

## SPECIFICS OF THE COMMUNICATION MIX APPLIED ON THE CZECH AND GERMAN MARKET BY THE SELECTED COMPANY

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**Abstract:** International marketing communication is the most visible and also the most culturally conditioned international marketing tool. The main objective of the international communication policy is to create a favourable image of the company and shape the desired image of its products and brands. Usually, the basic communication concept is used as a starting point, and the individual tools of the communication mix, the content and method of communication, and the choice of media are adapted as needed. This paper presents a case study that aims to identify differences in the marketing communication of a selected global company on the German and Czech markets. The global company dm-drogerie markt GmbH, which engages in business activities in both countries, was selected for the case study. For the Czech Republic, the primary research method used was face-to-face interviews. For the research in Germany, the primary research method used was observation. The research identified a predominant strategy of adaptation over a strategy of standardisation. One example of adaptation is the creation of communication content; for German customers this is based on corporate social responsibility, while for Czech customers the company uses price as its main selling point. Standardisation was evident in the choice of the same communication mix and the massive promotion of corporate private brands in both countries

**Keywords:** Communication, dm-drogerie markt GmbH, face-to-face interviews, communication mix

**JEL Classification:** M31, M37

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### INTRODUCTION

According to De Pelsmacker et al. (2003), marketing communication refers to the means by which companies attempt to inform consumers of the existence of the company or product and then persuade them of the need to own that product. Marketing communication is what shapes relationships with consumers. It should be strategically oriented and aimed at fulfilling corporate branding objectives. Integrated marketing communication is currently being applied, as explained by Kotler et al. (2013). In integrated marketing communication, the activities are usually different, so it is not possible to create a single formula or recommendation, but there are several ways to achieve the goal. Kotler (2013) notes how strategies can differ within a segment: "Avon spends the most resources on personal sales and direct marketing, while Revlon invests the most in consumer advertising. Compaq Computer relies on advertising and retail support, while Dell Computer practises direct marketing." These different strategies fit the competitive environment. Specific communication strategies and tactics may vary from market to market and may change depending on the market environment and the company's strategic objectives in each country. The country's degree of economic development, its legal and socio-cultural environment and, above all, the behaviour and nature of consumers must always be taken into account. Usually, the basic communication concept is used as a starting point and the individual tools of the communication mix, the content and method of communication

and the choice of media are adapted as needed (Machková, 2015). Differences in the marketing communication mix applied in the international environment led to the establishment of a main objective to identify these differences. Objectives of the research: **Identify the differences in the marketing communication of a selected global company on the German and Czech markets.** This main objective was determined through two sub-objectives:

1. Identify the marketing communication of a selected global enterprise in Germany.
2. Identify the marketing communication of a selected global enterprise in the Czech Republic.

## 1. LITERATURE REVIEW

Integrated marketing communication consists of a set of tools that can be divided up in different ways, depending on the objectives of the communication. Classic generally accepted marketing communication tools: advertising, sales promotion, public relations, direct marketing and personal selling are still valid, but nowadays new possibilities are offered by the use of modern technologies. Technology, especially social technology, is changing marketing communications. It can even be described as a media revolution. Modern international marketing communication tools include online marketing on the internet and social networks, product placement and mobile marketing. Marketing communication can therefore be divided into Inbound and Outbound.

Outbound marketing communication uses traditional media such as print advertising, billboards, radio, television, LED screens and others. Outbound marketing actively reaches a wider audience. Outbound marketing is a traditional product promotion model where the goal is to attract the attention of people who are not yet aware of the product or brand (Jamil & Almunawar, 2021). According to Rancati et al. (2015), outbound marketing applies a strategy in which a company promotes its products and services by providing information to consumers even when they are not looking for those products or services. However, this strategy is no longer effective in delivering messages and increasing traffic in the online world.

