ECONOMICS WORKING PAPERS

VOLUME 6

NUMBER 3

ISSN 1804-9516 (Online)

2022

ECONOMICS WORKING PAPERS

Volume 6 Number 3 2022

Publisher: University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice
Faculty of Economics

Reviewers: prof. Ing. Ludmila Nagyová, PhD.
Slovak University of Agriculture in Nitra
Faculty of Economics and Management
Department of Marketing and Trade

doc. Ing. Milan Paták, CSc.
University College of Business in Prague
Department of Marketing, Management and Social Sciences

Edition: 4, 2022

ISSN: 1804-9516

ECONOMICS
WORKING
PAPERS

ECONOMICS WORKING PAPERS. Published by Faculty of Economics. University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice• The editor’s office: Studentská 13, 370 05 České Budějovice, Czech Republic. Contact: tel: 00420387772493, Technical editor: Markéta Matějčková, e-mail: matejckova@ef.jcu.cz • ISSN1804-5618 (Print), 1804-9516 (Online)

Content

Vol. 6, No. 3, ISSN 1804-9516 (Online)

OPTIMIZATION POTENTIAL IN SME MARKETING COMMUNICATION IN A CZECH-GERMAN COMPARISON

Enz, Ch.

Abstract

Technological progress ensures a growing number of communication channels. National and international corporations use the new tools for intensive customer communication. SMEs therefore are in danger of disappearing from their consumers' field of vision. This paper examines the current communication behavior of SMEs. Future developments also are identified. The analysis of a large-scale survey of companies shows that the number of communication channels used depends on the size of a company. It is found that SMEs currently use fewer communication channels than large companies. Marketing communication is also much less professionalized in small companies. For example, this paper shows that only 25% of companies with an annual turnover of less than 2 million euros have their communication budgets. For SMEs with an annual turnover of 10 to 50 million euros, the share is already 58%.

The importance of communication channels, on the other hand, depends on the regional context of the company's headquarters. Thus, the prioritization of certain communication channels is significantly dependent on the region in which a company is located. However, the research shows that SMEs across regions and size categories are aware of changes in the media use of their target groups. Nevertheless, many SMEs do not want to or cannot use all communication channels considered relevant in the future. This is equally evident among Czech and German SMEs, although German companies use more communication channels on average than Czech ones. This study also shows that SMEs are generally not willing to increase their marketing communication staff at present.

This means that SME management faces the challenge of setting the correct priorities in customer communication. On the German side, the focus is on weighting. For Czech companies, the focus is on channel selection. This paper thus shows that there is potential for optimization for Czech and German SMEs. If it is possible to optimally reflect regional peculiarities in the use of media in the communication mix, efficiency increases and even the development of a competitive advantage over large companies is possible.

Key words: SME, Sales, Integrated Communication, Communication Mix, Competitive Advantage, Regional Economic Area, Applied Economics

JEL classification: M21, M31, M37

1. Introduction

The business environment is becoming increasingly complex and dynamic (Škodová Parmová, Líšková, Sdrolias, & Kain, 2017). A phenomenon that, according to Parmová, Líšková and Kain (2018), can be found in almost all industries (Škodová Parmová, Líšková, & Kain, 2018) and goes beyond desirable lively competition. According to Meyer (2020), healthy competition provides positive stimuli. This includes innovations as well as the optimization of the allocation of economic factors and thus ultimately, an improved supply (Meyer, 2020, p. 27). However, Enz & Škodová Parmová (2020) now identify destructive competition in many markets, which ultimately leads to market concentration and thus a worse position for consumers (Enz & Škodová Parmová, 2020, p. 141). Small and medium-sized enterprises in particular run the risk of being forced out of the market by large companies (North, 2007). This can be attributed to the fact that professionally managed, profit-oriented corporations specifically exploit market opportunities (Enz, Škodová Parmová, & Wolf, 2021) or leverage synergy effects (Enz, 2020b). In contrast, SMEs often do not base their strategic steps on rational considerations. The reason for this is that decision-makers legitimized by family structures sometimes have little business expertise and act on gut instinct (Enz, 2019c, p. 9).

At the same time, SMEs play a decisive role from an economic perspective. Zehrer (2018) notes that small businesses as a whole make an enormous economic contribution (Walter, 2017a, p. 57). This is in line with Niebler (2015), who points out that 60 percent of jobs in the private sector are provided by SMEs (Walter, 2017b, p. 4). If diversity of supply and jobs are to be maintained, SMEs must increase their competitiveness (Eßer, Hillebrand, Messner, & Meyer-Stamer, 1990, p. 186; Škodová Parmová et al., 2018).

Marketing communication can make an important contribution to this, as Enz (2020) and Homburg (2017) agree. This importance results from the fact that marketing communication is the basis of every purchase (Enz, 2020a; Homburg, 2017, p. 865). Sales goals and thus economic success can only be realized, if it is possible to address consumers in the right way. For this reason, the business discipline of marketing communication has often been the subject of research. Today there is a multitude of communication models (Balmer & Greyser, 2003; Balmer & Greyser, 2006; Valackiene, 2010). The aim of these communication models is to address the recipients as efficiently as possible through a target group-specific combination of different communication channels, the so-called communication mix. These consider demographic characteristics such as age or income as well as geographical, sociological or psychographic criteria (Feigl, 2015, p. 74; Freter, Naskrent, Hohl, & Staub, 2008, p. 25).

Currently, valid communication models take different sectors and target groups into account. The so-called average customer of a target group is always at the center of the considerations, what should be addressed (Enz, 2019a, 2019b, p. 186). This is a popular practice, but one that has been subject to continuous criticism since the 1960s (Sathisch & Rajamohan, 2012; Tang, Thomas, Fletcher, Pan, & Marshall, 2014, p. 631; Yankelovich, 1964, 89 ff). Enz (2020) adds to this criticism the aspect that regional specifications are also largely disregarded (Enz, 2020b, p. 28). It poses particular challenges for SMEs with geographically limited business areas. This is because media diversity varies greatly between rural areas and conurbations, as does the acceptance of communication channels (Enz, 2010, p. 3). That offers the chance of a competitive advantage. Such an advantage occurs, three when SMEs succeed in reaching their specific target groups with less wastage than is possible for nationally or internationally operating groups (Enz, 2019a).

This paper deals with the question of which communication channels are currently used by SMEs for customer communication. It also aims to clarify whether the use of communication channels in rural areas differs from their use in metropolitan regions. In a third step, it will be examined whether the communication work of SMEs is purely model-driven or whether cultural differences also play a role. For this purpose, SMEs in the Czech Republic and in Germany will be included.

2. Theoretical background

The subject of this research is the communication behavior of SMEs. Although there is agreement that corporate communication is also a success factor for SMEs (Müller, 2011, p. 11; Zerfaß, 2014, p. 22), there are hardly any studies that focus on the specific prerequisites or differences of SME communication (Enz, 2020a; Winkler, 2020, p. 61). According to Moog (2013), questions of business administration or marketing have so far formed the core of SME-oriented research (Moog & Witt, 2013). Fischbach & Mack (2008) attribute this fact to the longer tradition of business administration compared to communication research (Fischbach & Mack, 2008, p. 36). In contrast, for Enz & Škodová Parmová (2020) the lack of research budgets is decisive for the current state (Enz & Škodová Parmová, 2020, 142 f). SMEs are considered to have a high level of innovation thanks to their active research activities, also in cooperation with universities. However, they usually focus their budgets on research projects directly related to their core business (Fuka, Vrchota, & Rolínek, 2018; Kamerar, 2016; Vrchota, Volek, & Novotná, 2019; Zimmermann, 2019).

In general, it can be seen that increasing global competition is being countered with regional strategies (Škodová Parmová et al., 2018), because of the assumption that advantages can be generated from regional specificities. In this context, Enz (2019) points out that there can also be regional specificities in the canon of available communication channels and media use (Enz, 2019b, p. 190).

2.1 Definition SME

There is general agreement that SMEs make an important contribution to the stability and success of an economy (Bondareva & Zatrochová, 2014; Dobošová, Hupková, Beňuš, Mihálová, & Synetska, 2020, p. 21). In contrast, however, there is a multitude of definitions for SMEs. In addition, there is another competing term in the D-A-CH region, 'Mittelstand'. The SME represents a separate category of companies. However, there is no uniform definition for the categorization of corresponding companies (Botzkowski, 2017, p. 38). In addition, the term Mittelstand is a typically German-language classification. There is no corresponding typification at international level (Welter et al., 2015, p. 1). In addition, the German language does not make a clear distinction between the terms Mittelstand, SMEs and family businesses (Botzkowski, 2017, p. 38).

The Institut für Mittelstand Bonn (IfM), for example, defines a company as medium-sized, if at least 50 percent of the company shares as well as the management of the company are in the hands of a maximum of two owner families (Wolter, 2001). This is an attempt at a definition that can be applied to all sectors. However, Welter (2015) criticizes that this definition does not consider the diversity of the Mittelstand (Welter et al., 2015, p. 1). In fact, the German Mittelstand is a heterogeneous group with specific structural and process-related characteristics (Icks, 2018). In addition, the topic of SMEs has another facet besides the economic side. This relates to the social contribution of a company or the entrepreneurial family behind it (Becker & Ulrich, 2011, 18 f). A variety of definitional approaches attempt to do justice to this. As early as 1991, Kosminder registered over 200 approaches to describing the middle class (Kosmider, 1991). Hamer (1990) recognizes in this a failure of the definitional approaches. In agreement with Welter, he attributes this to the fact that they are always static attempts at definition

(Hamer, 1990). De and Becker & Ulrich (2011) conclude from this that there can be no universally valid definition due to multi-layeredness and complexity (Becker & Ulrich, 2011, 18 f; De, 2005, p. 236).

Against this background, the idea of an expedient definition in individual cases has prevailed over a generally valid definition (Becker & Ulrich, 2011, 18 f). To this end, both qualitative and quantitative criteria are considered in practice as well as in academic discourse (Botzkowski, 2017, p. 39). Qualitative criteria primarily serve to understand the nature of SMEs. Quantitative aspects, on the other hand, serve practical purposes (Berens, Högemann, & Segbers, 2005, 8 f). Various quantitative characteristics are conceivable. Pfohl (2006), for example, names the criteria of corporate management, organization, procurement, production, sales, disposal, research, development, financing, personnel or logistics as possible criteria (Pfohl, 2006). As a rule, a qualitative delimitation is not based on a single aspect, but on a catalog of characteristics (Gaubinger, 2000).

The result of this consideration is the definition of the Institute for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises already presented. It is widely used due to its clarity and simplicity of application (Block & Moritz, 2016, p. 146; Kay & Nielen, 2018, p. 2; Schlömer-Laufen, 2012). In contrast, the Ifo Institute — Leibniz Institute for Economic Research at the University of Munich defines the number of employees. This approach ignores ownership structure and management. At the same time, the Ifo Institute is more precise. Instead of using the broad term Mittelstand, it refers to SMEs. In the view of the Ifo Institute, these are companies with fewer than 500 employees (Berlemann, Jahn, & Lehmann, 2019, p. 25). This concept breaks with the idea of the German Mittelstand, which dates back to the time of feudal estate structures. At that time, the middle class emerged as a social center between the traditional estates of the aristocracy and the proletariat (Amschlinger, 2011).

By contrast, shifting the focus from the social status of the owners to the nature of the enterprise itself is more in line with international practice. The same applies to the term SME, which is also used internationally.

However, there are also different definitions for the term SME. In Germany, for example, a company is classified as an SME, if it has a maximum of 500 employees, in line with the Ifo Institute's concept mentioned above. The limit for annual turnover is 50 million euros (Belitz, Dreher, Kovač, Schwäbe, & Som, 2017, p. 344). This also corresponds to the US approach (OECD Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2005). The EU

Commission, on the other hand, defines SMEs as companies with a maximum of 250 employees (Fust & Fueglistaller, 2016, p. 55). In some countries, the upper limit of employees for an SME is even only 200 (OECD Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2005). It is not only this disparity that gives rise to criticism. Curran & Blackburn (2001) call for the threshold for the number of employees to be set on a sector-specific basis (Curran & Blackburn, 2001, p. 56).

In total, there are around 23 million companies in the member states of the European Union that can be categorized as SMEs. This means that they account for 99.8 percent of the total. They include micro-enterprises with fewer than 9 employees as well as global market leaders with an annual turnover of 50 million euros (Röhl, 2017, 15 ff). Despite these hidden champions being successful on the global market, SMEs as a whole have benefited little from the export growth of recent years. This is because SMEs are particularly often active in domestically oriented sectors (Röhl, 2017).

Overall, the idea of an expedient definition in individual cases has become established (Becker & Ulrich, 2011, 18 f). Qualitative as well as quantitative aspects can be considered as criteria (Botzkowski, 2017, p. 39). In the context of this paper, a company is classified as an SME, if it meets the criteria of the European Union. For the EU, companies are SMEs, if they employ no more than 250 people and their annual turnover does not exceed €50 million (Enz, 2020b, p. 29; Enz & Škodová Parmová, 2020, p. 143).

2.2 Definition Marketing Communications

There are also different conceptions for the term marketing communications. The approach advocated by Rennhak & Schmidt (2020) to distinguish public relations (PR) from marketing is widespread. A distinction is made here based on the target group. While messages in the context of PR are directed at the entire public, marketing focuses on a specific target group (Rennhak & Schmidt, 2020, 8 ff). Moreover, widespread is the differentiation of PR from advertising, as described by Mast (2016). Here the distinction is made based on whether money is paid for the transport of a message (Mast, 2016, 20 ff).

In contrast to the two popular definitions, the authors of this paper follow the approach of Ternés et al. (2017). They summarize under the term marketing communications all instruments that are suitable for influencing addressees in the context of decision-making (Ternès, Klenke, Jerusel, & Schmidtbleicher, 2017). Kilian (2019) specifies that both customers and noncustomers are the target of marketing communication. The purpose is to place, reinforce or change opinions in the interests of the company (Kilian, 2019, p. 63). Thus, corporate communication can be understood as an integrated management process (Bruhn, 2016, p. 107).

The joint use of the different communication channels is called the communication mix. The term marketing mix was introduced into scientific discourse by Borden (1964). Borden was the first to formulate the necessity of using different marketing instruments in a coordinated manner to achieve a defined marketing objective (Borden, 1964). According to Shaw & Jones (2016), Borchers (2014), Borden (1984) and McCarthy (1964), marketing objectives can be divided into four categories. These are product policy, pricing policy, distribution policy and communication policy (Borchers, 2014, p. 34; Borden, 1984; McCarthy, 1964; Shaw & Jones, 2016, p. 250).

Klewes (2005), Bruhn (2010) and Ternès, Jerusel & Schmidtbleicher (2017) see the task of communication policy as influencing the decisions of target group members in the interests of the company. This goal can be achieved through the use of different instruments. Therefore, the model of the communication mix has emerged in the discipline of communication (Bruhn, 2010, pp. 3-25; Klewes, 2005; Melzer, 2015, p. 26; Ternès et al., 2017). This includes classic communication instruments such as PR, sales promotion and advertising as well as innovative communication tools. These include the internet, social media, mobile communication and event marketing. Kreyher (2015), Bruhn (2014) and Bruhn (2009) agree on this (Bruhn, 2009a, p. 46, 2014, p. 67; Kreyher, 2015, p. 11). Others, exemplified by Meffert, Burmann & Kirchgeorg (2012) and Schweiger & Schrattenecker (2009), define details differently. However, they confirm the communication mix model theoretically (Meffert, Burmann, & Kirchgeorg, 2012; Schweiger & Schrattenecker, 2009, 113 ff).

Based on this, Röttger (2018) attributes a strategic function to it (Röttger, Kobusch, & Preusse, 2018, p. 151). This includes evaluating the efficiency of communication channels and selecting the appropriate means for a specific project (Bak, 2016, p. 45). Within economics, the term is used synonymously with the term communication policy (Szyszka, 2015). In the social science context, the term communication mix is used synonymously with market communication. This includes all of a company's internal and external communication activities (Bolten & Schröter, 2001; Derieth, 1995; Zerfaß, 2010).

2.3 Definition of regional economic areas

This paper deals with regional differences in the communication behavior of SMEs. Economic geographic theories are used to describe economic areas. Economic geography is a branch of general geography and can be subdivided into spatially or sectorally oriented approaches. Currently, the dominant approach is the spatial economic approach postulated by Ludwig Schätzl (Haas & Neumair, 2007, p. 4). This approach sees the focus of economic geography in the description, explanation, and evaluation of economic spatial systems (Schätzl, 2003, 24 f). The main objects of research are spatial patterns of interdependence, spatial structures, spatial development processes as well as spatial inequalities and interdependencies (Staudacher, 2005, p. 33).

Cluster formation

Considering increasing globalization, the focus of economic policy thinking and action in the 1980s was on improving international competitiveness (Larédo, 1997, p. 34). Today, attempts are being made to counter this development by forming regional economic units, so-called clusters (Mattsson, 2009, p. 1625). The bundling of forces within such clusters is seen as an important instrument for regional economic promotion. The goal is usually the institutionally anchored networking of public and private actors (Engstrand & Sätre åhlander, 2008, p. 487).

The development-theoretical approach of achieving competitive advantages through networking has a long tradition and can already be found in the 1920s in Marshall (Marshall; Rieter, 2012, p. 157). However, for decades, the cluster idea was not related to the cross-sectoral development of economic areas. Thus, from Isard, Schooler and Vietorisz (1959) to Czamanski, Czamanski and Ellis (1974) to Porter (1990), the pooling of forces within existing economic and industrial sectors was seen as a means of generating a competitive advantage within the sector (Czamanski, Ellis, & Czamanski, 1974; Isard, Schooler, & Vietorisz, 1959; Porter, 1990a).

Around the turn of the millennium, this approach was then taken further by Porter when he included spatial proximity, related economic sectors, skilled labor and infrastructure and political actors in his cluster definition (Porter, 1998, 197 f). The thought process of achieving synergy effects by bundling forces across sectors and ultimately gaining a competitive advantage — and understanding the bundling of forces within such clusters as an important instrument for regional economic development (Engstrand & Sätre åhlander, 2008, p. 487) is understandable from the point of view of the authors of this work. However, Martin & Sunley (2003) must also be considered. They dispute that the formation of clusters is in itself an amount to economic development (Martin & Sunley, 2003). A justified criticism because while some locations thrive, other clusters die (Mattsson, 2009, p. 1628).

Simultaneously, numerous empirical research projects exist to identify success factors in cluster development. Of central importance here are the determinants 'production factors', 'demand', 'supporting industries' and 'competitive structure' included in Porter's diamond model (vom Hofe & Bhatta, 2007, p. 2). In addition, it is considered certain that the companies and people assigned to a cluster, as well as their thinking and actions, also play an important role (Harrison, Cooper, & Mason, 2004; Lucas, Sands, & Wolfe, 2009; Mattsson, 2009, p. 1626). These findings strengthen the authors' assumption that the efficiency of communication channels can also differ within clusters. This would be the basis for developing a competitive advantage through regional increases in communication efficiency.

Social environment

The effect of some communication channels depends on the media competence of the recipients. In this context, Herrmann & Wiafe (2020) refer to the decisive influence of the social environment of consumers (Herrmann & Wiafe, 2020, p. 145). This shows the necessity of including the character of the respective living space in the consideration of an economic region in addition to the economic characteristics. In this context, a differentiation between rural and urban areas is frequently encountered. Hämel & Walter (2020), however, criticize the imprecision of this definition, for which neither statistical values nor spatial planning levels exist (Hämel & Walter, 2020, p. 444). Hämel & Walter agree with Schlömer (2015), however, that the settlement structure is fundamentally suitable for differentiating between urban and rural areas (Schlömer, 2015).

To establish statistical comparability between national and international regions, the NUTS classification was introduced within the EU. This is based on the administrative divisions of the individual countries. As a rule, these represent an abstract image of the settlement structure. However, the NUTS regions show clear differences in terms of area, population size and economic and administrative importance. Against this background, the suitability of the content must be checked before each comparison and, if necessary, an adjustment made (Cerba, 2020; Federal Statistical Office, 2021).

