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Factors influencing marketing communication  
perception by singles in Czech Republic

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## **Working Papers in Interdisciplinary Economics and Business Research**

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## **Abstract**

Martin Klepek, Kateřina Matušínková: **Factors influencing marketing communication perception by singles in Czech Republic**

*Fundamental changes in the population lifestyle thanks to globalization and socio-economic transformations occurred during last decade. New segment of customers emerged, firstly in highly advanced countries and later in all around the developed world. This working paper presents a structural equation model used to verify the validity of the model from previous exploratory factor analysis. We used primary quantitative data on singles as a specific segment for marketers with focus on marketing communication and its perception. Paper starts with brief theoretical debate on singles as socio-demographic group and continues with marketing communication components used for this particular questionnaire. For purpose of collecting data, online and offline questionnaire was given to 702 respondents in total during the years 2014 and 2015. Model was constructed using SPSS Amos. We synthesised two data sets under one model performing model fit. Our results show underlying structure in the data. Two latent factors which influence perception of marketing communication tools verified previous findings.*

## *Key words*

consumer behaviour, marketing communication, marketing potential, marketing research, model, singles

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## **Introduction**

Fundamental changes in lifestyle in the population are ongoing. Thanks to globalization and development of individualization it is not important to start a family anymore. Young people prefer to study and pursue their dream career. The pressure on individual development and success on the labour market is not in conformity with the family (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995). There is also an increasing trend of independent living. Living behaviour goes hand by hand with marriage rates and natality behaviour (Kuchařová et al. 1999). Marriage rates are decreasing as well as the average age of bride and groom in Czech Republic as well as in Germany, Austria, Slovakia and Poland (Klepek and Matušínská, 2015a). Divorce rate in Europe is increasing but will lose speed in future since there will be less marriages (Scase, 1999). These trends were the impulses for the new segment formation. The segment of singles. This issue has been analysed very infrequently from the scientific and even practical point of view in the Czech Republic.

### **1. Review of Relevant Literature**

Specific nature of our research where sociological phenomenon generates important changes in other fields such as consumer behaviour, marketing and communication requires different approach in conducting literature review. Therefore we follow one of Hartley's (2008) reasons for conducting literature review which is to integrate and synthesize work from different research areas. We first describe the singles phenomenon from sociological point of view and then marketing communication. At the end of the first section we synthesize these areas into one by reviewing latest studies on singles from the marketing perspective.

#### **1.1. Singles**

The lifestyle of singles in advanced countries has been apparent for many years. The segment can be considered as a growing and significant in its marketing potential. The available studies related to the description of the segment mainly ignore economic, business or marketing aspects.

Singles were researched dominantly by sociologists and psychologists in areas of cause of this trend and its impact on society and individual. The first studies were conducted in the nineteen thirties followed by work on typologies by Staples (1981), Stein (1981) or DePaulo (2007). For our research project we adopted Stein's (1981) typology and used voluntary temporary singles and voluntary stable singles as our unit of interests.

Singles from a psychological point of view are described as narcissistic individuals who refuse the liability for each other, or for family and are not able to limit themselves (Hartl and Hartlová, 2000). Bartoš (2010) analysed nonclinical forms of narcissism finding out unmarried and childless people has highest narcissistic score. Yet we have to distinguish narcissism from individualism which is global trend and not every single can be identified as narcissistic. Consequently, this segment cannot be viewed as a uniform group of consumers, it is essential to identify, map and describe the various sub-groups (sub-segments) appropriately.

## 1.2. Marketing communication

Marketing communication is every form of managed communication that the company uses to inform, persuade or influence consumers, intermediaries and certain groups of the public (Boučková, 2003). Marketing communication mix is broadly accepted term for categorization of particular components. Nearly every author prefers different composition of the mix (see Tab.1)

**Tab. 1: Marketing communication mix by authors**

Author	Year	Components of the communication mix (number of components)
De Pelsmacker	2003	Advertising, Sales promotion, Sponsorship, Public relations, POP, Exhibitions and shows, Direct marketing, Personal selling, Interactive marketing. (9)
Horáková	2003	Advertising, Sales promotion, Public relations, Personal selling. (4)
Kotler	2004	Advertising, Sales promotion, Public relations, Personal selling, Direct marketing. (5)
Foret	2006	4 main: Advertising, Sales promotion, PR, Personal selling. 3 Others: Direct marketing, Internet marketing, Sponsorship. (7)
Jakubíková	2007	Advertising, Sales promotion, PR, Personal selling, Direct marketing (5)
Strnad a Dědková	2009	Advertising, Sales promotion, Public relations, Personal selling. (4)

From this spectrum we can name subcategories such as internet banners, events, e-mail newsletter, social networks advertising, mobile advertising (MMS and SMS), billboards, loyalty programs, print flyers, mass media advertising, recommendations, competition presents and sales furthermore point-of-sale or point-of-purchase materials also called POS or POP. We used all these subcategories for our research to investigate its effects on single customers.