Inbound marketing communication most commonly uses websites, cookies, SEO (search engine optimization), PPC (pay-per-click), remarketing, social media, podcasts, newsletters, videos, content marketing, blogs and email marketing. Inbound marketing seeks to create interest among customers who have already shown some degree of interest in a product or service. Inbound marketing thus adapts the content to the "buyer persona" who receives the information from the communication voluntarily. This application of marketing requires very careful audience targeting and actual communication with the audience through high quality content (Patruti-Baltes, 2016). Modern marketing communication tools fall largely into the online media environment. Social networks (Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, YouTube, Pinterest, Instagram, etc.) are a specific environment for inbound marketing because with them a company can identify potential customers and communication is tailored depending on the type of network used and the audience. These so-called "new media" associated with inbound marketing are taking up an increasing proportion of marketing communications budgets in many organisations, however, there is no evidence that they are more effective than standard communication methods. The use of new technologies presents a significant opportunity to target each age group with clear market offers tailored to their specific characteristics and desires (Morra et al., 2018; Duffett et al., 2020)

Nowadays, social media is an integral part of the daily life of everyone who has access to the internet. At the same time, the Internet is an ideal place to promote brands, as well as a communication platform that allows consumers to acquire more information about services, products or brands (Fayvishenko et al., 2023). According to Carlson et al. (2019), Kim & Johnson (2016), brands on social media gain popularity more easily, allowing them to build strong relationships with customers faster. In this respect, it can be argued that new technologies, especially social media, are making marketing communications more interactive (Bhagat et al., 2016). These technological platforms are more transformative than any other mass media such as print, radio and television. Santoro et al. (2019) demonstrate that new technology platforms are helping to shape new

business models and are gradually becoming global in the international environment (Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006; Trusov et al., 2009).

When deciding which variant of international communication strategy to choose, whether standardisation (Pasquarelli, 2023) or adaptation, contemporary marketers are leaning towards adaptation (Olney, 2022). According to Viswanathan et al. (2017) and Thakur (2016) the choice of market approach is decided by a number of factors. In terms of international marketing strategy, this means that a company cannot follow a uniform or standardised approach when using online media (Iankova et al., 2019). While global standardisation can be applied to other marketing mix tools such as product, pricing and distribution strategies, it is very risky to standardise communication strategies and content selection for online platforms (Sheth & Solomon, 2014). According to Vrontis & Basile (2022), the most common mistakes made in international marketing are incorrect brand names and incorrectly translated advertising slogans linked specifically to the standardisation strategy.

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

The case study research method was chosen to meet the research objective. This is a research method that focuses on conducting a detailed analysis of a specific case, situation, organisation, individual or phenomenon. Researchers collect and examine different types of data, such as texts, interviews, documents, photographs and other resources, to get as comprehensive a picture as possible. A combination of two types of primary research was chosen for this case study. The first research, using the observation method, was applied to the German market. The second research, using the personal interview method, was applied to the Czech Republic.

### **2.1. Primary research in Germany**

The aim was to analyse the communication mix applied by the selected company on the German market. This included identifying appeals in the content of the communication. The marketing communication tools were identified using the primary data collection method - observation. This method was used to examine the communication tools applied by the company in the online and offline environments, which were published on the Internet. Where necessary, they were drawn from the company's internal materials. The evaluation method was content analysis using group evaluation. Communication tools and communication content were sought during the analysis. Subsequently, the individual tools were evaluated and grouped, resulting in a list of marketing communication tools and an overview of the content appeals in the communication.

### **2.2. Primary research in the Czech Republic**

The primary research in the Czech Republic was conducted in the form of personal interviews with respondents at branches of the selected company Dm-drogerie markt in the Liberec and Central Bohemia regions. Respondents who had just shopped and thus had knowledge of the existence of this retail network were deliberately approached. The interviewers were trained, which helped to obtain 202 checked responses. A questionnaire with a combination of open and closed questions was used. Three classification questions were used, dividing respondents by gender, age and education. In the second part, the questions were designed to determine awareness of DM's communication tools and the reasons why they follow these tools. To evaluate the research, descriptive statistics, the chi-square goodness of fit test was used to evaluate the effects of sorting characteristics on the research results and Pearson's correlation coefficient, which was used to measure the strength of the linear relationship between the marketing communication tool and subscription to the periodical published by the company being studied.

## **3. RESULTS OF RESEARCH**

The case study has two parts. In order to identify any differences in marketing communication between the Czech Republic and Germany, primary research of the company's communication in Germany

was first applied. Subsequently, primary research of customers in the Czech Republic was applied and finally the research results were compared.

