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## THE PLAN OF INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATION WITH EMPHASIS ON DESIGNING A STRATEGY FOR THE BRAND X

**Purpose:** The article discusses the plan of integrated marketing communication with an emphasis on designing a strategy for the brand X. Marketing communication is one of the key elements of strategic marketing, as it has a significant impact on the recognition and success of a company or brand. It should be emphasized that in the era of information technology, information overload, and increasing consumer demands, the concept of marketing communication is much more complex than simply informing target customers about the existence of a product or service. **Methodology:** The quantitative research was carried out using a survey questionnaire technique. For this purpose, we used a web-based IKA survey sent via email addresses. **Results:** The survey determined (1) the level of general interest in alarm systems for the protection of residential, holiday, and commercial properties, (2) the level of awareness of brand X. We further identified (3) the target audience of the brand X, (4) the key message for advertising needs and (5) communication channels through which to address the target audience. **Practical implications:** The obtained results were our key guidelines in designing a marketing communication strategy for the brand X, aimed at improving the effectiveness of current marketing campaigns and increasing the sales of products under the selected brand.

**Keywords:** integrated marketing communications, marketing communication strategy, home security system.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

In today's highly competitive marketplace, every business organisation must work hard to establish successful marketing communications. Marketing communication, also known as promotion, is one of the key elements of strategic marketing, as it has a highly significant impact on the visibility and success of a company or brand. It is worth pointing out that, in an age of information technology, information overload and increasing consumer demands, the concept of marketing communication is much more complex than simply informing target customers of the existence of a product or service. First and foremost, it is necessary

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to integrate different communication tools, what we call integrated marketing communication. Integrated marketing communication is not just an integration of tools, but a long-term and controlled process based on a holistic approach, researched data, interactivity and creativity, with the aim of delivering a clear, consistent and compelling message about the organisation, its products and/or services. The goal of integrated marketing communication is to stand out from the crowd, to delight the target audience and to create and strengthen long-term profitable relationships with customers and other stakeholders in the business-sales process. This provides the company with cost efficiencies, increased market share and, consequently, higher operating profits. Managing all the relationships of integrated marketing communications is extremely challenging and success can only be reaped if the company has a well-designed plan that includes an effective integrated marketing communications strategy, its comprehensive implementation and the measurement and evaluation of marketing communications activities.

In a globalised and highly dynamic marketplace, every brand has to work hard to establish a successful marketing communication to attract the attention of its target customer and thus pave the way to better visibility and, consequently, a larger market share. It is well known that marketing communication is a major challenge for any business and that without a well-designed integrated marketing communication plan it is impossible to prosper. A well-organised plan enables a company to simplify the challenges and thus achieve its marketing objectives with certainty.

### **1.1. Literature review**

Marketing communication is one of the seven elements of the marketing web that an organisation implements in order to increase its brand awareness among consumers, thereby increasing its market share and profitability (Prachi, n.d.; Percy, 2018). A company uses a different web of communication tools to communicate with its target groups. The choice depends on the communication objectives and other factors (Vukasović, 2020). Drawing on the foundational literature, there are five communication tools, namely: advertising, personal selling, sales promotion, public relations and direct marketing (Armstrong et al., 2017). Seitel adds a sixth to the basic web of tools, namely word-of-mouth marketing (Seitel, 2022).

The origins of marketing communications date back to the late 1980s. The rapid expansion of this type of activity progressed rapidly and led to the idea of integrated marketing communication (IMC), which became fully established in the mid-1990s. The basic concept has changed a lot (Jerman, Završnik, 2013), as marketing communication is an industry that is constantly changing and adapting to customer values, technologies and other trends (Eagle et al., 2020). Thus, many authors point out that the traditional approach of integrated marketing communication, which merely integrates several different communication tools, is no longer sufficient in the modern environment. Integrated marketing communication advocates the delivery of the same message through different types of media, such as TV, radio, internet, mobile phones, social media, etc. (Armstrong et al., 2018). In doing so, the message needs to be clear, consistent and creative. In an age of information overload, creativity is crucial as it allows the message to stand out from the crowd and impress the target audience (Čebulj, 2021). In turn, the placement of clear and consistent information helps to successfully build awareness of a brand or organisation in the minds of consumers (Armstrong et al., 2018). Both the message and the medium should be tailored to the target recipient, their needs, preferences and lifestyle (Blakeman, 2018).

Two-way communication is also important. The feedback a company receives from consumers is an important indicator of success in marketing activities. This is because feedback serves as a foundation for further building better results in both product or service development and communication, which in turn leads to good, strong and long-term customer relationships. Equally important is the relationship with all other stakeholders, such as employees, business partners, suppliers, etc. (Jerman, Završnik, 2013).

Integrated marketing communication always looks at other areas of the marketing web, adapts to them and intervenes with suggestions for improvement where necessary (Turza, 2022). For the best results in marketing communication, the entire marketing web must be aligned. The look of the product, the price of the product, the colour of the packaging, the store or the staff selling the product, etc. all communicate something to customers (Armstrong et al., 2017; Smith, Zook, 2020). If distribution does not provide adequate access to the product, if the price is unacceptable to consumers, if the packaging of the product does not match the customer's preferences, etc., then even the best promotion cannot bear the desired fruit (UKEssays, 2021).

Using an integrated approach to marketing communications, which aims to carefully coordinate and interconnect all segments of marketing communications, also helps to reduce costs (Tairova et al., 2020). Lower costs are mainly recorded in terms of the message, which remains the same for all communication channels. Such a move does not only have the advantage of reducing costs, but also improves the effectiveness of the marketing campaign by ensuring a consistent message about the organisation or its products and/or services (Kumar, 2022).

