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C-2-C MARKET RELATIONS AND WORD OF MOUTH

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ABSTRACT: *Most market research focuses on business-to-business and business-to-consumer interactions to explain the structure and dynamics of the market. Meanwhile, negligible effort has been invested in researching consumer-to-consumer interaction and its impact on companies' behaviour and purchase decision-making, which determines business performance. The greatest challenge for marketers at the beginning of the 21st century is this third relationship dimension, consumer-to-consumer interaction: how consumers influence each other's attitudes, expectations, perceptions, preferences, satisfaction, loyalty, and purchasing decisions, and, importantly, the possibility of incorporating consumers into businesses' marketing programmes. Despite the existence of a multitude of media and different forms of communication between businesses and the market, such as newspapers, periodicals,*

billboards, television etc., a considerable portion of information is communicated to consumers informally, mostly in the form of word-of-mouth. The information received by consumers through this communication form – from family and similar individuals – is very often accepted as more reliable and certain than information transmitted through formal communication channels. What is often neglected when studying the phenomenon of word-of-mouth communication is the fact that its efficiency and effect also depend on the type and character of the interaction between the consumers themselves. This paper aims to investigate the extent to which the nature of customer-to-customer (C2C) interaction influences the effect of word-of-mouth communication.

KEY WORDS: *Word of mouth, consumer, relationship, purchase*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Contemporary marketing theory and practice is based on the belief that consumers gather information on products based on what businesses communicate to them in the integrated marketing communication process, but also that they discuss this information with persons they regard as close, that is, trustworthy. Viewed globally, their consumer behaviour, and, above all, purchasing decisions, are made based on the advice and recommendations of these particular trustworthy persons, and are decreasingly based on information received from businesses. Unfortunately, real-life business practice shows that a comparatively small number of businesses have realised that the best way to increase sales and profits is to include and involve the consumers themselves in the selling process. Modern marketing theory says that marketing no longer revolves predominantly around advertising, direct marketing, and promotion in general; rather it increasingly revolves around word-of-mouth communication generated by consumers themselves.

The current dynamic and turbulent marketing environment, where consumers' economic, political, and social roles in general are being transformed, has caused businesses to accept the fact - to which only the most successful businesses have responded positively - that consumer choice and decision-making comprise a single social process, which depends not only on the impact of the mix of companies' marketing elements on consumers, but is a complex process that is primarily determined by individual or group-based interactions and relationships between the consumers themselves.

This paper aims to present the phenomenon of word-of-mouth communication and to examine the significance of the existence of various types of consumer-to-consumer interaction that influence the effects of this type of communication.

The research questions that the paper attempts to answer are:

- (a) Do different types of consumer-to-consumer relations influence the effects of word-of-mouth communication?
- (b) If the impact of word-of-mouth communication is determined by the type of consumer-to-consumer relations, is there an observed effect of gender-based difference?

2. OVERVIEW OF LITERATURE

It has long been acknowledged that a consumer is a social entity, a unique and inimitable whole, transformed from a biological individual into a community member through the process of socialisation (Kovač, Žnideršić, & Marić 2007). The process of socialisation empowers an individual to live in a social environment in compliance with the rules and norms that this environment entails. A consumer's social environment consists of other individuals; i.e., consumers interacting and relating either continuously or sporadically and also consumers with whom the individual has no direct contact at all.

Acknowledging and accepting that relations and interactions between consumers (C2C) increasingly influence companies' business results, marketing theory and practice are showing an increasing interest in studying the causes and consequences of these consumer interactions; that is, the sociological dimension of consumer behaviour. Thus, Kiss & Bicher (2008) emphasize that the same attention must be devoted to studying the structure of consumer relations and interactions as to studying the characteristics of the consumers themselves, while pointing out that the problem with following these interactions is that they are mostly realised in private, and, if they are not, consumer behaviour and thus the reliability of the gathered data is changed.

Studying relations between consumers (C2C), Libai, Bolton, Bugel, de Ruyter, Gotz, Risselada, and Stephen (2010) try to broaden the focus of word-of-mouth communication research, and point out that the development of communication technology has provided consumers with the possibility of much easier, faster, and more intensive C2C interaction and relations. At the same time the number and availability of scientific papers in this area has increased the theoretical and practical study of these phenomena. The authors divide their research into four areas (p. 268):

- Dimensions of C2C interaction,
- Social systems issues related to individuals,
- C2C context issues, including product, channel, relational, and market characteristics,
- Identification, modelling, and assessment of the business outcomes of C2C interaction and relations.

