

MARKETING COMMUNICATION OF BRAND IN THE FINANCIAL SERVICES BUYING PROCESS

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Abstract

Ordinary consumer today can't avoid the offerings of various companies, otherwise it is not even in the financial institutions. Continual growth of financial institutions and their influence on consumer behaviour is significant. These companies are constantly trying to establish the desired awareness and image in the minds of consumers. It means that when the companies want to attract consumers, they should be focusing on building a strong brand, because brands are the interface between consumers and the company. That is why their marketing communications involves mixing and matching different communication options. So, the aim of this paper is to investigate impact of the communications tools and brands of financial institutions on consumer perceptions and behaviour. For achieving this purpose the primary research method was chosen. The analysis was based on the number of 412 respondents. The consumers were questioned about their behaviour within the topic of financial products consumption, the link among the choice of financial institution and brand meaning, consumers' loyalty, the marketing communication tools importance with emphasis on merchandising and sensory marketing. If we take into account the basic criteria when selecting a financial institution and its products, respondents have mentioned a pricing policy, influence of reference groups, physical availability of sales points and image - brand of the financial institution.

Key words:

Brand. Consumer. Marketing communication. Meaningful marketing. Relational perspective.

1 Introduction

The current marketing communication environment is rapidly changing. With the change of the media environment based on the internet, the traditional advertising remains stagnant and the growth of new media advertising is strongly apparent. And, consumer's activeness in the marketing communication process has increased. Also, in this new media environment, the form and the role of advertising become more diverse. In that, the marketing communication environment is quickly progressing, and one of the important trends of the field is placing the significance on the relational perspective between brand (company) and consumer. Thus, the development and strengthening of consumer relation is emphasized as the major role of marketing communication. In the face of the many challenges emerging in the marketing environment, brands offer value in terms of the perceived credibility and trustworthiness of the firm, the ability for messages about the firm's offer to be attended by consumers, for emotional attachment to form between the firm and its stakeholders, and in motivating consumers and customers to purchase and repeat purchase what the firm has to offer.^{1,2} One critical aspect of building strong brands is the ability of the firm to devise ongoing effective marketing communication

¹ AMBLER, T. et al.: *Relating Brand and Customer Perspectives on Marketing Management*. Released on 5th August 2002. [online]. [2016-10-04]. Available at: <<https://faculty.fuqua.duke.edu/~jae6/bio/relating%20brand%20and%20customer%20perspective.s.pdf>>.

² RUST, R. et al.: *Measuring Marketing Productivity: Current Knowledge and Future Directions*. Released on 10th October 2004. [online]. [2016-10-04]. Available at: <http://ink.library.smu.edu.sg/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2252&context=lkcsb_research>.

strategies that ensure the market sees and hears the brand, thereby enabling the development and sustenance of long-term brand value.³

According to Wheeler, the brand plays an important role in leading to help consumer choosing from a variety of choices. It has been pointed out that brands communicates the quality of product or service and build up the confidence of consumers to reassure that they have made the right choice. It is also said that brands create engagement of customers to determine them by unique image, languages and associations.⁴ The aim of this paper is to investigate impact of the communications tools and brands of financial institutions on consumer perceptions and behaviour.

2 Branded communication through branded content

Schultz (1998) has argued that the brand is the very key to integrated marketing. The brand, in increasingly, is the central core or hub of what consumers want, need, and consider to be value. And, it is the brand with which customers and consumers have ongoing relationships. The objective of brand communication has been to expose the audience to a brand, whereby the effect can be maximized in terms of increased awareness and higher recall, so that the customer will buy the brand which has the highest recall; and to satisfy the customer to the optimum level. Any exposure to the brand communication affects consumer response, which can be measured by analysing variables like brand awareness in terms of recall and recognition, favourability, strength and uniqueness of the brand associations in the consumer memory. These dimensions affect other characteristics of brand congruity and relationships among the brand associations in consumer memory for building a positive image.⁵

Defined as "the consumer's overall evaluation of a brand whether good or bad" brand attitudes encapsulate the meaning that consumers attach to brands, which in turn effects their purchasing behaviour.⁶ Branded content is a new form of marketing communication media that unifies conventional distinction between advertising (commercial message) and content (program), and it is distributed as editorial content although it has a commercial purpose. It is an emotional content that triggers consumers' interest, and allows them to connect and consume actively. Presently, branded content is being widely used as the major commercial communication means. The branded content that moves beyond general scale and quality of contents have achieved great success as they made the consumer search for the content

³ LUXTON, S., REID, M., MAVONDO, F.: Integrated Marketing Communication Capability and Brand Performance. In *Journal of Advertising*, 2015, Vol. 44, No. 1, p. 37-46.

