

# A Study Of Marketing Communication Channels In The Food Industry

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**Abstract:** *This research is a marketing research investigating the importance of social media marketing and sales promotions. The purpose of the research is to find out the opinion of the major brands in food industries, about the impact of social media on sales promotions. (By sales promotions we mean face-to-face connections between sales promoters and consumers - demonstrations, samplings, live experiences etc.). The goal is to find out whether brands plan to do sales promotions in the future, or are they just going to focus on social media. Additionally the research will present a full description of the commissioner. The theoretical framework is created in relevance to the topic to support it and give some support to the problem and its findings. The main approach I am using on this research will be face to face interviews. First there will be a questionnaire created by the researcher and that will be used as the base of the interviews. During the interviews I will be using a recording device as long as the interviewee has agreed to it. Additionally I will be taking notes. The reliability and validity part is written to show whether the research is reliable and valid and why so. At the end of this report there is an analysis made of all the data gathered in addition to suggestions and conclusion for the commissioner and the interviewed brands.*

**Keywords:** *Marketing Research, Sales Promotins, Social Media, B2B Marketing, Qualitative Research*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

This study is conducted by an International Business student studying in HAAGA- HELIA University of Applied Sciences as the student's thesis. The thesis is planned to conduct a marketing research, with the goal of finding out social media's impact on sales promotions. In this thesis by sales promotion I mean face-to-face connections between sales promoters and consumers - demonstrations, samplings, live experiences etc. The research is commissioned by Sales Promotion Agency Expression Ltd. (also known as Marketing Agency Expression Ltd.) The aim of the commission company is to know the opinion of the major brands, in the food industry, whether brands plan to do sales promotion in the future, or are they only going to focus on social media. Sales Promotion Agency Expression Ltd. is a medium-sized marketing agency company that has offices in Tampere and Helsinki. The company is operating fully on sales promotion services. The thesis is a qualitative research that is conducted via field and desktop studies. The research started with defining the research problem and objectives. This is important to do at the beginning to ensure you are researching the correct and questioned issue. Additionally it will help to understand the aim and the structure of the research. The second step is learning the background of the commissioner and understanding fully their mission and goal with the research. There will be a theoretical framework written to give us an understanding of the research process; data gathering, analysis etc. After the theoretical framework, the data collection methodology is defined to be as a support on how to continue forward with the data collection. Additionally it describes the ways of collecting the data and how they were conducted. At the end of the research there will be a final report written, which include the analysis of the research, conclusion and suggestions to the commissioner and the target group.

### 1.1 Research Objectives

My main objective is to find out what kind of communication channels will be used by major brands in food industry in the near future. Furthermore, it is important to find out how important sales promotions are to these brands, especially now that social media is growing rapidly and has become one of the main marketing tools. Every company has their own marketing budget and I am interested to see where it is mainly directed, if the budget is limited. Many sales promotions follow the products sales on that same day and the promotion employees usually have a target that they are trying to reach. One of the goals of this research is to tell us if the product keeps selling successfully after the promotion day or does it stop only to that one day; meaning that I will research whether sales promotion truly increases the sales of the promoted product or if it is only sold highly on that one day.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Marketing communications of an online store entering an emerging market:

a product-based study with the objective of creating a marketing communications plan for Adrenalin dealer. The commissioning party is a distribution company, Menikmati Distribution. The company recently launched the online store Adrenalindealer in the Indonesian market. The online store focuses on youth culture, skateboarding, motocross and surfboarding. The primary objective of this thesis is to create a comprehensive marketing communications plan that helps Adrenalindealer to reach the right customers with the right type of promotion tactics. The secondary objectives are to acknowledge the factors in operating an online store in an emerging market and to what extent they affect the marketing communications of a company. The creating process is based on a marketing communications plan framework and influenced by the CREF-model for marketing. Also affecting the creation of the plan are the author's observations of the Indonesian market and various market research conducted by research companies.

### 2.2 proposals to developing corporate communications

In a current image society people are constantly exposed to different types of messages. People base their information on perceptions and images as much as on actual facts. Image is formed by unconscious and conscious matters and can be formed in a single encounter. Organizations' can never fully determine what kind of image is formed of them and therefore it is essential for any organization to be up-to-date with its current image. This bachelor's thesis was commissioned by Hostelling International Finland. The aim of this thesis was to examine the current image of HI-hostels amongst the membership organizations of Hostelling International Finland and offer suggestions for possible improvements. The theoretical framework consists of image and reputation formation and image building process. Also strategic and marketing communications are described. A qualitative research method was used to gain better insight of the current image. Semi-structured interview method was chosen to collect data and the data were analyzed based on the themes of the interviews. Due to confidentiality reasons the analysis of the interview outcomes and suggestions for future development are not published and they can be found in the appendices.