### 3.1. Presentation of the company subject to the reserach

The company selected for the case study was "DM drogerie markt GmbH & Co", which operates on the market as a retail chain specialising in health and beauty products. It offers a wide range of products including cosmetics, personal care items, baby products, household items and other complementary products. It is an international multinational company divided into two levels. The first level is registered in Germany and acts as the parent company for the other subsidiaries. The second level is the Austrian subsidiary, which acts as the headquarters for other companies in 11 European countries: Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Romania, Bulgaria, Northern Macedonia and Italy. In 2022, the company operated in 13 European countries and employed over 66,000 people. For the 2020/2021 financial year, it succeeded in generating sales of EUR 12,265 billion across Europe (dm-drogerie markt, 2023).

The company opened its first office in the Czech Republic in 1993 in the city of České Budějovice, where the company's management is still based. It stood out from its competitors by offering a product portfolio that, in addition to cosmetics and home care products, offered non-traditional home products such as baby care, organic food, pet supplies and photo services. Gradually, the company began to include other Czech domestic brands in its product range. For the past few years, the company has been promoting a healthy lifestyle, supporting ecology and participating in the National Food Collection scheme (dm-drogerie markt, 2023).

### 3.2. Primary research in Germany

This subsection was intended to fulfil the first sub-objective: Identify the marketing communication of a selected global enterprise in Germany. The primary research in the German market used the observation method. This method was challenging as it was carried out by Czech researchers in Germany without them travelling there. It identified the communication mix and content that the company applies with German customers.

A. The final composition of the marketing mix consists of the following tools:

1. **TV spot** - DM presents its products in a TV spot both on state television and on private channels. The research was carried out in November and December 2022, which corresponded with the theme of the spot. The predominant emotional appeal was associated with trust and love in the family.
2. **Leaflets** - the company's leaflet focused on products presented by members of the classic family of four. The couple and their children present the company's products, focusing primarily on the quality of the products. Validity of the offer
3. **Loyalty programme** - there are two loyalty programmes. One is called payback, the other glückskind.
  - a) **The Payback program** allows registered customers to earn points. For every 2 euros spent, the customer receives 1 point in their account, and if they accumulate enough points, they can redeem them for discounts on their next purchase. The discount can be redeemed through points accumulated both in the brick-and-mortar store and in the dm online shop. Points earned through the loyalty programme can also be spent in partner stores, not only in the DM chain. (DM-Drogerie Markt, 2022)
  - b) The **Glückskind**, or "Happy Child" **programme**. This is a programme for pregnant women and mothers with children up to 12 years of age. The programme offers its members a magazine with lots of advice on how to prepare for childbirth, how to care for a newborn, etc. In addition, discount coupons, prize competitions and samples of dm products for pregnant women are available for members.

4. **Podcast** - focused on family life. This presents stories of people dealing with ordinary things like moving house, getting married or family relationships. There is no primary mention of any specific product from the DM range.
5. **Company magazine** - the German magazine is called "Alverde" and is published every month. The magazine focuses on news from the world of beauty and healthy lifestyle. The name corresponds to the name of the private label, which is also called Alverde and presents natural cosmetics. The front page is reminiscent of luxury women's magazines such as Cosmopolitan. The magazine includes a section on employees and an interview with one of them. In addition, at the end of the magazine there are also competitions to win prizes, such as a trip to a wellness centre, a package of products, etc.
6. **Social networks** - the company's social media activities are divided into three main channels on Facebook, Instagram and YouTube.
  - a) The German DM's **Facebook profile** mainly consists of posts about products, mostly with a private label. Alternatively, these are posts related to an important day, e.g. World Cancer Day or a holiday, such as Christmas. Its Facebook profile has about 2.5 million followers, which is roughly 3% of Germany's total population.
  - b) **Its Instagram profile** consists of posts with a personal touch. The German Instagram is run by a group of women who sign their individual posts. It makes the whole account look friendlier. Some posts on the German dm Instagram are duplicated together with the German dm Facebook page. Approximately half of the posts are short videos, mainly make-up tips, hairstyles and recipes. The German dm Instagram profile is followed by 1.8 million people, i.e. roughly 2.2 % of the total population. On Instagram, the company works with influencers, people who have a large following on the social network and could influence their followers. The most common focus of influencers is on body care, fashion trends and make up.
  - c) **The YouTube** channel in Germany is followed by around 170,000 people. The content mainly consists of several categories of videos: make-up and hairstyle tips, demonstrations of new dm products, educational videos on issues such as ecological packaging, skin care, what it is like to work at dm and tips for pregnant women.
7. **Newsletters** - provide regular information about products and related sales promotions. They also present events in which the company participates.
8. **Event** - the company organises events directly related to the company, e.g. the opening of new stores or celebration of the store's anniversary. At the same time, it cooperates with and sponsors partner events such as "Discover the Organic Farm", where children can try out how things work on an organic farm, what is involved in growing vegetables or what process is followed when baking bread.