⁴ WHEELER, A.: *Designing Brand Identity – an essential guide for the whole branding team*. 4th Edition. New Jersey : John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2013, p. 18.

⁵ PANDA, T. K.: Consumer Response to Brand Placements in Films Role of Brand Congruity and Modality of Presentation in Bringing Attitudinal Change Among Consumers with Special Reference to Brand Placements in Hindi Films. In *South Asian Journal of Management*, 2004, Vol. 11, No. 4, p. 7-19.

⁶ LOW, G. S., LAMB, C. W.: The measurement and dimensionality of brand associations. In *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 2000, Vol. 9, No. 6, p. 350-368.

themselves and willingly focus on the message.⁷ The prime purpose of branded content is to create a natural exposure. The contents are produced to be distributed through unpaid media channels, where, in this case, the brand becomes its own publisher. On the other hand, the content itself might have the viral capacity to earn media coverage and voluntary word-of-mouth amongst bloggers and internet users.⁸

Accordingly, branded content has an effective force to expose brand message to the consumer. Conventional advertisements are placed among the contents (program). Thus, consumers are passively exposed to brand related messages. Whereas, in regard to branded content, the brand related message is infused into the contents of what customers want to see or listen. Meaning, the contents that consumers want to see and the brand message are combined together. In that, unlike the previous ways of viewing advertisements, consumers are willingly engaging with a brand message. Therefore, in the present day where exposing advertising message to consumer are becoming harder, branded content increases recognition effect by raising the exposure possibility of brand message.⁹

In a broader sense, branded content is viewed under the same context as the new marketing phenomenon, which is the 'fusion of non-commercial contents and commercial contents'. For example, in a conventional advertising environment, the non-commercial contents and commercial contents had a clear demarcation, such as, in TV, there was a strict division between programs and advertisements and, in newspaper, it distinguished editorials from advertisement sections. However, the distinctions between non-commercial contents and commercial contents are being blurred in the new advertising environment.¹⁰ The reason behind this contemporary fusion of non-commercial contents and commercial contents are as follows; the contraction of conventional advertising that were centred on the four traditional types of medias, the fact that the consumers are trying to avoid advertisement and the technological development is making this avoidance possible, and the fact that the general exposure of advertisement is difficult because of the emergence of versatile media. In order to overcome these obstacles, the advertisers and advertising agencies tried to infuse commercial messages into contents. Another key factor that caused the fusion of non-commercial and commercial contents was to raise brand image by merging consumer's favoured contents with a brand's message.¹¹

As discussed above, branded content has numerous differences from traditional marketing communication means, and, in regard to advertising effect, it has qualities that the conventional platforms does not have. These particular effects and characteristics of branded content are brought together with the current commercial

⁷ MIN-WOOK, C.: A Study on the Branded Content as Marketing Communication Media in the Viewpoint of Relational Perspective. In *Indian Journal of Science and Technology*, 2015, Vol. 8, No. 1, p. 116-123.

⁸ SUNG, M. J., CHO, J. S.: In search of effective brand content: interviews with leading communication professionals. In *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 2012, Vol. 16, No. 4, p. 5-50.

⁹ MIN-WOOK, C.: A Study on the Branded Content as Marketing Communication Media in the Viewpoint of Relational Perspective. In *Indian Journal of Science and Technology*, 2015, Vol. 8, No. 1, p. 116-123.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*.

¹¹ KIM, B. H.: Perception and regulatory policy to product placement in the interactive digital tv programs. In *Korean Journal of Advertising*, 2012, Vol. 15, No. 5, p. 317-342.

marketing environment, and are contributing to the growth of branded content. Beyond the expansion of the market, as one can see from the Cannes Lions including Branded Content & Entertainment category to their festival, branded content is establishing a solid ground in the marketing communication sector. Such growth is expected to continue, as the related professionals predict that the use of branded content will increase¹², and certain researches anticipate a drastic increase in the fusion of advertising, PR, and PPL.¹³

2.1 Branded content and consumer

The reason why costumers actively connect with branded content is that they want entertainment or emotional satisfaction from contents. It is to say that they access their personal interest such as celebrities, hobbies or other interests through the contents and gain satisfaction. Brand messages that are contacted under the consumer's psychological state like this brings positive image of the brand to the viewer. This active and positive psychological state while interacting with the contents has a positive influence on processing brand related information, and the favorable images of celebrities, hobbies and other interests seamlessly transfer to the brand. Thus, through branded content, the emotional solidarity between brand and consumer is heightened and the relationship between them is enhanced.