Interactions and relations between consumers in everyday life, mostly in the form of dialogue, influence their ideas, thinking patterns, feelings, and behaviour, and

in the sociological and marketing-related academic and professional literature this phenomenon is referred to as personal influence: change, whether intentional or inadvertent, in an individual's belief, attitude, or behaviour, emerges as a consequence of word-of-mouth communication.

Hanna & Wozniak (2009, p.457) define word-of-mouth communication as “personal communication between individuals, where one of them plays the role of message recipient, whereas the other acts as the source, i.e. sender of a message that is regarded as non-commercial and relates to products, services or brands”. Although it refers to businesses' products, services, or brands, word-of-mouth communication is generated completely independently of the business: it is transmitted spontaneously and autonomously between consumers. Word-of-mouth communication is a synonym for personal, face-to-face contact between consumers, where individuals exchange impressions and advice about products and services, but it is important to point out that interpersonal communication is more than that; i.e., it can flow through different types of media such as telephone, mail, internet, etc.

Michael Solomon, a leading marketing authority in the area of consumer behaviour, (2011, p.332) defines word-of-mouth communication as “communicating information on products and services from one individual to another”. He also points to the significance of formal information sources, which are still present to a high degree, and which he primarily equates with corporate advertising, especially in the case of developing brand awareness among consumers. However, here marks that word-of-mouth communication dominates in the later phases of product evaluation and acceptance. If consumers hear positive impressions of a product from friends, acquaintances, or relatives, this increases the chance that they will purchase and accept the product.

Much of the research of Christian Grönroos (2004), a major European marketing expert, is devoted to the phenomenon of word-of-mouth communication, to which he attributes a much greater influence and impact on consumer behaviour than planned formal communication initiated by businesses, and which occurs much more frequently. Word-of-mouth communication is defined as “messages and information on a business, its credibility, trust in it, the business' manner of operation, offer and quality of its products and services, exchanged in individual communication” (Grönroos 2004, p.269). As his area of research is primarily services, when Grönroos writes about word-of-mouth communication he views it in the context of interaction between consumers; i.e., he relates it to relationship marketing. Thus, Grönroos points out that generated word-of-

mouth communication is rooted in consumers' commitment and their long-term experience with a business's products and services. Such word-of-mouth communication reflects the nature and value of consumers' positive or negative perceptions of the relationship between consumers and the offers and staff of a business. The intensity and direction of word-of-mouth communication will depend on the intensity and type of relationship. Grönroos was one of the first marketing experts to analyse the phenomenon of this specific communication form by viewing it through the prisms of consumer perception and consumer-to-consumer communication, thus attributing to it two significant dimensions of observation, the psychological and the social.

Emanuel Rosen (2009) researches the phenomenon of word-of-mouth communication in terms of its exploitation by businesses, criticising contemporary marketing executives for investing excessive amounts of money and expectation into advertising and other traditional marketing instruments aimed at reaching a targeted individual consumer. Rosen considers word-of-mouth communication about a business and its products, services, and brands to be "aggregated and personal" (2002, p.7). As modern-day consumers can distribute their impressions and comments to other consumers through direct contact, by telephone, email, social networks, and on the internet etc., Rosen emphasises that the type of media is not so important as the fact that "all of those comments and impressions are created in the conscience of a single consumer, and end up in the consciousness, i.e. mind, as the author prefers to point out, of another consumer" (2009, p.7).

George Silverman defines word-of-mouth communication as "communication about a business' products and services occurring between individuals, assuming that they are independent of the businesses offering those products and services, and that this communication is conducted through media also independent of the business whose products are referred to" (2005, p.25). Silverman points out that owing to intensified marketing research over the past few years, the top management teams of businesses are beginning to understand the impact of word-of-mouth communication on business performance, but still do not seem to grasp the position and strength of this communication in comparison to other marketing-mix instruments of their businesses, notably those that are promotional. The author reduces the reasons to the following: it is very hard for a business to control the process of word-of-mouth communication.

