next, I will use structured questionnaires to assess the selected e-shop and also competing e-shops. The obtained results will be subject to thorough analysis and close comparison.

## **Methods and Data**

First, we will collect data on marketing communication tools used by Subject A for the communication or interaction with customers. The data will be amassed from websites of the selected Subject A, providing the information on particular communication tools employed by Subject A. The same procedure will apply to Subject B, Subject C and Subject D. All the aforementioned entities have penetrated the consumer electronics market to a large extent. The specific naming of the companies is to remain silent about the commercial secret.

The next data-gathering will focus on effective communication of Subject A and other three subjects - B, C and D. This part of the research will aim at the primary data acquisition conducted by a qualitative survey using structured online questionnaires drawn up in Google Formuláře. The questionnaire will contain the information and answers to both research questions and will be filled in by people responsible for long-term marketing communication in given e-shops. We will start by an introductory sentence informing the respondents on the inquiry. Then, we will refer to the amount of time roughly taken by responding, the purpose of the survey and a plea for cooperation. The first part will consist of four filtration questions to verify if competitors of Subject A are to be dealt with. To make a close comparison, it is imperative that these subjects are the actual competitors of Subject A. In order to honestly answer the formulated research questions, we must find out how effective the communication tools of the main Subject A

are. After identification questions have been fully answered, fifteen carefully framed meritorious questions follow, which comprise the crucial part of the research. To give respondents a free hand for answering, all these meritorious queries will remain open. The closing words will include expressing thanks for the cooperation with the presented questionnaire, which we will send via e-mail to people involved in the marketing communication in specific e-shops.

The captured data will be put through SWOT analysis, focusing on strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats of marketing communication tools used by the monitored subjects in the Covid-19 pandemic. First, we will identify strong points and drawbacks of the designated communication tools. Then we will focus on opportunities and threats, all compiled into the SWOT matrix. The systematic analysis will also show the information about the communication effectiveness of the given e-shop.

The synthesis of the information acquired by SWOT analysis and questionnaire survey will allow comparing marketing communication of the monitored competing subjects. The comparison will observe the effectiveness of online communication of the selected e-shops. SWOT analysis and a close comparison will also reveal which enterprise has established the most efficient communication and which tools it applies. In this way, we will be able to recommend the enterprise useful instruments that may boost its effectiveness.

We expect that the communication effectiveness of given e-shops will be almost identical and on a very high level despite the pandemic, as all the enterprises put together expert teams for creating good marketing communication. However, we presume that the detailed comparison of the unique mix of marketing communication of the monitored subjects will indicate which of the designated entities exploits marketing communication to the strongest effect.

## **Results**

The websites of the inspected subjects during Covid19 pandemic provided the information in the first part of the experiment - data collection, which was subsequently interpreted by SWOT analysis. Table 1 suggests strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of marketing communication tools used by Subject A. The entry "Strengths" lists a large number of advantages, mostly including social networks like YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn, followed by telemarketing, e-mailing, mobile marketing, websites, mascots, newsletter, sponsoring, sales support, e.g. special offers, sales, loyalty bonuses, voucher gifts or special offer days such as Black Friday. The entry "Opportunities" involves blogging and "Weaknesses" contains chatbots, whereas the "Threats" listing includes public relations.

Tab. 1: SWOT analysis of marketing communication tools of Subject A

	POSITIVE	NEGATIVE
<b>I N T E R N A L</b>	<b>STRENGTHS</b> - social networks - telemarketing - e-mailing - mobile marketing - sales support - websites - mascot - sponsoring - newsletter	<b>WEAKNESSES</b> - chatbots
<b>E X T E R N A L</b>	<b>OPPORTUNITIES</b> - blogging	<b>THREATS</b> - public relations

Source: Author.

Table 2 suggests that the competing Subject B also exploits strengths from marketing communication technologies, including social networks Facebook, Instagram and YouTube, followed by e-mailing, mobile marketing, websites, mascots, sales support involving special offers and sales, loyalty bonuses, vouchers, gifts and special offer days. The entry also contains public relations, in particular press releases, telemarketing and blogging. Opportunities involve sponsoring, weaknesses record chatbots, and threats encompass newsletter.

Tab. 2: SWOT analysis of marketing communication tools of the internet Subject B

	POSITIVE	NEGATIVE
<b>I N T E R N A L</b>	<b>STRENGTHS</b> - social networks - e-mailing - mobile marketing - websites - mascot - sales support - public relations - telemarketing - blogging	<b>WEAKNESSES</b> - chatbot
<b>E X T E R N A L</b>	<b>OPPORTUNITIES</b> -sponsoring	<b>THREATS</b> - newsletter

Source: Author.