Mastering all the relationships of integrated marketing communication is very challenging and without a well-designed plan it is impossible to thrive in the target market (Oblak, 2016). A well-designed plan enables a company to simplify too many challenges and achieve its marketing communication objectives. There are many different approaches to creating an integrated marketing communications plan. There is therefore no single common approach, but there are essential elements that every plan should contain (Smith, Zook, 2020). According to a review of different literature, the plan can be divided into three main areas: (1) strategy (Publisher, 2018), (2) strategy implementation, and (3) controlling marketing communications (Smith, Zook, 2020). It is true that planning integrated marketing communications is not a one-off task, but a process that needs constant renewal (Prachi, n.d.). Smith also agrees on the iterative planning process, recommending a 90-day cycle and adding that the duration of the cycle is also conditioned by the success or failure of the implemented marketing campaign. Therefore, if the plan is not working, it should be changed immediately (Smith, Zook, 2020).

## **1.2. Research problem**

The market analysis of the smart home alarm systems sector in Slovenia shows that despite medium competition, there is no intensive or innovative promotional activity by many brands. This is a phenomenon that reflects an ideal opportunity to take over the market leadership. The demand for home security solutions has been increasing in recent years, and market projections predict that this trend will continue in the future (Markets And Markets, n.d.). Hence, the increasing demand trend potentially leads to more competition or to players who will want to take advantage of the highlighted opportunity sooner rather than later, which is why we have decided to take this initiative. The aim of our research was to design an effective marketing communication plan, with a focus on planning a strategy with the main objective of increasing the awareness and sales of

a particular brand of alarm system. After a thorough review of the home alarm systems of the most prominent brands available on the Slovenian market, we put at the centre of the challenge a brand (hereafter the brand X) that boasts a professional and extremely powerful home alarm system, as evidenced by the innovation award given to the developers of this solution by the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Dolenjska and Bela krajina Region (GZDBK, b.d.).

In this context, we were guided by three main research questions, namely: (1) how does the brand company currently communicate with its target audience, (2) who is the target audience and what are their needs and wants in terms of marketing communication, and (3) how should the brand X reach its target audience and stand out from the crowd. In order to get the right answers to these questions, we have conducted extensive marketing research involving a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods and a review of current and relevant publicly available secondary data. The purpose of this study was to develop a comprehensive integrated marketing communications plan that would enable the brand X to be well recognised and to achieve a leading market share in the Slovenian market for smart alarm systems.

In this paper we will present the methodology and sample of the quantitative research, the key findings of the research, test the hypotheses and further propose a marketing communication strategy for the brand X.

## **2. METHODOLOGY AND SURVEY SAMPLE**

### **2.1. Methodology and sample of the quantitative survey**

The aim of the quantitative research was to obtain data on the target group in order to understand their wants, needs and behaviour in relation to marketing communication. The quantitative research was carried out using a survey questionnaire technique. For this purpose, we used a web-based 1KA survey sent via email addresses. The questionnaire contained 40 closed questions, some of which were closed-ended and some of which were semi-open-ended. In designing the questionnaire, we used the skip concept, which means that not all respondents answered all 40 questions, but only those for which they had answers that were relevant to the study. The questionnaire was structured in four sections. The questions that were more attractive to the respondents were placed in the first section and the questions that were least interesting in the last or fourth section of the questionnaire, with all questions being asked in a logical sequence. The survey was carried out from 8 March 2023 to 31 March 2023. After the survey was completed, we started statistical analysis, which involves applying statistical methods to describe the data, test hypotheses set before the survey was carried out and identify associations between variables. The data were presented using Microsoft Excel and the hypotheses and associations between variables were tested using SPSS.

The population consists of all adult residents of Slovenia who own or rent a residential and/or commercial and/or vacation house, either in their home country or in a foreign country. Due to financial and time constraints, sampling was carried out using the non-probability method and the technique of collecting responses was ad hoc. Thus, the sample included people from a personal mailing list and users of the alarm system brand X from the mailing list of the company that carries the brand.

### 3. RESULTS OF THE QUANTITATIVE SURVEY

196 respondents took part in the survey, and only those respondents who completed the survey in full, i.e. 138 respondents, were included in the analysis. Of these, 89 are men (64%) and 49 are women (36%), living predominantly in the south-eastern part of Slovenia (frequency: 80; 58%) and to a much lesser extent in the central Slovenia region (frequency: 37; 26%), with the other regions represented in negligible percentages in this survey.

The presentation of the results of the quantitative survey includes the key survey questions (16 questions), which we have divided into two parts. In the first part, i.e. section 3.1, we establish (1) the level of general interest in alarm systems for the protection of residential, holiday and commercial properties and (2) the level of awareness of the Brand X. In the second part (Section 3.2), we identify the opinions, preferences, needs and habits of the target audience for the Brand X. Therefore, we only present the results of those respondents who already use the alarm system of the brand under study and those who have expressed a desire to use this brand or have not yet fully decided on their choice of brand. There were 99 such respondents. All respondents who were in favour of using an alarm system but not the Brand X were excluded from the data analysis.

#### 3.1. Level of general interest in alarm systems and level of awareness of the brand X

138 respondents answered the question whether the population is interested in using or buying an alarm system. Figure 1 shows that 54% of the respondents (frequency: 74) already use an alarm system for home and vacation house use, while 20% (frequency: 27) do not yet use an alarm system but would like to have one. 27 respondents (20%) are not in favour of using such an alarm system, and 7% (frequency: 10) of respondents were undecided about using or buying a home and vacation house alarm system, so the latter were excluded from further analysis. We also excluded all respondents who were not in favour of using an alarm system (N = 27).

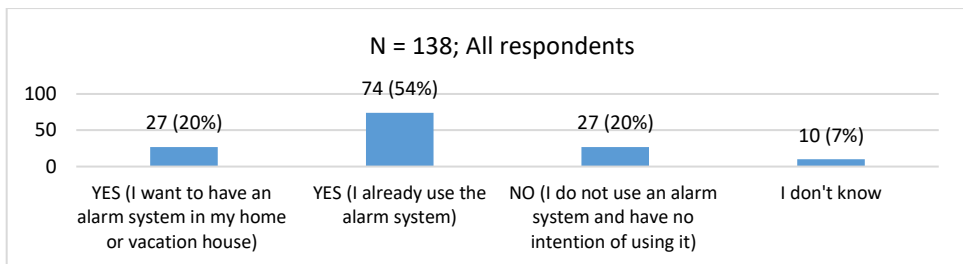


Figure 1. Responses to the question (Q12): Are you interested in using/purchasing an alarm system worth approx. €300 that effectively protects your home or vacation house from burglary, theft, fire and floods/spills of various liquids?