Another reason why costumers actively connect with branded content is signified by what they want out of the contents. In this case, the consumer's engagement and involvement to the contents are increased and their focus or information processing is increased. Simultaneously, consumers will be able to concentrate on the branded message fused into the content and the possibility of active information processing elevates. These high engagement and active information processing during the interaction of branded content strengthen the relationship between consumer and brand. As the activeness of consumer and the importance of the brand are enhanced in the current marketing landscape, the development and maintenance of long-term relationship, rather than a short-term trade, is considered a significant factor of any business success. With that in mind, branded content is a significant method of constructing and retaining consumer relationship, and hence, the development of long-term, positive consumer relationship through branded content will emerge as a crucial topic in the future marketing communication activity of company.¹⁴

2.2 Importance of relational perspective between brand and consumer

While the principle of previous corporate communication was to persuade the consumer, the principle of the present and future corporate communication is 'communication and conversation'. Thus, the development and retention of interactive communication and the relationship with individual consumer become a

¹² SUNG, M. J., CHO, J. S.: In search of effective brand content: interviews with leading communication professionals. In *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 2012, Vol. 16, No. 4, p. 5-50.

¹³ KARRH, J. A.: Brand Placement: A Review. In *Journal of Current Issues & Research in Advertising*, 1998, Vol. 41, No. 2, p. 31-49.

¹⁴ MIN-WOOK, C.: A Study on the Branded Content as Marketing Communication Media in the Viewpoint of Relational Perspective. In *Indian Journal of Science and Technology*, 2015, Vol. 8, No. 1, p. 116-123.

crucial factor. Furthermore, while the focus of the former corporate communication was based on its message delivered through the communication channels, in regard to the corporate communication of the present and the future, the relationship formed with individual consumer will be as important as the message itself. In other words, it could be said that the core of current corporate communication transformation is at the enhancement of relational perspective.¹⁵

The word, 'relation', became an important concept in the current marketing communication environment. The changes caused in the society represented by smartphone and SNS also rapidly transformed people's lives. An individual who used to be a passive consumer of information, turned into active participant of communication network, and obtained the power to produce and distribute information. They were able to connect with parts of the society with SNS and communicate regardless of time and place.¹⁶ Also, the communication between corporation (brand) and consumer progressed from one way and short-term communication to mutual and long-term relationship. Consumer-brand relationship is an important concept that needs to be explored in regard to relational perspective in marketing communication. Researches about consumer-brand relationship were made since the 1990's as the consumer relationship become increasingly critical. The examination of relation between people and between people and objects greatly influenced the early consumer-brand relationships study.^{17,18} Moreover, beyond the current understanding of human-to-human relationship, further research were made regarding cases that one cannot fully perceive the liveliness or meet with the counter party. For example, such relationship include fan and a movie star, man and god, and human and pets.^{19,20} These studies became the theoretical background for expanding from human partnership with customers to the field of brand sectors.

As the importance of relational perspective rises in the marketing communication environment, the marketing communication media, called the branded content, is being emphasized. Branded content began from branded entertainment concept, and is actively utilized in various fields such as PPL and sponsorship marketing concepts. Amid the changing media and marketing environment, the exposure and attitude change with commercial message using traditional marketing communication became increasingly difficult. The result was to use branded content as a means to develop higher exposure of commercial message and raise the likability of brand and company. By producing contents that can trigger the interest and attention of the consumer, it is able to increase the exposure of message to consumer and increase the company and brand's likability, and cause attitude change amongst the consumer. In the future, branded content will act as a major marketing communication media of the new marketing communication environment, and there is a high possibility that it will maintain the current rapid

¹⁵ Ibidem.

¹⁶ Ibidem.

¹⁷ BROWN, D. E.: *Human universals*. New York : McGraw-Hill, 1991, p. 58.

¹⁸ NIDA, E., SMALLEY, W.: *Introducing animism*. New York : Friendship, 1959, p. 42.

¹⁹ BELK, R. W.: *Possessions and extended self*. Released on 30th September 1988. [online]. [2016-10-04]. Available at: <http://criticalmanagement.uniud.it/fileadmin/user_upload/Belk_1988.pdf>.