3. Methodology and Data

Spending on marketing communications has steadily increased by a total of 67 percent between the years 2009 and 2019. Globally, companies spent a total of 367,320 million US dollars on customer engagement in 2009. In 2019, spending was US$614,472 million. A decline was then recorded due to the Corona pandemic. Nevertheless, Weidenbach (2021) expects the original trend to continue and that in 2022 the year 2019 will be surpassed with 620,180 million US dollars spent on marketing communications (Weidenbach, 2021). However, the budgets for the different communication channels are developing very differently. Digital offers in particular are among the winners. Their budget has increased almost tenfold since 2006 (Mühlenhoff & Rudloff, 2020, p. 19). A trend that will continue, according to Enberg (2019). Although a decline in growth rates is to be expected, the growth in spending in 2023 is still expected to be around 8 percent. This is because the importance of digital marketing communication is steadily increasing (Enberg, 2019; Greve & Scheibe, 2020, p. 106). The situation is different, however, with classic communication channels. This genre includes, for example, print, TV, radio or out-of-home. Such formats are still used today, but at the same time they are losing enormous importance (Weimann & Tewes, 2020, p. 177). An example of this is print advertising. In 2015, newspaper ads had a share of 14.6% of the total German advertising budget. Five years later, this has fallen to 10.7%. The situation is similar with advertisements in magazines. These fall from 12.5% (2015) to 8.2% (2020) (Dentsu Germany GmbH, 2019). In addition to the different channels, deviations can also be seen in different regions. For example, growth in marketing communications spending in France was 7.1% in 2019. At the same time, Germany recorded a decline of 1.1%. Similar fluctuations are also expected for the period after Corona. For example, Dentsu Germany (2021) expects budgets in India to grow by 10.8% in 2021, while Russia is expected to grow by 3% (Dentsu Germany GmbH, 2021).

This clarifies that there are differences in the use of communication channels worldwide. This paper aims to clarify, whether these differences are national trends or whether different currents can also be detected on a small-scale regional level.

Data collection

To clarify the underlying hypotheses, a large-scale survey is conducted first. For this purpose, SMEs are interviewed about their current and future communication behavior. The survey will be conducted utilizing an online questionnaire. The survey will be conducted using the SurveyMonkey system. This offers the advantage of low-threshold use. No software needs to be installed to answer the questions. In addition, it can be used sensibly with both desktop and smartphone. In the authors' view, these are factors that enable a good response rate.

Target regions

This paper will also consider possible differences between SMEs from a metropolitan region and those from rural areas. At the same time, the possible cultural influence should also be considered. Against this background, the company survey is conducted in four regions in two countries.

On the German side, the survey is based on the NUTS 2 region Mittelfranken. As representatives of rural areas, enterprises from the NUTS 3 regions Ansbach (DE251), Erlangen-Höchstadt (DE257), Neustadt/Aisch-Bad Windsheim (DE25A) and Weißenburg-Gunzenhausen (DE25C) are considered. The selection was made because the respective districts are characterized by small towns and villages. The Nuremberg metropolitan region is considered in contrast. For the purposes of this study, this consists of the NUTS 3 regions of Nuremberg (DE254), Fürth (DE253) and Erlangen (DE252). Taken together, these three regions can be considered a metropolis. They are closely intertwined, have a metropolitan character, and together have a correspondingly high number of inhabitants.

Corresponding areas in the Czech Republic are analyzed as control groups. The NUTS 3 region of South Bohemia (CZ031) is analyzed as representative of the rural area. It has a comparable small-scale character to the areas named for Central Franconia. With Prague (CZ031), there is only one metropolitan city in the Czech Republic. Therefore, this NUTS 2 region is used as a comparative area for the Nuremberg Metropolitan Region.

Thus, the two Czech regions encompass significantly more inhabitants and a larger area than the two German target regions. From the authors' perspective, this is not an obstacle because a balance is achieved through similarly large samples.

Conducting the survey

The survey of the companies took place in April and May 2021. During this period, representatives of the management or corporate communications of SMEs were invited by e-mail to participate in the survey. The authors collected the contact data of 500 contacts per region. Member lists of chambers of commerce and marketing associations were considered for the research. In addition, further suitable SMEs were identified via Google search.

To ensure a good response rate, the questionnaires were sent out in the national language. In addition, the survey consisted of only 11 questions, for which a response time of less than five minutes is to be expected.

Communication channels considered

Due to technical progress and the linking of analogue and digital communication channels, marketing communication has steadily growing possibilities for addressing customers (Kochhan, Elsässer, & Hachenberg, 2020, 22 f). Against this background, convergent orchestration of the channels is necessary to achieve efficient activation of the target group (Cordesmeyer, Degen, & Terstiege, 2020, p. 48). This makes it clear why the concept of integrated communication, originally limited to classic advertising, is now valid for all marketing communication (Rademacher, 2020, p. 53).

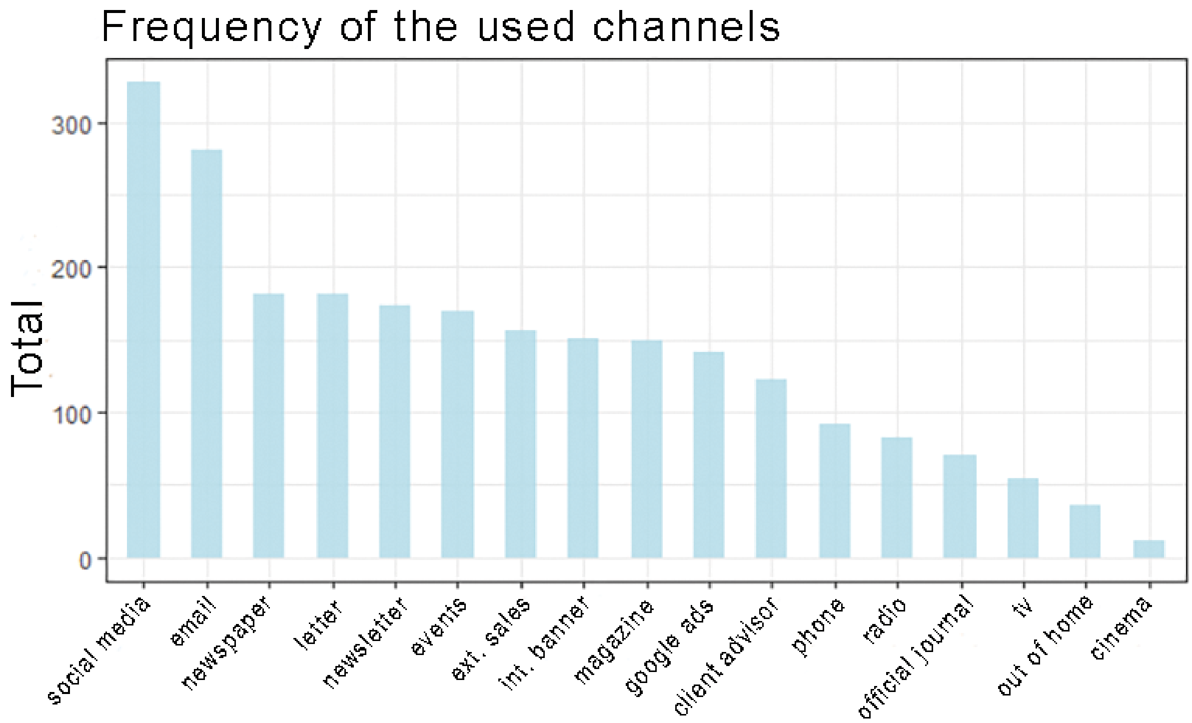
Nevertheless, not every conceivable communication channel was included in the context of the company survey. This would have prolonged the processing of the questionnaire for participants. It would have resulted in a poor response rate. To avoid this, the usage behavior of the most widespread channels was targeted.

Method and analysis

A survey was conducted among 2,000 SMEs to clarify the research questions. The respondents came from rural areas and metropolitan areas. Four clusters were formed within the survey: one rural region each in the Czech Republic and Germany, and one metropolitan region each in the Czech Republic and Germany. This makes it possible to identify differences due to the different national cultures. Furthermore, it is possible to differentiate based on rural or metropolitan living areas. A total of 522 (n=522) companies took part in the survey. Of these, a total of 249 participants were from the Czech Republic. On the German side, 273 companies took part. In the Czech group, 203 participants come from rural areas, 46 participants from the metropolitan region. In the German group, 195 participants belong to the rural area, 78 companies can be assigned to the metropolitan region. To clarify the hypotheses, the answers were analyzed using R (packages: psych, ggplot2) and Microsoft Excel (add-on: XLSTAT).

Influence of nationality on the distribution of communication channels

This paper aims to clarify whether marketing communication in SMEs can be developed into a competitive advantage over corporate groups. In a first step, it is necessary to analyze current communication behavior. For this purpose, the companies were asked which communication channels they currently use. A total of 17 channels were asked about. The number of responses is shown in Figure 1.



The picture shows a wide range in the frequency of use. The maximum value is reached using social media, with 327 mentions. Cinema advertising is used the least, with 11 mentions.

From the wide spread of frequency, it can be deduced that different companies use a different number of communication channels. Against this background, it is important to clarify whether there is a significant difference in the number of communication channels used in the Czech Republic and Germany. The following hypothesis should therefore be tested:

H_A: There is no difference in the number of communication channels used in Czech and German companies.

A t-test with Welch correction is used to test hypothesis H_A. The effect size is calculated according to Cohen (Cohen, 2013). A test of normal distribution is waived about the central limit theorem and the group sizes (Figure 2) (Enz et al., 2021). According to Rasch et al. (2011), the prerequisites for the Welch test are thus fulfilled (Rasch, Kubinger, & Moder, 2011).

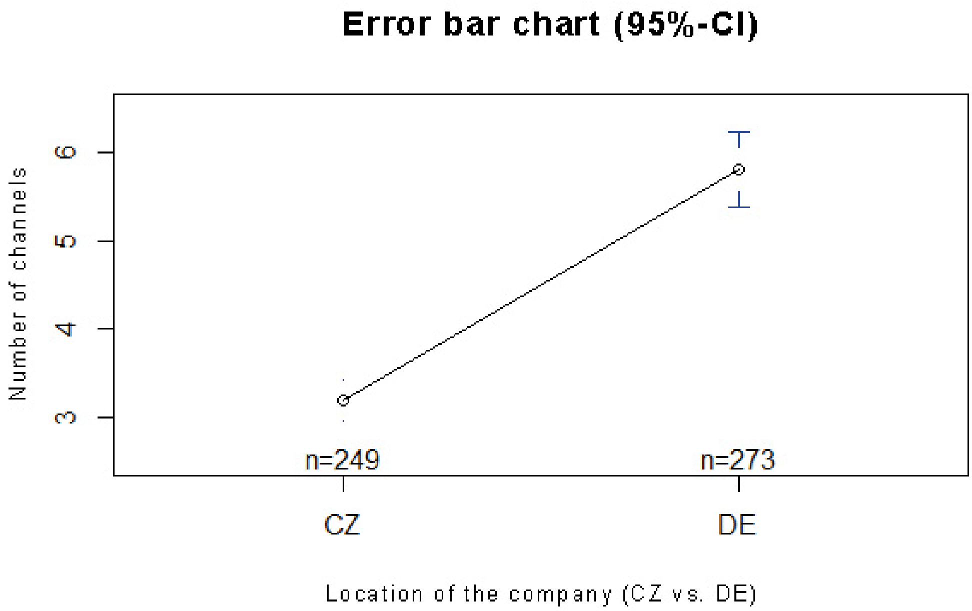


Figure 2: Error bar chart on the use of communication channels in the Czech Republic and Germany.

Figure 2 shows the confidence intervals of the two comparison groups, “Czech Republic” (CZ) and “Germany” (DE). This is already a first indication that there may be significant national differences in the number of communication channels used. This impression is confirmed when the Welch t-test is carried out and Cohen is considered. According to the Welch test, the number of different channels used to communicate with customers is significantly smaller in Czech companies ($t(421.64)=-10.6$, $p<0.001$) (MW=3.19, M=3, SD=1.89) than in German companies (MW=5.81, M=5, SD=3.57). The mean difference is 2.62 (95%-CI [2.13, 3.10]). According to Cohen (1988), the effect is large (d=0.734). Thus, the null hypothesis must be rejected in favor of H_1. Thus, the formulated hypothesis H_A must also be rejected. It can thus be assumed that nationality has an influence on the number of channels used by companies in the communication mix.

Influence of company size on the scope of the communication mix

As already explained, SMEs are a homogeneous group. Bussiek (1994) attributes this to the fact that the term SME represents more than the size-related classification of companies. This leads Bussiek to deliberately exclude freelancers from his definition of SME (Bussiek, 1994, p. 11). In contrast, Röhl (2017) sees freelancers and solo self-employed persons as part of the SME, in line with the Small Business Act (SBA) of the European Union, as well as companies with several thousand employees (Röhl, 2017, p. 6). This view is also held by the authors of this paper, who develop the research question from this, whether the number of communication channels used is influenced by the size of the company. For clarification, the SMEs surveyed were divided into four groups. Group 1 includes tiny companies with less than 2 million euros in turnover or total assets. Group 2 includes small companies with a turnover or balance sheet total between 2 and 10 million euros. Medium-sized companies with a turnover or balance sheet total of 10 to 50 million euros are grouped in Group 3. Group 4 is made up of large companies with a turnover or balance sheet total of more than 50 million euros. This means that companies in Group 4 no longer belong to the SME group, but serve as a comparison group in this study.

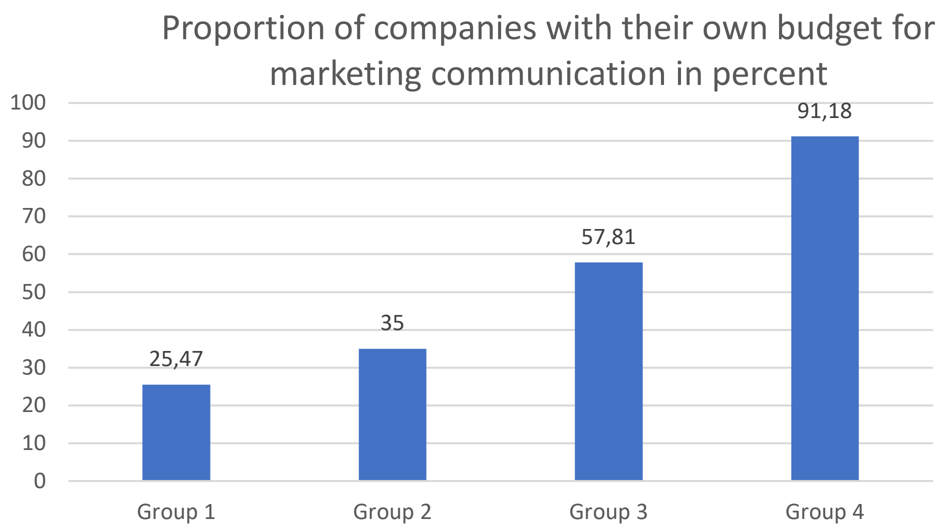


Figure 3: Share of companies with budget for marketing communication by size (1=tiny)

In general, the existence of own budgets is considered an indicator for the professionalization of marketing communication in companies (BPRA Bund der Public Relations Agenturen, 1980, p. 48; Ruppert, 2016, p. 45). Figure 3 shows that only 25% of the tiny companies in the survey state that they have a strategically planned, dedicated budget for marketing communications. This figure rises steadily to 91% for large companies. This may be an indication that the number of communication channels used corresponds to the size of the company. Against this background, the following hypothesis should be tested:

H_B: There is no correlation between the size of a company and the number of communication channels used.

Regarding the existence of budgets for marketing communication, the authors expect an increase in the number of communication channels used as the size of the company increases. It is therefore assumed that there is a natural order. For this reason, the hypothesis is to be carried out using the Jonckheere-Terpstra test (IBM Deutschland GmbH, 2021). Compared to the more popular Kruskal-Wallis test, this procedure has the advantage of higher sensitivity in the case of ordered alternatives, if the presumed or a very similar pattern of alternatives is present (Brehm, 2008, p. 40; Brunner & Munzel, 2013, p. 123). For the procedure to be carried out properly, the sample variables within a block must be independent. In addition, the sample variables must have a continuous distribution function. Furthermore, the data must have at least an ordinal level of measurement (Duller, 2008, 221 ff). All the aforementioned requirements are fulfilled by the present data set.

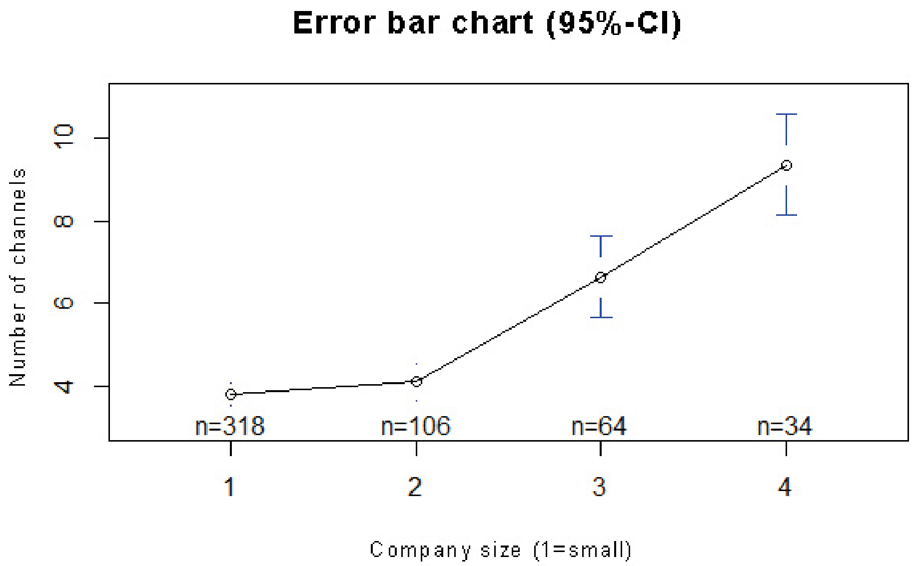


Figure 4: Error bar chart on the number of communication channels used relating to company size

Figure 4 visualizes the confidence intervals of the four comparison groups. This shows that there is no overlap in the four control bars. It may indicate, that there is a significant dependence of the number of communication channels used on the size of the company.

The Jonckheere-Terpstra test conducted afterwards shows that there is a significant growing trend in the medians (JT=51968, p=0.001). Larger companies use more different channels for customer communication (Tiny median=3, Small median=3, Medium median=6, Large median=10).

Usage rate of the communication channels

To provide SME management with approaches for increasing the efficiency of communication, it is necessary to evaluate communication behavior. For this purpose, the companies were asked which communication channels are currently used. The distribution is shown in Figure 5. This shows that the communication channels are generally used more in Germany than in the Czech Republic, which confirms the statistical analysis already carried out.

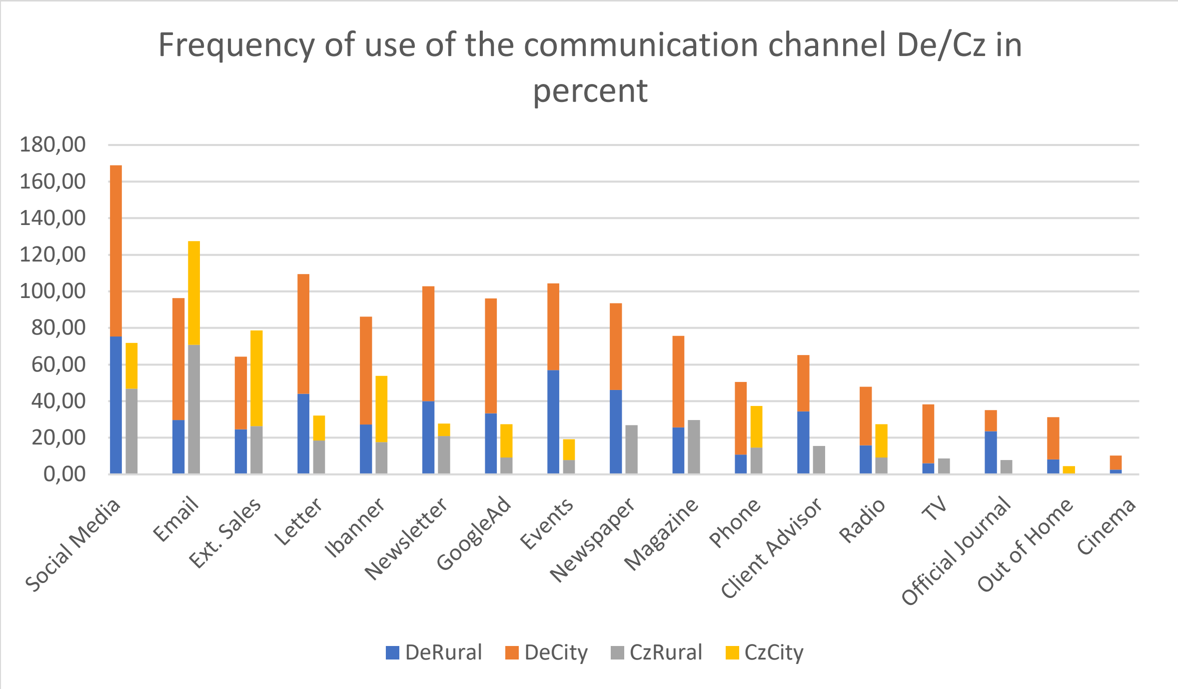


Figure 5: Differences in the Frequency of use of the communication channel in Germany and Czech Republic

The only exception is the use of emails. These are used more in the Czech Republic. The related communication channel social media, on the other hand, is used more than twice as often in Germany, with a ratio of 168.97 to 71.83. This could be because email marketing is highly regulated in Germany. That means that email marketing is only permitted with the explicit consent of the recipient (Strzyzewski & Karpa-Tovar, 2019, 335 ff). In addition, it is hardly possible to rent or buy email addresses anymore, which is why companies usually only have self-generated email addresses at their disposal (Feldmann & Höppner, 2021, 442 ff).