Source: own research, 2023.

Respondents who advocate the use of a home/ vacation house alarm system but do not use or are not familiar with the Brand X were asked if they had ever heard of the Brand X? Figure 2 shows that 38 respondents were asked and of these, 63% (frequency: 24) had not heard of this alarm system. 13 respondents (34%) had heard of it, while 1 respondent (3%) was unsure about this type of familiarity.

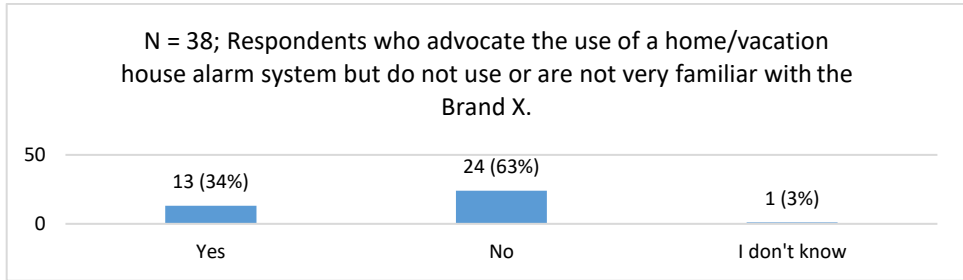


Figure 2. Responses to the question (Q21): Have you ever heard of the Brand X alarm system?

Source: own research, 2023.

The question “Where did you hear about the Brand X alarm system?” was asked to all those who are most familiar with or even use the Brand X alarm system, as well as to those who have only heard of it and are not most familiar with it - 77 respondents in total. Figure 3 shows that the majority of respondents (frequency: 42; 55%) found out about the alarm system in question through friends or acquaintances. 27% of respondents (frequency: 21) found out about the alarm system on the Internet or on the Brand X website, and 6% (frequency: 5) found out about it from family members. 4 respondents (5%) cannot remember where they found out about the Brand X alarm system, and 6% (frequency: 5) mentioned other sources, such as (1) the company that carries the Brand X and (2) their workplace. 4 respondents (5%) do not remember where they found out about the Brand X alarm system. None (frequency: 0; 0%) of the respondents had heard about it on the radio or on Facebook.

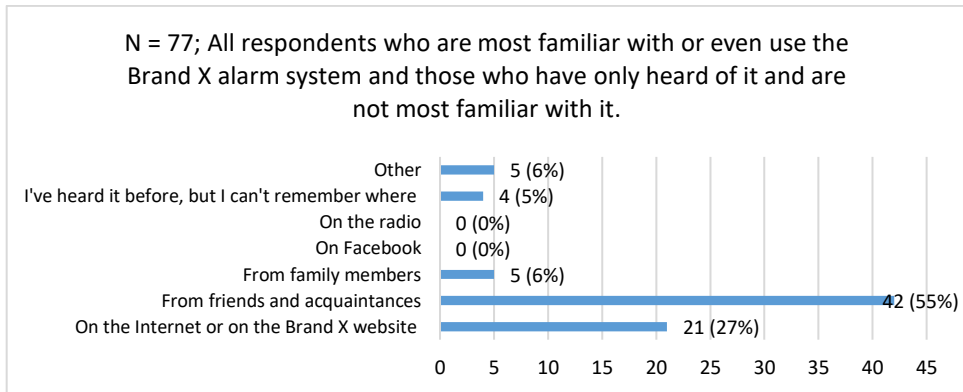


Figure 3. Responses to the question (Q22): Where did you hear about the Brand X alarm system?

Source: own research, 2023.

All respondents who are users of the Brand X alarm system (N = 52) rated (from 1 to 5) the reliability of the alarm system, the speed of notification, the user-friendliness and the design of the alarm system. In Figure 4, users rated the appearance of the alarm system and user-friendliness as 4.3. They rated the reliability of operation slightly higher (rating:

4.5) and the speed of notification in the event of an alarm as the highest or very high rating (rating: 4.8).

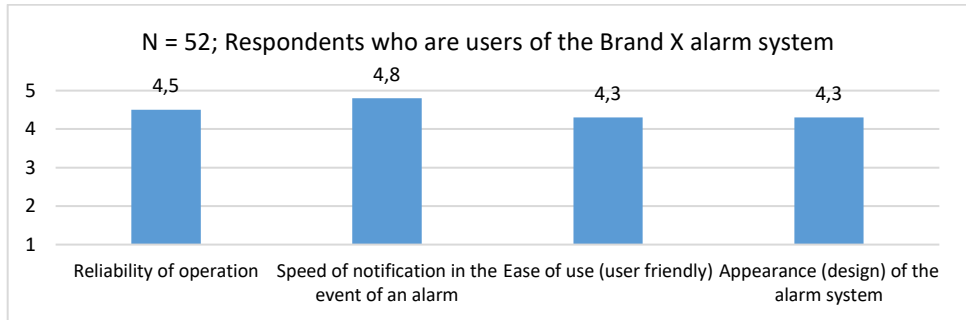


Figure 4. Answers to the question (Q24): How do you rate the Brand X alarm system?

Source: own research, 2023.

We also asked users of the Brand X alarm system to rate the customer support. Figure 5 shows that users are very satisfied with the friendliness or helpfulness of the staff (rating: 4.7), and also rate the accessibility and honesty of the staff very highly (rating: 4.6).

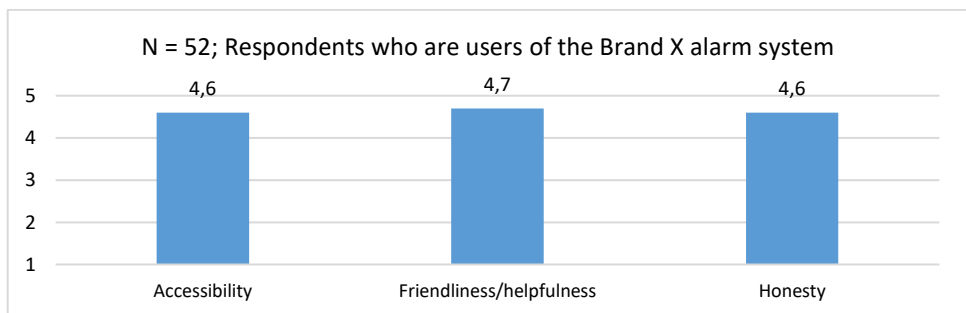


Figure 5. Responses to the question (Q25): How do you rate the customer support of the Brand X alarm system?