Mowen defines word-of-mouth communication as "messages exchanged face-to-face between partners in the exchange" (1993, p. 551). This author belongs in the group of theoreticians who regard negative word-of-mouth

communication as more powerful, frequent, and effective than positive word-of-mouth communication, and believe that this type of consumer-to-consumer communication is the outcome of the sender's and recipient's basic need to provide and give information. Mowen also connects word-of-mouth communication to another phenomenon in consumer behaviour theory, "opinion leadership".

Kelly (2007) has an original view of word-of-mouth communication, highlighting inflexibility and rigidity within businesses when understanding marketing as the source of real and timely information on the business for consumers. She asserts that the purpose of marketing is to involve consumers in the cognitive process of grasping the essence of a business' existence and its value for them. Identifying simultaneous fear of and interest in consumer-to-consumer communication within businesses, Kelly sees the solution (2007, p.2) in changing the approach to marketing within the business and developing consumer relations "through the business' effort not to propose solutions to shopping problems by means of communication, but to engage them in a dialog where the consumer will reach those decisions by themselves".

The focus of Keller and Berry's (2003) work is studying consumers who initiate and generate word-of-mouth communication, who they refer to as "influential". These are consumers with "active minds, common sense, clearly defined priorities, self-confidence, firm beliefs and opinions, dedicated approach to life, who know more than other consumers, are the first to learn the news, and extend and share their experience and considerations with their environment" (p.124).

Urban (2005) believes that rather than only business-to-consumer messages, consumer-to-consumer interaction and communication affect the effectiveness and efficiency of marketing as a business function. By engaging in interactions with other consumers, the consumer essentially gains the power of knowledge, whereby his/her position in relation to a business becomes dominant. Therefore, consumer-to-consumer relationships and interactions affect the relationships between consumers and businesses.

Grasping the complete picture of word-of-mouth communication requires prior research into theoretical sources on the issue of interpersonal relationships.

There are numerous theories of social interaction that possess certain similarities and fundamental differences, which can be used in researching interpersonal relationships.

Garry S. Becker (1974) proposes a theory of social interaction that uses basic premises of economic theory to analyse, identify, and quantify relations between individuals' personal traits and their behaviour when interacting with other individuals. The concept of 'social revenue' as the sum of individuals' monetary income and the monetary value of features of the social environment, that is, other individuals that surround them, are central to Becker's theory (1974, p.1067). The individuals' social environment affects their behaviour and consumption through interactions and relationships, through the impact of individuals' social revenue. The more the individuals' social revenue grows, the stronger the impact of the social environment is on the individuals, much more than their personal income. Thus word-of-mouth communication is not only conditioned by relationships but at the same time influences consumer-to-consumer interaction. Becker (1974, p.1074) believes that social interactions and relations change depending on whether they occur between family members, individuals motivated by human benevolence or material interest, or individuals motivated by envy and hatred. Each of these drives affects the establishment and form of relations, and especially the reaction of other entities. This also applies to the analysis of motives for generating word-of-mouth communication, regardless of whether it is positive or negative, and, most importantly, what its effects will be.

Another fundamental theory of consumer-to-consumer interaction often cited by researchers is Alan P. Fiske's (1992) "universal theory of social relations", claiming that people in all cultures basically use four models of relationships to establish and maintain social interaction, and form their feelings, assessments, opinions, and attitudes based on these. The author opines that different individuals in different cultural milieus can combine these four models of interaction in specific ways, but there is no new model; rather, any originality in the manifestation results from combining the above four in compliance with the written or unwritten rules of the cultural milieu. Based on these four models, the author derives all individuals' key social concerns, desires, objectives, and behaviours, and points out that individuals are primarily rationally oriented when establishing relationships with others. Fiske (1992, p.690) proposes four basic models of human relationships:

- CS – Communal Sharing – represents social interactions among individuals who are mutually similar and undifferentiated, who believe that they share something very important of common interest, and have a very developed feeling of belonging, loyalty, and altruism towards others whom they regard as very close. Strong mutual connection, familiarity, and intimacy are the essential characteristics of this type of interaction, which is seen in lovers, religious and

