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INNOVATIONS IN THE MARKETING COMMUNICATION MIX AS A TOOL FOR INCREASING COMPETITIVENESS OF RETAIL DRUGSTORE CHAINS IN THE POST-COVID PERIOD

Abstract. The paper analyses the marketing communication mix of selected retail drugstore chains operating on the Czech market—dm drogerie markt s.r.o., Teta drogerie a lékárny ČR s.r.o., and ROSSMANN s.r.o.—in the context of post-COVID market recovery. The aim is to identify suitable innovations in marketing communication that can strengthen the competitiveness of retail businesses. The research is based on content analysis of official websites and communication channels, observation of offline marketing tools, and evaluation of social media performance (Facebook and Instagram) using engagement rate (ER). Benchmarking was applied to compare the selected drugstores with Lidl across defined marketing criteria. The results reveal notable differences in communication effectiveness. DM achieves the strongest performance in personalization, social media activity, loyalty programs, sustainability communication, and digital integration. ROSSMANN demonstrates high engagement on Instagram and strong omnichannel integration, while Lidl stands out in pricing strategy and environmental initiatives. Teta shows the greatest potential for improvement, particularly in social media activity, brand positioning, mobile application development, and sustainability

communication. The findings indicate that digitalization, personalization, influencer marketing, loyalty program optimization, and clear sustainability communication are key drivers of competitiveness in the post-pandemic retail environment.

Keywords: marketing communication mix; retail; social media engagement; benchmarking; sustainability marketing.

JEL classification: E31, L81, M37

Introduction

Contemporary marketing communication is increasingly shifting from traditional mass communication to personalized, interactive, and two-way communication between companies and their customers. Digital technologies create space for more targeted targeting of specific segments and support the building of long-term relationships based on dialogue and customer engagement (Stratila and Madan, 2021). In this context, marketing initiatives are understood as a key source of sustainable value creation and a prerequisite for maintaining a strong competitive position in the market, while companies must continuously increase the value provided to customers (Gotteland, Shock, and Sarin, 2020). The retail sector is also undergoing a fundamental transformation under the influence of digitalization. The growth of e-commerce, changing consumer purchasing behavior, and the increasing complexity of supply chains pose significant challenges for retail companies (Vhatkar et al., 2024). The digital environment requires not only effective management of online channels, but also a deeper understanding of customer engagement and its impact on purchase intentions and customer acquisition (Zheng, Li, & Na, 2022).

The COVID-19 pandemic has further accelerated this development and has fundamentally influenced consumer media behavior. The increase in time spent on social media has strengthened the importance of digital advertising, which allows for flexible and individually tailored content consumption (Byun et al., 2023). Social media has thus become not only a communication platform, but also a distribution and information channel, the effective use of which requires strategic marketing decisions regard-

ding the role of individual actors in the value chain (Zhou et al., 2022). At the same time, the impact of owned and earned media on retailer performance is being examined, including the impact of online interactions, comments, or organic search on sales (Vieira, Almeida, & Schreiner, 2022). Sharing shopping experiences on social networks and the role of information provider significantly influence shopping decisions in the online environment (Qiu, Chhikara and Vakharia, 2021). The aim of the article is to analyse the marketing communication mix of three selected retail drugstore chains operating on the Czech market – dm drogerie markt s.r.o., Teta drogerie a lékárny ČR s.r.o. and ROSSMANN s.r.o. – and to identify possibilities for its innovation with the aim of strengthening their competitiveness in the post-covid market recovery period.

1. Literature Review

Current professional literature defines marketing as a key determinant of the long-term competitiveness of enterprises in a dynamic and highly competitive environment. Marketing capabilities significantly contribute to the adaptability and survival of enterprises, and their effect is strengthened by targeted marketing investments (Paurova and Majerova, 2020; Patel, Feng and Guedes, 2021). At the same time, marketing systems fulfill a broader economic function, as they effectively connect supply with demand and support economic growth (Shaw, 2020). Current approaches understand marketing not only as a tool for managing change, but also as a process of creating meaning for customers and other stakeholders, thereby expanding its role in the context of social and institutional changes (Groenroos, 2023). In this context, the integration of social responsibility into marketing activities and the issue of its implementation at the level of marketing departments are discussed (Ozturan and Grinstein, 2022). The importance of marketing is also assessed in terms of its impact on the value of the company, the measurability of its benefits and the relationship with external stakeholders (Guenther et al., 2024).