Expected development of the importance of individual communication channels

The expected future importance of the individual communication channels is also relevant for this study. Where the current frequency of use deviates strongly from the expected future importance, a change in the SME's behavior is to be expected. Should this follow the mainstream of marketing communication and bypass the regional preferences of the recipients, a loss of efficiency would be expected.

Within the scope of the survey, the expected development in the next three years was asked for each communication channel. The importance could be assessed on a five-point scale from 'absolutely crucial' (4) to 'completely insignificant' (0). Under 'Growth expected', all assessments were recorded that assume increasing importance. Under 'Decline expected' all answers were summarized that expect declining importance.

The results are shown in Table 1. The mentions with increasing and decreasing importance are summarized and presented in a separate column.

Table 1: Development of importance by communication channel over the next three years

	DeRural: Growth expected	DeRural: Decline expected	DeCity: Growth expected	DeCity: Decline expected	CzRural: Growth expected	CzRural: Decline expected	CzCity: Growth expected	CzCity: Decline expected
Social media	80,51	-3,08	88,46	0	72,2	-19,02	11,36	-9,09
Email	40	-24,1	53,85	-15,38	39,02	-21,95	15,91	-25
Ext. sales	18,46	-52,82	30,77	-38,46	34,15	-38,05	29,55	-18,18
Letter	40,51	-24,62	26,92	-34,62	10,24	-36,59	6,82	-54,55
Ibanner	43,08	-30,77	41,03	-19,23	43,9	-38,05	63,64	-2,27
Newsletter	38,97	-23,08	44,87	-34,62	13,17	-33,66	0	-68,18
GoogleAd	61,54	-15,38	71,79	-7,69	41,95	-36,1	45,45	-29,55
Events	63,59	-3,59	61,54	-15,38	10,24	-39,02	18,18	-54,55
Newspaper	6,15	-62,56	7,69	-55,13	11,71	-53,17	4,55	-65,91
Magazines	6,67	-55,38	3,85	-60,26	7,32	-48,78	4,55	-81,82
Phone	4,62	-75,38	11,54	-52,56	6,34	-59,02	4,55	-36,36
Client Advisor	40,51	-22,56	19,23	-50	21,95	-51,22	0	-40,91
Radio	19,49	-36,92	19,23	-42,31	16,59	-42,44	9,09	-54,55

	DeRural: Growth expected	DeRural: Decline expected	DeCity: Growth expected	DeCity: Decline expected	CzRural: Growth expected	CzRural: Decline expected	CzCity: Growth expected	CzCity: Decline expected
TV	13,85	-51,28	3,85	-46,15	21,46	-36,59	0	-59,09
Official Journal	3,08	-68,72	7,69	-69,23	7,8	-61,95	0	-72,73
Out of Home	16,92	-42,05	23,08	-42,31	3,9	-55,61	4,55	-63,64
Cinema	3,08	-75,38	3,85	-55,13	4,88	-64,39	0	-61,36

In general, there is no uniform picture. For each communication channel, there are companies that attest to its increasing, constant or decreasing importance. However, the assessments vary. This is illustrated in Figure 6.

This shows that the classic communication channels in particular are attributed declining importance. Cumulatively, the worst value is shown by official journals (272.63%). They are followed by cinema (256.26%), magazines (246.24%) and newspapers (236.77%). However, it is noticeable that the importance of so-called new media is also expected to decline. This category, which has been constantly recomposed over time, currently includes digital media such as the internet and social media (Enz, 2019a; Hartl, 1999, p. 168). Here, a strong loss of importance is expected for the email newsletter in particular (159.54%). GoogleAds (88.72%) and internet bannering (90.32%) also have high values here.

Cumulatively, the highest growth in importance is expected for social media (252.53%), GoogleAds (220.73%) and internet bannering (191.65%).

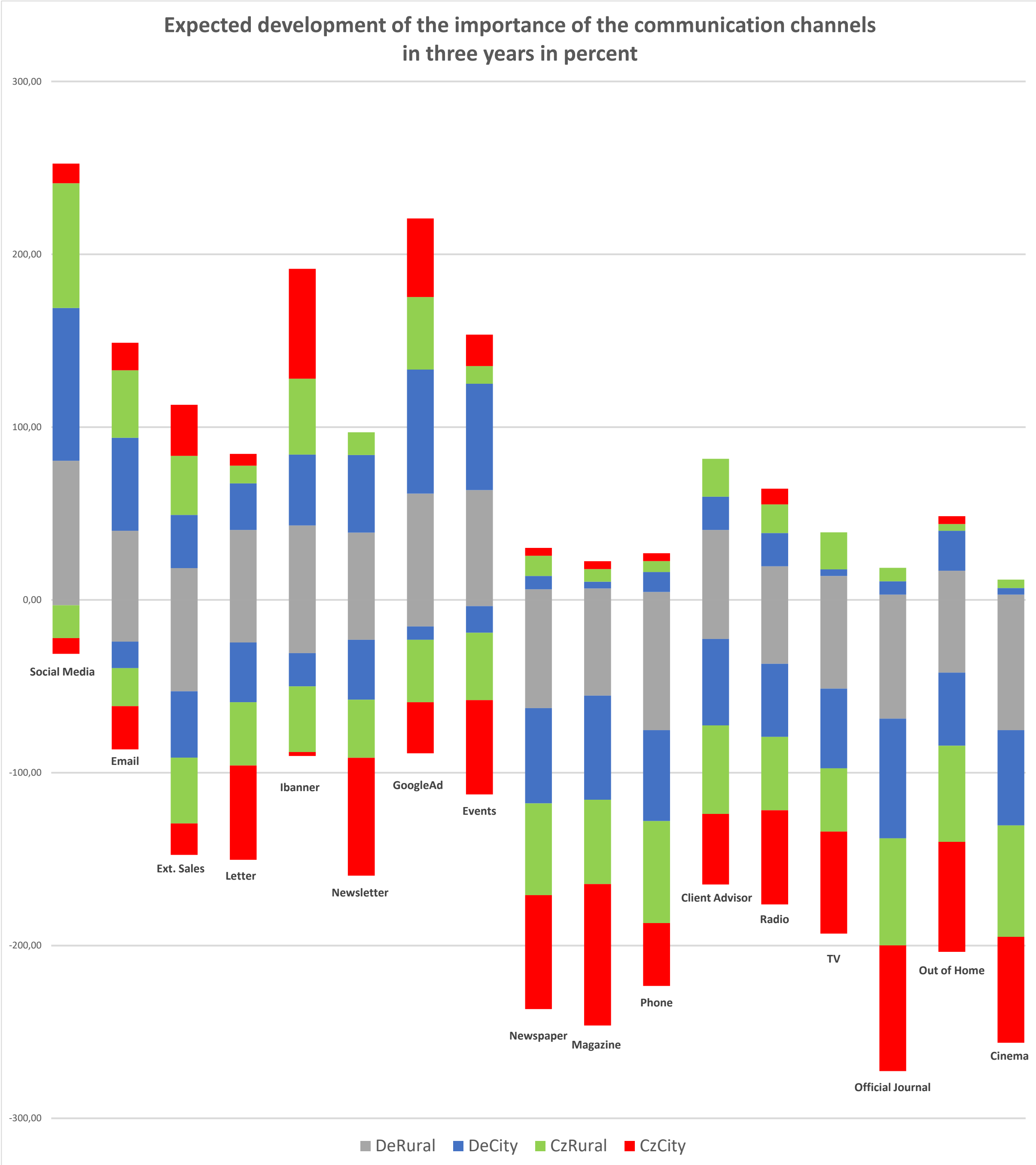


Figure 6: Expected development of the importance of the communications channels in three years in percent

Considering the strongly differing evaluations, it is important to clarify regarding the research question whether the assumed future importance of a communication channel depends on where an SME is located. The hypothesis must therefore be clarified:

H_C: There is no correlation between the location of a company and the importance attributed to a communication channel for the future.

This hypothesis is tested using Pearson's Chi^2 test. For this purpose, a normalized acceptance rate is determined from the answers given in the survey. This is normalized to 100%, which corresponds to the theoretically maximum achievable score per area. The values determined are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Contingency table for expected importance of communication channels

	dev_client_advisor	dev_ext_sales	dev_phone	dev_letter	dev_email	dev_newsletter	dev_bannering	dev_googlead	dev_socialmed
DeRural	55,77	36,41	21,92	52,82	52,18	52,18	52,05	64,23	81,28
DeCity	39,42	42,63	32,05	48,08	61,54	56,41	55,45	71,79	80,77
CzRural	38,29	46,22	27,44	38,05	57,07	43,41	48,9	50,73	71,22
CzCity	30,68	58,52	42,05	39,77	43,18	23,86	65,34	53,98	50,57

	dev_off_journal	dev_magazine	dev_nespaper	dev_radio	dev_tv	dev_cine	dev_ooh	dev_events
DeRural	25,38	32,82	31,67	40,46	33,72	21,15	37,05	70,64
DeCity	23,72	31,09	32,05	38,46	32,69	28,53	38,46	63,46
CzRural	26,83	33,05	33,9	36,71	41,46	25	28,17	38,05
CzCity	18,18	17,05	23,86	37,5	30,68	19,32	19,32	30,11

The Chi^2 test is performed using Excel ("Excel," 2020) and the XLSTAT extension ("XLSTAT," 2020). In order for the test to be performed correctly, conditions must be met. For example, reliability is only given, if a maximum of 20 percent of the cells have an expected frequency smaller than 5. Furthermore, the smallest expected frequency must be at least 1 (Backhaus, Erichson, Plinke, & Weiber, 2016, p. 315; Bühl, 2016, p. 306; Hartung, Elpelt, & Klösener, 2009, p. 416).

Thus, a chi-square test is performed between the expected future importance of a communication channel and the region in which the company is located. No expected cell frequency was less than 5. There was a statistically significant correlation between the expected future importance of a communication channel and the region in which the company is located, x2=75.895, p= 0.003, alpha=0.05.

Expected development of budgets for individual communication channels

The aim of this study is to examine whether marketing communication by SMEs can be developed into a competitive advantage. This would be the case if marketing communication of SMEs could be designed more efficiently than that of nationally or globally communicating corporations. Therefore, it is important on which communication channels SME want to spend money in the future. Thus, the companies were asked in the survey what the capital allocation for the individual channels should look like for the next three years according to current knowledge.

Table 3: Expected development of budgets by communication channel

	DeRural: Growth expected	DeRural: Decline expected	DeCity: Growth expected	DeCity: Decline expected	CzRural: Growth expected	CzRural: Decline expected	CzCity: Growth expected	CzCity: Decline expected
Social media	26,67	0	15,38	0	16,59	7,8	0	0
Email	3,08	5,13	7,69	7,69	9,76	4,39	0	0
Ext. sales	4,62	27,18	0	19,23	7,8	31,71	4,55	43,18
Letter	3,08	4,62	3,85	8,97	3,9	27,8	6,82	38,64
Ibanner	6,67	4,62	3,85	7,69	10,73	23,41	15,91	0

	DeRural: Growth expected	DeRural: Decline expected	DeCity: Growth expected	DeCity: Decline expected	CzRural: Growth expected	CzRural: Decline expected	CzCity: Growth expected	CzCity: Decline expected
Newsletter	3,08	1,54	7,69	11,54	5,37	27,32	0	18,18
GoogleAd	13,85	18,97	19,23	14,1	7,8	42,44	0	50
Events	27,69	0	15,38	11,54	8,78	30,24	0	18,18
Newspaper	0	33,33	0	21,79	0	40,98	0	75
Magazines	1,54	43,08	0	29,49	1,95	42,93	0	75
Phone	1,54	43,08	0	29,49	1,95	42,93	0	75
Client Advisor	3,08	15,38	0	19,95	3,9	24,39	0	25
Radio	0	40	0	19,23	0	40,49	0	54,55
TV	1,03	31,79	0	33,33	1,46	46,34	0	68,18
Official Journal	0	45,13	0	42,31	0	59,02	0	75
Out of Home	3,08	35,38	0	34,62	0	52,68	0	25
Cinema	0	47,18	0	33,33	1,46	56,1	0	68,18

In the evaluation, the respondents could classify the budget development on a scale of 0 to 7. The minimum value O corresponds to a budget reduction of 100%. The maximum value describes an increase in the budget by 100% or more. Table 2 shows the values of the respective top boxes. The top box for growth includes an expected budget increase of 75% or more. The top box for decreasing budgets covers a reduction of 75% or more.

Figure 7 shows the cumulative values to give an impression of the development of the individual communication channels. It shows that the five most important channels can also expect the highest budget increases. These are social media, email, internet bannering, Google Ads and events.

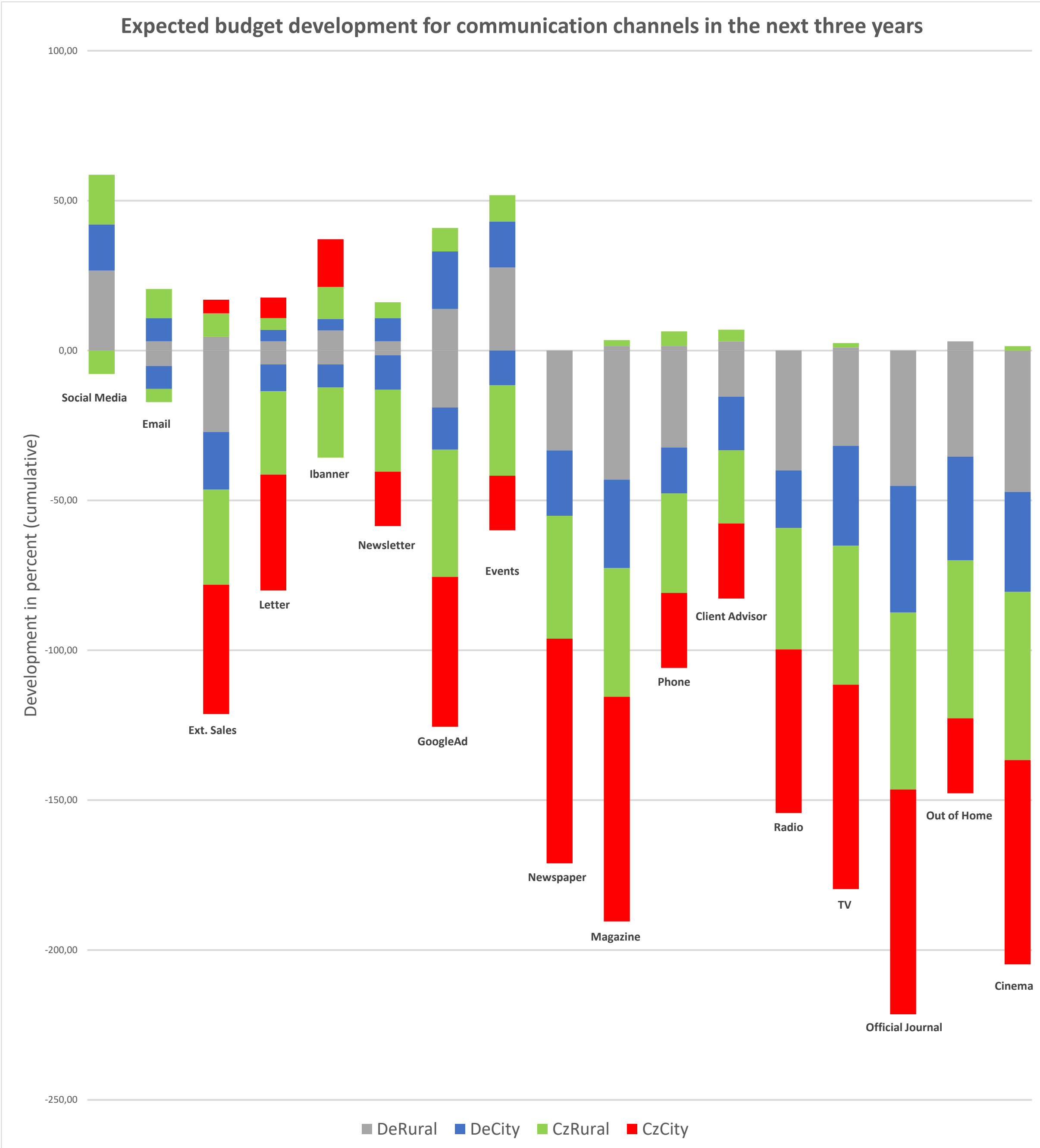


Figure 7: Expected budgets for communication channels in future

The strongest budget growth is thus accounted for by digital media in particular. It is striking that traditional communication channels will have to reckon with strong budget cuts, even if the SMEs continue to attribute importance to them.

Considering the strongly differing evaluations, it is essential to clarify regarding the research question whether the budgets provided in the future depend on where an SME is located. The hypothesis must therefore be clarified:

H_D: There is no correlation between the location of a company and the future budgeting of communication channels.

This hypothesis is tested using Pearson's Chi^2 test. For this purpose, a normalized acceptance rate is determined from the answers given in the survey. This is normalized to 100%, which corresponds to the theoretically maximum achievable score per area. The values determined are shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Contingency table for future budgeting of communication channels

	dev_client_advisor	dev_ext_sales	dev_phone	dev_letter	dev_email	dev_newsletter	dev_bannering	dev_googlead	dev_socialmed
DeRural	47,62	43,22	36,84	56,24	55,17	58,58	61,91	57,03	78,80
DeCity	32,84	31,31	25,97	39,44	38,68	41,02	42,39	39,73	54,45
CzRural	104,67	95,78	83,65	123,67	123,05	129,02	136,13	129,37	174,17
CzCity	29,07	26,50	22,60	34,28	33,69	35,31	36,97	34,98	47,98

	dev_off_journal	dev_magazine	dev_nespaper	dev_radio	dev_tv	dev_cine	dev_ooh	dev_events
DeRural	29,65	31,36	36,12	34,50	36,79	27,13	38,05	74,93
DeCity	19,68	21,29	24,03	24,53	25,83	16,98	26,73	51,03
CzRural	65,63	70,13	80,32	78,08	81,36	61,01	83,37	164,02
CzCity	17,39	18,37	21,65	21,02	22,87	15,50	22,73	44,56

The Chi^2 test is again carried out using Excel. In order for the test to be carried out correctly, the framework conditions must fit. Reliability is only given if a maximum of 20 percent of the cells have an expected frequency of less than 5. In addition, the smallest expected frequency must be at least 1 (Backhaus et al., 2016, p. 315; Bühl, 2016, p. 306; Hartung et al., 2009, p. 416).

So, a chi-square test is performed between the expected future budgeting of a communication channel and the region where the company is located. No expected cell frequency was less than 5. The result is x2=0.513, p= 1.000, alpha=0.05. The calculated p-value is greater than the significance level alpha. Likewise, the observed value x2 (0.513) is smaller than the critical value x2 (65.171). Thus, there is no reason to reject H_0.

Expected development in the supraregional context

The analysis described above clearly shows that SMEs expect a shift in the importance of the available communication channels. In order for SME to be able to generate a competitive advantage over nationally or globally thinking corporations through more efficient marketing communication, a differentiation of action is necessary. In this context, it is important to recognize whether the change assumed by SME also represents the opinion of the major market players.

For an analysis of cross-regional communication behavior, data compiled by Dentsu Aegis Network is used in the context of this work. The marketing network has compiled statistics on advertising expenditure in Germany between 2015 and 2020 (Dentsu Aegis Network, 2021). Not all the channels considered in this work are recorded or shown individually. Nevertheless, this indicates future behavior. The development of the digital, radio, outdoor, cinema, magazine, newspaper, and TV channels covered is shown in Figure 8. Exploratively, it can also be seen here that the share of classic communication channels is declining. At the same time, a trend towards digital communication channels is also visible here. The only difference is in the use of radio. In contrast to the company survey conducted for this study, this category still shows a slight increase of 0.5% in advertising expenditure.