Source: own research, 2023.

For the users of the Brand X alarm system, we were also interested in their overall satisfaction with the alarm system, and as can be seen from Figure 6, 69% (frequency: 36) of the users are very satisfied, 29% (frequency: 15) are satisfied and only 1 user (2%) expressed dissatisfaction with the use of the Brand X alarm system.

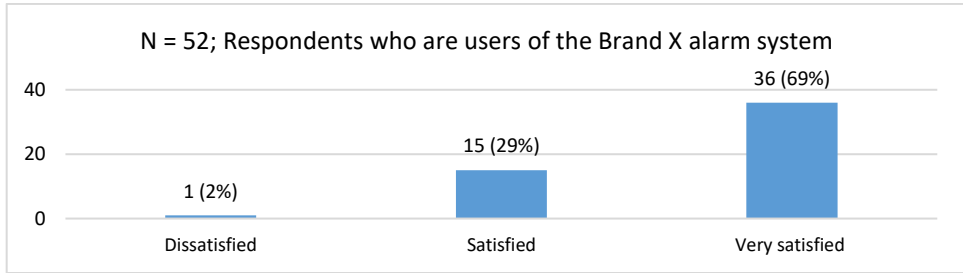


Figure 6. Responses to the question (Q26): How satisfied are you with the use of the Brand X alarm system?

Source: own research, 2023.

We asked all respondents who use an alarm system but not the Brand X, as well as those who do not yet use an alarm system but would like to, whether they would use the Brand X alarm system (N = 49). 39% of respondents (frequency: 19) answered yes, while more than half (frequency: 28; 57%) were undecided and only 2 respondents (4%) would not choose to use one (Figure 7).

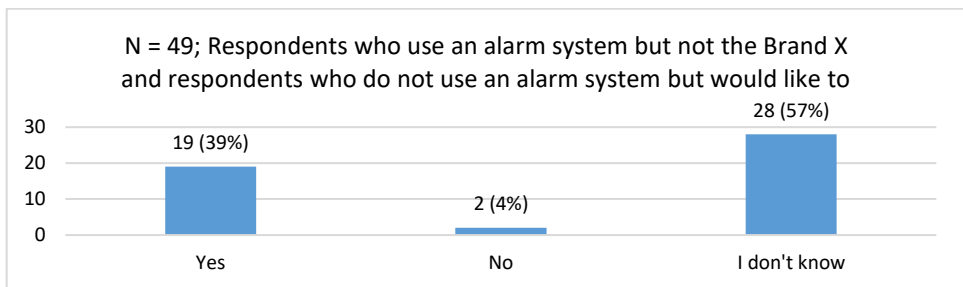


Figure 7. Responses to the question (Q27): Would you use the Brand X alarm system?

Source: own research, 2023.

### 3.2. Characteristics of customers and potential customers of the Brand X alarm system

Figure 8 shows that when asked what is your main concern when it comes to home or vacation house security, half of the respondents (frequency: 50; 51%) answered “Burglary and theft of valuable items”, while slightly fewer (frequency: 31; 31%) answered “Burglary and assault on family when they are home alone”. Only 7% of respondents (frequency: 7) were worried about fire, and even fewer (frequency: 4; 4%) were worried about flooding or pillage of various liquids in their home/ vacation house. 7 respondents (7%) gave the answer “other”, of which 4 respondents gave specific answers: (1) damage to the building, (2) burglary and damage to possessions, (3) thought of a villain entering the home and (4) burglary and subsequent fear of burglars.



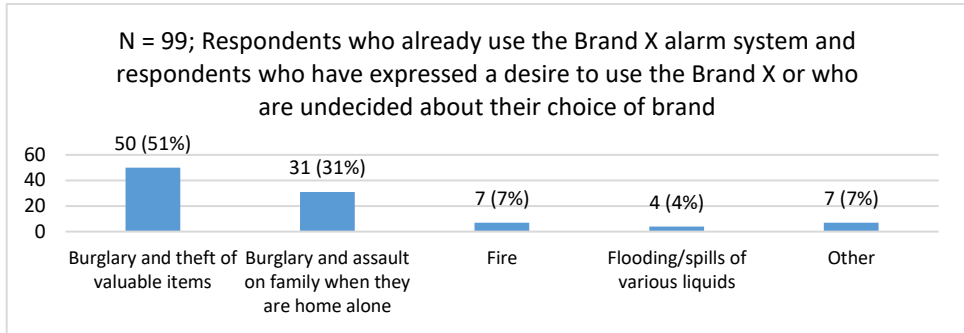


Figure 8. Responses to the question (Q15): What is your main concern when it comes to the security of your home or vacation house?

Source: own research, 2023.

We asked respondents what their main reason was for buying or using an alarm system. Figure 9 shows that no one (frequency: 0, 0%) uses an alarm system to increase self-confidence, while 31 respondents (31%) gave the main reason for buying or using an alarm system as “to increase self-confidence”. The main reason for using an alarm system was “Feeling safe when I am at home or at the vacation house”, 28 respondents (28%) chose “The thought of someone being in my home when we are not at home” and 22 respondents (22%) use or consider buying an alarm system because of the experience of relief and peace of mind that comes from using an alarm system. 22 respondents (22%) use or consider