The marketing mix remains the basic conceptual framework for managing marketing activities, with its individual tools being adapted to changing market conditions (Paurova and Majerova, 2020). In the field of public relations, the role of strategic communication in building relationships with key public groups in the context of a changing social environment is emphasized (Giovanelli and Persigo, 2022). Promotional activities are increasingly based on personalization and analytical use of customer data, which allows for more effective targeting and optimization of resources (Baardman et al., 2023; Chaudhuri, Hirunyawipada and Pan, 2024). Horizontal collaboration between entities in joint promotion is also growing in importance (Yan et al., 2022), with the effectiveness of promotional strategies being conditioned by the perception of the quality of the brand and the chosen communication channel (Cao et al., 2021; Frimpong, Hope, & Anane-Donkor, 2022).

Advertising continues to be a key tool for building awareness and stimulating demand across traditional and digital media (Arafat et al., 2021). Research focuses on the role of creativity, in particular the dimensions of originality and appropriateness, the effects of which may vary depending on the context, for example in crisis situations (Demsar et al., 2022). Television advertising retains a significant position in the media ecosystem, although the issue of the accuracy of audience measurement and its relevance for valuing advertising space is debated (Lu-Wen, 2022; Song, Shi, & Tso, 2022; Nurumov et al., 2023). In the case of radio advertising, limited knowledge of the factors influencing avoidance of advertising messages is pointed out (Michelon et al., 2020). Digital forms of advertising, including SMS marketing, have a positive effect on purchase intentions provided that they are perceived as informative, entertaining and trustworthy (Amoako et al., 2023). Specific attention is paid to millennials and Generation Z, for whom the effectiveness of online advertising is conditioned by the format and content of the message, while in the social media environment, the quality and repeatability of advertising content play a significant role (Munsch, 2021).

Sales promotion is seen as a tool for short-term demand stimulation with a direct impact on sales performance (Zeybek and Ulengin, 2022). The literature distinguishes activities aimed at end consumers and at distribution intermediaries (Grubor, Dokic and Milicevic, 2015). Loyalty programs play an important role as part of customer relationship management (Zilinska, Vrbka and Kalinova, 2021; Hendler, LaTour and Cotte, 2022), with empirical findings indicating that their effect on loyalty may not be automatic and depends on the method of implementation (Zilinska, Vrbka and Kalinova, 2021).

Direct marketing is characterized by an orientation towards measurable and immediate customer response and its importance has increased especially during the period of pandemic restrictions (Kollarova and Ungero-va, 2021). The effectiveness of this tool depends on the appropriate choice of communication channels and the use of analytical methods, including response modeling, which, however, face methodological challenges, such as data imbalance (Percic and Peric, 2022; Zhang et al., 2024). The pandemic has also accelerated the use of technology in the development of direct marketing and highlighted the importance of overcoming logistical and communication barriers (Yousefian et al., 2021). The development of online retail is associated with the transformation of business models, an emphasis on logistical efficiency and delivery time management (Salari, Liu, and Shen, 2022). The online environment allows the use of tools that influence purchasing decisions, such as communicating product availability (Calvo, Cui, and Wagner, 2023). Digital platforms have become the dominant economic form, and their sustainability depends on the effective management of profitability within the supply chain (He, 2021; Jia, 2021; Binsaif, 2022). The COVID-19 pandemic has further accelerated the growth of online shopping (Colaco and de Abreu e Silva, 2022). The quality of websites and the level of online services are important determinants of purchasing behavior and the formation of first impressions of a company (Wu, Liu and Cui, 2021; Alghenaim, Abu Bakar and Rahim, 2023). Digital marketing and social media marketing are an integral part of current marketing strategies (Dasic et al., 2023). Rese-

arch systematizes knowledge about social media strategies and their impact on business performance (Li, Larimo and Leonidou, 2021), while empirical studies point to shortcomings in the measurement and optimization of online activities, especially in small and medium-sized enterprises (Cetlova and Velinov, 2019). In the cosmetics sector, the importance of social networks for influencing customer behavior has been confirmed, with some platforms showing higher marketing potential than others. Digital marketing is simultaneously associated with building customer relationships and improving customer experience, with its benefits and limitations depending on industry specifics (Kaur and Kumar, 2022). The retail sector is responding to customer expectations by intensively digitizing communication channels and developing e-commerce (Stratila and Madan, 2021).