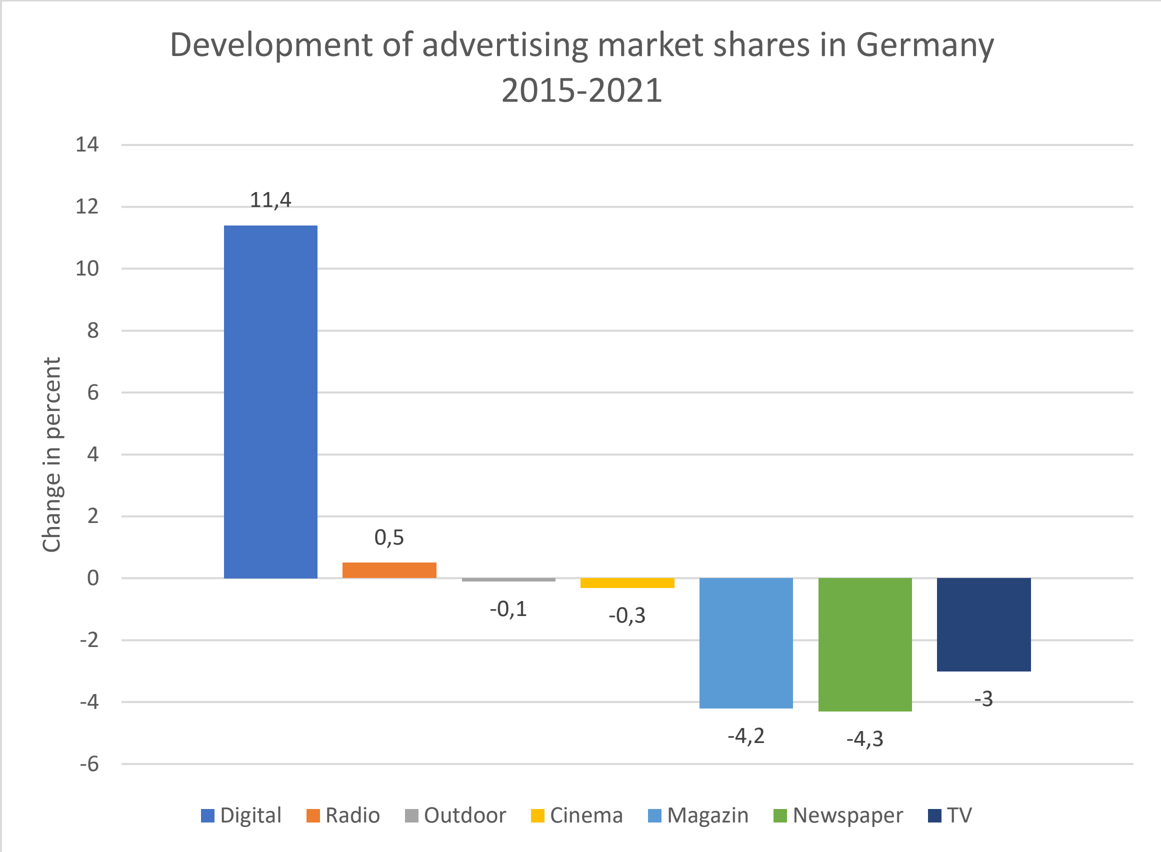


Figure 8: Development of advertising market shares in Germany, 2015-2021

Personnel development in corporate communications

The previous comments show that SMEs are aware of upcoming changes in marketing communication. New communication channels are in the focus of decision makers and there is a willingness to reallocate budgets. However, to interact efficiently with customers, sustained interaction is necessary. Against this background, the question arises as to how communication departments should be staffed in the future. The more communication channels have to be integrated into the communication mix, the higher the time required for this. In this context, the companies were asked how the staff situation will develop in the next three years.

Respondents had the choice between decreasing staff resources (0), keeping staffing levels the same (1) or increasing the size of the communications department (2).

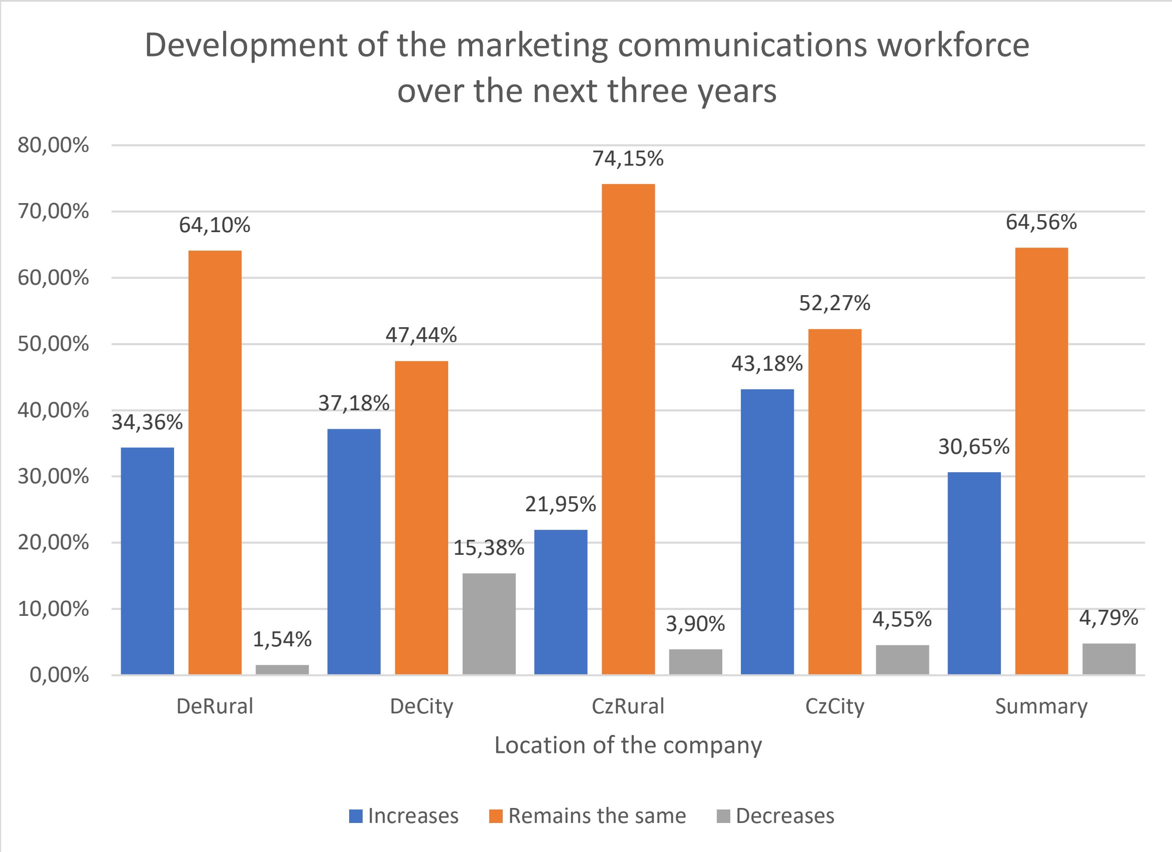


Figure 9: Expected staffing levels in marketing communications

Figure 9 shows how the SMEs see their corporate communications developing. It is striking that more than half of the SMEs are of the opinion that they will be able to cope with future tasks with their existing team strength. As many as 30 percent are prepared to add personnel. However, just under 5% expect to make cuts in corporate communications.

4. Discussion

This paper aims to address whether corporate communication could be developed into a competitive advantage for SMEs.

Definition of competitive advantage

The purpose of any enterprise is profit. While the profit of non-profit enterprises is social, the state administration pursues political profit. The task of every business enterprise is to achieve economic profit (Karazman, 2015, p. 7). This is sought through the sale of products or services. Demanders are therefore indispensable for the economic success of a company. Therefore, the customer base of a company represents a monetary value (Paffhausen & Rebernig, 2019, 144 f). Retaining existing customers and acquiring new ones is therefore the object of entrepreneurial action. In concrete terms, it involves being able to solve a problem for the customer better than the competition. This is achieved when comparative competitive advantages are sought, found and realized (Holland, 2019, p. 244).

The basis of current competition theory is the competition matrix presented by Porter in 1980 and continuously developed. In it, he identifies five forces that determine a competitive advantage (Lucius, 2018, p. 146). Porter (1990) sees the first force in intra-industry rivalry. It forms the center of his model. Porter names the bargaining power of suppliers, the bargaining power of buyers, new market entrants and the development of substitute products as further factors (Porter, 1990b). To use these forces and generate an actual competitive advantage, Porter formulates various strategies.

The strategy's task is to ensure that the company is positioned advantageously in competition (Abraham, 2013, p. 32; Becker, Ulrich, & Stradtmann, 2018, p. 13; Zott & Amit, 2008, p. 4). According to Porter's generic competitive strategy, success can be achieved by attaining cost leadership or alternatively through differentiation (Kummer, 2017). Alternatively, concentration on focal points, i.e., differentiation from competitors, is still possible (Kummer, 2017, p. 8). Porter's approach has met with criticism. This is essentially based on the lack of empirical justification (Müller, 2007, p. 3; Scheuss, 2016, p. 77). Nevertheless, the idea of three generic competitive strategies is considered one of the most influential today (Hungenberg, 2014, p. 198; Scheuss, 2016, p. 68; Waibel & Käppeli, 2015, p. 82). This can probably be attributed to the stringent train of thought, which makes empirical evidence seem dispensable. Porter justifies his approach with the fact that a company does not present itself as the most efficient market participant outside its strategies, nor does it sell its products at premium prices (Hungenberg, 2014, p. 203; Kummer, 2017, p. 1).

Cost leadership strategy

The strategy of cost leadership pursues the goal of gaining a competitive advantage through lower costs relating to competitors (Homburg, 2017, p. 227). This strategy is based on the idea of being able to offer a lower sales price at the same margin through lower costs. Friedl, Hofmann et al. (2017) therefore argue that no company can be successful in the long term, if it does not understand its costs (Friedl, Hofmann, & Pedell, 2017). This is because the question of costs always arises when a basis is needed for determining the price of a material or service (Dey, 2017, p. 82).

Operating costs can be differentiated in terms of their type (Spindler, 2017, p. 100). The categorization can be carried out according to various attributes. For example, costs can be classified according to their origin. They can also be classified according to their nature or the way they are allocated. The creation of costs through the consumption of resources in the production process also forms an independent cost type. So does the function of an expense. Functional costs are, for example, storage costs, general administrative costs but also expenses for marketing measures and sales activities (Wöhe & Döring, 2013, 99 f).

Aspect of the profitability of customer relationships

The upper price limit of a product or service is determined by the representable customer benefit and competitive prices. The company's costs determine the lower limit of the price. In the short term, the variable unit costs are the basis. In the long term, however, the total unit costs are decisive (Simon & Faßnacht, 2016, p. 98). This approach reduces the relationship between supplier and buyer to the making of a single transaction. This is not sufficient for value-based corporate management (Helm, Günter, & Eggert, 2017, p. 59; Meyer & Blümelhuber, 2017). Engelhardt & Freiling (1995), Cornelsen (2000) and others therefore call for the value of a customer relationship to be assessed based on the total duration of the customer relationship life cycle (Cornelsen, 2000; Engelhardt & Freiling, 1995).

The customer relationship life cycle describes the temporal course of a customer relationship. This can be divided into different phases depending on the intensity of the relationship (Burghardt, 2015, p. 36). These are the period of customer acquisition, customer retention and, if necessary, the phase of customer recovery (Bruhn, 2009b, p. 60). The existence of the individual phases and their duration depend on the type of service and industry (Bruhn, 2009b, 64 f). In general, however, studies from the consumer goods sector have shown that acquiring new customers is more expensive than maintaining existing customers (Ertle-Straub, 2018, p. 399).

Regardless of whether it is a question of acquiring a new customer or reactivating an existing customer: every consumption presupposes the prior establishment of contact between supplier and consumer. Thus, every purchase is always preceded by an interaction (Bruhn & Stauss, 2000, 141 f). How high the costs of sales measures turn out to be varied greatly. There are large differences between industries, companies, and products. In practice, values ranging from one percent to 30 per cent of the previous year's turnover can be observed (Zydorek, 2017, p. 151).

A customer relationship can be considered economic, if the sum of all revenues generated with a customer exceeds the sum of all costs associated with it. To achieve long-term corporate goals, it is not necessary for every single transaction to have a positive contribution margin. Marketing communication can make a positive contribution at this point. Its task is to activate target groups effectively and efficiently through strategic planning (Bruhn & Ahlers, 2014, p. 708). This is usually done by using several communication channels that are combined in a communication mix. According to Kormanova, the degree of effectiveness achieved here has a direct influence on the operating result and thus high corporate relevance (Kormanova, 2015, p. 318). For this reason, the field of corporate communication has already been the subject of much academic work. A variety of approaches already exist (Balmer & Greyser, 2003; Balmer & Greyser, 2006; Valackiene, 2010). However, they always aim to address the statistical average customer. This is modelled from demographic and statistical data as well as focus tests and customer feedback (Siebel & Malone, 1998, p. 142). However, this concept, which is often found in practice, is subject to ongoing criticism because it does not sufficiently appreciate the uniqueness of the individual (Wölki, 2007, p. 72).

Communication as a cost factor

Expenditure on corporate marketing and sales is a form of capital investment in intangible assets. This expenditure on communication is also referred to as ad spend. They are directly related to the profitability of a business enterprise (Blankley, 2007). The development of advertising expenditure varies greatly between sectors and companies. For example, manufacturers of IT systems reduce their communication budget, when new products are introduced. This helps to keep the company's return on investment constant, although the market launch of a new product usually entails additional costs. This is due to the IT industry's assessment that new products require less marketing support than older products (Bayus, Erickson, & Jacobson, 2003). The situation is exemplarily different in medical technology. Here, the placement of new products is a cost-intensive challenge. Therefore, the costs for marketing and sales of medical technology products are typically two to three times more expensive than their development (Traub, Ostle, Koller, & Feußner, 2018, p. 104). In addition, the globalization of markets has led to increased competitive pressure. This challenges suppliers in new ways. Sales are no longer determined solely by the suitability of a product. A distinctive image has also gained decisive importance (Will, 2018, 524 f). Building and maintaining this is also the task of marketing communication. At the same time, this corporate sector has the same strategic relevance as other sectors, such as product development. Marketing communication therefore also requires a fixed budget (Behrens, 2017, p. 43).

A look at the overall budgets shows that companies are well aware of this need. Analogous to the increasing competitive pressure, the expenditures for the communication mix also increased. FAMAB (2019) recorded total budgets of 31.49 billion euros in 2017. In the previous year, it had been 30.22 billion euros (FAMAB, 2019). In the coming years, however, the Dentsu Aegis Network (2019) sees weaker growth. In line with this, GroupM (2019) also expects declining growth in the coming years. For example, growth of only 1.4 percent is expected for 2019 compared to 2018. For 2020, an increase of only just over one percent is expected (Weidenbach, 2019). This is due to declining economic growth. That is because spending on public relations is dependent on the economy (Siegert, 2018, p. 3). This significant dependence has been demonstrated in various countries (Chang & Chan-Olmsted, 2005; Lamey, Deleersnyder, Dekimpe, & Steenkamp, 2007; van der Wurff, Bakker, & Picard, 2008).

However, there are clear differences in the development of different communication channels. For example, GroupM expects an increase of 11 percent in spending on customer contact via the internet by 2020. In contrast, a minus of 6 per cent is forecast for newspapers and magazines (Weidenbach, 2019). According to Hüttenberend (2018), these figures confirm a trend. This means that online communication will become the normal form of communication in the future (Sachse-Henninger, 2018). This approach is confirmed by Kientzler (2019). He sees all relevant stakeholder touchpoints in the digital space in the future. He backs up his position with the declining circulation of daily newspapers. Here, circulation has fallen by 27 million copies since 1991 (Kientzler, 2019).

This study explores the communication behavior of SMEs. For this purpose, a survey was conducted among 2,000 companies in the first quarter of 2021, in which 522 companies participated. The analysis shows that the number of communication channels used increases with the size of the company. A Jonckheere-Terpstra test conducted shows that this is a significantly growing trend.

This finding shows that large companies want to use a competitive advantage in corporate communication. Because, considering the generally increasing intensity of competition, marketing communication is of particular importance. Defined sales targets can only be achieved if the correct approach to demanders is successful (Enz, 2019b, p. 186). Against this background, the discipline of marketing communication is experiencing increasing professionalization (Niebergall & Röttger, 2018, p. 323; Röttger et al., 2018, p. 43). To activate consumers, it is no longer sufficient to broadly distribute messages (Enz, 2019b, p. 190). Rather, bilateral communication actively managed by the company is required (Sdrolias et al., 2016). Thanks to technological progress, a constantly growing number of communication channels are available for this purpose (Enz, 2020b, p. 32). However, limited financial or human resources make it difficult or even impossible to use certain communication channels (Enz, 2019a).

To meet the changed requirements and new opportunities, large companies are therefore increasing their communication budgets (FAMAB, 2019) and the staff in the departments dealing with marketing communication (Dillmann, 2018). Large companies can also exploit synergy effects through restructuring (Foerster, 2020; pressesprecher — Magazin für Kommunikation, 2021).

The present paper shows that SMEs also expect changes in marketing communication. This can be deduced from the fact that new digital communication channels are attributed the greatest importance on a three-year horizon. In contrast, a strong decline in the importance of traditional communication channels is expected — without, however, considering them to be completely unimportant. This can be explained by technological progress and increasing digitalization. At this point, the SMEs agree with the general supraregional expectation of change.

At the same time, this paper shows that future expectations vary regarding the importance of communication channels. Significantly different future expectations could be identified in different regions. In contrast, this paper shows that there is no correlation between the future budgeting of communication channels and the home region of a company.

In addition, the present study shows that SMEs in all the regions considered predominantly assume that they will continue to conduct marketing communication with the same number of staff as at present. This is at odds with the awareness that new communication channels are gaining in importance without established communication channels being eliminated. Nevertheless, this position represents a stringent action that can be explained by the economic development. For example, the willingness to allocate resources to corporate communication is always closely linked to the earnings situation of companies. Declining sales and earnings are usually countered with spending cuts (Quelch & Jocz, 2020).

Even before the outbreak of the Corona pandemic in 2020, many companies were in a negative market environment. The global economy was cooling down. This is shown by a look at the economic development of the strongly exporting German economy. In 2018, the price-adjusted gross domestic product grew by 1.5 percent. This was the ninth year in a row that the German economy recorded growth. However, this was noticeably lower than in previous years. In the two previous years alone, the price-adjusted gross domestic product rose by 2.2 percent (Federal Statistical Office, 2019). Considering the significantly slower growth of the German economy, the German Council of Economic Experts has also revised its forecasts for 2019 and 2020 significantly downwards (German Council of Economic Experts, 2019, p. 1). The economic development of the Czech Republic is similar. In 2019, it will grow for the sixth year in a row. As in Germany, however, the momentum is being lost. Growth in 2017 compared to 2016 was 4.4 percent. In contrast, growth in 2018 compared to the previous year was only 2.9 percent. For 2019, the Czech Ministry of Finance expects growth of only 2.4 percent (Wippler, 2019).

Lower economic growth is associated with falling demand. First for the companies. Considering the unclear sales prospects, they cut back their investments (Zemanek et al., 2016, p. 9). In the medium term, this also has an impact on the labor market. On the one hand, the wage level is negatively affected. On the other hand, the level of employment decreases (Möller, 2017). This leads to private households also limiting their consumption and postponing investments into the future. This reduces demand overall.

It results in increasing competitive pressure. At the same time, providers are faced with increasingly informed consumers. However, these are not to be equated with the politically propagated responsible consumer. The latter would have to be able to deal with the available consumer products in a self-willed manner (Bernardy & Klimpe, 2017, p. 178). This is not the case considering the influence of the media. In this context, the term media includes editorial offers as well as communication offers and advertising messages initiated by companies. Thus, a well-informed consumer can be influenced by advertising at the same time (Müller, 2019, p. 1). Against this background, Schnellenbach and Fridrich formulate the farewell to the responsible consumer (Fridrich, Hübner, Kollmann, Piorkowsky, & Tröger, 2017; Schnellenbach, 2018, p. 18). Instead, companies are encountering pseude-mundane consumers (Fridrich et al., 2017, p. 10). Heidbrink & Reidel (2011) also recognize that consumers' decision-making processes can be sustainably influenced through targeted control of the decision-making processes (Heidbrink & Reidel, 2011).