## 1.3. Marketing to singles

There is need for deeper understanding of this specific group as it has its own needs and desires. Very little academic research from marketing perspective has been done in the Czech Republic on this topic as well as worldwide. The reason may lie in difficulties of obtaining accurate information about the group (Donthu and Gilliland, 2002). It is not easy to separate the single person from married unless the respondents provide this information themselves.

First systematic research on singles from marketing perspective was done by Kotyzová (2011). In her Ph.D. dissertation she provided qualitative and quantitative research. One of the conclusions were that numbers of singles will constantly grow and the segment will provide many opportunities to businesses therefore future research on consumer behaviour and marketing is desirable.

Michman et al. (2003) classified singles as a part of subcultural segmentation which helps marketers to analyse the subgroup, its beliefs, values and standards that can help develop appropriate marketing strategies and seek out new market opportunities.

Donthu and Gilliland (2002) profiled the single consumer and investigated how singles differ from their married counterparts on a series of marketing-specific psychographic variables. They also compared singles by choice and those who are single by circumstance (not voluntarily). In conclusion authors discussed that singles desire more intimate identification

with an individual and compensate for this lack of identification by forming large networks of friends. Part of this behaviour is their tendency to identify more closely with brand names, possibly allowing the lifestyle depicted by the brand to be a reflection of their own. The rest of their recommendations on how to market to singles are connected with the assumption that singles are rich and successful which we cannot relate to Czech Republic as we explain later.

## 2. Methods

We used primary data to focus on description of selected consumer and media behaviour of singles segment. Combination of online and offline data collection was used. Self-administrated questionnaire for online and snowball technique for offline collection to be precise. Respondent were answering twelve questions about each marketing communication tool and its influence on buying behaviour. Five point Likert scale was used to collect the degree of influence from Not at all to Extremely.

On our way to build a model of marketing communication perception by singles, we synthesized two datasets from our long-term research project on singles from the years 2014 and 2015. We already published the three factor solution based on the data from first collection (Klepek and Matušínková, 2014) and two factor solution from the second<sup>1</sup>. Three factor solution using exploratory factor analysis has shown significant role of recommendations which formed independent factor. Second exploratory factor analysis on recent data showed even unsuitability of recommendations for further analysis leading to two factor solution. While the pattern of two factors was emerging through our research we used confirmatory factor analysis using IBM AMOS 23 software to construct the model and execute a model fit.

## 3. Sample

Final sample consists of 702 voluntarily single living persons. We asked control questions on financial independence and living without partner to check for respondents who does not match our definition. Detailed information about the sample are in the Table 2.

**Tab. 2: Sample distribution**

	2014	2014 (%)	2015	2015 (%)	Total	Total (%)
<b>Sex</b>						
Male	164	41,7	149	48,2	313	44,6
Female	229	58,3	160	51,8	389	55,4
<b>Age</b>						
<25	98	24,9	83	26,9	181	25,8
26-35	140	35,6	94	30,4	234	33,3
36-45	65	16,5	73	23,6	138	19,7
46-55	44	11,2	45	14,6	89	12,7
>56	46	11,7	14	4,5	60	8,6
<b>Education</b>						
Elementary school	8	2,0	36	11,7	44	6,3

<sup>1</sup> The paper is under review process by the Scientific Papers of the University of Pardubice journal. Source will be updated in later versions of this working paper.