- ethnic groups, etc. These interactions imply relations between individuals of equivalence, reflection, and symmetry.
- AR – Authority Ranking – refers to interactions between individuals that are primarily based on asymmetry; i.e., viewed linearly, placed at different levels of the social hierarchy. These interactions very obviously and intensively show which of the matrix members is in a senior or junior position. Individuals in higher positions have greater influence over individuals in the lower positions in the model, and often exploit this power in either a positive or negative way. This type of relationship is characteristic of traditional societies and castes.
 - EM – Equality Matching – is based on balance and equality in mutual correspondence, on fairness, reciprocity, compensation, and even retaliation. Individuals' main concern in this type of interaction is whether everything is equally distributed and how much the interaction disturbs the balance. Every individual should and must identically contribute to the preservation of this type of relation, which is characteristic of competing sports between individuals and between teams, as well as between individuals without a significant degree of familiarity.
 - MP – Market Pricing – is a type of interpersonal relationship that applies evaluation and rationality to interaction: in other words, individuals in his type of interaction will reduce it to only the dimension(s) providing the most benefits to both participants in the interaction. The relationship implies measuring values in both quantitative and qualitative terms. These relationships always contain cost-benefit analysis, the issue of prices, wages, income, commission, material provision and exchange, where money is the key factor.

To date, most research has used Fisk's models to analyse the effects of paid word-of-mouth communication, and the conclusion is that they are greatest and certain only when the recipient and the transmitter of the interpersonal message are involved in an MP relationship. The traditional understanding of word-of-mouth communication as independent of businesses, that is, unpaid, produces the greatest effects in relationships of the EM or CS type. Paid word-of-mouth communication is virtually ineffective. AR relations imply word-of-mouth communication whose impact is based primarily on the actions of opinion leaders, which characteristically occur in doctor-patient or professor-student relations.

The work of Tajfel & Turner (1986) is cited by numerous marketing researchers, and they also belong to the group of authors studying consumer behaviour and word-of-mouth communication primarily through their mutual relationships, where these relations are formed predominantly through group membership.

The influence of word-of-mouth communication varies depending on whether it occurs within a group, when its impact is high, or outside a group, when its influence declines.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The survey conducted in order to confirm or reject the hypotheses set in the study is a segment of a complex research project into the impact of consumer-to-consumer word-of-mouth communication on purchase decision. The research method used is a structured personal communication, i.e., questionnaire. Due to geographic dispersion and the size of the research area (Serbia, Croatia, and Slovenia), dissemination and response retrieval was conducted predominantly through the internet (1,214 respondents or 80.2%) and in person (299 respondents or 19.8%). The research areas were selected to discover if there were differences between states that used to belong to the same country Yugoslavia, have a very similar social and cultural setting, and have now reached different political positions and levels of economic development (Slovenia as an EU member, Croatia as the youngest member of the EU, and Serbia, which is not an EU member but is following the path to European integration. The survey was conducted from May to September 2013 on a defined stratified sample of 1,513 respondents. Stratification was performed by gender, geographic location, and respondents' age and education level. The number of respondents was determined so as to be sufficiently large to be significant and to correspond with similar studies. No other sample limitations were set. The data gathered by the questionnaire were processed by appropriate mathematical and statistical methods, with the application of statistical SPSS software, as follows:

- Parametric tests:
 - Normal distribution – testing the hypothetical proportion value of the basic set, based on the sample;
 - Analysis of variance, i.e., ANOVA dispersion analysis with 1, 2, and 3 samples:
 - t-test
 - Levene's test

Table 1. Demographic and geographic structure of the respondents

Geographic location	Republic of Serbia	1,009 respondents	66.7%
	Republic of Croatia	253 respondents	16.7%
	Republic of Slovenia	251 respondents	16.6%
Age	Up to 30 years	1,277 respondents	84.4%
	31-45 years	184 respondents	12.2%
	46-65 years	52 respondents	3.4%
	66 years and above	/	0%
Education level	Primary education	/	0%
	Secondary education	487 respondents	32.2%
	Higher education	1,018 respondents	67.8%
Gender	Male	386 respondents	25.6%
	Female	1,122 respondents	74.4%

Source: Authors' calculation

The questions in the questionnaire were tested by the Cronbach alpha method. The fundamental idea behind this method is that a measuring instrument with several variables can be regarded as reliable if all variables express the same phenomenon, but in a slightly different way. The Cronbach alpha coefficient is 0.738, which points to high internal consistency, i.e., the questions in the questionnaire are positively correlated.