Companies are taking this into account by methodically merging marketing, PR, and advertising. According to Lies (2017), this is expressed in the emergence of content marketing as its discipline. The aim here is to provide attractive content for specific target groups and thus generate consumption (Lies, 2017, 14 f). However, this requires in-depth knowledge of strategy development, marketing, and communication. As well as project management and time management. In implementation, extensive skills such as copywriting, SEO, or ROI analysis are then required (Hilker, 2017, VI). Large companies have responded to these increasingly extensive tasks by increasing their communication budgets (FAMAB, 2019) and expanding their human resources (Dillmann, 2018). Expenditure related to digital activities in advertising and PR increased particularly strongly (Wielki & Grabara, 2018). However, Seufert (2019) was able to identify major differences in behavior between company size classes. Large companies kept budgets constant, which is equivalent to a moderate cut considering growing tasks. SMEs showed a strong decrease (Seufert, 2019).

In agreement with Seufert, Schaff (2019) notes that SMEs attach little importance to the need for branding compared to large companies (Schaff, 2019a, p. 46). The same applies to strategic marketing as a whole. Schaff (2019) complains that energy and resources are wasted in randomly selected operational measures (Schaff, 2019b). If SMEs engage in marketing communication at all. Regional trade and crafts often still rely on the word-of-mouth model for marketing and sales. However, this is under threat, as Meffert (2018) warns. This is because new market participants and communication channels are making the independent search for suppliers obsolete for end customers (Meffert, 2018, p. 369).

Both SMEs that are already involved in marketing communication and large companies face the same challenge. They have to serve different target groups with different communication offers with the available and usually limited resources. Digital measures are currently enjoying great popularity. Even if they hardly achieve the expected communication goals so far (Wielki & Grabara, 2018). In general, however, the question of effectiveness in customer communication is already being asked. Against this background, various models for an efficient communication mix have been developed. These are mostly based on a modelled average customer. However, this model customer is subject to criticism. Lüttke (2014) notes that the average customer of an average mall has long been a thing of the past (Lüttke, 2014, p. 2). This is since there are already different customer groups regardless of marketing measures (Kopetzky, 2015). Lüttke (2014) cites different needs between different age cohorts as an example (Lüttke, 2014, p. 2). However, target groups can be clustered according to numerous other aspects. For example, the level of education or disposable income (Wolfrum, Heuwinkel, Reents, Wiesinger, & Hülsbergen, 2017). In addition, different cultures have different value systems. Different cultural characteristics also influence consumer behavior (Hoffmann & Akbar, 2019, p. 136). This is further complicated by the fact that a consumer does not always have the same purchasing behaviour (Ternès & Hagemes, 2018, p. 215). This is described by Homann (2015). He states that there is no such thing as a homo economicus who generally acts purely rationally. Decisions, on the other hand, are influenced by individual interests and moral concepts. These can change constantly against the background of the respective life situation (Homann, 2015, p. 52).

In the face of globalization with the accompanying almost unmanageable choice in all areas of consumption, rationality is gaining in importance again. The European Union now presents itself as a Europe of regions. A region can be understood as a current political-administrative unit. But historical units are now also re-emerging (Schütz, Vogt, Mergenthaler, & Verbraucherzentrale NRW/Kompetenzzentrum Verbraucherforschung NRW, 2019, p. 12). Such complexity requires a differentiated approach (Pfaffenberger, 2017, p. 56). Regional affiliation can therefore be a decisive aspect in the customer journey. This refers to the individual path of the customer from the first impulse to the purchase (Ternès & Hagemes, 2018, p. 215). According to Fischer (2017), it is important to record this process as precisely as possible. Then, targeted impulses can be set to intend a purchase (Fischer, 2017). From the consumer's perspective, there are different motives for buying regional products. These can be of a social or economic nature (Schütz et al., 2019, p. 12). Rosenkranz & Schneider (2000) state in this context that consumption is no longer merely a means to an end. Rather, consumption has acquired a meaning of its own (Rosenkranz & Schneider, 2000, p. 13). This means that people consume consciously with their ideas in mind. As already explained in this paper, these ideas can include regional premises. However, these do not have to be present to display consumption behavior that deviates from the average. Factors that are not consciously perceived can also imply deviations. On the one hand, this consumer behaviour includes the classic purchase to satisfy a need. On the other hand, it already includes the consumption of means of communication. It means that one and the same communication channel can have different effects in different regions.

5. Conclusions

This paper shows that SMEs are facing a major challenge. These result from increasing competitive pressure. The reasons for this are manifold. One point is technical progress. Now this makes it possible for large companies to operate economically even in niche markets. The same applies to activities with small volumes or individual requirements. These are areas that for a long time were reserved for SMEs because of their flexibility and cost structure. Globalization is also creating noticeably stronger competitive pressure. Thanks to high-performance transport technology, sophisticated infrastructure and comprehensive communication technology, SMEs are no longer competing with large corporations alone. Rather, they are also competing. Across regional and national borders.

At the same time, SMEs face consumers who are well-informed and demand transparency, which places increasing demands on corporate communication. This is increasingly required for another reason. Due to technical progress, a steadily growing number of communication channels are available for marketing communication. If all of these were to be used, the communications budget and staffing would have to be constantly expanded. However, this is not feasible from an economic perspective. After all, the costs would have to be allocated to the product.

However, price increases can only be implemented on the market to a limited extent. This is because economic growth is now declining after years of recovery. Closely linked to this is falling demand. It meets with constant production capacities — which is why a demand market has emerged, what puts the power in the hands of the consumer. As a rule, they will not accept price increases and will change suppliers (Leimeister, 2012, p. 151).

From this insight, it can be deduced that efficient marketing communication can be developed into an important competitive advantage. The goal is to use efficient marketing communication to make purchasing decisions more cost-effective than the competition. If this succeeds, a product of equal value can be offered at a lower price — which additionally facilitates sales. Or a higher margin can be realized with the same pricing. This contributes to an improved return in the short term. In the long term, this is a significant contribution to maintaining the company as a whole.

Currently, companies of different sizes use different communication models. In general, it can be said that SMEs currently use fewer communication channels than large companies. However, they are aware that other communication channels may be essential in the future than those currently used by SMEs. The goal is to realize an efficient customer approach through a suitable combination of different communication channels — i.e., the communication mix. Existing approaches are based on the model of the average customer. This average customer is modelled individually by companies and industries. As a rule, however, the data basis does not consider regional deviations in the behavior of the recipients. However, it has been shown that customers in different geographical regions do indeed display different behavior.

However, the knowledge of new communication channels and the necessity to communicate in a target group-oriented manner does not automatically imply the willingness to use all possibilities in the future or to achieve a target group-oriented approach. The reason therefore is, the willingness to allocate budgets for additional communication channels in the future varies greatly. The willingness to hire additional staff for marketing communication is also low in all regions. This can be interpreted to mean that the companies are foregoing the use of communication channels for financial reasons.

The prioritization of certain communication channels is also significantly dependent on the region in which a company is based. The concentration on selected communication channels is done for economic reasons. Whether this makes economic sense for a company is not clarified in this paper. This would be the case, if consumers also have regionally dependent characteristics in their media use behavior. Clarifying this question can be the subject of further research projects. In contrast, this paper shows that marketing communication is perceived by SME as a relevant cost factor. If there are regional peculiarities for the recipients, these could be used to increase efficiency through a targeted, regionally coordinated communication mix. This means that there is potential for optimization in marketing communication for SME.

In summary, it can be assumed that a more efficient design of marketing communication can become a competitive advantage for SMEs with a regionally limited business area. This is the case, if it is possible to address customers precisely by taking regional characteristics into account. This could be realized with less wastage compared to supra-regional communication campaigns. Basically, it can be seen in the current literature that numerous models exist for the composition of a communication mix. These focus on an average customer. However, their existence seems to be assumed only for a supra-regional population. Companies with a regionally limited business area should therefore define an individual average customer. Here, the regional culture must be considered, as well as regional values and habits of media use. These can also differ because not every communication channel is available everywhere. In this context, it should also be considered that not every trend starts simultaneously in all regions.

This paper shows descriptively that on average, German companies already use more communication channels than Czech SMEs. Thus, the optimization potential for German companies lies primarily in the regional calibration of their communication mix. Czech SMEs, on the other hand, face the challenge of being able to use more communication channels in the future with limited resources. Here, the optimization potential lies in prioritizing the channels with special consideration of regional target groups and their particularities in media use.

6. Outlook

This research project illustrates that a communication mix perfected relates regional conditions could be developed into a competitive advantage for SMEs.

The prerequisite for this, however, is that regional media consumption actually differs significantly from that of an average recipient. Only then would it be possible to address a regional target group more efficiently through a customized communication mix than it would be possible with a supra-regional target group. However, this research does not provide a conclusive answer to this question. Nevertheless, the literature research provides two clear indications that this is the case.

From an economic perspective, the subject of the communication mix fulfills the function of a cost unit. An efficient use of this resource would therefore have a positive effect on the company's results and competitiveness.

Furthermore, the communication mix with its messages is aimed at individual recipients. The literature shows that these same people have different preferences. These differing preferences suggest, that it is not possible to achieve the highest conceivable degree of effectiveness with a universally valid communication concept. Rather, it can be hypothesized that a significantly better impact can be achieved by specializing the communication mix on certain regions or target groups.

Media impact

Whether the formulated hypothesis can actually be accepted or must be rejected, only can be clarified within the framework of a further empirical research project. This has as its object an analysis of the media impact under regional aspects.

Every consumption presupposes prior contact between supplier and consumer. Thus, a purchase is always preceded by an interaction (Bruhn & Stauss, 2000, 141 f). This can take place on different communication channels. Renz (2016) and Bremi, Negri, Werkmann-Karcher, Nordmann & Beutter (2019) agree that these can be effective in different ways (Bremi, Negri, Werkmann-Karcher, Nordmann, & Beutter, 2019, p. 525; Renz, 2016, p. 74). Meanwhile, there is a multitude of methods for analyzing media effects, which differ greatly in depth and relevance (Besson, 2007, p. 410; Raupp & Vogelgesang, 2009; Wägenbaur, 2007). In this context, media effects research has the task of examining different communication channels for their effectiveness. Effectiveness is given, when an address via a certain channel causes an action for the recipient.

Media effects research is a sub-area of behavioral research. According to Sander, the quantitative survey of consumers is the ideal instrument for gaining insights into their behavior (Sander, 2017, p. 208). Lindner confirms this, especially regarding the evaluation of behavioral patterns (Lindner, 2015, p. 27). However, there is also criticism of the use of quantitative customer surveys. Lenger & Kruse (2017) complain that quantitative methods are unsuitable for determining causes or backgrounds (Lenger & Kruse, 2017, p. 112). Lindner shares this objection and therefore calls for an appropriate mix of qualitative and quantitative market research methods to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the customer (Lindner, 2015, p. 24). He thus consolidates the opinion formulated by Brüsemeister (2008), Kelle & Erzberger (2012) and Baur & Blasius (2014) (Brüsemeister, 2008; Kelle & Erzberger, 2017; Wägenbaur, 2007). They agree with Scheutzow (2016) that quantitative and qualitative methods can be used complementarity (Scheutzow, 2016, p. 175). Even though this understanding represents the current state of the methodological debate, it was already lived by the sociological classics (Baur & Blasius, 2014, p. 42). This can be seen in the methodology of the studies by Max Weber, Norbert Elias or Émile Durkheim.

Market research

As part of the continuing research, a large-scale customer survey is now to be conducted. This is therefore a process of market research. A market research study is always a multi-stage process. Kotler, Armstrong, Harris & Piercy (2016), in agreement with Meffert, Burmann & Kirchgeorg (2012), define four phases (Kotler, Armstrong, Harris, & Piercy, 2016, p. 202; Meffert et al., 2012, p. 100). At the beginning is the problem definition. Here, the marketing decision issue must be described. At the same time, the necessary research objective is defined.

In phase 2, the research plan is developed. Here, research objects are defined, decisions are made on the use of instruments and finally the measures are carried out. Step three is for information processing. Obtained data are reviewed, coded and recorded. Then an evaluation plan is drawn up and processed. At the end, the results are documented. Step four is dedicated to communication. Here, the results are prepared and presented in a target group-oriented and decision-making manner.

Others define the process of market research in more detail. Scholz, Pastoors, Becker, Hofmann & van Dun (2018) consider the importance of the methodological approach much more strongly. They supplement the approach with a decided delimitation of the market. They also define the methodology and approach in a separate step (Scholz, Pastoors, Becker, Hofmann, & van Dun, 2018, p. 211). Homburg (2017) even describes market research as a ten-step process (Homburg, 2017, p. 253).

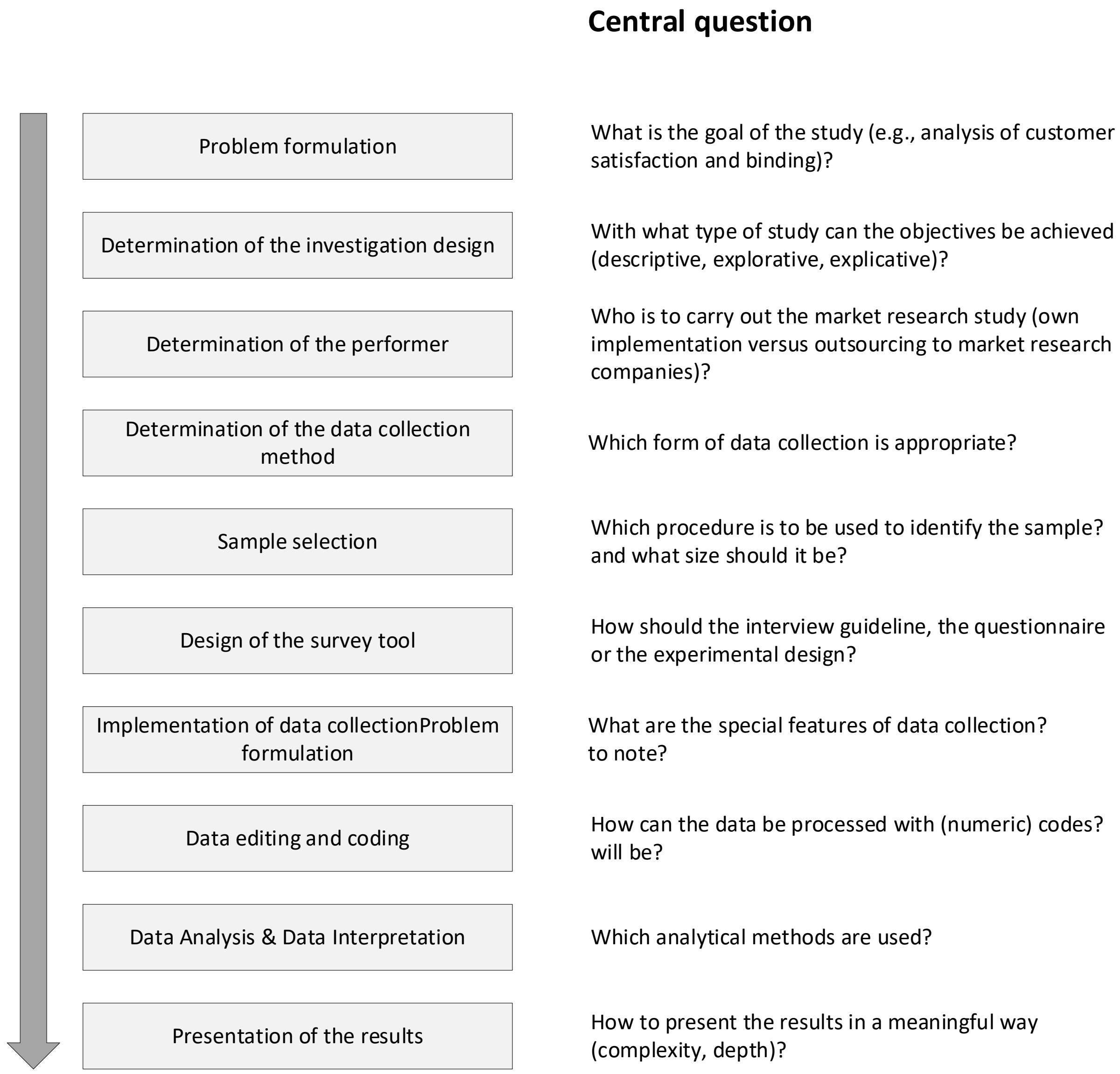


Figure 10: The process of market research according to Homburg, 2017

The subject of market research is the market itself. This is characterized by the encounter of suppliers and consumers. At the same time, it represents the environment of a company. This in turn can be clustered into micro-environment and macro-environment.

Microenvironment

The term microenvironment is defined as the direct environment of a company. It consists of all actors who directly influence the activities of a company (Kirchgeorg, Ermer, & Wiedmann, 2017, 137 f). Suppliers, retailers, and consumers are just as much a part of this as competitors, regulatory authorities, public authorities and municipalities (Meffert, Burmann, Kirchgeorg, & Eisenbeiß, 2019, p. 45). At the micro level, there are aspects that can have a direct and individual impact on competitiveness (Clement & Peren, 2017, p. 19).

The microenvironment cannot be related to companies and organizations alone. In the globalized world, regions also compete. In this dimension, factors are significant that are not offered by other locations, or only to a lesser extent or quality, or that are difficult for them to imitate. Clement & Peren (2017) refer to the microenvironment at this level as localization (Clement & Peren, 2017, p. 21). This level can be theoretically linked to the resource-based view (Peteraf & Barney, 2003). Factors of the micro-environment at the regional level can be human capital, transport accessibility, management skills, market access and quality of life (Clement & Peren, 2017, p. 21).

Macroenvironment

In contrast to the micro-environment, the macro-environment of a company includes those factors that cannot be controlled by an individual company (Meffert et al., 2012, p. 45). Political-social stability and bureaucratic obstacles can be assigned to this spectrum. Economic policy, legal certainty and economic payment security also belong to the macro environment (Clement & Peren, 2017, p. 20). Conrady (2019) also introduces technological and ecological-natural arguments to define a macro-environment (Conrady, 2019, p. 7). Companies and organizations are generally influenced by a multitude of different environmental factors that they cannot control themselves. Observing and analyzing these factors as part of a macro-environmental analysis enables early recognition of the opportunities and risks for their own business activities (Hirzel, Zub, & Dimler, 2016, p. 71).

Research design

A market research project can have three types of objectives. The aim of an exploratory study is to gather preliminary information. This helps to concretize a problem and establish hypotheses. To describe a specific question in more detail is the task of a descriptive study. In the context of so-called causal research, the focus is on hypothesis testing. It should provide information about the connection between cause and effect (Kotler et al., 2016, p. 203; Magerhans, 2016, p. 48). The task of case research is to explain developments in the market or the effect of a marketing measure (Magerhans, 2016, p. 6).

The research work initiated with this paper is to be continued with a descriptive analysis of regional media use. To obtain the necessary primary data, a large-scale survey will be conducted (Halder, 2016). In the process, recipients in the four already defined study regions will be asked about their current and future media use. The aim of the survey is to ascertain the acceptance of different communication channels in the respective regions. Due to limited time and financial resources, however, it is not possible to survey all inhabitants. This is true for most populations in market research. For these reasons, according to Walsh, Dose & Schwabe, data is usually collected by collecting samples (Walsh, Dose, & Schwabe, 2016, p. 17). According to Kuß (2009) and Hess & Barthel (2017), a survey is considered large-scale if the number of respondents exceeds 100 (Hess & Barthel, 2017, p. 313; Kuß, 2009, p. 265).

The core of the planned research work is the hypothesis that media use behavior can vary from region to region. To test this hypothesis, media use in the regional sectors is to be compared with national media use. National media use is not examined within the framework of this project. Secondary data already available will be used here. These can be obtained in Germany and the Czech Republic from openly accessible and commercial sources.

To make it easy for test persons of all age groups to participate, the survey is analogue and digital. On the one hand, participants will be given the opportunity to fill out a paper questionnaire at information stands. On the other hand, there will be an online questionnaire. This can be conveniently filled out on a computer or smartphone. To ensure that the analogue and digital answers are comparable, there will be no interview at the information stands. Instead, the questionnaires are to be filled out by the participants themselves.

The aim of the survey is to find out to what extent the communication work of SMEs is already responding to the regional characteristics of the recipients. Another goal is to see, whether the planned or expected changes in corporate communication lead to a better fit of information supply and media consumption — or whether the companies are currently driven more by the spirit of the times than by the needs of their customers.

7. References

ABRAHAM, S. (2013). Will business model innovation replace strategiec analysis? *Strategy & Leadership*, *41*(2), 31–38.

AMSCHLINGER, M. C. (2011). *Internationalisierung im Mittelstand: Eine empirische Analyse kulturabhängiger Erfolgsfaktoren von Direktinvestitionen deutscher kleiner und mittlerer Unternehmen in Rumänien* (1. Aufl.). *Kleine und mittlere Unternehmen: Vol. 21*. Lohmar: Josef Eul Verlag.