Table 3 shows that Subject C also extensively exploits the strengths of marketing communication tools. On the other hand, we can see some significant weaknesses here as well - chatbot and blogging. The entry “threats” involves mascots, whereas “opportunities” include sponsoring. All the same, as in previous cases, “strengths” list the largest number of things comprising Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, sales support in form of special offers and sales, vouchers, loyalty bonuses and special offer days. Strengths, on the other hand, further contain public relations including press releases, e-mailing, passive telemarketing, mobile marketing, newsletter and websites.

Tab. 3: SWOT analysis of marketing communication tools of the internet Subject C

	<b>POSITIVE</b>	<b>NEGATIVE</b>
<b>I N T E R N E T S T R E N G T H S</b>	<b>STRENGTHS</b>	<b>WEAKNESSES</b>
	- social networks	- chatbot
	- sales support	- blogging
	- public relations	
	- e-mailing	
	- telemarketing	
	- mobile marketing	
<b>E X T E R N A L</b>	<b>OPPORTUNITIES</b>	<b>THREATS</b>
	- sponsoring	- mascot

Source: Author.

Table 4 indicates that the last tested e-shop, the competing Subject D, plays to its strengths as well, including Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, LinkedIn, e-mail marketing, sales support in form of special offers and sales and loyalty bonuses, newsletter, passive telemarketing, public relations involving press releases and websites. Opportunities contain sponsoring. Subject D employs a slightly larger number of tools listed in the negative part of SWOT analysis. Weaknesses involve chatbots and blogging, while threats suggest mobile marketing and mascot.



Tab. 4: SWOT analysis of marketing communication tools of the internet Subject D

	POSITIVE	NEGATIVE
<b>I N T E R N A L</b>	<b>STRENGTHS</b>	<b>WEAKNESSES</b>
	- social networks	- chatbot
	- e-mail marketing	- blogging
	- sales support	
	- newsletter	
	- telemarketing	
<b>E X T E R N A L</b>	<b>OPPORTUNITIES</b>	<b>THREATS</b>
	- sponsoring	- mascot
		- mobile marketing

Source: Author.

The following part of the research included data captured through questionnaires completed by all four addressed competing subjects. We subsequently processed the data using comparative methods.

The answers of the competing subjects revealed roughly parallel portfolios and business size, indicating keen competition even during Covid19 pandemic. Most online communication tools used by Subjects A, B, C and D are suggested in Tables 1-4 and classified according to their nature - strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

The answers of the questionnaire survey showed that all four competing subjects consider their marketing communication as effective, irrespective of the pandemic. The replies regarding the assessment of the effectiveness of the communication tools were rather vague, although hinting that such a measurement takes place. Subject A refers to assessing the effectiveness of communication tools by various techniques, declaring it cannot be reliably measured by only one method as it employs different communication tools. Similar claims were made by the other competing respondents. Above all, Subject B factors in a close comparison of its profit margin. Subject C suggested different methods and techniques of measuring tool effectiveness, pointing out monitoring the impact of the interaction with customers on their attitude adoption. Subject D emphasized an extraordinary variety of techniques and methods with a recent focus on social networks measured by a number of clicks on the link to the respective website. All aforementioned subjects follow different principles of measuring the effectiveness of communication tools, leaving no possibility to reliably identify the best one.

The question how much the specific e-shop spends on on-line marketing communication remained unanswered as it would disclose confidential information which may not be open to the public. Table 5 suggests the data compared according to specific

communication tools considering the profit margin. The list below ranks the communication tools starting with the most useful ones regarding profit margin and ending with the least practical ones.

Tab. 5: Ranking communication tool of individual subjects considering profit margin. The order of communication tools was arranged and evaluated in this way on the basis of the percentage representation of the given tool of the subjects, their acquisition price, and how many customers it roughly affects.

Rank	SUBJECT A	SUBJECT B	SUBJECT C	SUBJECT D
1.	Websites	Sales support	Sales support	Social networks
2.	Mascot	Websites	Social networks	Websites
3.	Sales support	Social networks	Websites	Sales support
4.	Social networks	Mascot	E-mailing	E-mailing
5.	E-mailing	E-mailing	Telemarketing	PR
6.	Telemarketing	Telemarketing	PR	Telemarketing
7.	Newsletter	Mobile marketing	Mobile marketing	Newsletter
8.	Sponsoring	PR	Newsletter	Sponsoring
9.	Mobile marketing	Blogging	Sponsoring	Blogging
10.	Blogging	Sponsoring	Blogging	Chatbot
11.	PR	Newsletter	Chatbot	Mascot
12.	Chatbot	Chatbot	Mascot	Mobile marketing

Source: Author.