The scale applied in this research was used by Marić (2014) and consists of 30 items, but, due to publication length limitations, this paper only presents the items that confirm or reject the defined hypotheses. The research questions and hypotheses in the paper are set according to the Universal Theory of Social Relations (Fiske 1992) cited in the literature overview. The items are arranged with a Likert scale of reply options.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5

H_0 : Word-of-mouth communication, its generation and effects, depend on the type of consumer-to-consumer relationship and interaction (CS vs. AR vs. EM vs. MP relationships), regardless of the consumer's gender.

H_a : Word-of-mouth communication, its generation and effects, do not depend on the type of consumer-to-consumer relationship and interaction (CS vs. AR vs. EM vs. MP relationships), and differ depending on the consumer's gender.

4. ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Statement: I share my experiences about products and services more often with consumers I know, such as friends and relatives (CS relationship), than with those I do not know (EM relationship).

Table 2. Structure of responses by gender:

Statement: I share my experiences about products and services more often with consumers I know, such as friends and relatives, than with those I do not know.		(1) male	%	(2) female	%
Valid	Strongly disagree	28	7.3	26	2.3
	Disagree	29	7.5	35	3.1
	Neither agree nor disagree	37	9.6	21	1.9
	Agree	118	30.6	269	24.0
	Strongly agree	174	45.1	765	68.2
	Total	386	100.0	1,116	99.5
	Blank	/	0.0	6	.5
Total	386	100.0	1,122	100.0	

Source: Authors' calculation

The analysis of variance by means of t-test for the two variables and Levine's test for equality of variances identified the existence of a statistically highly significant difference between the respondents according to gender for this item. As the p value is lower than 0.05, it is concluded with 95% probability that there exist statistically significant differences between male and female responses to this statement, in the sense that the null hypothesis is rejected and a stricter criterion is used, starting from the assumption that the variances are differ in samples. Observing the values of standard deviations resulted in the conclusion that the average deviations of individual responses from the average value are much greater in male respondents than in females as regards more active dissemination of personal experience by word-of-mouth communication to other consumers that the respondents know, compared to dissemination to consumers they do not know personally. This indicates that men are more extreme, i.e., more specific in expressing agreement or disagreement with the statement that generating word-of-mouth communication is influenced by the type and character of consumer-to-consumer interaction.

Table 3. ANOVA t-test

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. deviation	Std. error of the mean
Statement	Male	386	3.99	1.226	.062
	Female	1116	4.53	.869	.026

Source: Authors' calculation

Table 4. Levine's test for equality of variances

		Levene's test for equality of variances		t-test for equality of means						
Statement		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean difference	Std. error difference	95% confidence interval of the difference	
									Lower	Upper
Statement	Equal variances assumed	53.781	.000	-9.519	1500	.000	-.547	.057	-.660	-.434
	Equal variances not assumed			-8.090	524.843	.000	-.547	.068	-.680	-.414

Source: Authors' calculation

The statistical method of sample-based testing of the hypothetical value of the basic set was used to confirm hypothesis H_1 , and the following hypothesis H_n was based on the data from the research sample: The percentage of respondents who would respond with grade 4 or 5 (“Agree” and “Strongly agree”) to the set statement is higher than X%.

The percentage of respondents who responded to the statement “I share my experiences about products and services more often with consumers I know, such as friends and relatives, than with those I do not know” with “Agree” or “Strongly agree”, i.e., grade 4 or 5, higher than 83%, can be expected to occur with probability higher than 99%. Such an overwhelmingly high percentage of positive responses to the question whether the generation and effects depend on the type of consumer-to-consumer relationship indicates that hypothesis H_1 is confirmed: word-of-mouth communication, its generation and effect, depend on the type of consumer-to-consumer relationship, regardless of the consumer's gender. It is also important to note that areexist statistically significant differences

by gender, but only in the sense that men are much more categorical in agreeing or disagreeing with the set statement.

Statement: My purchase decision is influenced the most by the recommendations of other consumers – relatives and close friends (CS relationship) - then by other consumers I do not know personally (EM relationship), and the least by the sales staff's suggestions (MP and AR relationship).

