

# Influence of marketing communication tools on customer's purchase processes of erotic products in the Czech Republic

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## Abstract

**Research background:** Even today, part of society considers shops with erotic goods as something completely controversial, which should not be talked about, or used in any case. Erotic tools have been used by people for thousands of years (30,000 years ago, people in caves painted the first erotic aids). In the case of material finds, various tools from the period of 2,500 BC were discovered. Due to the understanding of erotic tools and the presentation of conservative to negative opinions of people, it is important to create effective communication and effectively influence the information of potential customers.

**Purpose of the article:** The main goal of the work is a description of customer behavior, analysis of the point of sale, and marketing communication in the market of erotic tools. The primary research was realized in questionnaire form in focus on the definition of a typical customer and his characteristics within their purchase habits with the support of interviews.

**Methods:** The description of customer behavior is based on the analysis of their behavior based on a quantitative questionnaire survey. We asked 870 people and received 463 fulfilled sheets. The results of the questionnaires will be extended by a qualitative survey in the form of personal interviews with 10 respondents.

**Findings & Value added:** We find out four different customer types which have different purchase behavior, and on which is necessary to use a different type of communication. According to our types, sellers of erotic tools could improve their communication channels to become more effective.

**Keywords:** *marketing communication tools; customer's behavior; erotic goods; purchase processes*

**JEL Classification:** *L81; M2; M31*

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

Present societies still consider several topics and product kinds as non-ethical, unacceptable, or perverse. These characteristics are suitable for all kinds of products in the erotic industry. In western countries, erotic industry and connected areas are not the topics of common talking and people usually become ashamed. Although, erotic products and similar “gadgets” have not only sexual benefits but very significant medical aspects for both physical and psychical areas. The medical reasons should be significant for producers how to communicate their products, especially due to the message content, and by which communication tool they use (Walther, Schouten, 2016; Groppe-Klein, 2005).

The producers can communicate their products under tough conditions at a specific time and place, and they must present product newness. However, the erotic products and various gadgets have been used for over 30000 years (according to the cave paintings), and also there have been found several erotic items from the era 2500 BC (Janiš, 2020).

The main problem of marketing communication in this field is the negative behavior of target customers and their reserved opinions about the usage of these gadgets. Beyond these customers' factors, the communication message arises awareness of all observing people, because of the typical provocations and breaking taboo "walls" (Myers, et al., 2020; Gurrieri et al., 2016; Zarzosa, Huhmann, 2018).

It is necessary to meet three parameters during creating marketing campaigns to be effective (Tuzla, 2020):

- customer's interest in commercial channel;
- influence of product;
- purchase meanings.

Tuzla (2012) also mentions the significant impact of erotic commercials on males, but in addition to that specification, Walther and Schouten (2016) discussed a similar impact on females. Therefore, it is difficult to prefer only one gender group within dependence of kind of erotic product (e.g. womanizer is strictly used by females). All kinds of erotic products are considered such strongly controversial goods by a huge worldwide population, especially in the context of religions. Everything connected to the erotic they reject as immoral or non-ethical. The others think that erotic and sexual area is a normal part of human beings and it is normal to communicate these elements to the whole audience, not only to the men (Martíšková, Slabá, Švec, 2017; Klapilová et al., 2015).

Present marketing campaigns change customers' behavior during the purchasing decision-making process and their minds. Therefore, they start to focus on different kinds of products and it is possible to use specific marketing communication tools, which can target psychological mindset in connection to specific kinds of products such as erotic (Gracia, Huertas-Garcia, 2016; Buss, 2014; Griskevicius, Kenrick, 2013). This mindset is based on specifics of regional cultural conditions and helps to create personal sexual pleasure for each person (Kraus, 2017; Walther, Schouten, 2016).

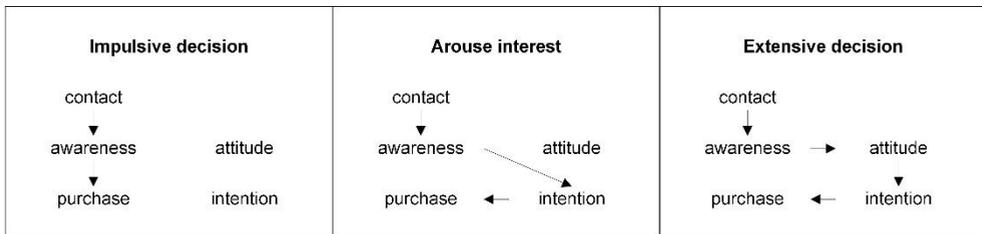
Except for the sexual area, it is possible to define several others "outrageous" areas, which arise various passions (see Table 1).