Influencer marketing has established itself as a significant part of digital marketing strategies (Farivar and Wang, 2021; Leung et al., 2022; Leung, Gu and Palmatier, 2022). Its effectiveness lies in the ability of influencers to activate the audience and strengthen brand credibility (Han, Wang and Fan, 2023). In the cosmetics industry, it represents one of the dominant communication tools (Yfantidou and Grncarov, 2021). Current research compares the impacts of communication through real and virtual influencers, with consumers generally preferring authentic personalities (Penttinen, Mouritzen, & Pedersen, 2024). For environmentally friendly products, a significant influence of e-WOM on purchase intentions has been identified. Green marketing is associated with the integration of environmental aspects into marketing strategies and building competitive advantage (Martins, 2022; Rajput et al., 2022; Gelderman et al., 2021). Growing consumer environmental awareness and pressure for corporate responsibility are leading companies to implement environmentally friendly operations and communication activities (Shi et al., 2022). Empirical studies confirm the positive impact of green marketing tools on satisfaction, loyalty, and brand equity in both B2B and B2C environments (Gelderman et al., 2021; Nguyen-Viet, 2023), while their effective implemen-

tation requires systematic management and identification of key elements of the strategy (Kiyak and Grigoliene, 2023).

2. Methodology

The aim of the article is to analyse the marketing communication mix of three selected retail drugstore chains operating on the Czech market – dm drogerie markt s.r.o., Teta drogerie a lékárny ČR s.r.o. and ROSSMANN s.r.o. – and to identify possibilities for its innovation with the aim of strengthening their competitiveness in the post-covid market recovery period.

In connection with this objective, the following research question was formulated:

What innovations in the field of marketing communication mix are suitable for increasing the competitiveness of retail businesses in the period of post-covid market recovery?

Data was obtained using content analysis from the official websites and related communication channels of selected companies, namely DM, Teta and ROSSMANN drugstores, along with an observation method that will also include offline marketing tools. Furthermore, an analysis of the performance of companies on the social networks Facebook and Instagram will be evaluated using the Social Blade platform. In order to achieve objective and comparable results, how strongly and actively users react to the content on the social networks of all three research subjects, data will be analyzed for a certain period, namely 1.1. 2025 - 31.1. 2025.

We used the following formula to calculate the engagement rate (ER):

$$ER = (\text{likes} + \text{comments} + \text{shares}) / (\text{number of followers}) \times 100\%$$

For the research question, which we used to evaluate the obtained data, it is most optimal to choose the benchmarking method. Using this method, four reference companies will be selected, in which they will be examined how they carry out their marketing activities. Subsequently, a table will be used to evaluate which forms the researched entities have or do not have. The aim will be to find out what other options can be used

within the framework of this research in comparison with the competition in retail.

Benchmarking is a method in which the performance, processes and strategies of a selected company are systematically compared with the best organizations in a given field. It is primarily a process of improvement. The goal is to reveal differences and be inspired by the best practices and methods that will lead to improved performance and increased competitiveness..

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Performance analysis on social networks

According to the data from the Social Blade platform, the first table was prepared that shows the results of the process of evaluating the effectiveness of activities on the Facebook social network. The results of the calculation of the engagement rate (ER) for the individual investigated drugstores show significant differences in the way their followers react to the content published on Facebook profiles.

During January, the DM drugstore published 62 posts on its profile, which received a total of 26,477 reactions. The profile is followed by 221 thousand users, which led to an ER result of 11.98%. This result can be primarily attributed to high-quality and relevant content that corresponds to the interests of the target group. Drogerie DM has a long-term focus on topics supporting sustainability, ecology and a healthy lifestyle, which evokes a strong response from its audience. An important role in success is also played by the already mentioned cooperation with influencers, who have a very high level of trust among their followers, and the effective use of interactive elements in posts, visually attractive graphics and concise texts.