Table 5. Structure of responses by gender:

Statement: My purchase decision is influenced the most by the recommendations of other consumers – relatives and close friends - then by other consumers I do not know personally, and the least by the sales staff's suggestions.		(3) male	%	(4) female	%
Valid	Strongly disagree	17	4.4	48	4.3
	Disagree	57	14.8	94	8.4
	Neither agree nor disagree	51	13.2	102	9.1
	Agree	153	39.6	459	40.9
	Strongly agree	108	28.0	418	37.3
	Total	386	100.0	1,121	99.9
	Blank	/	0.0	1	.1
Total	386	100.0	1,122	100.0	

Source: Authors' calculation

The analysis of variance by means of t-test for the two variables and Levine's test for equality of variances identified the existence of a statistically highly significant difference between the respondents according to gender for this item. As the p value is lower than 0.05, it is concluded with 95% probability that there exist statistically significant differences between male and female answers to this statement, in the sense that the null hypothesis is rejected and a stricter criterion is used, starting from the assumption that the variances are differ in samples. Observing the values of standard deviations resulted in the conclusion that the average deviations of individual responses from the average value are much greater in male respondents in comparison to females as regards the influence of word-of-mouth communication on the purchasing decision coming from other consumers – relatives and close friends, then other, unfamiliar consumers, and the least by the sales staff's recommendations and negative opinions. Men are more prone to giving severer and more specific responses when assessing agreement or disagreement with the above statement.

Table 6. ANOVA t-test

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. deviation	Std. error of the mean
Statement	Male	386	3.72	1.151	.059
	Female	1,116	3.99	1.089	.033

Source: Authors' calculation

Table 7. Levine's test for equality of variances

		Levene's test for equality of variances		t-test for equality of means						
Statement		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean difference	Std. error difference	95% confidence interval of the difference	
									Lower	Upper
Statement	Equal variances assumed	14.904	.000	-4.072	1505	.000	-.266	.065	-.393	-.138
	Equal variances not assumed			-3.963	638.129	.000	-.266	.067	-.397	-.134

Source: Authors' calculation

The statistical method of sample-based testing of the hypothetical value of the basic set was used to confirm hypothesis H_0 , and the following hypothesis H_n was based on the data from the research sample: The percentage of respondents who would respond with grade 4 or 5 (“Agree” and “Strongly agree”) to the set statement is higher than X%.

There is over 68% probability that more than 83% of respondents will answer the statement, “My purchase decision is influenced the most by the recommendations of other consumers – relatives and close friends, then of other consumers I do not know personally, and the least by the sales staff’s suggestions” with “Agree” or “Strongly agree”, i.e., grades 4 or 5.

Such an overwhelmingly high percentage of positive responses to the question whether the generation and effect depend on the type of consumer-to-consumer relationship indicates that hypothesis H_0 is confirmed: Word-of-mouth communication, its generation and effect, depend on the type of consumer-to-consumer relationship, regardless of the consumer’s gender. It is also important

to note that there do exist statistically significant differences by gender, but only in the sense that men are much more categorical in agreeing or disagreeing with the set statement.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND LIMITATIONS

Most businesses associate the importance of studying consumer-to-consumer interaction with the fact that the modern-day consumer is an equal in the interactive process of value creation, as a business can only present an offer of value, and it is the consumer that perceives and thus determines the extent of that value. Modern-day consumers are well-informed and educated, and base their purchasing decisions not on aggressive marketing, but rather on independent information received from other consumers with whom they engage in interactive relationships.

Consumer-to-consumer interactions and relationships, rather than merely business-to-consumer communication, affect the effectiveness and efficiency of marketing as a business function. By engaging in interaction with other consumers the consumer gains the essential power of knowledge, whereby his or her position in relation to a business shifts towards a position of dominance. Therefore, consumer-to-consumer relations and interactions affect the business-to-consumer relationship's word-of-mouth communication. Its generation and effect depend on a variety of factors such as the characteristics of the consumers themselves, the products and services, the market, the media, and also the characteristics and the type of consumer-to-consumer interaction.

The conclusion is unambiguous: consumer-to-consumer interactions form a relational framework within which word-of-mouth communication is created and transmitted. The intensity of its generation and dissemination, and the level of the achieved effect, depend on the type and nature of interpersonal interaction not only in the marketplace but also in society in general.

The limitations of this research can be summarized as the fact that making general conclusions based on a single study is not completely reliable, regardless of the sample size and the structure of the instrument. The electronic questionnaire and software solutions developed for it may confuse respondents, especially when responding to the ranking questions. The basic shortcoming of the sample lies in the proportion of its size (1,513) to the size of the basic set – almost 14 million inhabitants.

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