²⁰ FOUMIER, S.: *Consumers and their brands: developing relationship theory in consumer research*. Released on 4th March 1988. [online]. [2016-10-04]. Available at: <<http://pure.au.dk/portal/files/36292097/fournier.pdf>>.

progression. At this moment, there needs to be an in-depth examination about the features and prospect of branded content.

The rising importance of a brand is one of the factors that emphasize the value of the relational perspective in the marketing communication process. The importance of a brand is becoming more evident as a physical differentiation between products are increasingly close due to the technological and economic development, and as consumers focus on expression of the self or emotional satisfaction through consumption rather than a physical satisfaction with a product. Besides high-end products, even for daily consumption, it is not too farfetched to say that the success of a business depends on how they construct and maintain a powerful brand. For the contemporary buyers, the notion of brand goes beyond the physical limitations of a product, and becomes a significant socio cultural code in their daily lives as a mean to express themselves. The importance of consumer-brand relationship, as a symbol of solidarity resulting from the parallel interaction between consumer and brand, is heavily emphasized along with the rising criticality of concepts such as 'consumer', 'brand' and 'relationship'. Forming and retaining a long-term, positive relationship with consumer is now an essential factor of all business activities.²¹

2.3 Meaningful marketing as a tool for brand building

A sick consumer who cannot visit her doctor can use the interactive tool on the website of a popular cold medication brand (Vicks) to identify her malady and possible remedies. Bank of America sends its customers information on how they can avoid checking account fees due to overdrafts. The brand Tylenol teaches consumers how to avoid headaches (even if doing so can help consumers avoid taking Tylenol). These examples, and many others, point to a growing trend of building brands through 'meaningful marketing (MM)' that adds value to consumers' lives instead of pushing products and services.²²

MM is a non-interruptive marketing communication that provides utility to the consumer independent of consumption of the brand's product or service. As is evident from the examples above, MM can be seen in most of the major modes of marketing communication²³ and can be viewed as part of corporate social responsibility.²⁴ The goal of MM is not to tout the benefits derived from consumption of the brand but to build a relationship with the consumer by fostering perceptions of benevolence toward, trust in, and indebtedness toward the brand.²⁵ As implied by

²¹ MIN-WOOK, C.: A Study on the Branded Content as Marketing Communication Media in the Viewpoint of Relational Perspective. In *Indian Journal of Science and Technology*, 2015, Vol. 8, No. 1, p. 116-123.

²² GILBREATH, B.: *The next evolution of marketing: Connect with your customers by marketing with meaning*. New York: McGraw Hill, 2009, p. 30.

²³ KELLER, K. K.: Building strong brands in a modern marketing communications environment. In *Journal of Marketing Communications*, 2009, Vol. 15, No. 2/3, p. 139-155.

²⁴ GOLOB, U., LAH, M., JANCIC, Z.: *Value orientations and consumer expectations of corporate social responsibility*. Released on 4th April 2008. [online]. [2016-10-04]. Available at: <https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Ursa_Golob/publication/233254565_Value_orientations_and_consumer_expectations_of_Corporate_Social_Responsibility/links/53dfab4b0cf27a7b83069fb3.pdf>.

²⁵ HAMMER, P., RIEBE, E., KENNEDY, R.: How clutter affects advertising effectiveness. In *Journal of Advertising Research*, 2009, Vol. 49, No. 2, p. 159-163.

its definition, MM has three characteristics. First, it is not interruptive; rather it is marketing communication that consumers choose to engage with. In contrast, traditional marketing communication is delivered to consumers while they are consuming other content or involved in other activities, typically interrupting the narrative (e.g. ads between an episode of a TV show). Further, while the receiver of traditional marketing communication is typically a passive recipient of the message, MM typically involves an activity-based interaction. Second, while traditional ads typically tout the benefits that would accrue to consumers on consumption of the product/service associated with the brand, MM does not explicitly tout any brand-specific virtues. Third, the contribution made by MM is immediate and unconditional – the consumer does not need to satisfy any criterion (e.g. purchasing a certain quantity of product) to enjoy the benefits of the MM activity. The current research focuses on how the consumer-directed MM of a brand will affect consumers' (a) perceptions of the benevolence of the brand, (b) trust in the brand, (c) indebtedness toward the brand, and consequently, (d) purchase intentions.