On the contrary, Teta drogerie, which achieved an ER value of only 0.85% with 100 thousand followers, is struggling with a low level of fol-

lower engagement, which is indicated by a half lower number of published posts during the period under review, namely 29 posts with only 853 reactions. This result can be a way of less attractive content that does not generate enough interest, or lower activity of followers who do not respond to posts to the same extent as the competition. A likely reason for the low level of engagement can also be less emphasis on influencer marketing and lower investment in paid promotion, which leads to lower reach and overall less interaction.

Drogerie ROSSMANN published 35 contributions during January, which received a total of 2,714 reactions and thus achieved an ER value of 2.06%, which places it between the two extremes mentioned. This level of engagement is medium, which for this company means that followers interact with the content created, but not to the extent of DM Drugstore and there is still room for improvement.

Table 1: Performance analysis of official Facebook company profiles

Company	Number of posts	Number of likes	Number of comments	Total reactions	Number of followers	ER (%)
DM	62	20 892	5 585	26 477	221 000	11,98
Teta	29	762	91	853	100 000	0,85
ROSSMANN	35	1 570	1 144	2 714	132 000	2,06

Source: Own processing based on data from the Social Blade platform

The second table will be based on a similar principle, only the process of evaluating the effectiveness of activities on the Instagram social network of the investigated companies is shown here. As part of the analysis of the engagement rate (ER) on the Instagram social network for the month of January, three main drugstore chains - DM, Teta and ROSSMANN - were examined. The results showed that there are differences in follower engagement between these companies, which greatly reflects

the effectiveness of marketing strategies and the quality of content shared on Instagram.

Drogerie DM published 52 posts during the entire month of January, which received a total of 63,064 responses. The official Instagram account is followed by 176 thousand users, which led to an ER result of 35.83%. This value is high and indicates an active community that interacts with the content to a large extent. DM drugstore probably benefits from attractive and regular content, which mainly includes competitions, educational posts, product tips and topics focused on ecology. Cooperation with influencers again plays an important role here.

Drogerie Teta published 28 contributions during January, which received a total of 5,151 responses. This Instagram account has 36,000 followers, resulting in an ER result of 14.31%. Although this result is lower than that of competing drugstore chains, it still points to solid audience engagement. A lower level of engagement can be influenced by less dynamic content, less frequent campaigns or lower use of cooperation with influencers.

Of all the three investigated entities, the ROSSMANN drugstore showed the highest level of involvement. During January, she published 39 posts that received 66,158 responses. The Instagram account is followed by 151 thousand users, which led to an ER result of 43.81%. This means that the content of the ROSSMANN drugstore resonates the most with the audience. It is likely to be visually appealing, creative content that effectively appeals to followers and motivates them to interact. The key to such a high ER result can be regular cooperation, competitions or various interactive elements.

Table 2: Performance analysis of official Instagram profiles of companies

Company	Number of posts	Number of likes	Number of comments	Total reactions	Number of followers	ER (%)
DM	52	44 229	18 835	63 064	176 000	35,83
Teta	28	5 112	39	5 151	36 000	14,31
ROSSMANN	39	51 716	14 442	66 158	151 000	43,81

Source: Own processing based on data from the Social Blade platform

3.2 Comparison of marketing performance of competitors

Data for the research question was collected through official websites, from published annual or press releases of retailers, social networks or by examining marketing campaigns. On the basis of these data, the following table was created, in which the individual criteria were evaluated for individual investigated subjects according to how well the criterion is fulfilled for the given retail store. A scale of 1–5 was used for the assessment, when:

- 1 = very weak or non-existent; not filled or only at a low level
- 2 = weak; fulfilled but with significant shortcomings
- 3 = average; filled, but not above average
- 4 = good; well filled, however with smaller reserves
- 5 = excellent; high level of fulfillment, without flaws

Lidl was included in the benchmarking in order to gain a broader view of competition in the retail sector. The reason for choosing this retailer was to deepen the analysis of strategies, innovations, price policies, ecological initiatives and customer approach.