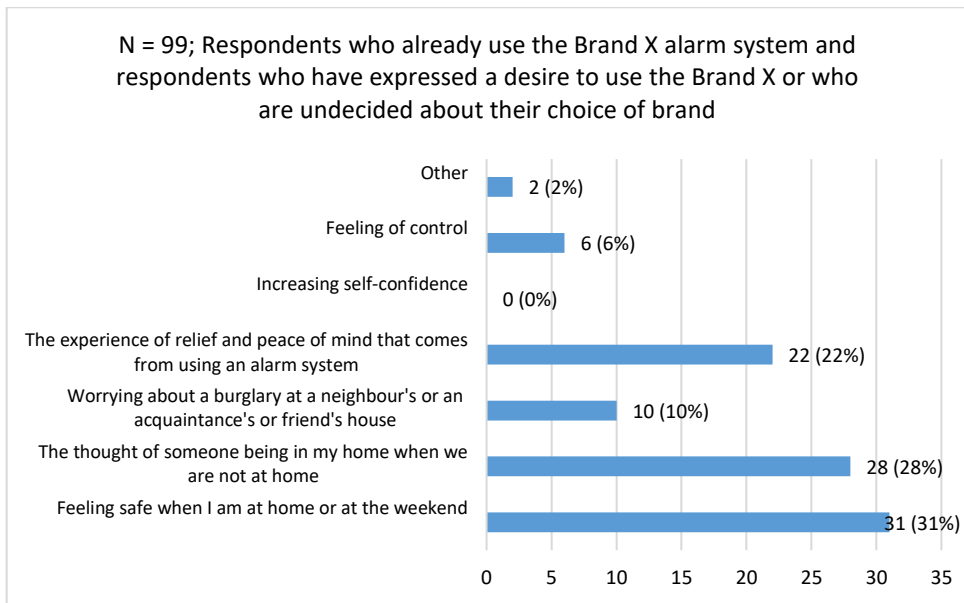


Figure 9. Responses to the question (Q16): What is the main reason that leads you to buy/use a home or vacation house alarm system?

Source: own research, 2023.

buying an alarm system because of the experience of relief and peace of mind that comes from using an alarm system. Worrying about a burglary at a neighbour's or an acquaintance's or friend's house is the reason for using or buying an alarm system for 10 respondents (10%), and for 6 respondents (6%) the reason for using or buying such a system is the feeling of control. 2 respondents (2%) wrote down their reason (other) for using or buying an alarm system as (1) due to past burglaries, and (2) the feeling of security. 2 respondents (2%) wrote down their reason (other) for using or buying an alarm system as (1) due to past burglaries and (2) the feeling of security.

Figure 10 illustrates that the most frequent daily use of radio is listening to the radio (frequency: 65%; 66%), followed by watching TV (frequency: 45%; 45%), Facebook activity (frequency: 31%; 31%) and YouTube activity (frequency: 20%; 20%). The above-mentioned media also have the highest percentages for those respondents who are not active on these media on a daily basis, but still very frequently, i.e. more than 3 times a week. Media such as Instagram, newspapers or magazines, Twitter and TikTok are the least popular with most respondents.

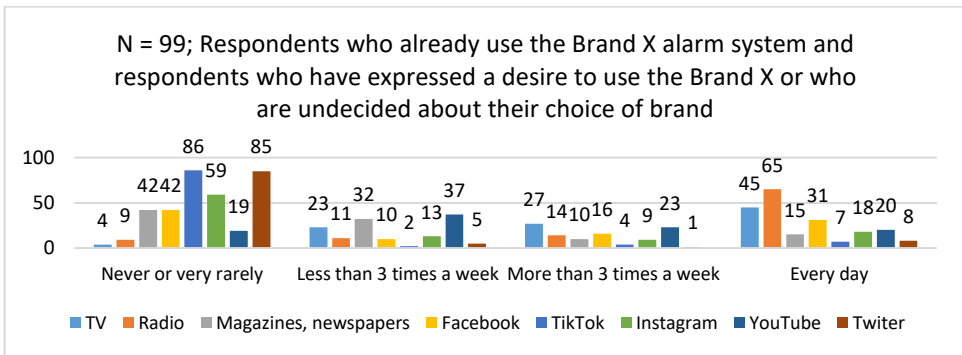


Figure 10. Responses to the question (Q2): How often are you active on the media listed?  
Source: own research, 2023.

We also asked respondents how often they check their emails. Figure 11 shows that 4% (frequency: 4) of respondents check their emails more than 3 times a week and 96% (frequency: 95) of respondents check their emails every day. No respondents (frequency: 0; 0%) indicated that they check their emails less than 3 times a week or never.

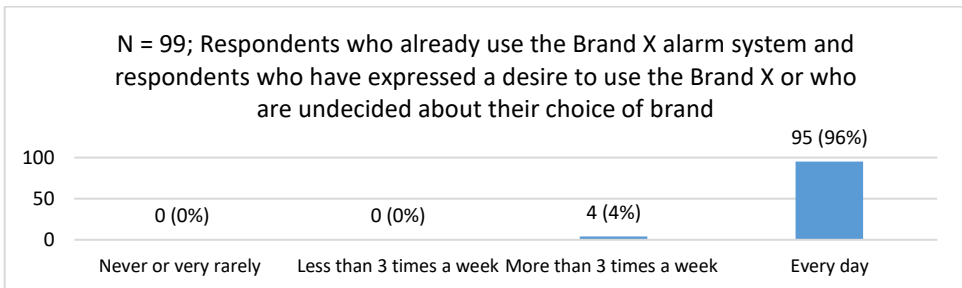


Figure 11. Responses to the question (Q3): How often do you check your emails?  
Source: own research, 2023.

We also asked respondents how often they surf the internet. From Figure 12 we can see that 12% of respondents (frequency: 12) surf the internet more than 3 times a week, while 78% of respondents (frequency: 77) surf the internet every day. Only 1% of respondents (frequency: 1) do not or very rarely surf the Internet, and 9% of respondents (frequency: 9) surf the Internet less than 3 times a week.