The above differences can be conceptualized by considering the perceived beneficiary of a brand's marketing communications. Traditional marketing is typically perceived to be generated in the brand's own interest (i.e. to sell the product or service). Cause marketing, such as sponsorships of educational or philanthropic efforts, is perceived to benefit the greater society. In considering MM, we focus on marketing efforts with direct benefit to the consumer.²⁶

3 Marketing research

The marketing research was realized for the purpose of practical evaluation of examined issue. The secondary and primary data were analysed. The major part of paper is devoted to primary marketing research. The objective of this research was to describe the connection between marketing communication - brand and customers' behaviour in the financial services market. The following three research questions were defined for the purpose of marketing research:

- RQ1: For more than 20 % of respondents the brand of financial institution is important in the purchase of credit products;
- RQ2: For more than 50 % of respondents the commercial presentation is decisive in selection of a financial institution;
- RQ3: Assessment of marketing communication tools within the physical environment varies according to the age group of respondents.

Due to the type of requested information and examined topic, the personal interview as the primary research method was chosen. The analysis was based on the number of 412 respondents. As a technique of selecting a sample of respondents was used semi-representative technique of choice (non-exhaustive survey), which consists of selecting respondents based on the assumption (judgment) that these respondents meet certain requirements. The choice of respondents was also restricted to people at age of 18 – 75+. There was no limitation regarding marital status, the level of

²⁶ PULIGADDA, S., DEL VECCHIO, D., GILBREATH, B.: 'Meaningful marketing': A process investigation of how consumers reward non-interruptive, non-persuasive marketing communication. In *Journal of Marketing Communications*, 2014, Vol. 20, No. 5, p. 325-338.

incomes and education, gender, place of living and other demographic characteristics. The survey was distributed in the spring 2016.

We questioned consumers about their behaviour within the topic of financial products consumption, the link among the choice of financial institution and brand meaning, consumers' loyalty, the marketing communication tools importance with emphasis on merchandising and sensory marketing. MS EXCEL was used to evaluate the overall research. Some questions in the questionnaire were evaluated with descriptive statistics (absolute and relative frequency of responses). The chi-square test aims at comparing the actual frequencies within each category of a nominal variable against its expected frequency. The six steps of the Chi-square test procedure were implemented:²⁷

1. Null and alternative hypotheses formulation. The null hypothesis is that there is no difference in the proportion of respondents in the different categories of the variable while the alternative hypothesis has the opposite meaning.
2. Data converting into a tabular form.
3. The expected frequencies for each of the categories finding out.
4. Chi-square value finding out by applying the formula of

$$\chi^2 = \sum_{i=1}^n \frac{(O_i - E_i)^2}{E_i} \tag{1}$$

5. The critical chi-square value finding out for 0.05 level of significance.
6. The decision making by comparing the calculated and critical chi-square value.

The structure of the sample is 43.0 % male and 57.0 % female, dominated by unmarried people. The largest group of respondents represents people at the age of 25 – 49 years (see Chart 1 below). In the area of education, the largest group represents the respondents with secondary education diploma. Their share amounted to 38.6 % of total sample of respondents. The respondents with higher education were the second largest group (42.7 %). The largest income group (38.6 %) is surprisingly in the category 50 000 Czech crowns and more, up to 10 000 Czech crowns (1.2 % respondents), 11.7 % respondents belong to the income category 10 001 – 20 000 Czech crowns. 5.8 % respondents have incomes 20 001 – 50 000 Czech crowns.

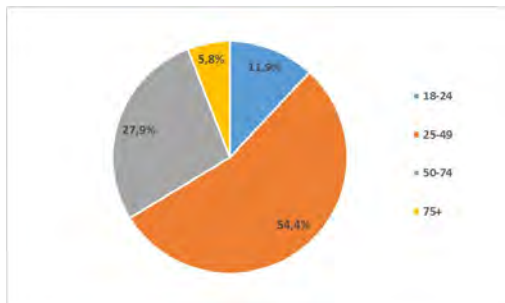


Chart 1: The structure of respondents according to their age

Source: Own processing

²⁷ ISRAEL, D.: *Data analysis in business research: a step-by-step nonparametric approach*. New Delhi : Sage publications India, 2008, p. 25.