The evaluation of retail chains focused on the target group shows that the DM drugstore performs best thanks to effective marketing and personalization of the offer. Lidl and ROSSMANN also successfully manage to address their customers, however with a lesser degree of focus than DM drugstores. Teta drugstore lags slightly behind the competition, which

may be closely related to the less recognizable brand and weaker market segmentation. Overall, DM and ROSSMANN drugstores are stronger than Teta drugstores in this area, while Lidl appeals to a wider customer base.

DM drugstore is the most active on social networks, which means that it regularly publishes content, interacts with customers and uses modern marketing strategies. Lidl and ROSSMANN are also active, especially through advertisements and competitions, but their activity on social networks is not as intense as that of the DM drugstore. The least active in this area is the Teta drug store, which may result in a lower reach and involvement of customers.

Considering the other two criteria, namely the use of a mobile application and the development of loyalty programs, the DM drugstore stands out the most due to its comprehensive and user-friendly application. At the same time, Lidl and ROSSMANN offer applications with attractive loyalty programs, while Teta drogerie only provides basic functions, so it is advisable to improve the user interface and improve the offer of benefits.

It is also clear that the DM drugstore dominates with a wide and high-quality product range with a strong focus on sustainability. Both Lidl and ROSSMANN also offer a diverse assortment, with Lidl focusing more on affordability and thematic events, while ROSSMANN emphasizes drugstore goods. Among other drugstores, Teta could strengthen its competitiveness by expanding and diversifying its offer.

From the values in the table, it can be seen that available customer support and e-shop are provided by all the examined subjects. It can be stated that the DM drugstore is once again a leader in the field of customer support and manages a quality e-shop. Both Lidl and the ROSSMANN drugstore also offer solid services, while the Teta drugstore has room for improvement in both areas. The improvement could primarily include the expansion of available communication channels and the improvement of the user interface of the e-shop.

Each of the retail chains uses a different pricing strategy that properly corresponds to the specific target group and maintaining competitiveness on the market. Specifically, Lidl focuses on the lowest prices, promotional offers and private brands (Pikok - meat products, Milbona - dairy products, Fin Carré - confectionery). DM drug store emphasizes stable prices, sustainability, and above all the quality of own brands (Balea, Alverde). Teta drugstore uses a regional pricing policy, frequent discounts and a loyalty program. ROSSMANN combines a more premium pricing strategy with frequent discounts and exclusive offers for club members.

Each of the aforementioned retailers approaches innovation differently. Lidl focuses on the use of digital technologies to improve the shopping process and interaction with customers (eg the Lidl Plus mobile application), but it still lags behind in e-commerce. DM Drogerie places the greatest emphasis on sustainability, as well as on the digitization of the DM Active Beauty loyalty program and the development of the e-shop. Teta drugstore modernizes stores and adapts to local needs. ROSSMANN drugstore is strong in connecting physical and online sales, while it invests the most in ecological innovations, to which it tries to minimize the impact on the environment. These individual strategies make it possible to react better to changing market conditions, among the most important can be included, for example emphasis on sustainability, digitization and automation, changes in marketing or stricter legislation.

In the area of social responsibility, these retail chains are actively involved in various initiatives that support local communities, charity projects and especially sustainability. Lidl stands out for its extensive involvement, support of Czech suppliers and regular publication of sustainability reports. Drogerie DM is also involved, specifically through its "TOGETHER" initiative, which has already supported over 200 projects in social, cultural and ecological areas. Even the ROSSMANN drugstore has a strong commitment to social responsibility, although its communication about these activities is not quite as pronounced as at Lidl. Finally, the Teta drugstore, which shows a basic level of involvement, but its activi-

ties in this aspect are not so extensive or visible, which unfortunately ranks it in a lower position compared to the competition.

In the area of ecological initiatives, all the aforementioned retailers are involved again, just with different intensity. Lidl is at the top thanks to a strong focus on ecology and sustainability, due to the regular support of ecological products and the implementation of measures to reduce the carbon footprint. Next comes the DM drugstore, which is also involved in ecological activities, especially in the area of organic farming, but its initiatives are not as publicly communicated as Lidl's. Then ROSSMANN also has a strong ecological program that focuses on eco products and ethical initiatives, but its presence in this aspect is not as wide as at the competition. Teta drugstore is again at a low level in the evaluation of ecological initiatives, which allows it to remain only at the lower limit compared to other chains.