**Table 1.** Specific and outrageous areas of marketing communication.

|   |                                   |                          |                                    |
|---|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Advertisement on cigarettes                           | Sexual and erotic themes in ads   | Advertisement on spirits | Advertisement on off-prescriptions |
| Religious motives in ads                              | Advertisement on non-healthy food | Advertisement on beer    | Advertisement on wine incl. sects  |
| Advertisement with focus on children in child program | Promotion of political party      |                          |                                    |

Source: Martišková, Slabá, Švec (2017)

The realized marketing communication campaigns must reach an adequate number of potential customers to become effective. Also, it is important to offer relevant parameters to a customer such as quality of goods, consultancy services, and others (Kollárová, Ungerová, 2016). In that way, all customers have to pass five steps, leading to purchase: contact, awareness, attitude, intention, purchase (see Figure 1). These steps should combine each other and impact customers by three approaches. Always it is necessary to catch the awareness of the customer, leading to mainly impulsive or arouse states. However, every time must company plan an adequate marketing communication strategy and also must have relevant knowledge about their purchase behavior (Scott, Martin, Schouten, 2014; Tomek, Vávrová, 2011).

**Figure 1.** Possible ways of getting potential customers

Source: own work according to Tomek, Vávrová, 2011, s. 246

## 2 METHODOLOGY

The main goal of the work is a description of customer behavior, analysis of the point of sale, and marketing communication in the market of erotic tools. The primary research was realized in questionnaire form in focus on the definition of a typical customer and his characteristics within their purchase habits with the support of interviews.

The description of customer behavior will be based on the analysis of their behavior according to a quantitative questionnaire survey. We asked 870 people and received 463 fulfilled sheets. The results of the questionnaires will be extended by a qualitative survey in the form of personal interviews with 10 respondents. The quantitative questionnaire survey was viewed by 870 individuals, however, only 463 people answered. The success rate of completing the questionnaire was 53.2%. Did people leave the questionnaire because they did not want to talk about this topic? 270 individuals out of the total number of 463 respondents have experience with erotic aids.

## 3 Results

In case communication with the customer is to be effective, it is necessary to choose a suitable communication channel. Select the communication channel you use on the specific consumer

to be addressed. For this reason, customer segmentation is extremely necessary. However, creating a segment for individuals who buy erotic aids is not entirely easy.

The questionnaire survey showed that women experience more often than men. People in the age range of 18-30 years and a net cash income of CZK 15,000-25,000 most often have experience with erotic aid. Most respondents wanted to try new things with the erotic aid, most often buying the aid on the e-shop (109 individuals). On the contrary, only 44 individuals bought it in a stone shop (approximately 16% of respondents). Individuals who have never been to a stone shop I asked why. The most common answer was that buying online was more convenient and also that it would be embarrassing for them to go to the store.

Sexual issues concern the absolute expectations of the population, whether they talk about it or not. Thanks to this, absolutely anyone can be a consumer. Based on this fact, consumers in the market of erotic aids cannot be specified. This fact is also based on the results of questionnaires, from which no specific customer filled in.

Nevertheless, it is possible to specify certain groups of customers for whom the majority of consumers can be registered based on their attitude towards shops selling erotic goods. When evaluating the questionnaires and interviews, we realized that most respondents can be boxed into the following four group customers.

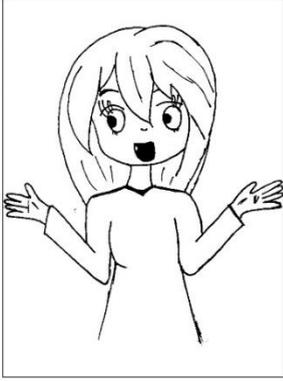
- **Conservatives** - these are not current customers. This group can include individuals who perceive shops with erotic goods as something taboo. They have no experience with this type of business and perceive it rather neutrally, sometimes even negatively. Using properly formulated and appropriately placed communications can change their views and ultimately become satisfied customers of these stores.

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>CONSERVATIVE</b>   |  |
| <b>IDEAS</b>  |  |
| <p><i>This kind of shops should not be topic of talking.</i></p> <p><i>I never enter the shop voluntarily.</i></p> <p><i>I never buy any erotic gadgets or equipments.</i></p> <p><i>This kind of shops should be prohibited. They are nasty.</i></p> |  |
| <b>KEY COMMUNICATION TOOLS</b>  | <b>INDIVIDUAL NEED</b>   |
| professional articles in neutral journals   | healthy benefits<br>partner  |

**Figure 2.** Description of conservative type of customer

Source: own work

- **Neutralists** - is a term for consumers who have a neutral view of shops with erotic goods. If necessary, they have no problem visiting the store and buying something, however, most individuals in this group will have a slightly strange feeling from visiting the store, supplemented by a certain amount of shame. This can include various jokers who want to buy a gift for their loved ones, whether a birthday or a wedding. Also included are curious people who go to the store and check out what they can find in it and what it looks like inside.