The current account is included, as expected, among the most frequently used financial products (94.2 %). It is striking that only 68.2 % of respondents use within their payment debit card which is linked to a current account. 8 % of active users of debit card use it only to pay, 45 % only for withdrawals from ATMs and 26 % respondents use it for both purposes. There is clearly seen that there is a change in trends and approaching to European standards because the payment card primarily fulfilled the function of withdrawals from the ATM in recent past. The following financial products also dominate - pension schemes (57.3 %), building savings (50 %), life insurance (44.7 %), non-life insurance (44.2 %) and accident insurance (37.6 %). Within the short-term and long-term credit products, there are mentioned products as the mortgage loan (18.2 %), short-term consumer loans (10 %), leasing loans (2.9 %). 29.6 % of respondents use a credit card that belongs to the category of credit products. Many users of this type of credit card, however, have it more for the benefits of additional services that are associated with it. Increased interest in this instrument of payment is currently supported with intensive marketing communications campaigns of financial institutions.

Overall, respondents tend rather to savings products and life insurances than to credit products (Chart 2). This approach is based on higher public awareness in the area of Czech financial literacy, as well as changing customer access to debt, when caution, rationality and responsibility prevail. 37.9 % of respondents argue that they have never had any credit product. 31.8 % say that a credit product have only because of necessary living expenses. 31.8 % say that a credit product have only because of necessary living expenses. In terms of marketing communications and brand perceptions (positioning) of financial institution, 23.5 % of respondents would like to have a credit products provided only by known credible financial institution (well-known brand) with long history in the market. **The research question No. 1 is confirmed because for more than 20 % of respondents the brand of financial institution is important in the purchase of credit products.**

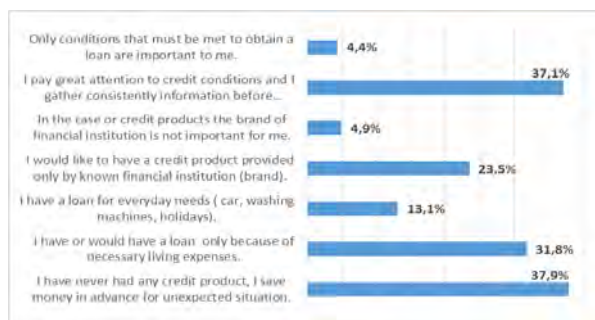


Chart 2: Relationship to the credit products and influence financial institutions brand
Source: Own processing

When deciding about the selection of financial institutions as fundamental criteria are said to be pricing policy, reference groups opinions, physical availability of branches, image - brand of financial institutions (see Chart 3). Despite the fact that the use of intensive marketing communication is necessary in a strong competitive environment, the use of ATL communication is the least popular and has a minimal

influence on the respondents' purchasing decisions. According to the research results the customer loyalty to financial institutions is still quite high. 61.9 % of respondents as bank clients have not changed the bank during the last ten years. Czech population, especially in the higher age category, is not willing to undergo the process of financial institutions changing in spite of the fact there are very intensive marketing communications campaigns of banks. Among the basic obstacles include Czech customers' mobility, information asymmetry, customers' laziness, product packages, penalties for cancellation of existing products and the administrative barriers. To eliminate the administrative barriers when changing the existing banks, the Czech Banking Association has issued the Code of clients' mobility which must be respected by participating banks. Code of clients' mobility is a useful tool used to facilitate a change of bank but unfortunately the vast majority of bank clients do not know about it. **The research question No. 2 is not confirmed because for more than 50 % of respondents the commercial presentation is not decisive in selection of a financial institution.** It is evident from the text above that the effect of the reference groups is quite substantial, there is opportunity to use the very topical Word-of-Mouth communications (in general way with support of electronic means we can say viral marketing). Word-of-Mouth communications are characterized as informal, unplanned, unsolicited, interactive and bidirectional conversations. These recommendations provide information and purchasing support and serve to reinforce and individual's purchasing decisions. Personal influence is important and can enrich the communication process.²⁸

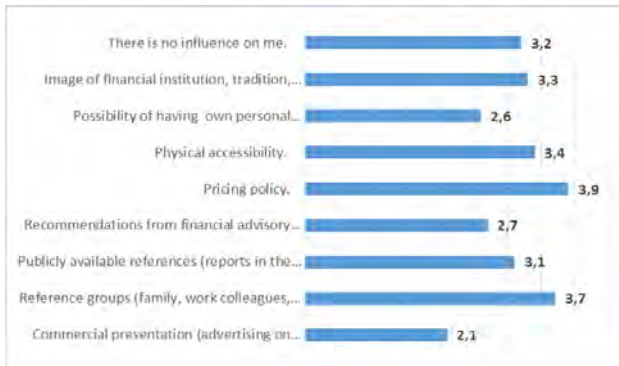


Chart 3: Decisive factors in the selection process of financial institutions (1= the lowest importance, 5= the highest importance)

