

# ASPECTS OF THE DEVELOPMENT AND GROWTH OF CORPORATE INNOVATIVENESS IN RELATION TO MARKETING COMMUNICATION DEPENDING ON THE GENDER OF THE SLOVAKIAN TOP MANAGERS

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## Abstract

The article gives an overview of research in small and medium-sized enterprises in the Slovak Republic in terms of innovation and its application in various areas of marketing management in enterprises. The study consists of quantitative and qualitative research in 638 enterprises, focusing primarily on a questionnaire survey. The criterion analysis serves to identify the specifics of the perception of innovations of their application in enterprises from the aspect of the gender of the top manager of the enterprises under study. The paper provides empirical evidence on how gender may influence the choice of communication channels in terms of innovations in marketing communication. Gender equality is still something of a management issue in modern society. An interesting fact is that 54% of the companies surveyed have women in top management. We can conclude that the influence of gender in the implementation of modern tools in marketing communication is evident. More than 47% of the enterprises surveyed consider their business to be innovative (of which 51% are women in TOP management) and 23% of the enterprises consider their business to be the most innovative in the field of marketing (of which, again, more than 50% are women in TOP management). The paper presents empirical results of innovativeness in enterprises in relation to modern marketing communication tools.

**Key words:** innovation, enterprise, marketing communication, online marketing, gender

**JEL Code:** M13, M14, O22, H430

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## Introduction

Innovation in today's modern business environment is the driving force of the economy and business development. Viable small and medium-sized enterprises are the basis for the functioning of the economy and its development in any country. The European Union places great emphasis on innovation and innovation in business. Translating innovation into a

company's product strategy is essential in the face of ever-increasing competition on domestic, European, and global markets. However, it is not only the view of product or service innovation that is important. Currently, more than a year into the sub-standard normal, businesses face many challenges as result of the global COVID-19 pandemic. The forced lock-down of individual countries, the fear of the spread of infection, have all contributed to the fact that SMEs in a particular have had to reassess their operations, as many were concerned about surviving this difficult situation. The pandemic has affected all areas of our daily lives. Businesses have had to manage the transition from face-to-face communication and sales to the online space. And this presented new challenges for marketing communications for small and medium-sized businesses.

### **1. Innovative entrepreneurship and Marketing Communications**

Innovation is a key driver of economic growth. They enable businesses to create new markets, increase their competitiveness and performance and ensure higher growth. Europe has been a global driver of innovation over the last century. Today, although its contribution is considerable, its global position has weakened, and in many aspects American and Asian companies have begun to assert themselves more strongly. According to a survey conducted by McKinsey in 2018 (McKINSEY, 2019), the proportion of European companies that consider themselves true innovators is significantly lower than in the US.

Innovativeness refers to a firm's ability to engage in innovation and is one of the most important factors for business performance. Previous research (e.g., Keskin 2006; Rhee et al 2010) suggests that market orientation and learning orientation are key antecedents of robust innovativeness. Innovative firms take precautionary measures to achieve a competitive advantage that contributes to higher performance (Hult et al 2004).

Today, markets are changing at an incredible speed. This means that in addition to globalization and technological change, we are witnessing a transfer of power from manufacturers to retailers, the rapid growth and adoption of brand marketing, new forms of retailing, rising consumer prices, sensitivity to benefits, the declining role of traditional marketing and mass advertising, and less brand loyalty to product (Kotler et al, 2020). Every business needs innovation to grow. When implementing innovation, a company faces not only motivating elements but also barriers (Fila et al., 2020).

It is digital marketing communication that has brought many new opportunities and tools to the forefront, which include social media, email marketing, blogging, SEO and video marketing. Chaffey & Smith (2017) explain that it is staggering how much marketers can now do using digital methods and the rate is increasing, both financially and quantifiably. Digital marketing allows for a much more powerful and in-depth analysis of CRM that was not possible before the growth of non-traditional methods (Kotler, 2019, Ertz et al. 2020).

The presence of women in the labour market is increasingly important for economic growth and development at the national and company levels. The growing participation of women in the labour market is a major driver of global growth and competitiveness (ILO, 2020). Harnessing the power of women's potential is therefore essential for inclusive economic growth in digital economies that are moving towards an aging society. We can see this as a soft engine for sustainable growth, which can be replaced by costly hard investments, which is especially important for emerging economies (Jia & Zhang, 2012).