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>NEUTRALIST</b>   |  |
| <b>IDEAS</b>  |   |
| <p><i>I do not care about erotic shops.<br/>It is up to everybody's wishes.</i></p> <p><i>I need to buy humour gift.</i></p> <p><i>I feel kind of curiousness.</i></p> <p><i>I have strange feeling during<br/>purchasing, I shame.</i></p> |   |
| <b>KEY COMMUNICATION TOOLS</b>  | <b>INDIVIDUAL NEED</b>  |
| eshop / stores<br>flyers<br>influencers   | humourous gadgets<br>underwear  |

**Figure 3.** Description of neutralist type of customer

Source: own work

- Playmakers - depict individuals who have a positive attitude towards erotic aids. They perceive them as a pleasant diversion. Most of these customers will think carefully about what to buy, and in most cases, they will probably welcome advice from sales staff. Even in this group, some customers may be a little ashamed when entering the store. It is possible to include a partner who wants to revive their relationship or an individual who wants to replace the missing partner with a toy. Consumers in this group usually shop occasionally and prefer "ordinary" devices.

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>PLAYMAKER</b>   |  |
| <b>IDEAS</b>   |   |
| <p><i>Erotic gadgets provide pleasing<br/>relationship diversification.</i></p> <p><i>I must think out, what to buy.</i></p> <p><i>If I have no partner, I'm going to<br/>buy gadget.</i></p> <p><i>What my partner should like?</i></p> |   |
| <b>KEY COMMUNICATION TOOLS</b>   | <b>INDIVIDUAL NEED</b>  |
| reviews / videoreviews<br>recommendation / advices<br>partner's wishes   | relationship activation<br>partner substitution                                     |

**Figure 4.** Description of playmaker type of customer

Source: own work

- Raubi - represents a group of consumers who feel at home in erotic shops, so this group should not feel ashamed. They often buy erotic aids and have a variety of these tools at home. It could be assumed that they are more interested in new products on the market because they already have all the "experienced" tools at home. This includes individuals who have a range of BDSM tools at home.

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>RAUBÍ</b>  |   |
| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>IDEAS</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Erotic shops are great. I feel there like a home.</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>I want to extend my collection.</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>I like to try new things.</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>I have no sense of shame, it is a common.</i></p> |  |
| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>KEY COMMUNICATION TOOLS</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">erotic fair trades, flyers<br/>Ads at erotic websites<br/>eshop / stores</p>   | <p style="text-align: center;"><b>INDIVIDUAL NEED</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Market news (common<br/>gadgets already have)</p> |

**Figure 5.** Description of raubí type of customer

Source: own work

The moment marketing communication is adapted for each type of this group of customers and a suitable communication channel is chosen for transmission to the given groups, there could be higher marketing efficiency and thus an increase in sales.

## 4 CONCLUSIONS

Most people perceive shops with erotic devices either neutrally or completely positively. They don't mind stores as such, but if they had to visit this type of store themselves, they would most likely be ashamed.

People are most worried that someone will convict them of visiting an erotic store. If they have to, they would prefer to buy on the website instead of visiting a stone shop. Of all respondents, only 16.3% of respondents bought sexual aid in a stone shop.

It is said that even in today's society, many individuals deal with what others think of them. When I think about it, it's quite a paradox. Most individuals perceive these deals rather positively, but at the same time, people are afraid that others will condemn them. Based on the answers of the interviewed respondents, I believe that this fear of condemnation by others is completely unnecessary.

Based on a questionnaire survey, I conclude that part of the population still perceives erotic shops as taboo. This assumption is based on the fact that the questionnaire was viewed by 870 individuals, while 407 people left it when filling it out, which is about 46%. Consumer behavior can be affected by basically anything. Whether it is some external influences or any internal motives. Their shopping behavior can be influenced by, for example, opinions on erotic products, the appearance of the store, or any marketing activities. If the company wants to positively influence consumer shopping behavior, it is enough to have a positive effect on people's perceptions (Beyene, Shi, Wu (2016). However, if the company wants to influence attitudes towards erotic shops in any way, just follow my suggestions for improvement. To support next sales, each company must promote the possibility to look at the face just before orgasm, albeit pretended, leads to a significant increase in sales (Wolf, 2000; Rao, Hymavathi, Rao, 2018).

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