BACKHAUS, K., ERICHSON, B., PLINKE, W., & WEIBER, R. (2016). *Multivariate Analysemethoden: Eine anwendungsorientierte Einführung* (14., überarbeitete und aktualisierte Auflage). Berlin, Heidelberg: Springer Gabler. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-3-662-46076-4

BAK, P. M. (2016). *Erfolgreiche Kundenansprache nach Plan: Grundlagen zur Erstellung eines Kommunikationskonzeptes*. *Essentials*. Wiesbaden, s.l.: Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-13335-1

BALMER, J. M. T., & GREYSER, S. A. (2003). *Revealing the corporation: Perspectives on identity, image, reputation, corporate branding, and corporate-level marketing ; an anthology*. London: Routledge. Retrieved from http://www.loc.gov/catdir/enhancements/fy0650/2004559236-d.html

BALMER, J. M.T., & GREYSER, S. A. (2006). Corporate marketing. *European Journal of Marketing*, *40*(7/8), 730–741. https://doi.org/10.1108/03090560610669964

BAUR, N., & BLASIUS, J. (2014). Methoden der empirischen Sozialforschung. In N. Baur & J. Blasius (Eds.), *Handbuch Methoden der empirischen Sozialforschung* (pp. 41–64). Wiesbaden: Springer VS.

BAYUS, B. L., ERICKSON, G., & JACOBSON, R. (2003). The Financial Rewards of New Product Introductions in the Personal Computer Industry. *Management Science*, *49*(2), 197–210. https://doi.org/10.1287/mnsc.49.2.197.12741

BECKER, W., & ULRICH, P. (2011). *Mittelstandsforschung: Begriffe, Relevanz und Konsequenzen*. *Mittelstand und Mittelstandsforschung*. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer.

BECKER, W., ULRICH, P., & STRADTMANN, M. (2018). *Geschäftsmodellinnovationen als Wettbewerbsvorteil mittelständischer Unternehmen*. *Management und Controlling im Mittelstand*. Wiesbaden: Springer Gabler. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-13041-1

BEHRENS, U. (2017). *Quick Guide Effizientes Marketing für kleine und mittlere Unternehmen: Planung, Umsetzung und Optimierung von Marketingstrategien im Mittelstand*. Wiesbaden: Springer Gabler. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-14441-8

BELITZ, H., DREHER, C., KOVAČ, M., SCHWÄBE, C., & SOM, O. (2017). Steuerliche Förderung von Forschung und Entwicklung in KMU — Irrweg für Deutschland? *Wirtschaftsdienst*, *97*(5), 344–353. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10273-017-2142-1

BERENS, W., HÖGEMANN, B., & SEGBERS, K. (2005). Das mittelständische Unternehmen: Status Quo und Perspektiven in der Finanzierung. In W. Berens, H. U. Brauner, & J. Frodermann (Eds.), *Unternehmensentwicklung mit Finanzinvestoren: Eigenkapitalstärkung, Wertsteigerung, Unternehmensverkauf* (pp. 7–30). Stuttgart: Schäffer-Poeschel Verlag für Wirtschaft Steuern Recht GmbH.

BERLEMANN, M., JAHN, V., & LEHMANN, R. (2019). Wie ist der Mittelstand in Deutschland verteilt? Eine Analyse mit Befragungsdaten. *ifo Dresden berichtet*, *26*(1), 23–28.

BERNARDY, J., & KLIMPE, H. (2017). Michel de Certeau: Kunst des Handelns. In F. Eckardt (Ed.), *Schlüsselwerke der Stadtforschung* (pp. 173–188). Wiesbaden: Springer VS.

BESSON, N. (2007). Thomas Wägenbaur: Medienanalyse. Methoden, Ergebnisse, Grenzen. *Publizistik*, *52*(3), 410–411. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11616-007-0181-0

BLANKLEY, W. (2007). Correlations between advertising and R & D expenditures: dealing with important intangibles. *South African Journal of Science*, *103*(3-4), 94–98.

BLOCK, J. H., & MORITZ, A. (2016). Corporate Social Responsibility im Mittelstand: theoretische Überlegungen und empirische Evidenz. In G. Fahrenschon, A. G. Kirchhoff, & D. B. Simmert (Eds.), *Mittelstand - Motor und Zukunft der deutschen Wirtschaft: Erfolgskonzepte für Management, Finanzierung und Organisation* (145-160). Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden.

BOLTEN, J., & SCHRÖTER, D. (Eds.) (2001). *Im Netzwerk interkulturellen Handelns: Theoretische und praktische Perspektiven der interkulturellen Kommunikationsforschung*. *Schriftenreihe interkulturelle Wirtschaftskommunikation: Vol. 6*. Sternenfels: Verlag Wissenschaft & Praxis.

BONDAREVA, I., & ZATROCHOVÁ, M. (2014). Financial Support for the Development of SMEs in the Slovak Republic. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, *110*, 541–548. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2013.12.898

BORCHERS, N. S. (2014). *Werbekommunikation: Entwurf einer kommunikationswissenschaftlichen Theorie der Werbung*. Zugl.: Mannheim, Univ., Diss., 2014. *Research*. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.

BORDEN, N. H. (1984). The concept of the marketing mix. *Journal of Advertising Research*, *24*(4), 7–12.

BORDEN, N. H. (1964). The Concept of the Marketing Mix. *Science in Marketing*. (4), 2–7.

BOTZKOWSKI, T. (2017). *Digitale Transformation von Geschäftsmodellen im Mittelstand: Theorie, Empirie und Handlungsempfehlungen*. *Unternehmensführung & Controlling*. Wiesbaden: Springer Gabler. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-20333-7

BPRA BUND DER PUBLIC RELATIONS AGENTUREN (1980). Aufwendungen für Public Relations deutlich zugenommen. In P. H. Fenkart (Ed.), *Kommunikation: Vol. 20. PR konkret* (2020th ed., pp. 48–49). Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter. https://doi.org/10.1515/9783112312988-015

BREHM, D. G. (2008). *Ein Polymorphismus der G-Protein β3–Untereinheit als möglicher Risikofaktor symptomatischer koronarer Herzkrankheit: Assoziation des GNB3 825T–Allels mit reduzierter Belastbarkeit und vermehrtem Auftreten pectanginöser Beschwerden beim Fahrrad–Belastungs–EKG* (Inaugural-Dissertation). Universität Duisburg-Essen, Duisburg.

BREMI, R., NEGRI, C., WERKMANN-KARCHER, B., NORDMANN, D., & BEUTTER, C. (2019). Personalgewinnung, Entwicklung und Trennungsmanagement. In E. Lippmann, A. PFISTER, & JÖRG (Eds.), *Handbuch angewandte Psychologie für Führungskräfte: Führungskompetenz und Führungswissen* (5th ed., pp. 517–606). Berlin, Germany: Springer.

BRUHN, M. (2009a). *Integrierte Unternehmens- und Markenkommunikation: Strategische Planung und operative Umsetzung* (5.th ed.). s.l.: Schäffer-Poeschel Verlag für Wirtschaft Steuern Recht GmbH. Retrieved from http://site.ebrary.com/lib/alltitles/docDetail.action?docID=10556031

BRUHN, M. (2009b). *Relationship Marketing: Das Management von Kundenbeziehungen* (2., vollst. überarb. Aufl.). *Vahlens Handbücher der Wirtschafts- und Sozialwissenschaften*. München: Vahlen.

BRUHN, M. (2010). *Kommunikationspolitik: Systematischer Einsatz der Kommunikation für Unternehmen* (6.th ed.). *Vahlens Handbücher*. München: Vahlen.

BRUHN, M. (2014). *Unternehmens- und Marketingkommunikation: Handbuch für ein integriertes Kommunikationsmanagement* (3.th ed.). München: Vahlen. Retrieved from http://site.ebrary.com/lib/alltitles/docDetail.action?docID=10953809

BRUHN, M. (2016). Strategische Planung und Umsetzung einer Integrierten Kommunikation: Die Anbieterperspektive. In M. Bruhn, F.-R. Esch, & T. Langner (Eds.), *Handbuch Strategische Kommunikation* (pp. 103–129). Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden.

BRUHN, M., & AHLERS, G. (2014). Sponsoring als Instrument der integrierten Unternehmenskommunikation. In A. Zerfaß & M. Piwinger (Eds.), *Springer NachschlageWissen. Handbuch Unternehmenskommunikation: Strategie - Management - Wertschöpfung* (2nd ed., pp. 707–730). Wiesbaden: Springer Gabler.

BRUHN, M., & STAUSS, B. (2000). *Dienstleistungsqualität: Konzepte - Methoden - Erfahrungen* (3., vollständig überarbeitete und erweiterte Auflage). Wiesbaden: Gabler Verlag. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-3-322-91158-2

BRUNNER, E., & MUNZEL, U. (2013). *Nichtparametrische Datenanalyse: Unverbundene Stichproben* (2., überarb. Aufl. 2013). *Statistik und ihre Anwendungen*. Berlin, Heidelberg: Springer Berlin Heidelberg. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-3-642-37184-4

BRÜSEMEISTER, T. (2008). *Qualitative Forschung: Ein Überblick* (2., überarbeitete Auflage). *Lehrbuch*. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-3-531-91182-3

BÜHL, A. (2016). *SPSS 23: Einführung in die moderne Datenanalyse* (15., aktualisierte Auflage). *st - scientific tools*. Hallbergmoos: Pearson.

BURGHARDT, K. (2015). *Einweiser- und Patientenbeziehungsmanagement im Krankenhaus* (Dissertation). Retrieved from http://gbv.eblib.com/patron/FullRecord.aspx?p=4470855

BUSSIEK, J. (1994). Das Unternehmen als System. In J. Bussiek (Ed.), *Informationsmanagement im Mittelstand* (pp. 11–15). Wiesbaden: Gabler Verlag. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-322-87043-8_2

CERBA, O. (2020). NUTS Geo-ontology. In T. Bandrova, M. Konečný, & S. Marinova (Eds.), *8th International Conference on Cartography and GIS: Proceedings Vol. 1* (pp. 605–612). Sofia: Bulgarian Cartographic Association.

CHANG, B., & CHAN-OLMSTED, S. (2005). Relative constancy of advertising spending. A crossnational examination of advertising expenditures and their determinants. *International Communication Gazette*, *67*(4), 339–357.

CLEMENT, R., & PEREN, F. W. (2017). *Peren-Clement-Index: Bewertung von Direktinvestitionen durch eine simultane Erfassung von Makroebene und Unternehmensebene*. *Essentials*. Wiesbaden: Springer Gabler. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-17023-3

COHEN, J. (2013). *Statistical Power Analysis for the Behavioral Sciences* (2nd ed.). Hoboken: Taylor and Francis. Retrieved from http://gbv.eblib.com/patron/FullRecord.aspx?p=1192162

CONRADY, R. (2019). Entwicklung der Makroumwelt des (Luxus-)Tourismusmarktes. In R. Conrady, D. Ruetz, & M. Aeberhard (Eds.), *Grundlagen und neue Perspektiven des Luxustourismus: Kundenverhalten - Paradigmenwechsel - Markttrends - Best-Practice-Beispiele* (pp. 5–34). Wiesbaden: SpringerGabler.

CORDESMEYER, S., DEGEN, F., & TERSTIEGE, M. (2020). Der GWA Effie Award - Erfolgsfaktoren effizienter analoger und digitaler Marketingkommunikation. In M. Terstiege (Ed.), *Digitales Marketing - Erfolgsmodelle aus der Praxis: Konzepte, Instrumente und Strategien im Kontext der Digitalisierung* (pp. 43–60). Wiesbaden: Springer Gabler.

CORNELSEN, J. (2000). *Kundenwertanalysen im Beziehungsmarketing: Theoretische Grundlegung und Ergebnisse einer empirischen Studie im Automobilbereich*. Zugl.: Erlangen, Nürnberg, Univ., Diss., 2000. *Schriften zum innovativen Marketing: Vol. 3*. Nürnberg: GIM.

CURRAN, J., & BLACKBURN, R. (2001). *Researching the Small Enterprise*. 1 Oliver's Yard, 55 City Road, London England EC1Y 1SP United Kingdom: SAGE Publications, Ltd.

CZAMANSKI, S., ELLIS, S.B., & CZAMANSKI, D.Z. (1974). *Spatial Organization of Industries*: Institute of Public Affairs, Dalhousie University. Retrieved from http://books.google.de/books?id=s340lQEACAAJ

DE, D. A. (2005). *Entrepreneurship: Gründung und Wachstum von kleinen und mittleren Unternehmen*. *wi-wirtschaft*. München: Pearson Studium.

DENTSU AEGIS NETWORK (2021). Werbemarktanteile der einzelnen Medien in Deutschland in den Jahren 2015 bis 2019 und Prognose bis 2021 (gegenüber dem Vorjahr). Retrieved from https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/870786/umfrage/prognose-der-werbemarktanteile-der-medien-in-deutschland/

DENTSU GERMANY GMBH (2019). Werbemarktanteile der einzelnen Medien in Deutschland in den Jahren 2015 bis 2019 und Prognose bis 2021: (gegenüber dem Vorjahr). Retrieved from https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/870786/umfrage/prognose-der-werbemarktanteile-der-medien-in-deutschland/

DENTSU GERMANY GMBH (2021). Entwicklung der Werbemärkte in ausgewählten Ländern weltweit im Jahr 2019 und Prognose bis 2021: (gegenüber dem Vorjahr). Retrieved from https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/182354/umfrage/entwicklung-des-werbemarktes-in-ausgewaehlten-laendern/

DERIETH, A. (1995). *Unternehmenskommunikation: Eine theoretische und empirische Analyse zur Kommunikationsqualität von Wirtschaftsorganisationen*. *Studien zur Kommunikationswissenschaft: Vol. 5*. Wiesbaden: Gabler Verlag. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-3-322-93825-1

DEY, G. (2017). *Rechnungswesen in Kulturbetrieben: Ein Leitfaden*. *Kunst- und Kulturmanagement*. Wiesbaden: Springer VS. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-17534-4

DILLMANN, T. (2018, March 15). bvik-Studie: Marketing-Etats von B2B-Unternehmen steigen. Retrieved from https://pr-journal.de/lese-tipps/studien/20339-bvik-studie-marketing-etats-von-b2b-unternehmen-steigen.html

DOBOŠOVÁ, Ľ., HUKOVÁ, D., BEŇUŠ, O., MIHÁLOVÁ, V., & SYNETSKA, Y. (2020). Management of Receivables and their Monitoring in the Small and Medium Sized Farms in the Slovak Republic. In Faculty of Economics, University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice (Ed.), *Proceedings of the 13 th International Scientific Conference INPROFORUM: Innovations, Enterprises, Regions and Management* (pp. 20–27). České Budějovice: Faculty of Economics, University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice.

DULLER, C. (2008). *Einführung in die nichtparametrische Statistik mit SAS und R: Ein anwendungsorientiertes Lehr- und Arbeitsbuch*. Heidelberg: Physica-Verlag Heidelberg. Retrieved from http://site.ebrary.com/lib/alltitles/docDetail.action?docID=10245903

ENBERG, J. (2019). Global Digital Ad Spending 2019: Digital Accounts for Half of Total Media Ad Spending Worldwide. Retrieved from https://www.emarketer.com/content/global-digital-ad-spending-2019

ENGELHARDT, W., & FREILING, J. (1995). Integrativität als Brücke zwischen Einzeltransaktion und Geschäftsbeziehung. *Zeitschrift für Forschung und Praxis*, *17*(1), 37–43.

ENGSTRAND, Å.-K., & SÄTRE ÅHLANDER, A.-M. (2008). Collaboration for Local Economic Development: Business Networks, Politics and Universities in Two Swedish Cities. *European Planning Studies*, *16*(4), 487–505. https://doi.org/10.1080/09654310801983274

ENZ, C. (2010). *Der Einfluss der regionalen Tageszeitung auf den kommunalen Wahlkampf* (Master Thesis). Donau Universität, Krems.

ENZ, C. (2019a). Assessment of the Economic Need for Efficient Customer Communication for Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises. In International Business Information Management Association (IBIMA) (Ed.), *34th IBIMA Conference on 13-14 November 2019: Conference proceedings*. Norristown, US.: IBIMA. Retrieved from https://ibima.org/accepted-paper/assessment-of-the-economic-need-for-efficient-customer-communication-for-small-and-medium-sized-enterprises/

ENZ, C. (2019b). Special requirements for corporate communications in geographically defined markets using the example of the sale of construction financing in rural areas. *Balkans Journal of Emerging Trends in Social Sciences*, *2*(2), 185–193. https://doi.org/10.31410/Balkans.JETSS.2019.2.2.185-193

ENZ, C. (2019c). Special requirements for corporate communications in geographically defined markets using the example of the sale of construction financing in rural areas. In B. Vuk (Ed.): *International Scientific Conference ERAZ - Knowledge Based Sustainable Development, Book of Abstracts: Part of ERAZ Conference Collection* (p. 9). Association of Economists and Managers of the Balkans, Belgrade, Serbia. Retrieved from https://eraz-conference.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/ERAZ_BoA-WEB.pdf

ENZ, C. (2020a). Importance of the sales force for effective communication of SME in the B2B sector. In International Business Information Management Association (IBIMA) (Ed.), *35th IBIMA Conference on 1.-2. April 2020: Conference proceedings*. Norristown, US.: IBIMA.

ENZ, C. (2020b). The Decision Cause-Matrix - A tool to increase efficiency in the corporate communications of SMEs with a geographically limited business area. In Faculty of Economics, University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice (Ed.), *Proceedings of the 13 th International Scientific Conference INPROFORUM: Innovations, Enterprises, Regions and Management* (pp. 28–34). České Budějovice: Faculty of Economics, University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice.

ENZ, C., & ŠKODOVÁ PARMOVÁ, D. (2020). Significance of digital communication channels for tourism providers in holiday regions. *DETUROPE - The central european Journal of regional development and tourism*, *12*(2), 140–165.

Enz, C., ŠKODOVÁ PARMOVÁ, D., & WOLF, P. (2021). Importance of ethical competence for the sales management of small and mediumsized financial sales organisations. In University of South Bohemia (Chair), *Ethics in 21st century.* Symposium conducted at the meeting of University of South Bohemia, Budweis.

ERTLE-STRAUB, S. (2018). Immobilienmarketing. In K.-U. Brauer (Ed.), *Grundlagen der Immobilienwirtschaft: Recht - Steuern - Marketing - Finanzierung - Bestandsmanagement - Projektentwicklung* (9th ed., pp. 395–427). Wiesbaden: Springer Gabler.

ESSER, K., HILLEBRAND, W., MESSNER, D., & MEYER-STAMER, J. (1990). Systemische Wettbewerbsfähigkeit: Neue Anforderungen an Unternehmen und Politik. *Vierteljahreshefte zur Wirtschaftsforschung*, *64*(2), 186–199. Retrieved from http://www.meyer-stamer.de/1995/diw.htm

EXCEL (Version 16.0.14026 (32 bit)) [Computer software] (2020). Redmond: Microsoft Corporation.

FAMAB (2019). Prognose zum Volumen der Gesamtetats für Kommunikation in Deutschland in den Jahren 2016 und 2017: (in Milliarden Euro). *Statista - Das Statistik-Portal*. Retrieved from https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/323477/umfrage/gesamtvolumen-der-kommunikationsetats-in-deutschland/

FEIGL, P. (2015). *Zielgruppenbestimmung von Mietern: Eine Analyse der Wohnbedürfnisse auf Basis von Nutzenerwartungen* (Unveränderter Nachdruck 2016). *Essays in Real Estate Research: Band 4*. Wiesbaden: Springer. Retrieved from http://gbv.eblib.com/patron/FullRecord.aspx?p=4179400

FELDMANN, T., & HÖPPNER, J. (2021). § 14 Adressenkauf- und -überlassungsvertrag (Feldmann/Höppner). In F. Moos (Ed.), *Datenschutz und Datennutzung* (3rd ed., pp. 443–472). Köln: Otto Schmidt KG, Verlag. https://doi.org/10.9785/9783504387082-019

FISCHBACH, C., & MACK, J. (2008). *Mittelstandskommunikation* (1. Aufl.). Konstanz: UVK Verlagsgesellschaft. Retrieved from http://www.content-select.com/index.php?id=bib_view&ean=9783864961595

FISCHER, R. (2017). Mitten in Utopia. Holistische Customer-Journey? *Werben&Verkaufen*, *39*(39), 4–10.