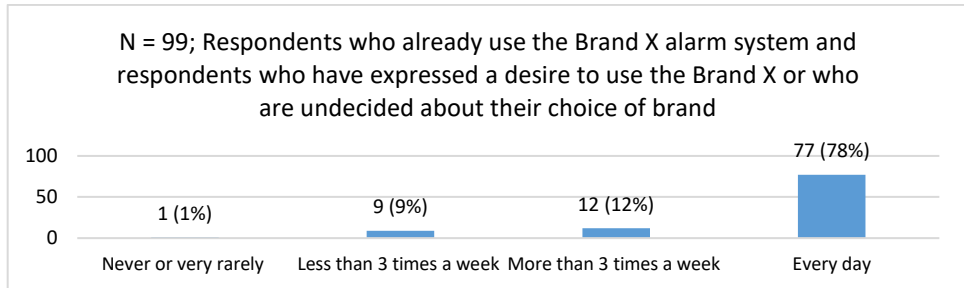


Figure 12. Responses to the question (Q4): How often do you surf the internet?

Source: own research, 2023.

We asked respondents who are users or potential users of an alarm system which advertising methods usually convince them to buy the product. Each respondent could give more than one answer. As can be seen from Figure 13, respondents are most persuaded to buy the product by recommendations from friends or acquaintances (frequency: 61%; 62%). Also persuasive, although half as much as recommendations from friends, are advertising on social media (frequency: 25%; 25%) and promotion in the form of

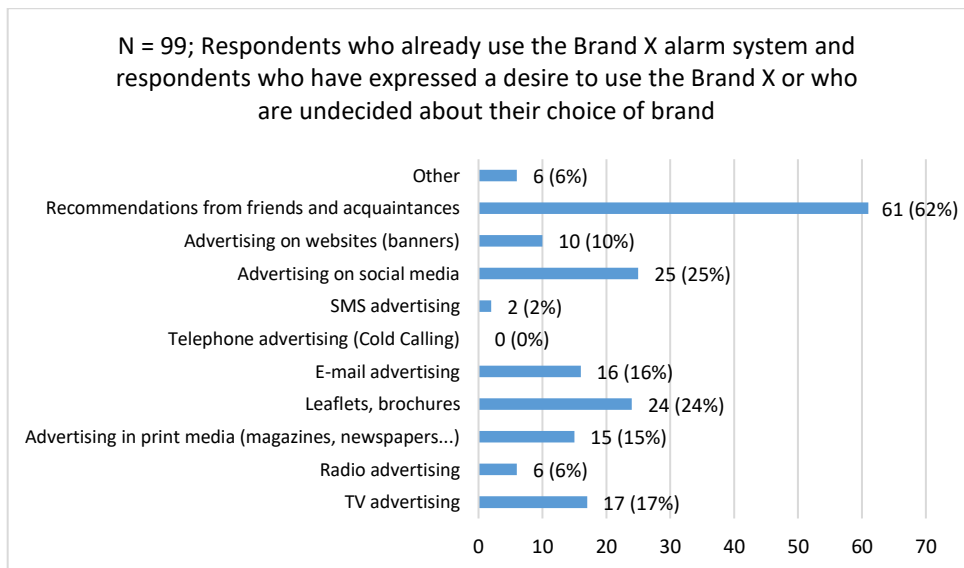


Figure 13. Responses to the question (Q8): Which advertising/messaging methods usually convince you most to notice or even buy a product? (Multiple answers are possible)

Source: own research, 2023.

a leaflet/brochure (frequency: 24%; 24%). Respondents are slightly less receptive to TV advertising (frequency: 17; 17%), email advertising (frequency: 16; 16%) and advertisements in newspapers/magazines (frequency: 15; 15%). Even fewer respondents are convinced by advertisements on websites, such as the Internet (e.g. Fewer respondents are convinced by banner advertisements (frequency: 10; 10%), radio advertisements (frequency: 6; 6%) and SMS advertisements (frequency: 2; 2%), while no respondents are convinced by telephone advertisements (frequency: 0; 0%). 6 respondents (6%) are not convinced by any of the advertising/messaging methods, as they entered the following statements under the answer other: (1) I buy when I need it, (2) I check on the internet, (3) when I need a product, I buy it, (4) none of the above convince me, (5) I check and review product reviews myself and (6) all advertisements put me off.

Respondents who are users or potential users of an alarm system were also asked which form of advertisement appeals to them the most. Each person could give more than one answer. Figure 14 shows that respondents are most attracted by pictorial advertisements such as photographs and graphic visualisations (frequency: 53%; 54%), followed by videos (frequency: 41%; 41%) and text advertisements (frequency: 27%; 27%). Respondents are least attracted by interactive adverts (frequency: 14; 14%), audio adverts (frequency: 7; 7%) and videos featuring pets (frequency: 5; 5%). Videos involving children do not appeal to any of the respondents (frequency: 0; 0%). 5 respondents (5%) gave the answer 'other' for the format of the advertisement, where four of them wrote down the following statements: (1) a video with a genuine and sincere presentation of the product, (2) different and (3, 4) none.

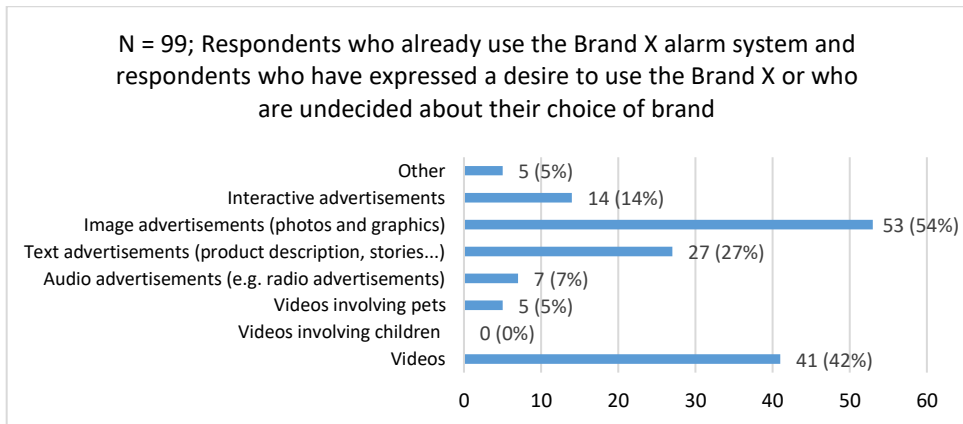


Figure 14. Responses to the question (Q9): Which form of advertisement/message usually appeals to you the most (Multiple answers are possible)

Source: own research, 2023.