In the area of certificates, DM and Lidl drugstores are characterized by a wide range of certified products, such as BIO and Fair Trade, and at the same time strongly communicate their commitment to ethical standards. The ROSSMANN drugstore also offers certified products, but its offer is not nearly as extensive or consistently communicated as in the two previous retail stores. The Teta drug store also received these certificates, but its focus is very limited - ie. that the products are not advertised as much, which can again strongly affect the competitiveness of customers

Table 3: Evaluation of competitor marketing strategies

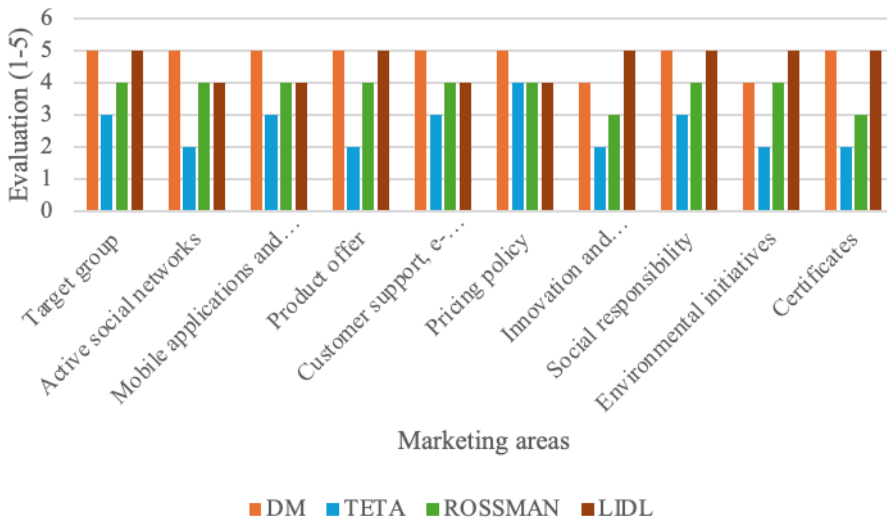
Criterion	DM	TETA	ROSSMAN	LIDL
Target group	5	3	4	5
Active social networks	5	2	4	4
Mobile applications and loyalty program	5	3	4	4
Product offer	5	2	4	5

Customer support, e-shop quality	5	3	4	4
Pricing policy	5	4	4	4
Innovation and adaptability	4	2	3	5
Social responsibility	5	3	4	5
Environmental initiatives	4	2	4	5
Certificates	5	2	3	5

Source: Own processing

For a clearer comparison of the individual marketing strategies of the examined retail stores, a bar graph was created in which each color represents one retail store and the higher the column, the better rating it has in the given area.

Graph 1 Comparison of retail marketing strategies



3.4 Discussion

Research question: What innovations in the field of marketing communication mix are suitable for increasing the competitiveness of retail businesses in the period of post-covid market recovery?

To find out how individual drugstores perform in comparison with each other, a table was created to compare the marketing performance of competitors using the benchmarking method. The data was collected from the official websites of the companies, annual and press releases, social media and marketing campaigns of the investigated retail chains. Based on the obtained data, individual criteria were subsequently selected, which were evaluated on a scale of 1-5 according to their fulfillment. In order to gain a broader view of the competition in the retail sector, Lidl was included in the benchmarking. This selection made it possible to analyze strategies, innovations, pricing policies, ecological initiatives and approaches to customers in more detail, thereby enriching the overall view of the competition in the given sector.

The evaluation of retail chains according to the target group showed that DM drugstore is the leader thanks to effective marketing and personalization of the offer. Lidl and ROSSMANN address customers successfully, but with less focus than DM. Teta drugstore lags slightly behind the competition, which is related to a less recognizable brand and weaker market segmentation. DM drugstore dominates social networks due to intensive activity, while Lidl and ROSSMANN are less active, and Teta is the least involved. In the field of mobile applications and loyalty programs, DM drugstore is at the top thanks to a comprehensive and friendly application. Lidl and ROSSMANN also offer applications with loyalty programs, but Teta lags behind, especially in the offer of benefits and the user interface. As for the product offer, the DM drugstore stands out with a wide assortment focused on sustainability, while Lidl focuses on affordability and ROSSMANN on drugstore goods. Drogerie Teta could strengthen its competitiveness by expanding the range of products or services.