## **2. Date and Methodology**

The study that forms the basis of the research for this paper and project consists of a quantitative and qualitative survey of 638 selected small, medium, and large enterprises in the Slovak Republic, focusing on a questionnaire survey. The issues of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises were addressed. The data obtained from the survey were processed using advanced statistical methods. Chi-square test was used to verify the answers of the respondents to the individual questions. Criterion analysis was used to identify specific factors of innovativeness of enterprises in relation to marketing communication tools. SAS statistical program was used to process the data. As a non-parametric method, we used the Kruskal-Wallis test, which is the non-parametric equivalent of the one-factor analysis of variance, i.e. it allows us to test the hypothesis  $H_0$  that  $k$  ( $k \geq 3$ ) independent sets come from the same distribution. It is a direct generalization of the Wilcoxon two-sample test for independent samples ( $k \geq 3$ ) (Stehlíková, 2009). In this paper, the research team presents the results of the Kruskal-Wallis test.

The interpretation of the results is as follows: if the P-value of the Kruskal-Wallis test is greater than 0.05, we do not reject the null hypothesis; otherwise, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis. The effect of the quality factor under study on the explanatory variable is statistically significant (Stehlíková, 2003). The statistical

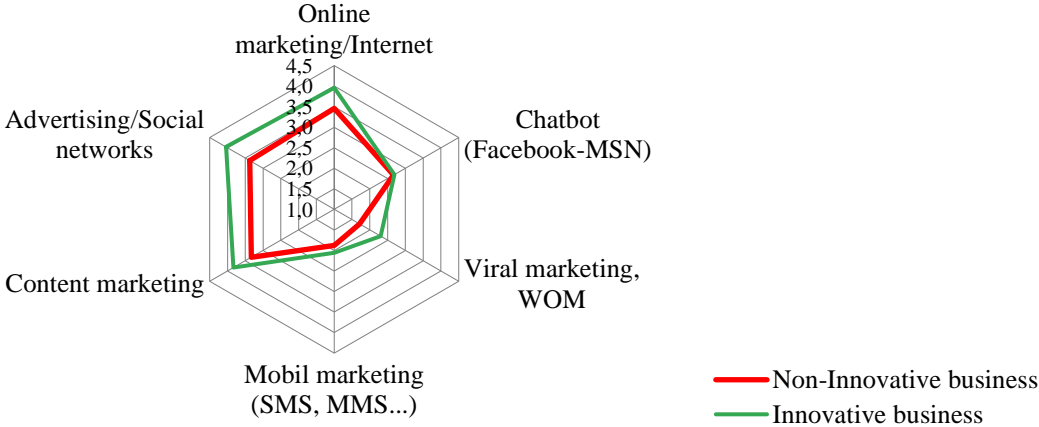
software SAS 9.3, in which we performed the calculations, also offers the calculation of the so-called Spearman's coefficient. P-value, which we compare with a value of 0.05. If the P-value is greater than 0.05, we do not reject the null hypothesis, the dependence between the variables under study is not statistically significant. Conversely, if the P-value is less than or equal to 0.05, we accept the alternative hypothesis, the dependence between the variables is statistically significant. Mosaic charts and X-square were tested in R. The questionnaire consisted of ten questions related to the identification of the enterprise, four questions related to the respondent and his relationship to the questioned enterprise and five groups of questions related to the perception of the enterprise's innovativeness from the management perspective, the implementation of production projects, questions focused on the start-up's perception of entrepreneurship today, the links and views on the marketing of the enterprise as a whole, the use of individual tools of marketing management in the enterprise, tools focused on marketing communication, not only in terms of traditional tools of the communication mix, but also tools of the current, more necessary online communication. The next group of questions focused on information about the respondent, his/her relation to the enterprise under study, four questions. The questionnaire was distributed through an online form in Google Forms. The individual corporate managers confirmed basic information about the company under study, which means that the survey was not anonymous, but telling. In terms of business size, most of the participating businesses, namely 50%, were micro businesses Medium-sized enterprises accounted for 9 %, small 37 % and large enterprises for 4 %. From the point of view of the distribution of men and women in the top management of the surveyed companies, it is possible to state that in a total of 51% of companies there are women in the top management. We consider this aspect to be key for further research of our selected parameters.

## **2. Results**

Innovation in businesses, especially small, start-up-type businesses, is closely tied to marketing decisions. On the one hand, there are the standards used by the European Commission to detect the level of innovativeness in the member countries, on the other hand, there is the perception of the issue of innovativeness of enterprises from the point of view of managers and owners of the surveyed Slovak enterprises. The paper presents the empirical outcomes of innovativeness in enterprises in relation to marketing communication tools. More than 47% of the enterprises surveyed consider their business to be innovative, 23% most

innovative in the field of marketing, and more than 26% in the field of management. Those companies that consider themselves innovative in their business see the lowest opportunity to innovate in areas such as logistics, distribution, and finance. When it comes to innovating modern marketing communication tools, innovative businesses are focusing on online internet marketing, advertising through social networks and content marketing. (See Figure 1,2).