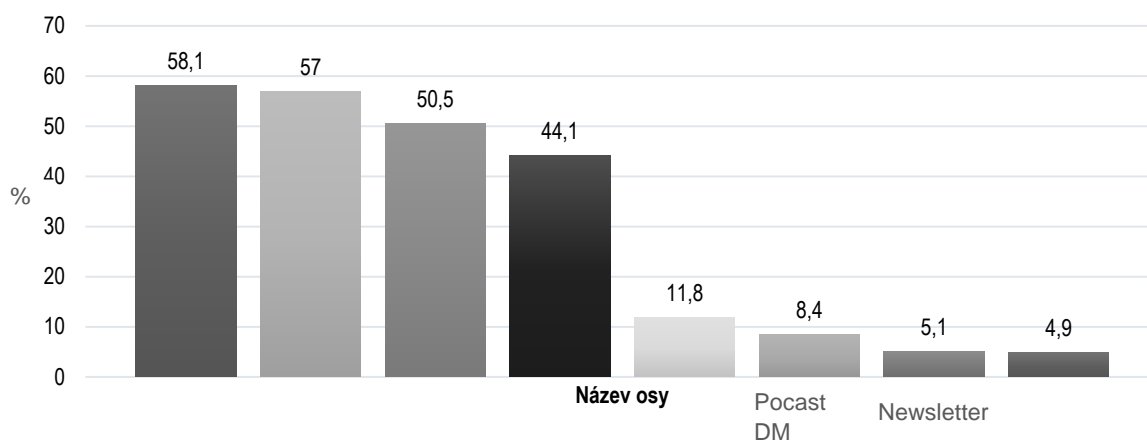
B. The content applied by the company can be divided according to the appeals that are communicated. The appeals overlap in various ways, but two main directions can be clearly identified. The first is social responsibility; the second is product presentation:
9. **Social responsibility** - applied both internally to the company's own employees and externally to the company's surroundings in social, economic and environmental terms. One example is the "HelferHerzen" or "Helper with Heart" initiative, which recognised and supported the work of volunteers in 2020, when the coronavirus pandemic swept through Europe. In the social area, for example organising "Singende Kindergärten" or "Singing Kindergartens" to encourage young children to sing and move. In economic terms, it supports young families with newborn children.

10. **Product presentation** - products offered by DM are used for content in almost all marketing communication tools. The company's own private labels, such as Balea, Alverde Sun Dance and Babylove, are presented significantly more.

### 3.3. Primary research in the Czech Republic

This subsection fulfils the second sub-objective: Identify the marketing communication of a selected global enterprise in the Czech Republic. A total of 202 respondents were involved in the evaluation and answered the questionnaire completely. In the evaluation, communication mix tools that respondents indicated they are familiar with are presented first. Figure 1 presents the respondents' exposure to the applied marketing communication tools.

Figure 1: DM marketing communication tools



Source: compiled by authors

Marketing communication tools can be divided into two groups. The first four, which respondents are significantly more familiar with, are the TV spot, the company magazine, the customer programme and the leaflets. The other four tools are perceived significantly less by respondents.