### 2.3 Analyzing the Influence of Sales Promotion

The promotion mix is a term used to describe the set of tools that a business can use to communicate effectively the benefits of its products or services to its customers. The purpose of promotion is to reach the targeted consumers and persuade them to buy. Promotion has been defined as the coordination of all seller-initiated efforts to set up channels of information and persuasion to sell goods and services or promote an idea. Sales promotion is vital element of promotional mix. The purpose of this study is to investigate the effects of sales promotion on buyer decision making process. In other words, the general objective of this study was to find out the effectiveness of some elements on the buying behaviors of customers. Marketing activities related to the promotion of sales increased consumer purchases and indirectly to get more profit for the company. So, the purpose of sales promotion is to reach the targeted consumers and persuade them to buy. Sales promotion has become a vital tool for marketing and its importance has been increasing significantly over the years. One of the purposes of a sales promotion is to elicit a direct impact on the purchase behavior of the firm's consumers. Firms have to rethink the relationship between attitude and behavior of their consumers. In this study, we will discuss the impact of sales promotion on consumer purchasing behavior.

### 2.4 Trust as a Valuable Strategic Variable in the Food Industry

Although it is often suggested that trust is an important construct in relationship marketing, there is only little empirical evidence of how, if at all, trust may be used as a valuable strategic variable. In the 1990s, the international food industry faced a number of serious challenges, most notoriously the mad cow disease. The present multiple case study, which is qualitative in nature, explores how the Danish-British bacon supply chain has dealt with the challenges by means of implementing different types of trust. The study confirms that there are different types of trust that marketers can embrace and shows that when one type of trust is not available marketers can draw on other types. The case study also maps different patterns of implementing trust-based marketing approaches.

### 2.5 The evaluation of traditional communication channels

This research aims at evaluating the traditional communication channels, and the possible impact that it may have on consumers purchase decision, particularly toward their choices of restaurants in Palestine. To achieve this purpose, two main hypotheses, and the total of four sub-hypotheses were derived based on literature review. Descriptive analytical methodology and inductive quantitative

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approaches were found most suitable to the nature of the research. The population of the research consisted of consumers who make the purchase decision in choosing restaurants either for themselves or on behalf of others. A self-administrated questionnaire was designed based on previous studies and primary data was collected over non-probability accidental sample (restaurants intercept). 500 questionnaires were distributed in Nablus, Ramallah and Bethlehem, 418 valid questionnaires were retrieved within a timeframe of 25 days, from 24th of June till 18th of July 2018, forming a response rate of 83.6%. Based on the statistical analyses, there is a statistically significant impact of traditional communication channels on purchase decision for Palestinian restaurants; the strength of the effect is moderate. Also, each traditional communication channels (Television, Radio, Newspaper and Outdoor) has, separately, a significant positive impact on consumer purchase decision. The strength of the effect ranged from weak to moderate, the study found that outdoors advertisements had the highest impact on purchase decision, followed by television, radio, and newspapers, respectively. Discussion and recommendations are provided based on the study findings.

Theoretical framework is created to help give perspective to the topic of the research. The theory part of the research is gathered via internet, books, journals etc. to support the topic and help in the data collection and analysis phase of the research. (University) It is important that the theoretical framework demonstrates the meaning of the theories and concepts in a way that they are relevant to the topic of the research. (University of Southern California, 2015)

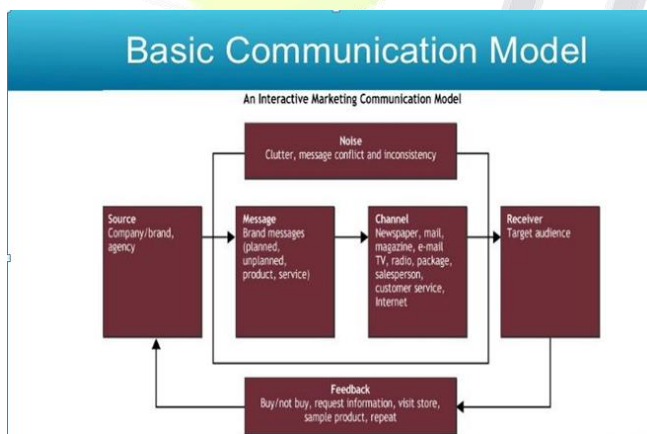


Fig3.1 An Interactive Marketing Communication Model

### 3.2 Marketing Tools

Marketing tools are various techniques and materials that are used to promote goods and services. Most companies with the aim to sell goods and services to the public use intensively marketing tools, to gain more success to the business. (BusinessDictionary.com) Marketing tools are a part of marketing communication, since it is a way to contact and connect with the public (consumers).

### 3.3 Sales Promotion

Sales promotion is an important tool of marketing communication and slowly increasing to be one of the most important instruments of the communications mix. Sales promotions are the best short-term device, which is designed to generate an increase in sales of the products. Sales promotion has many various characters that can be used. The goal in using sales promotion is to create an increase in sales via bringing decisions forward and adding some immediacy to the decision-making process.

Sales promotions have four characteristics (D'Astous and Landreville 2003);

Attractiveness: This is the degree to which the customer perceives the promotion as being desirable.

Fit to product category: A promotion which has no relationship with the product is less likely to appeal to customers.

Reception delay: If the promotional gift or discount will not arrive for some time, it is less attractive.