## Discussion

Based upon the collected data, We may answer the aforementioned hypotheses.

*How does the selected e-shop interact with customers?*

Subject A interacts with potential or long-standing customers via various communication tools. The strongest ones involve social networks, passive telemarketing, e-mailing, mobile marketing, sales support, websites, mascot, sponsoring, newsletter and blogging. On the other hand, Subject A is threatened by a limited use of public relations, lagging behind its competitors in its content.

*How effective is the communication of this e-shop?*

This question does not provide an easy answer. Neither Subject A, nor its competitors revealed enough information, as it deals with confidential data. Subject A employs various techniques and methods of measuring communication effectiveness regarding a bewildering variety of available marketing communication tools. Overall, all subjects consider their communication approaches as effective. In view of the profit margin of these instruments, websites rank amongst the most efficient ones, displaying their content to the largest number of users. Websites are followed by mascots, sales support,

social networks, e-mailing, telemarketing, newsletter, sponsoring and mobile marketing. As proved by the SWOT analysis, Subject A belongs to the better enterprises interacting with their customers and environment, compared to the other competitors. Namely, the company shares the first place with the competing Subject B, both including the most communication tools in “strengths” entry.

The results may vary depending on different research limits. This analysis involved enterprises from the Czech Republic of similar size, portfolio and with the focus on the consumer electronic market. Covid19 pandemic also plays an essential role. Outside the pandemic, conducted surveys could achieve various results. The back-to-normal situation will require a different communication mix, aiming at a new variety of viable options of interaction with customers, e.g. a stronger representation of out of home advertisement.

Our research showed that social networks constitute the key communication tools within the examined enterprises. Similar results were revealed by Tao et al. (2020). The authors explored the utility of social networks in the state of Illinois using social media including Facebook and Instagram. Duffett (2021) arrived to the same conclusion, pointing to YouTube being the crucial communication channel for enterprises.

The major drawback the research suffers from is the unavailability of confidential data that might be of interest to the public. This secret information involves, for instance, a comprehensive statement on costs associated with the communication mix.

However, there are still burning questions which remain unanswered. These include not only costs and expenses arising from the specific communication mix, but also new challenging issues, e.g. the future development of marketing communication tools of both - the examined subjects and the internet environment. So will we have new and more effective communication instruments in the future?

The experiment confirmed the formulated hypotheses. The research further revealed the most practical on-line communication tools used in the consumer electronics market during Covid19 pandemic. The results may also help the subjects realize which communication tools they should improve on, or be inspired by instruments effectively used by their competitors. We recommend that Subject A should mostly work on chatbots. This improvement could save employees time and effort, providing customers with a quicker response to their frequent questions and problems.

## **Conclusion**

The article explored the channels of communication of a specific e-shop with its customers and whether a particular interaction is effective. By collecting data from the websites and a follow-up SWOT analysis, We found out how the specific e-shop communicates with its customers. To assess the effectiveness of the subject, We processed the information from SWOT analysis and questionnaires filled in by the monitored Subject A and its competitors. Then, We compared the obtained data to confirm the formulated hypotheses. The objective was thereby fulfilled.

The severe deficiency of this research was that inspected subjects remained silent about essential information, which must be kept confidential. For that reason, the enterprises were designated as Subjects A, B, C and D. All these companies fulfilled all requirements: they penetrated the consumer electronics market, came from the Czech Republic, are of similar size and offer the same product portfolio during Covid19 pandemic.

A relevant question which remains unanswered is the allocation of available funds to the enterprises for their marketing communication tools, which is not possible to answer until the companies disclose this confidential information. We will further be able to inspect the development of marketing communication tools in the on-line environment in the consumer electronics market, as contrasted to today's findings. The research also revealed the necessity of carefully monitoring competitors to be knowledgeable about their strategies and together move the development forwards. We must also be sensitive to changes in consumer behaviour and global socio-economic transformations caused by Covid19 pandemic. With the oncoming end of the pandemic, people will prefer to spend more time outside, compensating for the periods of strict lockdowns. Enterprise will thereby have to adapt their communication mix to the out of home advertisement.

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