We asked survey respondents who are users or potential users of an alarm system where they usually get information about a product worth around €300. Each person could give more than one answer. In Figure 15 we can see that most respondents (frequency: 77; 78%) look for information on the website of the seller or the manufacturer, but many respondents (frequency: 55; 56%) also look for information on forums and other websites where they can find user reviews and opinions. Much fewer respondents (frequency: 32%; 32%) ask friends or neighbours about the product and even fewer (frequency: 24%; 24%) ask the

manufacturer/seller via a phone call or in person. Very few respondents search for product information on social networks, either at the manufacturer/seller's address (frequency: 8; 8%) or at friends' addresses (frequency: 9; 9%). 4 respondents (4%) also search for information via other sources, such as: shop, abroad and YouTube review.

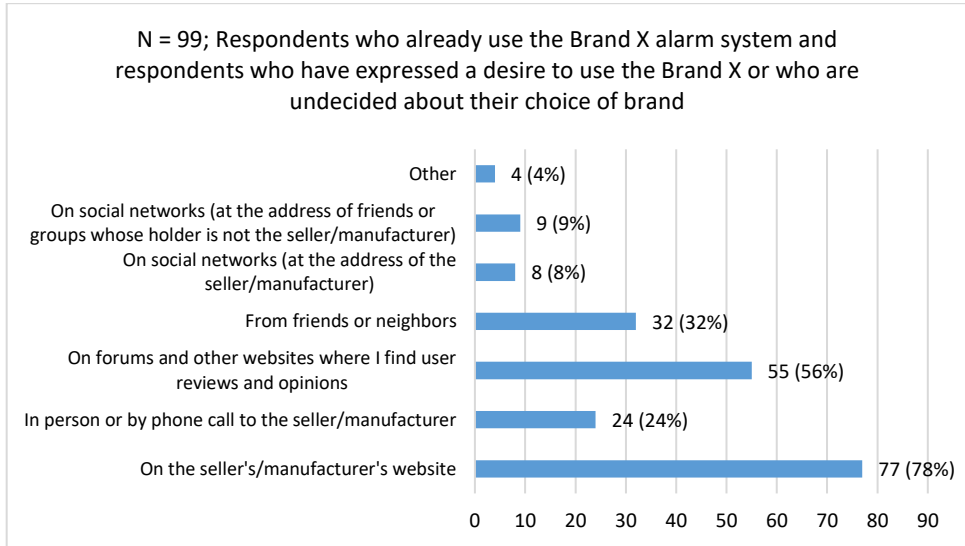


Figure 15. Answers to the question (Q10): When you want to buy a certain product worth about €300, where do you most often look for information? (Multiple answers are possible)  
Source: own research, 2023.

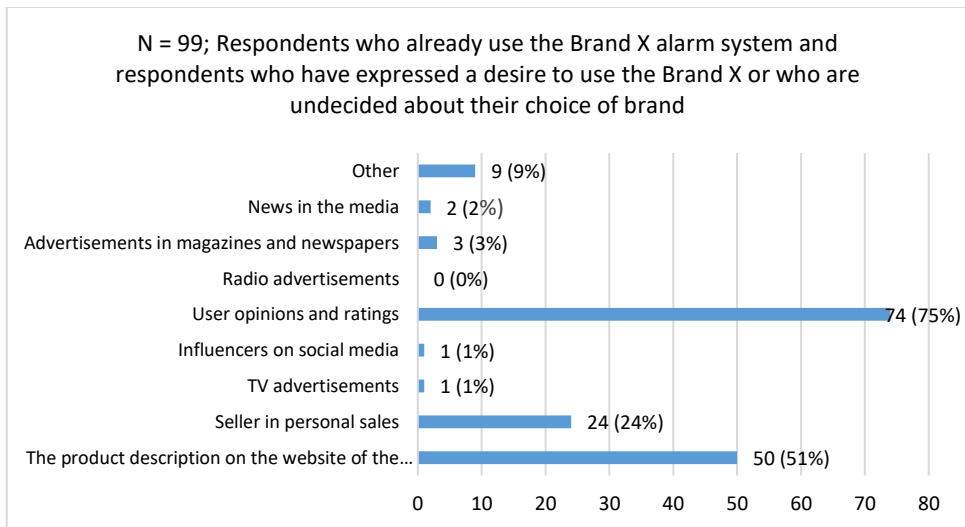


Figure 16. Responses to the question (Q11): When buying a product worth around €300, which source of information do you trust the most? (Multiple answers are possible)  
Source: own research, 2023.

We also asked respondents which source of information they trust the most. Each person could choose several possible answers. In Figure 16 we see that the answer to this question that was chosen most often (frequency: 74%; 75%) was “User opinions and ratings”. More than half of the respondents trust the product description on the manufacturer/retailer's website (frequency: 50; 51%), while only 24% trust the salesperson when selling in person (frequency: 24). Very few respondents trust advertisements in magazines and newspapers (frequency: 3; 3%), news in the media (frequency: 2; 2%), influencers on social networks (frequency: 1; 1%) and TV advertisements (frequency: 1; 1%), while no respondents trust radio advertisements (frequency: 0; 0%). 9% of respondents (frequency: 9) trust other sources of information more, with six specific answers: (1) opinion of friends, (2) friends, (3) independent reviews in professional media, (4) Consumer Federation Slovenia or other testing body (depending on the type and value of the product), (5) information in forums and (6) own analysis.

### 3.3. Hypothesis testing

#### **H1: Men in Slovenia are 20% to 30% more likely to use or buy an alarm system than women.**

Hypothesis H1 was tested by cross-sectional analysis of two variables, i.e. (1) gender and (2) interest in using or buying an alarm system. Based on Figure 17, 81% of the respondents who already use or want to use an alarm system are male, while the proportion of females in this category is slightly lower, at 59%. Looking at the proportions of respondents who are undecided about whether they want to use an alarm system or not, only 19% are male and 41% are female. The percentage difference between female and male sex is the same in both categories, i.e. 22%. The results show that hypothesis H1 is confirmed. It is therefore true that men in Slovenia are 20% to 30% more likely to use or buy an alarm system than women.