Source: Own processing

Although the survey results show that marketing communication as a source of information and motivation incentive is understood by respondents as the least important, it cannot be eliminated in the area of the external marketing. According to research outputs, it seems effective to use BTL communication (see Chart 4), i.e. pricing strategies - such as individual pricing, segmentation pricing, flexible pricing. Within the sales promotion there is a big potential of tools such as free product testing, price incentives a 1 + 1, competitions. Within the direct marketing

²⁸ FILL, CH.: *Essentials of marketing communications*. Harlow : Pearson, 2011, p. 42-43.

respondents prefer surprisingly personified written communication (direct mail) than electronical communication contact. Commercial offerings in the form of telemarketing can be described as the least acceptable.

If we take into account all marketing communication tools in the concept of marketing communication mix, it is clear that the sale promotion has the highest level of acceptance among respondents. If we want to encourage sales while strengthening relationships with the public and to increase familiarity and brand positioning, it would also be appropriate to use in the marketing strategy of communication events (Event Marketing), which can be defined as designed occurrences that communicate messages to target audiences. It complies the use of unique sponsored activities or events in certain locations and point in time for reaching corporate marketing and communication objectives.²⁹

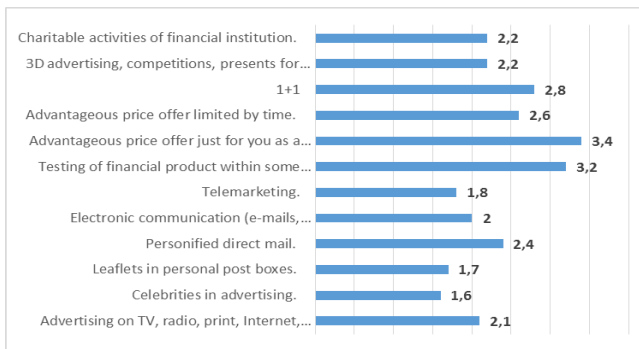


Chart 4: Decisive marketing communication tools in the selection process of financial product (1= the lowest importance, 5= the highest importance)

Source: Own processing

From a marketing communication point of view the crucial influence of personal selling cannot be ignored. Thanks to the dynamic and continuous development of information technology and the phenomenon of time, more and more financial services are provided through the so-called technology distribution (internet banking, telephone banking, mobile banking, ATM services etc.). The trend is to accelerate and cheapen the process of financial services providing using technology distribution, but personal meetings face to face will have an irreplaceable role in future. Financial institutions perceive the need for marketing orientation also in distribution policy. They implement marketing researches regarding the customer satisfaction with the place of purchase, they innovate the branches massively and implement new technologies (video-calls, biometric methods etc.) and introduce also a new concept of sales (bank-café, bank as the shop at the same time and so on). Demands on financial institutions employees have been still increased, both from the side of individual institutions as well as from customers' point of view. Only 1.7 % of respondents state that the impression of banker is irrelevant. This is most important to put emphasis on professionalism (60.4 %), today customers also expect a quick

²⁹ CATEORA, P. R., GHARI, P. N.: *International marketing*. Bershire : Graw-Hill Publishing Company, 2000, p. 556-557.

solution of their problem and acceptable soft skills, clothing (dress code) is not so significant (13.6 %) but it can also affect the overall perception of financial institution.

Personal contact with the customer takes mostly place in the stone branch, so the most attention should always be given to the place of sale, such as the appearance and cleanliness of the branch, staff behaviour, branch location etc. From a marketing point of view the businessmen should understand and implement merchandising issues into their marketing communication strategies. In relation to the meaning of point of sale it cannot be ignored increasingly important role of POP/POS displays in the in-store communication. Currently, we can notice new trends in financial services distribution as mini-branches, banking kiosks, mobile branches and more. The aim is to bring banking environment to customers, this phenomenon is called the humanization of space. According to the research results respondents are influenced the most at the place of purchase with contact face-to-face, i. e. friendly personal contact (66.7 %), followed by a waiting zone (50.5 %) and convenient way of waiting clients organizing (32.5 %). Other factors are listed in the Chart 5 below.