High school	36	9,2	98	31,7	134	19,1
High school with GCSE	182	46,3	117	37,9	299	42,6
University	167	42,5	58	18,8	225	32,1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>393</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>309</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>702</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Own research

Despite the fact that many sociologists describe singles as well educated and highly qualified and thus earning high salaries (including Donthu and Gilliland, 2002), recent empirical research in Czech Republic shows different description of the segment. Significant part does not reach even the minimum wage (Juříková et al. 2013, Kotyzová 2011). We can clearly deduce, that growing numbers of young voluntarily single living persons starting their work career who accepted this lifestyle shift the segment structure. Being single does not necessary mean being successful manager, lawyer or doctor anymore. Our data shows similar structure as previous research in Czech Republic (Tab. 3). There is a clear inconsistency which points to need of critical evaluation of the definition of singles.

**Tab. 3: Net income per month - singles sample 2014 (n=393)**

	Total	Total (%)
<555 €	161	41,0
556 – 926 €	129	32,8
927 – 1296 €	58	14,8
1297 - 1667€	16	4,1
>1668 - €	19	4,8
No response	10	2,5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>393</b>	<b>100</b>

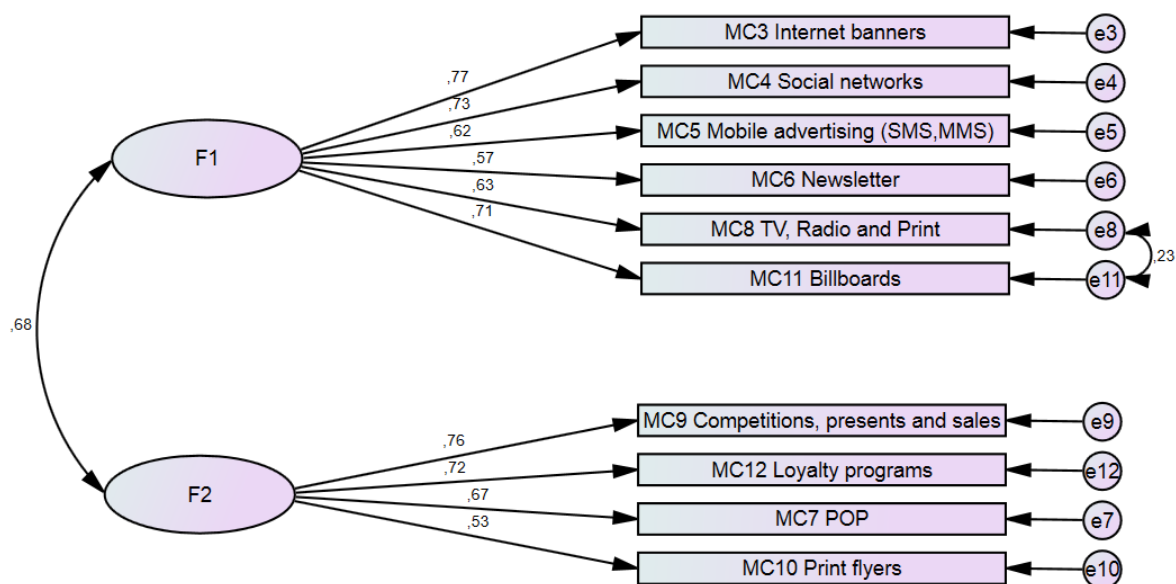
Source: Own research

## 4. Results

We used modification indices to identify residuals which should be covaried in the model. E8 and E11 were covaried (Fig. 1), without damaging the internal consistency of the factor 1. Then based on standardized residual covariance MC2 Event was removed to reach better model fit. Two latent factors (unobserved variables) contains 10 observed variables and the same number of errors. First factor relates to marketing communication tools 3,4,5,6,8 and 11 and second to 7,9,10,12.

### 4.1. Model fit

The final results suggested excellent model fit  $\chi^2(33) = 131,210$  ( $p = 0.000\dots$ ) (Iacobucci 2010) and  $\chi^2/df = 3.97$  (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2007). Further, GFI = 0,965; CFI = 0,959; RMSEA = 0,065 documented the excellent model fit to the data (Bagozzi and Yi, 2012; Bentler, 1990; Steiger, 2007). All standardized coefficients > 0,50 suggested that each of the items should remain in the model (Steenkamp and Van Trijp, 1991).



**Fig. 1: Final two factor model**  
(Source: Own research)

## Conclusion

This paper builds on published (or ready for publication) results of long-term research of the Czech singles. The aim of the paper was based on previous experiences and methods for exploratory factor analysis to verify the perception of marketing communication model between Czech singles. Model fulfilled all mathematical assumptions especially  $\chi^2$  and RMSEA which confirms the excellent model fit.

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