Value: High-value promotions work better than low-value ones, yet it is the value as perceived by the customer which is important.



Fig 3.2 Factors Affecting the Increasing Use of Sales Promotions.

### 3.4 Social Media Marketing

Social media marketing is a process of gaining attention and traffic via social media sites. The aim with social media marketing is to achieve marketing communication and branding goals in a form of internet marketing. The primary activities in social media marketing are social sharing such as videos, images and contents.

Using this marketing tool will help the company with website traffic, conversions, brand awareness, creating a brand identity and positive brand associations, communication and interaction with key audiences. (Search Engine Lab) Before companies consider starting social media marketing, they need to develop a plan. It is important to think about the companies goals and then start creating social media marketing campaigns. (WordStream) The reason to create a plan helps the company to get to the end goal and think of all the factors; target audience, place, reason, message etc. (WordStream) There are many various platforms where social media marketing can be executed. However it is crucial to know these platforms ahead, to increase the success of using these platforms, since every platform has its own techniques. (WordStream) .Facebook is one the most known and used social platforms and in the last years it has become a successful platform for companies to advertise. When starting social media marketing in Facebook, it is required to create a Facebook Business Fan Page. It is suggested to pay attention to the layout of the page since its visual component is a key factor of the Facebook experience. Every company who uses Facebook as a platform, needs to keep posting articles, images, videos etc. in their page to assure the connection with the audience. (WordStream)

Tools	Strength	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
<b>Facebook</b>	Most used and known	Consumer oriented	More interaction	Other companies use it as well for marketing
<b>Google+</b>	Google+ circles	Not easy to use for newcomers	-	<b>Facebook</b>
<b>Pinterest</b>	New, interesting and fun	Only pictures	All sorts of media to be used	Other platforms that are more known to the public
<b>LinkedIn</b>	Offers jobs and info about various companies	Mostly users are only professionals etc.	Open for not only educated professionals. More marketing about the whole platform.	-
<b>Twitter</b>	Active 24/7 and used a lot by famous people	Not easy to use for newcomers	-	<b>Facebook</b>
<b>YouTube</b>	Very known within the public	Only videos and slow to use	Access to register all, not only 18+	Google+

Table 1. SWOT of the Various Social Media Tools

## IV . RESEARCH APPROACH AND METHODS

### A. Research Approach

In a marketing research, it is very important to choose the correct research method. There are two main methods existing; qualitative research and quantitative research.

#### 4.1 The qualitative method

The qualitative method is used for exploration and when the aim is to find out answers for specific questions. Meaning that the qualitative method, researches people's opinions, attitudes, beliefs etc. that can be hard to calculate. In qualitative research a small amount of respondents is enough, since it does not require large groups for reaching a valid research. (British Library)

#### 4.2 Quantitative research

Quantitative research has a logical approach, which provides measure of what people think from a statistical and numerical point of view. The quantitative method is researching the data in a structured way, to provide hard facts and statistics. In this method it is needed to survey a large amount of people in order to get reliable statistical results. (British Library)

#### 4.3 Data Collection and Analysis Process

In this research the data is fully collected via face-to-face or phone interviews. The interviews are carried out with a questionnaire that was created by the researcher. The questions are open ended questions, which means that there is a lot of room for the interviewee to stage his/hers opinions and discuss the subject freely.

After the interviews are conducted and the data collected, there will be an analysis created from the data and some suggestions for the brands and the commissioner for the future.



Fig4.1 Four Possible Situations with Validity and Reliability. (Social Research Methods)

## V. Conclusions

This research is very reliable, yet not that valid. The data gathering method and process is a secure and efficient way to collect data. However the amount of the interviewees did not reach the full goal of ten interviewees. I believe that the brand I have interviewed are very interesting and it is good that they are so know, yet I would have hoped to receive more interviews to make the research more valid. Unfortunately the target group was the large food chains and the marketing managers in these companies are very busy, this leads to the fact why the goal was not reached; simply because the managers were not reached. The theoretical framework was created to support the research and the topics presented are relevant to the subject. In the social media marketing chapter I have explained the various social media platforms and their strengths and weaknesses. The commissioning company should use this information to improve their companies own platforms. In my opinion the website should be remodeled in a way that their services are presented clearly and explained more thoroughly, to attract new customers for them. Currently the visual look of the website is very well made and attractive, and easy to read. However there is not so much information of the company itself and the other marketing services they have. I recommend that they put time on improving their website so it advertises more their various services in order to acquire more clients. Additionally there is no harm in using the social media platforms for marketing their services; personally I believe that LinkedIn and Instagram can be useful for the commissioner (Facebook too, yet it is a bit more consumer oriented). The sales promotion chapter shows the various ways of conducting sales promotions and the results assures the commissioner that there is a market for them and probably will even increase. It is highly important that the commissioning company takes this attentively because this is their key

service. After this research they can suggest these various ways of conducting sales promotions and looking at the results offer to do the social media marketing for the promotion day to satisfy their clients fully. I gathered the B2B theory for the commissioner and readers to see the difference of B2B and B2C sales, in addition to show some factors required for a successful B2B sale.

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