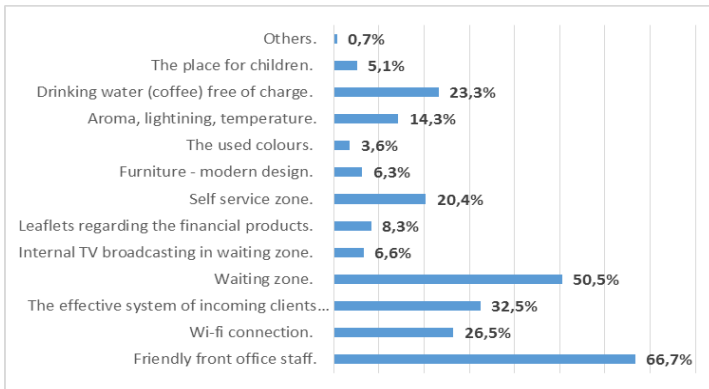


Chart 5: Decisive factors at point of sale and their positive effect on the clients' emotions
Source: Own processing

The areas as the relationship to the credit products, physical evidence and marketing communication tools in the process of a financial institution selecting were chosen for testing and verification of dependencies between age group and consumer behaviour in the financial market. Based on the outputs of chi-square test it can be concluded that respondents' age does not matter, because p value: $0.186606168 > 0.05$ in the assessment related to credit products and p value: $0.103030194 > 0.05$ in the assessment related to physical evidence factors. **The research question No. 3 is not confirmed because assessment of marketing communication tools within the physical environment does not vary according to the age groups of respondents.**

Some motivational factors in financial institution selection are very similar in all age groups categories as factor E, F, G, H, I (see Chart 6 below). On the other hand, the difference can be observed for factor A, B, C, D. Assessed factors mean: A -

commercial presentation, B – influence of reference groups, C – publicly available information sources, D – professional financial consultancy, E – pricing policy, F – availability of points of sale, G – personal banker/individual care, H – Image, brand and tradition of financial institution, I – no influence.

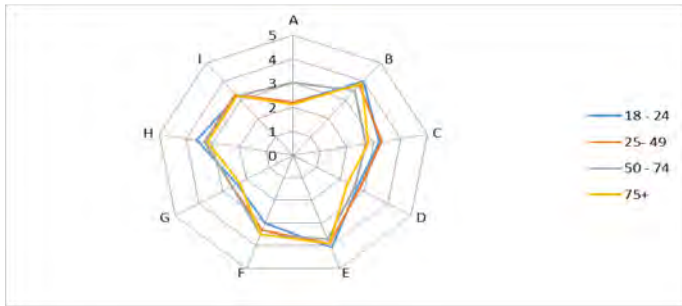


Chart 6: Motivational factors in the selection of financial institution
Source: Own processing

Conclusion

Financial institutions have been losing customers because of nonbank competitors. There are new financial companies in the market which are able to offer interesting products. The main competitors are Internet banks and technology companies whose offers are simple and can be adapted to the requirements of clients. With the development of modern technology, it is expected that especially young people will increasingly use alternative banks that offer attractive benefits at good prices. If so established banks want to keep clients, they will have to communicate more their established and market-proven brand. This paper focused on impact of the communications tools and brands of financial institutions on consumer perceptions and behaviour. The sample of respondents aged 18 to 75+ years was selected for the purpose of primary research. The survey was distributed in the spring 2016. The consumers were questioned about their behaviour within the topic of financial products consumption, the link among the choice of financial institution and brand meaning, consumers' loyalty, the marketing communication tools importance with emphasis on merchandising and sensory marketing.

The current account is included, as expected, among the most frequently used financial products (94.2 %). Overall, respondents tend rather to savings products and life insurances than to credit products. When deciding about the selection of financial institutions as fundamental criteria are said to be pricing policy, reference groups opinions, physical availability of branches, image - brand of financial institutions. According to research outputs, it seems effective to use BTL communication, i.e. pricing strategies - such as individual pricing, segmentation pricing, flexible pricing. Within the sales promotion there is a big potential of tools such as free product testing, price incentives a 1 + 1, competitions. Within the direct marketing respondents prefer surprisingly personified written communication (direct mail). Commercial offerings in the form of telemarketing can be described as

the least acceptable. Only 1.7 % of respondents state that the impression of banker is irrelevant. This is most important to put emphasis on professionalism (60.4 %), today customers also expect a quick solution of their problem and acceptable soft skills, clothing (dress code) is not so significant (13.6 %). According to the research results respondents are influenced the most at the place of purchase with contact face-to-face, i. e. friendly personal contact (66.7 %). Based on the outputs of chi-square test it can be concluded that respondents' age does not matter in the assessment related to physical evidence factors and credit products.

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