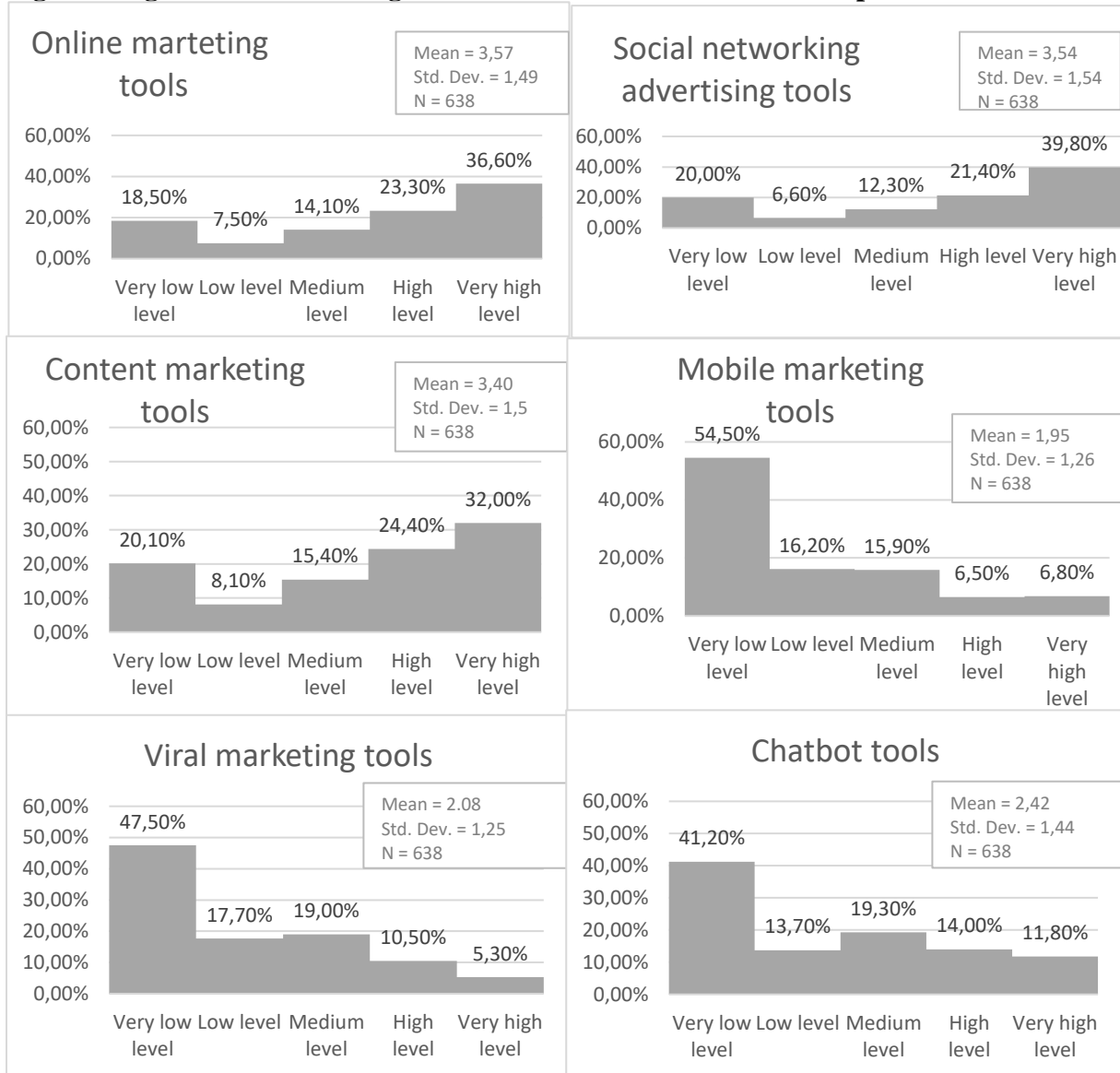
**Fig. 1: Detailed view of the use of modern marketing communication tools with the variable innovativeness**



Source: own processing

Figure 1 presents the results of the level of use of each modern marketing communication tool. Specifically, our survey focused on traditional online marketing communication, social media marketing communication, content marketing communication, the use of a targeted mobile marketing community and the use of viral marketing or the increasingly popular chatbots. We see the biggest gaps in the use of mobile-oriented marketing communication tools. In the context of the fact that the looming Covid-19 pandemic has just amplified the already high percentage of mobile usage, this destruction can be seen as a direction that companies should start to address more.