1. **TV spot** - Among the various marketing communication tools, respondents were most familiar with the TV spot (58.1%). The spot had an emotional subtext, "Magical Winter", and was intended to use positive emotions to persuade respondents to buy the company's products. It was all about the joy of using the product accompanied by information presenting a good price.
2. **Company magazine** - 57% of respondents subscribe to the Czech magazine, which is entitled "**Active Beauty**" and is linked to the Czech DM loyalty programme. It is published 10 times a year and focuses on news from the world of lifestyle and health. The front page is focused on aesthetics, with an artistic photo that always matches the season. The first pages and last pages of the magazine are more like a promotional leaflet, as they are devoted to DM private label products, where special prices are mentioned. At the end of the magazine there is a horoscope; the magazine also includes an interview with a famous person.
3. **Loyalty programme** - the loyalty programme is called "DM"; 50.5% of respondents confirmed they were registered in the customer **active beauty program** programme. The programme is based on collecting points, where one point is equal to spending 25 CZK. Customers can then spend the points they have collected in a DM brick-and-mortar store.
4. **Leaflet** - 44.1% of respondents confirmed they were familiar with the leaflet. The leaflet focuses on discounts and presenting the company's news. Every product on the flyer is on sale at a discount. The leaflet does not contain any other images except the logo and selected products, representing all the segments of the offer.

5. **Social networks** - monitoring of social networks by respondents is a relatively marginal DM tool (11.8%); most often respondents state that they are interested in discount promotions and competitions for DM products. In the Czech Republic, the company is active in three social media channels:
  - a) **Facebook** is mainly used to present competitions. These are then interspersed with posts about DM's private products. Around 210 thousand people follow Facebook in the Czech Republic, which is around 1.87% of the total population of the Czech Republic.
  - b) **Instagram** consists mainly of photos of DM's private products, supplemented by podcasts made for the company magazine. On Instagram, posts are duplicated with Facebook. The Czech DM Instagram profile has 133 thousand followers. This is 1.24% of the total population of the Czech Republic. Influencers focusing on fashion, lifestyle and presenting private products collaborate with Instagram.
  - c) **The YouTube** channel offers videos about make-up, hairstyles, products and careers at dm. It also focuses on another segment, which is cooking. The company presents recipes that work with dmBio products, and again podcasts with famous personalities who have already been interviewed in Active Beauty magazine. The Czech channel is followed by 5.7 thousand people.
6. **DM Podcast** - connected to the company's "Active Beauty" magazine. It comes out every month and is an audio version of an interview with a famous person that is printed in the magazine.
7. **Newsletter** - distributed to registered subscribers at monthly intervals. It contains information about current promotions related to discounts or information about events.
8. **Events** - own events are organised only at the local level, by individual stores independently. As a partner, DM works with RunCzech, which is a series of running races. Together with the organisers, they created the DM Family Run event. As the name suggests, parents and their children, as well as senior citizens, can compete on a route roughly 3 kilometres long.

The content of marketing communications reported by respondents in their open-ended responses can be aggregated into two areas. The first area is related to discount promotions associated with competitions, while the second is corporate social responsibility.

- a) **discount promotions and competitions** - the content of almost all communication mix tools included appeals to save money in the form of time-limited discount promotions, even though the company presents itself as offering low prices in the long term. Very often, especially on social media, a competition is announced for free products or discounts on products or to win vouchers for purchases. The majority of respondents said they follow these promotions, with a total of 91% of respondents saying they were familiar with the discounts.
- b) **social responsibility** - as an additional appeal, DM often presents its social responsibility in its communication. It presents its economic social responsibility, such as by creating the "Together" initiative, the purpose of which is to provide financial or material support for social, cultural and environmental projects. They are selected by an expert jury consisting not only of representatives of DM, but also business partners, the media, the Czech Red Cross and the Charity of the Czech Republic. Another example of social responsibility is a preventive programme in primary schools called "Happy Teeth", which aims to teach children how to take good care of their teeth. The company focuses on children quite often in other programmes, such as the "Sunshine Children" initiative, which provided information about the principles and risks of children spending time in the sun. There are also economic activities, such as the "DM Helps Children" project, which identified families living on the brink of poverty and provided them with support for their children. 38 % of respondents reported that they were aware of CSR programmes.

The next step was to specify the opinions of Czech respondents broken down by demographic characteristics. This specification was made by calculating statistically significant differences calculated using the chi-square test. Table 1 presents the distribution of respondents by sorting characteristics and the resulting p-value.