FOERSTER, U. (2020). Dagmar Fässler-Zumstein steigt als Kommunikationschefin ein: Berner Kantonalbank. *Horizont*. (11). Retrieved from https://www.horizont.net/schweiz/nachrichten/berner-kantonalbank-dagmar-faessler-zumstein-steigt-als-kommunikationschefin-ein-186997

FRETER, H., NASKRENT, J., HOHL, N., & STAUB, B. (2008). *Markt- und Kundensegmentierung: Kundenorientierte Markterfassung und -bearbeitung* (2., vollst. neu bearb. und erw. Aufl.). *Kohlhammer Edition Marketing*. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer.

FRIDRICH, C., HÜBNER, R., KOLLMANN, K., PIORKOWSKY, M.-B., & TRÖGER, N. (2017). Grundüberlegungen zu einer kritischen Verbraucherforschung. In C. Fridrich, R. Hübner, K. Kollmann, M.-B. Piorkowsky, & N. Tröger (Eds.), *Kritische Verbraucherforschung. Abschied vom eindimensionalen Verbraucher* (pp. 1–22). Wiesbaden: Springer VS.

FRIEDL, G., HOFMANN, C., & PEDELL, B. (2017). *Kostenrechnung: Eine entscheidungsorientierte Einführung* (3., überarbeitete Auflage). München: Verlag Franz Vahlen. Retrieved from https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/gbv/detail.action?docID=4851233

FUKA, J., VRCHOTA, J., & ROLÍNEK, L. (2018). In M. Waheed, N. Ain, U. Walker, & P. Bromwich (Eds.), *Global Summit on Applied Business, Economics, and Social Science* (pp. 41–58). Stockholm: Office of european academic research consortium.

FUST, A., & FUEGLISTALLER, U. (2016). KMU und Innovationen: der Einfluss des Unternehmers. In C. Hoffmann, S. Lennerts, C. Schmitz, W. Stölzle, & F. Uebernickel (Eds.), *Business Innovation Universität St. Gallen, Profilbereich Business Innovation. Business Innovation: Das St. Galler Modell* (pp. 55–78). Wiesbaden: Springer Gabler.

GAUBINGER, K. (2000). *Strategisches Marketing-Controlling für KMU: Basis für den Erfolg im EU-Binnenmarkt* (Gabler Edition Wissenschaft). *Gabler Edition Wissenschaft*. Wiesbaden: Deutscher Universitätsverlag. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-3-322-97817-2

GREVE, G., & SCHEIBE, M. (2020). Programmatic Advertising – Möglichkeiten und Grenzen bei Display-Advertising am Beispiel hedonistischer und utilitaristischer Produkte. In S. Boßow-Thies, C. Hofmann-Stölting, & H. Jochims (Eds.), *DATA-DRIVEN MARKETING: Insights aus Wissenschaft und Praxis* (pp. 105–133). Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden.

HAAS, H.-D., & NEUMAIR, S.-M. (2007). *Wirtschaftsgeographie* (2nd ed.). *Geowissen kompakt*. Darmstadt: WBG Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft.

HALDER, A. (2016). Methodik und Vorgehen der empirischen Untersuchung. In A. Halder (Ed.), *Research. Innovationsfähigkeit und Entrepreneurial Orientation in Familienunternehmen* (pp. 145–197). Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-11107-6_6

HÄMEL, K., & WALTER, B. (2020). Alter(n) im ländlichen Raum. In K. Aner & U. Karl (Eds.), *Handbuch Soziale Arbeit und Alter* (pp. 443–454). Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden.

HAMER, E. (1990). *Mittelständische Unternehmen: Gründung, Führung, Chancen, Risiken*. Landsberg/Lech: mi-Poller.

HARRISON, R., COOPER, S., & MASON, C. (2004). Entrepreneurial activity and the dynamics of technology-based cluster development: the case of Ottawa. *Urban Studies*, *41*(5-6), 1045–1070. https://doi.org/10.1080/00420980410001675841

HARTL, L. A. (1999). Menschenbilder und die Bilder vom Menschen. Betrachtungen zur Frage nach dem Menschenbild in der Kunst der Gegenwart. In R. Oerter (Ed.), *Menschenbilder in der modernen Gesellschaft: Der Mensch als soziales und personales Wesen* (pp. 159–177). De Gruyter. https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110510867-016

HARTUNG, J., ELPELT, B., & KLÖSENER, K.-H. (2009). *Statistik: Lehr- und Handbuch der angewandten Statistik*. Mit zahlreichen durchgerechneten Beispielen (15., überarb. und wesentlich erw. Aufl.). München: Oldenbourg. Retrieved from http://www.oldenbourg-link.com/isbn/9783486710540

HEIDBRINK, L., & REIDEL, J. (2011). Nachhaltiger Konsum durch politische Selbstbindung: Sustainable Consumption by Political Self-Binding. *GAIA*, *20*(3), 152–156.

HELM, S., GÜNTER, B., & EGGERT, A. (2017). *Kundenwert: Grundlagen - Innovative Konzepte - Praktische Umsetzungen* (4th ed.). Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden. Retrieved from https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/gbv/detail.action?docID=4854516

HERRMANN, A., & WIAFE, J. (2020). Das war für mich ein Wendepunkt.: Medienskepsis und Schlüsselerfahrungen. In B. Blöbaum, T. Hanitzsch, & L. Badura (Eds.), *Medienskepsis in Deutschland* (pp. 133–158). Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden.

HESS, T., & BARTHEL, P. (2017). Wieviel digitale Transformation steckt im Informationsmanagement? Zum Zusammenspiel eines etablierten und eines neuen Managementkonzepts. *HMD Praxis der Wirtschaftsinformatik*, *54*(3), 313–323. https://doi.org/10.1365/s40702-017-0308-3

HILKER, C. (2017). *Content Marketing in der Praxis: Ein Leitfaden - Strategie, Konzepte und Praxisbeispiele für B2B- und B2C-Unternehmen*. Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden. Retrieved from https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/gbv/detail.action?docID=4839068

HIRZEL, M., ZUB, H., & DIMLER, N. (Eds.) (2016). *Strategische Positionierung: Geschäfts- und Servicebereiche auf Kundenbedarf fokussieren*. Wiesbaden: Springer Gabler. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-11906-5

HOFFMANN, S., & AKBAR, P. (2019). *Konsumentenverhalten: Konsumenten verstehen - Marketingmaßnahmen gestalten* (2. Aufl. 2019). Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-23567-3

HOLLAND, H. (2019). *Dialogmarketing und Kundenbindung mit Connected Cars: Wie Automobilherstellern mit Daten und Vernetzung die optimale Customer Experience gelingt*. Wiesbaden: Springer Gabler.

HOMANN, K. (2015). „Wir sind mit unseren intuitiven Moralvorstellungen noch nicht in der Moderne angekommen“. *Perspektiven der Wirtschaftspolitik*, *16*(1), 44–56. https://doi.org/10.1515/pwp-2015-0004

HOMBURG, C. (2017). *Marketingmanagement: Strategie - Instrumente - Umsetzung - Unternehmensführung* (6., überarbeitete und erweiterte Auflage). Wiesbaden: Springer Gabler. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-13656-7

HUNGENBERG, H. (2014). *Strategisches Management in Unternehmen: Ziele - Prozesse - Verfahren* (8., aktualisierte Aufl.). Wiesbaden: Springer Gabler. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-06681-9

IBM DEUTSCHLAND GMBH (2021). Tests auswählen (nicht parametrische Tests bei unabhängigen Stichproben). Retrieved from https://www.ibm.com/docs/de/spss-statistics/version-missing?topic=tests-choose-independent-samples-nonparametric

ICKS, A. (2018). Mittelstand und Prävention. In O. Cernavin, W. Schröter, & S. Stowasser (Eds.), *Prävention 4.0: Analysen und Handlungsempfehlungen für eine produktive und gesunde Arbeit 4.0* (pp. 335–354). Wiesbaden: Springer. Retrieved from https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-658-17964-9_17

ISARD, W., SCHOOLER, E.W., & VIETORISZ, T. (1959). *Industrial Complex Analysis and Regional Development: A Case Study of Refinery-petrochemical-synthetic-fiber Complexes and Puerto Rico*: MIT Press. Retrieved from http://books.google.de/books?id=KzeGlAEACAAJ

KAMERAR, S. (2016). Universitäten als Ideenfabriken für den Mittelstand. Retrieved from https://www.top100.de/blog/show/universitaeten-als-ideenfabriken-fuer-den-mittelstand.html

KARAZMAN, R. (2015). *Human quality management: Menschengerechte Unternehmensführung*. Berlin: Springer Gabler. Retrieved from http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=site&db=nlebk&AN=997062

KAY, R., & NIELEN, S. (2018). Die Beschäftigungs- und Einkommenssituation von Young Women MINT Professionals im Mittelstand. *Daten und Fakten*. (22).

KELLE, U., & ERZBERGER, C. (2017). Qualitative und quantitative Methoden: kein Gegensatz. In U. Flick, E. v. Kardorff, & I. Steinke (Eds.), *Rororo Rowohlts Enzyklopädie: Vol. 55628. Qualitative Forschung: Ein Handbuch* (12th ed., pp. 299–309). Reinbek bei Hamburg: rowohlts enzyklopädie im Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag.

KIENTZLER, F. (2019). PR Trends 2019: Vier Prognosen für die Zukunft. Retrieved from https://suxeedo.de/magazine/seeding/pr-trends/

KILIAN, K. (2019). BEST of Branding für Start-ups. In C. Kochhan, T. Könecke, & H. Schunk (Eds.), *Marken und Start-ups: Markenmanagement und Kommunikation bei Unternehmensgründungen* (pp. 55–84). Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden.

KIRCHGEORG, M., ERMER, B., & WIEDMANN, M. (2017). Szenarioanalyse: Messen & Live Communication 2020. In M. Kirchgeorg, W. Dornscheidt, & N. Stoeck (Eds.), *Handbuch Messemanagement: Planung, Durchführung und Kontrolle Von Messen, Kongressen und Events* (2nd ed., pp. 133–150). Wiesbaden: Gabler.

KLEWES, J. (2005). *Unternehmenskommunikation auf dem Prüfstand: Aktuelle empirische Ergebnisse zum Reputation Marketing. Unternehmenskommunikation und Reputation Marketing*. Wiesbaden: Deutscher Universitätsverlag. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-3-322-81209-4

KOCHHAN, C., ELSÄSSER, A., & HACHENBERG, M. (2020). *Marketing- und Kommunikationstrends: Interviewstudie zur Akzeptanz bei Digital Immigrants und Digital Natives*. Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden.

KOPETZKY, M. (2015). *Einfluss von Preispsychologie auf Kundenbetrug: Theoretische Fundierung und empirische Analyse. Applied Marketing Science / Angewandte Marketingforschung*. Wiesbaden: Springer Gabler. Retrieved from http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=site&db=nlebk&AN=961559

KORMANOVA, L. (2015). Global methods of communication as a necessary part of communication mix: 15th International Scientific Conference on Globalization and its Socio-Economic Consequences. *Globalisation and its Socio-Economic Consequences*. (I+II), 318–324.

KOSMIDER, A. (1991). *Controlling im Mittelstand: Eine Untersuchung der Gestaltung und Anwendung des Controllings in mittelständischen Industrieunternehmen*. *Schriftenreihe der Wissenschaftlichen Hochschule für Unternehmensführung Koblenz Forschung: Vol. 5*. Stuttgart: Poeschel.

KOTLER, P., ARMSTRONG, G., HARRIS, L. C., & PIERCY, N. F. (2016). *Grundlagen des Marketing* (6., aktualisierte Auflage). *Always learning*. Hallbergmoos: Pearson. Retrieved from http://lib.myilibrary.com?id=913514

KREYHER, V. (2015). *Kommunikationspolitik*. Mannheim: Cross Media.

KUMMER, M. (2017). *Die gescheiterte Strategie von Air Berlin: Erklärungsansätze anhand von Porters Konzept der generischen Wettbewerbsstrategie.*

KUSS, A. (2009). Großzahlige Befragung. In C. Baumgarth (Ed.), *Empirische Mastertechniken: Eine anwendungsorientierte Einführung für die Marketing- und Managementforschung* (1st ed., pp. 263–290). Wiesbaden: Gabler.

LAMEY, L., DELEERSNYDER, B., DEKIMPE, M., & STEENKAMP, J. (2007). How business cycles contribute to private-label success. Evidence from the United States and Europe. *Journal of Marketing*, *71*(1), 1–15.

LARÉDO, P. (1997). Technological programmes in the European Union. In H. Etzkowitz & L. Leydesdorff (Eds.), *Universities and the global knowledge economy: A triple helix of university-industry-government relations* (pp. 33–43). London, New York: Pinter. Retrieved from http://latts.cnrs.fr/p_lattspersoea40.html?Id=1516&PRIN=1

LEIMEISTER, J. M. (2012). *Dienstleistungsengineering und -management*. Berlin, Heidelberg: Springer Berlin Heidelberg. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-3-642-27983-6

LENGER, A., & KRUSE, J. (2017). Qualitative Forschungsmethoden in der deutschen Volkswirtschaftslehre.: Eine explorative Erhebung zugrunde liegender Repräsentationsmuster. In J. Maeße, H. Pahl, & J. Sparsam (Eds.), *Die Innenwelt der Ökonomie: Wissen, Macht und Performativität in der Wirtschaftswissenschaft* (pp. 107–134). Wiesbaden: Springer VS.

LIES, J. (2017). *Die Digitalisierung der Kommunikation im Mittelstand: Auswirkungen von Marketing 4.0*. *Essentials*. Wiesbaden: Springer Gabler. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-17365-4

LINDNER, A. (2015). Kundenwünsche - entwickeln, antizipieren, entsprechen. *Marketing Review St. Gallen*. (32 (2)), 20–29.

LUCAS, M., SANDS, A., & WOLFE, D. A. (2009). Regional Clusters in a Global Industry: ICT Clusters in Canada. *European Planning Studies*, *17*(2), 189–209. https://doi.org/10.1080/09654310802553415

LUCIUS, H. (2018). Wettbewerbsvorteil Nachhaltigkeit. In P. Bungard (Ed.), *Management-Reihe Corporate Social Responsibility. CSR und Geschäftsmodelle: Auf dem Weg zum zeitgemäßen Wirtschaften* (pp. 139–152). Berlin: Springer Gabler.

LÜTTKE, P. (2014). *Die Zukunftsfähigkeit bestehender Shopping Center: Ein Bewertzungssystem zur Beurteilung* (Dissertation). Universität Wuppertal, Wuppertal. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-14286-5

MAGERHANS, A. (2016). *Marktforschung: Eine praxisorientierte Einführung*. Wiesbaden: Springer Gabler. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-00891-8

MARSHALL, A. *Principles of Economics* (8th ed.). London: Macmillan.

MARTIN, R., & SUNLEY, P. (2003). Deconstructing Clusters: Chaotic Concept or Policy Panacea? *Journal of Economic Geography*, *3*, 5–35.

MAST, C. (2016). *Unternehmenskommunikation: Ein Leitfaden* (6.th ed.). *UTB Beriebswirtschaftslehre, Kommunikationswissenschaft: Vol. 2308*. Konstanz, München: UVK Verlagsgesellschaft mbH; UVK/Lucius.

MATTSON, H. (2009). Innovating in Cluster/Cluster as Innovation: The Case of the Biotechvalley Cluster Initiative. *European Planning Studies*, *17*(11), 1625–1643. https://doi.org/10.1080/09654310903230558

MC CARTHY, E. J. (1964). *Basic Marketing: A Managerial Approach*. Homewood, IL: Richard D. Irwin.

MEFFERT, H., BURMANN, C., & KIRCHGEORG, M. (2012). *Marketing: Grundlagen marktorientierter Unternehmensführung; Konzepte - Instrumente - Praxisbeispiele* (11.th ed.). *Meffert-Marketing-Edition*. Wiesbaden: Gabler.

MEFFERT, H., BURMANN, C., KIRCHGEORG, M., & EISENBEISS, M. (2019). *Marketing: Grundlagen marktorientierter Unternehmensführung: Konzepte - Instrumente - Praxisbeispiele* (13., überarbeitete und erweiterte Auflage). *Meffert-Marketing-Edition: / Heribert Meffert; Lehrbuch*. Wiesbaden: Springer Gabler.

MEFFERT, J. (2018). Digital@Scale: Unternehmen erfolgreich transformieren. In M. Bruhn & M. Kirchgeorg (Eds.), *Marketing Weiterdenken: Zukunftspfade für eine marktorientierte Unternehmensführung: Herrn Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. mult Heribert Meffert zum 80. Geburtstag* (pp. 366–381). Wiesbaden: Springer Gabler.

MELZER, D. (2015). *Personal Branding und Celebrity Marketing im Profifußball* (Bachelorarbeit). University of Applied Sciences Mittweida, Mittweida.

MEYER, A., & BLÜMELHUBER, C. (2017). Kundenbindung durch Service. In M. Bruhn & C. Homburg (Eds.), *Handbuch Kundenbindungsmanagement: Strategien und Instrumente für ein erfolgreiches CRM* (9th ed., pp. 189–212). Wiesbaden: Springer Gabler.

MEYER, M. (2020). *Liberaldemokratie: Wohlstand zwischen Freiheit und autokratischer Führung*. Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden.

MÖLLER, H.-W. (2017). *Versuch und Irrtum: Wie Markt und Staat die Volkswirtschaft lenken*. Wiesbaden: Springer Gabler. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-02312-6

MOOG, P., & WITT, P. (2013). Mittelständische Unternehmen. *Zeitschrift für Betriebswirtschaft*. (4), 1–4.

MÜHLENHOFF, M., & RUDLUFF, D. (2020). Internet als Marketinginstrument. In H. Holland (Ed.), *Digitales Dialogmarketing* (pp. 1–38). Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-28973-7_21-1

MÜLLER (2019). *Konsumentenbilder als produktive Fiktionen: Eine theoretische und ethnographische Untersuchung*: Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden.

MÜLLER, B. (2007). *Porters Konzept generischer Wettbewerbsstrategien* (1. Aufl.). s.l.: DUV Deutscher Universitäts-Verlag. Retrieved from http://gbv.eblib.com/patron/FullRecord.aspx?p=750406

MÜLLER, P. (2011). Über die Notwendigkeit und den Nutzen proefssioneller Kommunikation. „Und was bringt das Ganze?“. In P. Müller & T. Lüdeke (Eds.), *Kommunikation im Mittelstand: Unternehmerische Herausforderungen erfolgreich meistern* (pp. 10–16). Meckenheim: DIHK-Verlag.

NIEBERGALL, J., & RÖTTGER, U. (2018). Zum Zusammenhang von Professionalierungsbestrebungen des PR-Berufsfeldes und seiner Vertrauenswürdigkeit.: Eine qualitative Journalistenbefragung. In O. Hoffjann & R. Seidenglanz (Eds.), *Allmächtige PR, ohnmächtige PR: Die doppelte Vertrauenskrise der PR* (pp. 303–328). Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden.

NORTH, K. (2007). Wissensorientierte Unternehmensführung in kleinen und mittleren Unternehmen - Praxiserprobte Rezepte. In A. Bellinger & K. David (Eds.), *Wissensmanagement für KMU* (pp. 167–186). Zürich: vdf Hochschulverlag AG.

OECD ORGANISATION FOR ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT (2005). Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs). Retrieved from https://stats.oecd.org/glossary/detail.asp?ID=3123

PAFFHAUSEN, A., & REBERNIG, C. (2019). *Erfolgreich als Handelsagent mit Fokus Österreich: Leitfaden für nachhaltige Beziehungen zu Geschäftspartnern und mehr Gewinn*. Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-23508-6

PETERAF, M. A., & BARNEY, J. B. (2003). Unraveling the resource-based tangle. *Managerial and Decision Economics*, *24*(4), 309–323. https://doi.org/10.1002/mde.1126

PFAFFENBERGER, K. (2017). Die Bedeutung regionaler Besonderheiten für das Geschäftsleben. In T. Schmidt, K. Pfaffenberger, & S. Liebing (Eds.), *Praxishandbuch Wirtschaft in Afrika* (pp. 55–68). Wiesbaden: Springer Gabler.

PFOHL, H.-C. (2006). Abgrenzung der Klein- und Mittelbetriebe von Großbetrieben. In H.-C. Pfohl & U. Arnold (Eds.), *Management und Wirtschaft Praxis: Vol. 44. Betriebswirtschaftslehre der Mittel- und Kleinbetriebe: Größenspezifische Probleme und Möglichkeiten zu ihrer Lösung* (4th ed., pp. 1–27). Berlin: Schmidt.