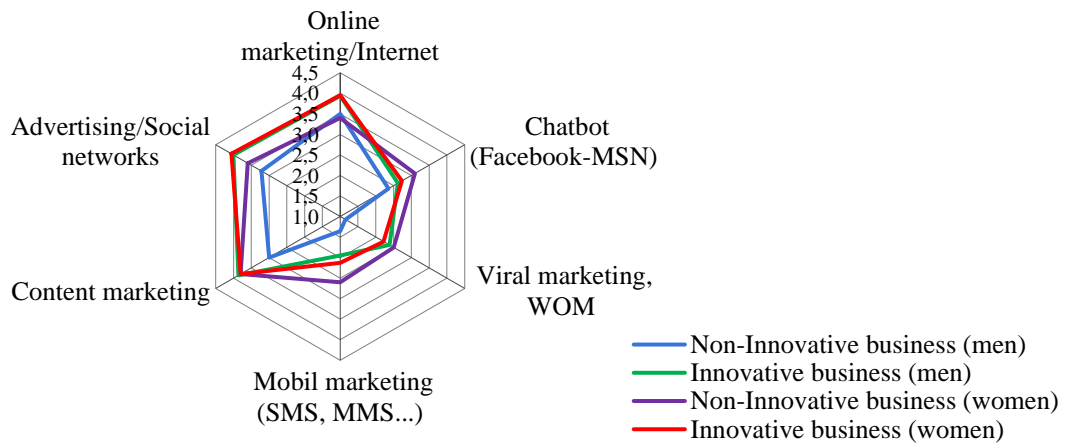
**Fig.2: Using modern marketing communication tools in Slovak companies**



Source: own processing

In Figure 3, we focused on the issue in more detail from a gender perspective. We find it interesting to compare the approach to modern marketing communication tools from the perspective of men and women in companies that are considered non-innovative. Here you can see that non-innovative company if it is in the leadership of a woman uses these tools far greater extent than if it leads man.

**Fig. 3: Detailed view of the use of modern marketing communication tools with the variable innovativeness and gender**



Source: own processing

As one example of testing the dependence of individual variables in the questions and answers of the respondents of the surveyed enterprises, we present the Kruskal-Wallis test. In relation to the online marketing instrument, the region of the enterprise's headquarters cannot be considered a statistically significant variable for innovative enterprises, because of  $P=0,8312$  (See Table 1 as example). We can consider the size of the enterprise as a statistically significant variable with the value of  $P=0.0341$  in relation to the online marketing communication tool, also the perception of the innovativeness of the business in the present and the number of years that have passed since the establishment of the enterprise is a statistically significant variable. Younger businesses are more prone to innovative marketing communication tools, and more willing to accept innovative proposals in relation to a product or service.

**Tab. 1: The impact of the variable region of the seat of the innovative enterprises on the application of modern marketing communication tool – online marketing**

Kruskal-Wallis Test	
Chi-Square	3.0246
DF	8
Pr > Chi-Square	0.8312

Source: own processing SAS

## Conclusions

Marketing communication strategies are dependent on the development of the company, on the development of all the tools of the marketing mix, but first and foremost they are dependent on technological advances. It is these IT advances that have played a major role in the success of businesses that have been prepared for the transition to e-commerce and m-commerce in the wake of the global pandemic COVID-19. Every marketing communication tool is a means of attracting customers, retaining loyal customers, and broadening the spectrum of consumer perceptions of the product and brand. Despite many assumptions that the online-only environment will be the future for most businesses, it is still true that the offline environment, i.e., the realm of traditional communication mix tools, must not be neglected and for many businesses is the basis of customer communication and a way to reach the broad masses of consumers of different segments. And these were the reasons that led the authors of the article to reflect on the issue of the use of traditional and new forms of marketing communication, precisely in relation to the innovativeness of the enterprises under study. The questionnaire survey was carried out as one of the outputs of the VEGA project. The authors did not study the innovativeness of enterprises through the grading standards of the European Commission, but directly asked the owners and managers of the enterprises studied how they themselves understand and pursue innovativeness in their enterprises, and how their enterprises are focused on innovativeness in the various tools of the marketing mix and communication mix. The aim of the investigation was fulfilled by appropriate marketing research methods, both from primary and secondary sources. In the area of primary research, the authors obtained the answers of respondents to a questionnaire survey, which was distributed electronically to a selected sample of enterprises in Slovakia and sent directly to their owners and top management. The spectrum of enterprises was sorted by size into micro, small, medium, and large enterprises. The data obtained from the questionnaire survey were



processed in SAS statistical software and subjected to critical analysis and evaluated by non-parametric method, where the authors used the Kruskal-Wallis test.

All responses to the merit questions in relation to variables such as size of the enterprise, sales, location of the enterprise within the territorial division of Slovakia and the time since the establishment of the enterprise, i.e., the age of the enterprise, were tested. In this paper, the authors focused primarily on examining the relationship between the variables, the innovativeness of the enterprise and the use of traditional and modern (online) communication mix tools. It can be concluded that there was no significant statistical dependence in relation to the size, age, and sales of the enterprise in the use of different communication mix tools and the direction of communication towards customers.

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