Table 1: Percentage distribution of respondents by socio-economic characteristics

Gender			Age			Education		
Women	61 %	124	18-39	56 %	113	Secondary education with leaving examination	52 %	105
Men	39 %	78	40-59	25 %	52	University	31 %	61
Total	100 %	202	60+	19 %	37	Elementary, skilled	17 %	36
			Total	100 %	202	Total	100 %	202
p-value	0.025687		p-value	0.042011		p-value	0.011025	

*Source: compiled by authors*

Because of the low representation of respondents in the age and education category intervals, these intervals were aggregated into larger units. The age interval was extended to twenty years and education reduced from five options to three. This ensured representation above 15 % in all categories. Subsequently, a test was used to identify statistically significant differences in responses between groups. The results showed statistically significant differences in all three categories. This was the reason for a more detailed identification of target groups depending on the marketing communication tools. The results are presented only for those respondents who indicated that they are familiar with or follow the communication tool, e.g. 47 % of respondents are familiar with the leaflets, which equals 100 %. To identify differences, only the top five most strongly applied tools were selected. At the same time, the correlation between the communication tool and the subscription to the company's Active Beauty periodical is observed.

1. **TV spot** (58.1 %) - familiarisation with the TV spot was highest among women (91 %), in the 40-59 age group (63 %). The research included assessment of the appeal of the "Magical Winter" TV spot and its ability to convince respondents to buy. A total of 58 % of respondents had seen this particular TV spot, and 32 % of respondents would be persuaded to buy. A small group of men (12 %), mainly in the 40-59 age group, also reported that they were familiar with the TV spot. However, the TV spot did not convince men to buy the product themselves. The TV spot was seen by significantly more people with secondary and higher education (68 %). The correlation coefficient between familiarisation with the TV spot and subscription to the company's Active Beauty periodical is moderately large, at 0.51235.
2. **Company magazine** (57 %) - female subscribers dominate (96 %). Large differences in familiarisation with the company magazine were also identified with age and education. A different, significantly higher degree of familiarisation was reported by younger respondents under the age of 39 (63 %) with a secondary education (47.7 %).
3. **Customer programme** (50.5 %) - women (96 %) from different age categories and educational backgrounds dominate registered account holders. Neither age nor education differences can be specified here. The main reason for registering was to take advantage of discounts (76.5 %). When registered, respondents collect points for which they can claim discounts. This registration is associated with the subscription to the company periodical Active Beauty, and so the correlation coefficient is 0.93562. This is the highest correlation between the subscription to the periodical and the communication tool.



4. **Leaflets** (47 %) - this tool is mainly followed by women (80 %) who were also registered in the Active Beauty customer programme; the correlation coefficient is 0.8845. According to the age distribution, these are women aged 18 to 59. By education, these are women with a secondary and university education. A difference was identified in the form of leaflets, with women aged 18-39 preferring to read online leaflets (71 %), and women aged 40-59 preferring paper leaflets (74 %). There is a positive correlation of 0.71455 between the frequency of leaflets and subscription to the Active Beauty periodical, i.e. women who subscribe to the leaflets also subscribe to the periodical.
5. **Social networking** (11.8 %) - Women (90.1 %) aged 18-39 (65 %) are the most frequent followers of DM's social networks. Facebook is the most followed social network (78.9 %). There was also a difference in education, with a significantly higher number of respondents with a secondary and university education. The correlation coefficient between familiarisation with the logo and slogan and subscription to the company's Active Beauty periodical is relatively low, at 0.28477.

The research showed that different communication tools appeal to different customer segments, with different preferences in terms of age, gender and education. The tools match only in terms of gender, where there is clear evidence of significantly higher involvement of women.

### 3.4. Comparison of communication tools in the Czech Republic and Germany

In international marketing, there are two options for multinational companies operating in multiple markets in Europe or worldwide. The first option is adaptation to individual markets, while the second option is standardisation applied to all markets. In marketing communication, adaptation means preparing content for each tool individually. Conversely, standardised marketing communication means the same content for the same communication tools applied in all countries. The evaluation compares the tools and content of communication individually. It then concludes by assessing the extent to which standardisation and adaptation have been applied.