PORTER, M.E. (1990a). *The competitive advantage of nations: with a new introduction* (11th ed.): Free Press. Retrieved from http://books.google.de/books?id=PQ21AAAAIAAJ

PORTER, M. (1998). Clusters and the New Economics of Competition. *Harvard Business Review*, 197–287. Retrieved from http://hbr.org/1998/11/clusters-and-the-new-economics-of-competition/ar/1

PORTER, M. E. (1990b). *The competitive advantage of nations*. New York, N.Y.: Free Press.

PRESSESPRECHER – MAGAZIN FÜR KOMMUNIKATION (2021). Mercedes-Benz legt PR und Marketing zusammen: Umstrukturierung bei Daimler. Retrieved from https://www.pressesprecher.com/nachrichten/mercedes-benz-legt-pr-und-marketing-zusammen-831306601

QUELCH, J., & JOCZ, K. (2020). So funktioniert Marketing in der Rezession. *Harvard Business Manager*. (1). Retrieved from https://www.manager-magazin.de/harvard/marketing/so-funktioniert-marketing-in-der-rezession-a-00000000-0002-0001-0000-000166984124

RADEMACHER, L. (2020). Digitale Desintegration? Warum das Konzept der Integrierten Kommunikation (noch) keine Antwort auf Fragen der digitalen Markenführung liefert. In S. Dänzler & T. Heun (Eds.), *Marke und digitale Medien: Der Wandel des Markenkonzepts im 21. Jahrhundert* (pp. 51–68). Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden.

RASCH, D., KUBINGER, K. D., & MODER, K. (2011). The two-sample t test: Pre-testing its assumptions does not pay off. *Statistical Papers*, *52*(1), 219–231. https://doi.org/10.1007/s00362-009-0224-x

RAUPP, J., & VOGELGESANG, J. (2009). *Medienresonanzanalyse: Eine Einführung in Theorie und Praxis* (1. Aufl.). Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften / GWV Fachverlage GmbH Wiesbaden. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-3-531-91605-7

RENNHAK, C., & SCHMIDT, C. (2020). *Public Relations klipp & klar*. *WiWi klipp & klar*. Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden.

RENZ, K.-C. (2016). *Das 1 x 1 der Präsentation: Für Schule, Studium und Beruf* (2., überarbeitete und erweiterte Auflage). Wiesbaden: Springer Gabler. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-10211-1

RIETER, H. (2012). Alfred Marshall. In J. Starbatty (Ed.), *Klassiker des ökonomischen Denkens: Teil I und II in einer Gesamtausgabe; Teil I Von Platon bis John Stuart Mill; Teil II Von Karl Marx bis John Maynard Keynes* (pp. 135–157). Hamburg: Nikol.

RÖHL, K.-H. (2017). *Europäische Mittelstandspolitik: Eine kritische Bestandsaufnahme*. *Forschungsberichte aus dem Institut der deutschen Wirtschaft: Vol. 116*. Köln.

ROSENKRANZ, D., & SCHNEIDER, N. F. (2000). *Konsum: Soziologische, ökonomische und psychologische Perspektiven*. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-3-322-89612-4

RÖTTGER, U., KOBUSCH, J., & PREUSSE, J. (2018). *Grundlagen der Public Relations: Eine kommunikationswissenschaftliche Einführung* (3., aktualisierte und erweiterte Auflage). *Lehrbuch*. Wiesbaden: Springer VS. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-17503-0

RUPPERT, A. K. (2016). *Innovationsmanagement in der PR: Wie die Unternehmenskommunikation die Einführung neuer Social Web-Kanäle steuert* (Dissertation). Universität Hohenheim, Hohenheim. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-18975-4

SACHSE-HENNINGER, C. (2018). "Nehmt die Trends von morgen an!": Magnus Hüttenberend über Onlinekommunikation. Retrieved from https://www.pressesprecher.com/nachrichten/nehmt-die-trends-von-morgen-an-722835724

SACHVERSTÄNDIGENRAT ZUR BEGUTACHTUNG DER GESAMTWIRTSCHAFTLICHEN ENTWICKLUNG (2019). *Konjunkturprognose 2019 und 2020*. Wiesbaden.

SANDER, M. (2017). Der Einfluss der Digitalisierung auf die Markenstrategie und das Markenerlebnis. In E. Theobald (Ed.), *Brand Evolution: Moderne Markenführung im digitalen Zeitalter* (2nd ed., pp. 197–214). Wiesbaden: Springer Gabler.

SATHISCH, S., & RAJAMOHAN, A. (2012). Consumer Behaviour and Lifestyle Marketing. *International Journal of Marketing, Financial Services & Management Research*, *10*(1), 152–166. Retrieved from http://indianresearchjournals.com/pdf/IJMFSMR/2012/October/13.pdf

SCHAFF, A. (2019a). Operatives Marketing für Gesundheitsdienstleister. In D. Matusiewicz, F. Stratmann, & J. Wimmer (Eds.), *Marketing im Gesundheitswesen: Einführung - Bestandsaufnahme - Zukunftsperspektiven* (pp. 41–56). [S.l.]: Springer Gabler.

SCHAFF, A. (2019b). Strategisches Marketing für Gesundheitsdienstleister. In D. Matusiewicz, F. Stratmann, & J. Wimmer (Eds.), *Marketing im Gesundheitswesen: Einführung - Bestandsaufnahme - Zukunftsperspektiven* (pp. 25–40). [S.l.]: Springer Gabler.

SCHÄTZL, L. (2003). *Wirtschaftsgeographie 1: 9. Auflage* (9th ed.). Paderborn: Verlag Ferdinand Schöningh GmbH & Co. KG.

SCHEUSS, R. (2016). *Handbuch der Strategien: 220 Konzepte der weltbesten Vordenker* (3., komplett aktualisierte und überarbeitete Auflage). Frankfurt, New York: Campus Verlag. Retrieved from https://www.content-select.com/index.php?id=bib_view&ean=9783593434506

SCHEUTZOW, S. (2016). *Kundenbindung durch Kundenintegration auf Industriegütermärkten* (Dissertation). FernUniversität Hagen, Hagen. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-15529-2

SCHLÖMER, C. (2015). Demographische Ausgangslage: Status quo und Entwicklungstendenzen ländlicher Räume in Deutschland. In U. Fachinger & H. Künemund (Eds.), *Research. Gerontologie und ländlicher Raum: Lebensbedingungen, Veränderungsprozesse und Gestaltungsmöglichkeiten* (pp. 25–44). Wiesbaden: Springer VS.

SCHLÖMER-LAUFEN, N. (2012). Die Entstehung von Betriebsräten in kleinen und mittleren Familienunternehmen: Eine theoretische und empirische Analyse der Determinanten von Betriebsratsgründungen durch Arbeitnehmer. *Schriften zur Mittelstandsforschung*. (177 NF).

SCHNELLENBACH, J. (2018, October 4). Abschied vom mündigen Verbraucher. *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, p. 18.

SCHOLZ, U., PASTOORS, S., BECKER, J. H., HOFMANN, D., & VAN DUN, R. (2018). *Praxishandbuch nachhaltige Produktentwicklung: Ein Leitfaden mit Tipps zur Entwicklung und Vermarktung nachhaltiger Produkte*. Berlin: Springer Gabler. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-3-662-57320-4

SCHÜTZ, K., VOGT, L., MERGENTHALER, M., & VERBRAUCHERZENTRALE NRW/KOMPETENZZENTRUM VERBRAUCHERFORSCHUNG NRW (2019). *Regionale Lebensmittel zwischen Anspruch und Wirklichkeit.*

SCHWEIGER, G., & SCHRATTENECKER, G. (2009). *Werbung: Eine Einführung* (7., neu bearb. Aufl.). *Grundwissen der Ökonomik Betriebswirtschaftslehre: Vol. 1370*. Stuttgart: Lucius & Lucius.

SDROLIAS, L., KAKKOS, N., ŠKODOVÁ-PARMOVÁ, D., ROLINÉK, L., CUDLÍNOVÁ, E., ASPRIDIS, G., KAZANTZI, V. (2016). Cultural Product and Cultural Communication as a Dynamic Bipolar Interaction and Creative Contribution to the Structural Recompiled of the Local Cultural Units. In V. Katsoni & A. Stratigea (Eds.), *Springer proceedings in business and economics. Tourism and Culture in the Age of Innovation: Second International Conference IACuDiT, Athens 2015* (1st ed., pp. 47–67). Cham: Springer.

SEUFERT, W. (2019). Owned media (und earned media) statt paid media? Eine empirische Analyse der Unternehmensaufwendungen für Marketingkommunikation auf Grundlage des Dialogmarketing Monitors. *MedienJournal*, *42*(3), 45–64.

SHAW, E. H., & JONES, D. G.B. (2016). A history of schools of marketing thought. *Marketing Theory*, *5*(3), 239–281. https://doi.org/10.1177/1470593105054898

SIEBEL, T. M., & MALONE, M. S. (1998). *Die Informationsrevolution im Vertrieb: Mit Computer Aided Selling zum totalen Verkaufserfolg*. Wiesbaden: Gabler Verlag. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-3-322-89033-7

SIEGERT, G. (2018). Werbung als medienökonomischer Faktor. In J. Krone & T. Pellegrini (Eds.), *Springer NachschlageWissen. Handbuch Medienökonomie* (pp. 1–19). Wiesbaden: Springer VS.

SIMON, H., & FASSNACHT, M. (2016). *Preismanagement: Strategie - Analyse - Entscheidung - Umsetzung* (4., vollständig neu bearbeitete und erweiterte Auflage). Wiesbaden: Springer Gabler. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-11871-6

ŠKODOVÁ PARMOVÁ, D., LÍŠKOVÁ, Z., & KAIN, R. (2018). Cross-border regions as supporting structures for raising competitiveness in Europe. In Association of Economists and Managers of the Balkans (Ed.), *Fourth international scientific conference ERAZ 2018: Knowledge based sustainable economic development* (pp. 65–78). Sofia.

ŠKODOVÁ PARMOVÁ, D., LÍŠKOVÁ, Z., SDROLIAS, L., & KAIN, R. (2017). Systematic approaches and development strategies of the rural small and medium-sized firms in boarder regions. In P. Janecek (Ed.), *Opportunities and threats to current business management in cross-border comparison 2017* (pp. 147–155). Lobnitz: Verlag GUC – Gesellschaft Unternehmensrechnung Controlling mbH.

SPINDLER, G.-I. (2017). *Basiswissen Allgemeine Betriebswirtschaftslehre: Quick Guide für (Quer-) Einsteiger, Jobwechsler, Selbstständige, Auszubildende und Studierende*. Wiesbaden: Springer Gabler. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-18630-2

STATISTISCHES BUNDESAMT (2019). Deutsche Wirtschaft ist im Jahr 2018 um 1,5 % gewachsen. Retrieved from https://www.destatis.de/DE/Presse/Pressemitteilungen/2019/01/PD19_018_811.html

STATISTISCHES BUNDESAMT (2021). NUTS-Klassifikation: Die Einteilung der Europäischen Union in EU-Regionen. Retrieved from https://www.destatis.de/Europa/DE/Methoden-Metadaten/Klassifikationen/UebersichtKlassifikationen_NUTS.html

STAUDACHER, C. (2005). *Wirtschaftsgeographie regionaler Systeme*. Wien: WUV Universitätsverlag.

STRZYZEWSKI, F., & KARPA-TOVARA, C. (2019). Verlängerung der Lebensdauer einer E-Mail-Adresse. In F. Strzyzewski & C. Karpa-Tovar (Eds.), *Generierung von qualifizierten E-Mail-Adressen: 111 Taktiken für mehr Erfolg im E-Mail-Marketing* (2nd ed., pp. 335–379). Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-26755-1_11

SZYSZKA, P. (2015). Kommunikationspolitik. In R. Fröhlich, P. Szyszka, & G. Bentele (Eds.), *Handbuch der Public Relations: Wissenschaftliche Grundlagen und berufliches Handeln. Mit Lexikon* (3rd ed.). Wiesbaden: Springer VS.

TANG, L., THOMAS, L., FLETCHER, M., PAN, J., & MARSHALL, A. (2014). Assessing the impact of derived behavior information on customer attrition in the financial service industry. *European Journal of Operational Research*, *236*(2), 624–633. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ejor.2014.01.004

TERNÈS, A., & HAGEMES, H.-P. (2018). *Die Digitalisierung Frisst Ihre User: Der Digitale Wahnsinn und Wie Sie Ihn Beherrschen*. Wiesbaden: Springer. Retrieved from https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/gbv/detail.action?docID=5400019

TERNÈS, A., KLENKE, B., JERUSEL, M., & SCHMIDTBLEICHER, B. (2017). *Integriertes Betriebliches Gesundheitsmanagement: Sensibilisierungs-, Kommunikations- und Motivationsstrategien*. Wiesbaden: Springer Gabler. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-14640-5

TRAUB, J., OSTLE, D., KOLLER, S., & FEUSSNER, H. (2018). Medizintechnik Entrepreneurship - von der Idee zur Markteinführung am Beispiel von Bildgebung und Navigation bei der Tumorchirurgie. In M. A. Pfannstiel, P. Da-Cruz, & C. Rasche (Eds.), *Entrepreneurship im Gesundheitswesen II: Geschäftsmodelle - Prozesse - Funktionen* (pp. 91–110). Wiesbaden: Springer Gabler.

VALACKINE, A. (2010). Efficient Corporate Communication: Decisions in Crisis Management. *Inzinerine Ekonomika-Engineering Economics*, *21*(1), 99–110.

VAN DER WURFF, R., BAKKER, P., & PICARD, R. (2008). Economic growth and advertising expenditures in different media in different countries. *Journal of Media Econimics*, *21*(1), 28–52.

VOM HOFE, R., & BHATTA, S. D. (2007). METHOD FOR IDENTIFYING LOCAL AND DOMESTIC INDUSTRIAL CLUSTERS USING INTERREGIONAL COMMODITY TRADE DATA. *The Industrial Geographer*, *4.* (2), 1–27.

VRCHOTA, J., VOLEK, T., & NOVOTNÁ, M. (2019). Factors Introducing Industry 4.0 to SMES. *Social Sciences*, *8*(5), 130. https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci8050130

WÄGENBAUR, T. (2007). *Medienanalyse: Methoden, Ergebnisse, Grenzen* (1. Auflage). Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlag. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.5771/9783845200262

WAIBEL, R., & KÄPPELI, M. (2015). *Betriebswirtschaft für Führungskräfte: Die Erfolgslogik des unternehmerischen Denkens und Handelns* (5., überarbeitete Auflage). Zürich: Versus.

WALSH, G., DOSE, D., & SCHWABE, M. (2016). *Marketingübungsbuch: Aufgaben und Lösungen* (2. Aufl. 2016). Berlin, Heidelberg: Springer Gabler. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-3-662-52985-0

WALTER, U. (2017a). Qualitätsstandards im BGM. In B. Badura (Ed.), *Arbeit und Gesundheit im 21. Jahrhundert: Mitarbeiterbindung durch Kulturentwicklung* (pp. 109–125). Berlin: Springer Gabler.

WALTER, U. (2017b). Qualitätsstandards im BGM. In B. Badura (Ed.), *Arbeit und Gesundheit im 21. Jahrhundert: Mitarbeiterbindung durch Kulturentwicklung* (pp. 109–125). Berlin: Springer Gabler.

WEIDENBACH, B. (2019). Werbeausgaben in Deutschland im Jahr 2018 und Prognose bis 2020: (in Millionen Euro). Retrieved from https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/75034/umfrage/entwicklung-der-werbeausgaben-in-deutschland-prognose/

WEIDENBACH, B. (2021). Prognose der Werbeausgaben weltweit bis 2022. Retrieved from https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/74622/umfrage/prognose-der-werbeausgaben-weltweit/

WEIMANN, O., & TEWES, C. (2020). Kommunikationsagenturen im Wandel – Neue Erfolgsfaktoren für die Zukunft. In S. Tewes, B. Niestroj, & C. Tewes (Eds.), *Geschäftsmodelle in die Zukunft denken: Erfolgsfaktoren für Branchen, Unternehmen und Veränderer* (pp. 177–189). Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden.

WELTER, F., MAY-STROBL, E., HOLZ, M., PAHNKE, A., SCHLEPPHORST, S., WOLTER, H.-J., & KRANZUSCH, P. (2015). Mittelstand zwischen Fakten und Gefühl. *IfM-Materialien*. (234).

WIELKI, J., & GRABARA, J. (2018). The Impact of Ad-Blocking on the Sustainable Development of the Digital Advertising Ecosystem. *Sustainability*, *10*(11), 4039. https://doi.org/10.3390/su10114039

WILL, R. (2018). Corporate Design als effektives Mittel zur Stärkung der Marke SEW-EURODRIVE. In C. Baumgarth (Ed.), *B-to-B-Markenführung: Grundlagen - Konzepte - Best Practice* (2nd ed., 523-). Wiesbaden: Springer Gabler.

WINKLER, L. (2020). *Organisationskommunikation im Mittelstand: Genese und spezifik der kommunikation mittelstndischer Industrieunternehmen*. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.

WIPPLER, R. (2019). Wirtschaftsausblick - Tschechien: Juni 2019. Retrieved from https://www.gtai.de/GTAI/Navigation/DE/Trade/Maerkte/Wirtschaftsklima/wirtschaftsausblick,t=wirtschaftsausblick--tschechien-juni-2019,did=2320732.html

WÖHE, G., & DÖRING, U. (2013). *Einführung in die allgemeine Betriebswirtschaftslehre* (25., überarbeitete und aktualisierte Auflage). *Vahlens Handbücher der Wirtschafts- und Sozialwissenschaften*. München: Verlag Franz Vahlen.

WOLFRUM, S., HEUWINKEL, H., REENTS, H. J., WIESINGER, K., & HÜLSBERGEN, K.-J. (2017). Ökologischen Landbau weiterdenken: Verantwortung übernehmen, Vertrauen stärken: Beiträge zur 14. Wissenschaftstagung Ökologischer Landbau, Freising-Weihenstephan, 7. bis 10 März 2017. In I. Schäufele & U. Hamm (Eds.), *Einstellungen und Präferenzen deutscher Öko-Weinkonsumenten: 14. Wissenschaftstagung Ökologischer Landbau* (pp. 704–707). Freising-Weihenstephan: Organic EPrints.

WÖLKI, P. (2007). *Briefing gut - Werbung gut: Marketing-Wissen für Werber, Kreative & Co.* (1.th ed.). Landsberg am Lech: mi Fachverlag, Redline GmbH. Retrieved from http://ebooks.ciando.com/book/index.cfm/bok_id/272690

WOLTER, H.-J. (2001). Die Bedeutung des Eigentümerunternehmens in Deutschland: Eine Auseinandersetzung mit der qualitativen und quantitativen Definition des Mittelstands. In Institut für Mittelstandsforschung (Ed.), *Schriften zur Mittelstandsforschung: 90 NF. Jahrbuch zur Mittelstandsforschung 1/2001* (pp. 25–77). Wiesbaden: Springer.

XLSTAT (Version 2020.5.1) [Computer software] (2020). New York: Addinsoft.

YANKELOVICH, D. (1964). New Criteria for Market Segmentation. *Harvard Business Review*, *42*(2), 83–90.

ZEMANEK, H., KRÄMER, J., WAGNER, M., PETERSEN, T., KREBS, T., SCHEFFEL, M., SCHMIDT, C. (2016). Geringeres Wirtschaftswachstum und Abwärtstrend bei Investitionen: Wege aus der Wachstumsschwäche. *ifo Schnelldienst*, *69*(22), 3–21.

ZERFASS, A. (2010). *Unternehmensführung und Öffentlichkeitsarbeit: Grundlegung einer Theorie der Unternehmenskommunikation und Public Relations* (3., aktualisierte Auflage). Wiesbaden: VS Verl. für Sozialwiss. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-3-531-92012-2

ZERFASS, A. (2014). Unternehmenskommunikation und Kommunikationsmanagement: Strategie, Management und Controlling. In A. Zerfaß & M. Piwinger (Eds.), *Springer NachschlageWissen. Handbuch Unternehmenskommunikation: Strategie - Management - Wertschöpfung* (2nd ed., pp. 21–79). Wiesbaden: Springer Gabler.

ZIMMERMANN, V. (2019). Financing of Innovation and Investment in SMEs: Die Finanzierung von Innovationen und Investitionen in mittelständischen Unternehmen. *Corporate Finance*. (5+6), 134–140. Retrieved from https://ssrn.com/abstract=3410813

ZOTT, C., & AMIT, R. (2008). The fit between product market strategy and business model: Implications for firm performance. *Strategic Management Journal*, *29*(1), 1–26.

ZYDOREK, C. (2017). *Einführung in die Medienwirtschaftslehre* (2. Auflage). Wiesbaden: Springer Gabler. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-14217-9