In the area of customer support and the e-shop, DM Drogerie is again in a leading position, while Teta has room for improvement, especially in communication channels. Pricing strategies are completely different for each of the chains, with Lidl emphasizing low prices and promotional offers, DM on stable prices and sustainability, and Teta drogerie uses regional policy and discounts. Innovations are present in every chain, with Lidl focusing most on digitization, DM mainly on sustainability and e-commerce, Teta drogerie is modernizing stores and ROSSMANN is connecting physical and online sales. In the area of social responsibility, Lidl is active in supporting local suppliers and sustainability, DM engages through the "TOGETHER" initiative, and ROSSMANN has a strong commitment, even if its communication is not that strong. Teta Drogerie is only minimally involved in this regard. While DM and Lidl offer a wide range of certified products, on the contrary, ROSSMANN and Teta have a more limited range.

Based on the benchmarking, it can be concluded that the DM drugstore is at the top in most of the evaluated areas, thanks to strong marketing, effective personalization of the offer, intensive activity on social networks, a strong focus on sustainability, quality customer support and innovative approaches in the field of mobile applications and e-commerce. Lidl and ROSSMANN also show strong results, with Lidl excelling in affordability and environmental initiatives, while ROSSMANN is strong in connecting online and offline sales and ecological innovations. However, both retail chains are not as focused on personalization and targeted marketing as is the case with the DM drugstore. Teta drugstore shows weaker results, especially in market segmentation, brand recognition, activity on social networks and mobile application development. Overall, the results show that the greatest scope for increasing competitiveness is suitable and essential for the Teta drugstore, which should invest in improving the marketing strategy, improving the user interface of the mobile application, strengthening the presence on social networks and expansion of the offer, especially in the area of ecological products and certified products. At the same time, drugstores can imple-

ment several other innovations in the marketing communication mix, which will lead to an increase in the competitiveness of retail businesses and, thanks to these innovations, they can better respond to the changing needs of the market

4 Conclusion

The aim of the article was to analyse the marketing communication mix of selected retail drugstore chains operating on the Czech market and to identify suitable innovations that could strengthen their competitiveness in the post-covid market recovery period. Based on content analysis, social media performance evaluation and benchmarking comparison, significant differences were identified in the strategic approaches of individual retail chains. The results confirmed that the dm drugstore achieves the strongest position in most evaluated areas, especially in the field of personalized communication, active social media management, development of loyalty programs and mobile applications, as well as sustainability-oriented marketing. ROSSMANN demonstrates strong performance particularly on Instagram and in connecting online and offline sales channels. Lidl stands out in pricing policy, innovation and environmental initiatives. On the contrary, Teta drugstore shows considerable room for improvement, mainly in the areas of digital communication, social media engagement, mobile application development, and stronger communication of ecological and certified products.

The findings suggest that innovations in the marketing communication mix should primarily focus on:

- strengthening digital marketing and data-driven personalization,
- more intensive and creative use of social media platforms,
- development of user-friendly mobile applications integrated with loyalty programs,
- strategic use of influencer marketing,

- clearer and more consistent communication of sustainability and social responsibility activities,
- deeper integration of online and offline communication channels.

Despite its contributions, the study has several limitations. First, the analysis of social media performance was conducted over a relatively short time period (January 2025), which may not fully capture long-term trends or seasonal fluctuations. Second, the benchmarking evaluation was partly based on qualitative assessment using a rating scale, which may involve a certain degree of subjectivity. Third, the research focused only on selected retail chains operating on the Czech market, which limits the generalizability of the findings to other markets or retail segments. Finally, the study relied mainly on publicly available data and did not include primary research methods such as surveys or interviews with customers or marketing managers.

The main contribution of this article lies in the comprehensive evaluation of the marketing communication mix in the context of post-covid retail transformation and in the identification of specific innovation opportunities that can support competitive advantage. The study connects theoretical knowledge with practical benchmarking analysis and provides actionable recommendations for retail managers seeking to adapt their communication strategies to the evolving digital and sustainability-oriented market environment. Future research could expand the time horizon of analysis, incorporate quantitative consumer research, or examine the impact of specific communication tools on financial performance indicators

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