1. **TV spot** - German advertising relies primarily on family themes with children. The German DM uses short scenes featuring a cute little boy, while the spots in the Czech Republic rely on creating a magical atmosphere that usually matches the season. Although they are conceptually different, they are united by positive emotions such as joy, love or well-being, which people often lack during difficult times. The Czech spots also mention the economic benefits of the products.
2. **Company magazine** - the periodicity differs slightly; in Germany the magazine is published every month, so 12 times a year, while just 10 times a year in the Czech Republic; there is one joint issue for July and August and also for December and January. Both magazines focus on news from the world of beauty and healthy lifestyle. The names of the magazine are different; in Germany it is called *Alverde*, and *Active Beauty* in the Czech Republic. The German version looks more luxurious and elegant. One specific feature of the German magazine is the employee section, featuring an interview with an employee every month. The Czech version, on the other hand, features an interview with a well-known personality. The Czech version is rather like a sales leaflet with product offers and competitions, e.g. to win a trip. The Czech magazine also features a horoscope on the back page.
3. **Loyalty programme** - based on collecting points both in the Czech Republic and in Germany. The system of collecting points in the Czech Republic works on a similar principle as in Germany; the customer gets 1 point for every 25 CZK spent. In Germany, 1 point is earned for every 2 euros. In terms of prices, the Czech loyalty programme is therefore cheaper than the German one. The disadvantage of the Czech programme is that the discount from accumulated points can only be redeemed in a brick-and-mortar store, not in the dm online shop or with other partners. The German loyalty programme offers points from more than 600 other corporate partners, such as H&M, REWE and Deichmann.

4. **Leaflet** - the difference is immediately noticeable and concerns the visual appearance of the leaflets. The German leaflet looks less like a discount leaflet, especially with the photo of the happy girl on the front page. It is immediately apparent that the Czech one is a leaflet with information about bargain prices, especially from the slogans "always a bargain" and "long-term price guarantee". Another difference is the validity of the leaflet; the Czech one is valid for almost a month, while the German one is valid for about 17 days. There is a further difference in the size of the range offered by the company at bargain prices for the given period of time. There are about 2.5 times more of these products in the Czech leaflet than in the German one. By the "long-term price", the Czech leaflet also gives the date since the price has not increased, while the German leaflet only states the words without a date.
5. **Social networks** - all three types of social networks used by the company in the two countries can be compared.
  - a) In the German version, **Facebook** regularly presents product information and regularly addresses current social issues. The company is active on Facebook on a daily basis. The use of Facebook in the Czech Republic is different due to the effort to actively engage followers through competitions. These are then interspersed with posts about the company's private products.
  - b) **Instagram** is much more personal in Germany, with five Instagram administrators signing the individual posts and acting as corporate influencers. The German account seems very friendly and is mostly filled with videos about the company's products, as well as about everyday concerns of women. Collaboration with paid influencers takes place on topics of interest to women, such as make-up or hair care. The Czech Instagram does not feature authors and the content is more centred around photos than videos. It presents products and current body care trends. Like the German Instagram, it collaborates with lifestyle influencers.
  - c) The **YouTube** channels in both countries have lower viewer figures than Facebook and Instagram. The German channel is categorised thematically into several groups. Topics include make-up, hairstyles, demonstrations of new products, educational videos, skin care etc. In addition, they make videos featuring their employees. The Czech channel also has videos thematically divided into similar categories. In addition, the Czech channel takes advantage of the popularity of cooking in the Czech Republic and therefore has a channel featuring recipes.
6. **Podcast** - this is completely different in Germany and the Czech Republic. In the Czech Republic, this is a marginal marketing communication tool, with just an interview published in a company magazine recorded in audio form and subsequently uploaded to social networks. In Germany, the podcast features interviews with interesting people or has these people talk about a variety of topics. The company does not present its products, but acts as the sponsor of the podcast. It is published on social media.
7. **Newsletter** - this is used in a very similar way in both countries. It differs in that each uses the national language, but otherwise the newsletters have very similar features. Customers in both countries have the opportunity to access new product news, competitions and discounts. Current events from both the corporate and social environment are also presented there. Registration is the same in both countries, via the website.
8. **Events** - organising events is part of the German and Czech communication mix. In Germany, events are mainly aimed at families with children, often in conjunction with ecology. In the Czech Republic, the company works with organisers of sporting events. In both countries, events are used to celebrate the anniversary of a branch or store.

**Content of communication** - DM's German and Czech marketing communication presents social responsibility in its themes. It not only communicates socially responsible topics, but also implements them.

This form of communication content is quite common nowadays, especially in the drugstore sales segment and other related segments that have an adverse impact on the environment. However, there is an evident difference in the intensity of CSR involvement in the communication content. In German communication tools, the intensity is significantly higher than in Czech ones. This is probably due to the fact that German customers are more sensitive to these topics than Czech customers. DM uses this differentiation. In its Czech communication, its work with pricing is strongly promoted in the content. These are mainly time-limited discount promotions, to which the Czech customer is very sensitive. For the Czech customer, a discount is one of the strongest incentives when deciding whether to make a purchase. In both countries, the presentation of products sold in DM stores appears in the communication content. There is strong support for private labels at the expense of other brands offered by the company (Třmínková, 2022). The product range presented is always linked to the season in which it is presented. In general, the company uses positive emotional appeals such as joy and love.

#### **4. DISCUSSION**

International marketing presents an interesting challenge for international marketing professionals. It is always necessary to decide which strategy to use for each region in which the company operates. According to Viswanathan et al., (2017), sociocultural differences in countries determine whether a company decides to standardise or adapt. Other factors for choosing an appropriate international strategy are political, economic and technological differences (Thakur, 2016). According to Sultan & Rohm (2005), in marketing communication, it is necessary to identify differences in other specifics such as language, consumer behaviour, the use of social media or the use of advertising. It is also necessary to find out what information consumers are looking for, especially in the context of the communication mix. This is important, for example, for web designers. It is not possible to provide just a translation so that the same message is transmitted (Smith & Zook, 2016).

The research confirmed the need to adapt the corporate communication mix, even though the product portfolio is approximately the same. This approach was confirmed in their research by (Olney, 2022). This is due to the differences between the target groups in Germany and the Czech Republic. The most differences, according to Percy, (2014), are in socio-cultural and economic factors. This combination of factors translates into economic opportunities for customers. For this reason, DM has used discount promotions as the main appeal for the Czech market. For German customers, on the other hand, corporate social responsibility was the main communication appeal. This strong attitude of German customers towards social responsibility has been confirmed by studies (Wojtaszek et al., 2023)

On the contrary, elements of standardisation were also detected in the case study. DM applied the same communication mix in both markets. This approach is also recommended by (Pasquarelli,2023) Applying the same communication mix makes it easier to manage these tools from headquarters. There is also a positive impact in terms of cost, as standardisation is cheaper than adaptation. Another important element of standardisation is the presentation of private labels at the expense of the production brands that are in the company's sales offer. As claimed by (Pasquarelli,2023), building customer loyalty to private brands is the core advantage of a business company in competition with a manufacturing company. In conclusion, it can be stated that DM applies the strategy of adaptation in international marketing communication significantly more than the strategy of standardisation, even though some elements of standardisation have been discovered.

#### **CONCLUSION**

The main objective of the research presented here was to identify the differences in the marketing communication of a selected global company on the German and Czech markets. To achieve this goal,

the company chosen was DM drogerie markt GmbH & Co", which is very active in marketing communication, while it is also a global European giant with a large presence in Germany and the Czech Republic. This company was the subject of the case study and clearly identified the company's strategies in marketing communication. The primary research found similarities and differences in the application of marketing mix tools and the application of message content in Germany and the Czech Republic. Although it was found that an adaptation strategy is applied more, the company always places emphasis on dm brand identity, product quality, sustainability and customer care. In Germany and in the Czech Republic, DM's communication campaigns present private labels in particular as reputable, reliable and of high quality. The German market is often more sensitive to sustainability and ethical issues. In the Czech market, on the other hand, customers are more sensitive to pricing. The research has benefits in several areas. For researchers, the methodology can serve as a model for further research. For marketers, it can serve as a guide for strategic decision-making when outlining an international communications strategy. Although the research fulfilled the stated objective, there are some limitations to the work. For the research in the Czech Republic, primary research using face-to-face interviews was used to identify in detail customer perceptions of communication. Primary research was also used for the research in Germany, but using the observation method, which cannot identify the issue in question study in such detail. Other limits may be in the brevity of the communication presented, where images, videos or social media posts are missing, which cannot be published due to the size of the post. Despite certain limitations, the paper presented here is timeless and has met all the stated objectives.

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