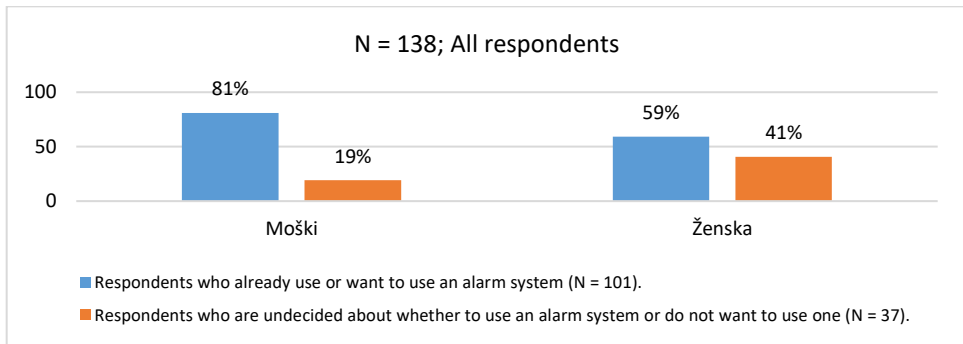


Figure 17. Relationship between respondent gender (Q33) and interest in using/purchasing an alarm system (Q12)

Source: own research, 2023.

#### **H2: More than 50% of all respondents who are buyers or potential buyers of the Brand X alarm system are most attracted by the image format of the ad (photo/graphic).**

Hypothesis H2 was tested by asking “Which form of advertisement/message usually appeals to you the most?” and confirmed it after analysing the responses. In Figure 14,

54% of respondents (frequency: 53) are most attracted by the pictorial form of the advertisement, such as a photograph or a graphic visualisation.

**H3: Respondents who are buyers or potential buyers of the Brand X alarm system are more likely to be persuaded to buy the product by TV advertising than by social media advertising.**

In order to confirm or reject hypothesis H3, we asked respondents who are users or potential users of an alarm system which advertising methods usually persuade them most to buy the product (Q8). Based on the results shown in Figure 13, we found that respondents are most persuaded to buy the product by recommendations from friends or acquaintances (frequency: 61%; 62%). Social media advertising is also persuasive, although half as persuasive as recommendations from friends (frequency: 25; 25%). The persuasiveness of TV advertising ranks fourth in our survey (frequency: 17; 17%), and we therefore reject hypothesis H3.

**H4: Respondents who are buyers or potential buyers of the Brand X alarm systems watch TV daily or more than 3 times a week to a greater extent than other communication media.**

Figure 18 shows that the highest percentage of respondents use e-mail more than 3 times a week or every day (frequency: 99; 100%), followed by surfing the web (frequency: 89; 90%) and listening to the radio (frequency: 79; 80%). Watching TV is only the fourth most frequent activity according to our survey, with 73% (frequency: 72). Based on the data, we reject hypothesis H4.

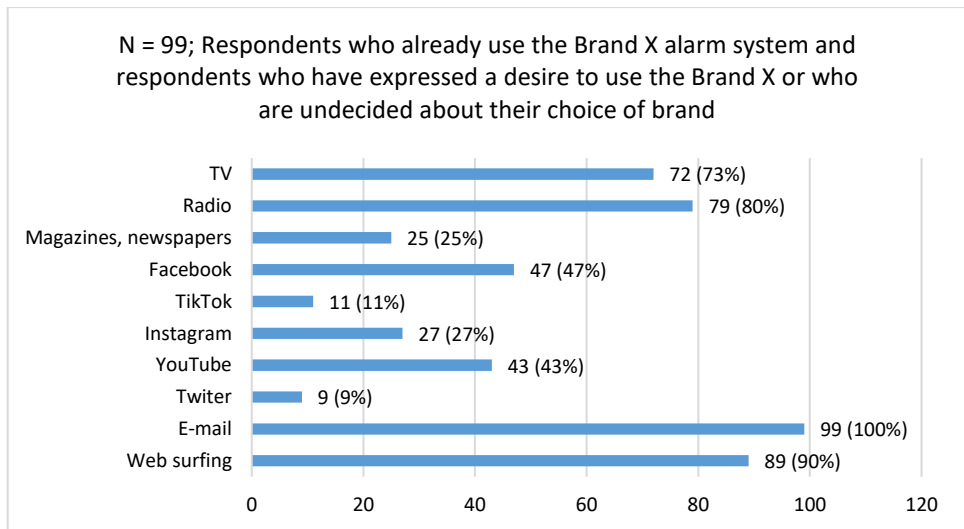


Figure 1. Extent to which respondents use communication media more than three times a week or every day

Source: own research, 2023.

#### 4. INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

We recommend that the company that owns the brand X ensures that the content SEO on the brand X homepage is perfect at all times and adjusts the Google advertising settings according to the results of the survey. The aim of these measures is to (1) increase traffic to the homepage and (2) optimise Google advertising costs. The website should also be equipped with a blog with interesting and relevant original or curated content. By providing interesting and high-quality content and using the right keywords, we can attract target customers who, according to the results of the quantitative research, are harder to reach with other marketing methods.

It is also essential to be active on social networks on a regular basis, not just for a certain period of time. A continuous social media presence increases audience reach, brand awareness, positive brand image and audience loyalty (Steuer, n.d.). We therefore suggest that at least once a month, interesting content should be posted on both Facebook and YouTube. When it comes to publishing video content, the same content can be published on both media. On Facebook, however, in addition to the various forms of content, we can also post a simple call to read the blog. Regardless of the frequency of posting, user activity on these media should be monitored on a daily basis and responded to promptly in the event of a demand. By being active on social media, a company shows customers and potential customers that it is interested in them and wants to meet their needs. This approach helps to build a strong relationship with customers and potential customers and to increase trust in the brand. If consumers are satisfied, they are more likely to return to the company, buy their product and share their positive experience with others. Through our research, we have found that customer reviews and recommendations from friends, or word-of-mouth marketing, is convincingly the most powerful advertising channel. In other words, positive consumer experiences are key to building a brand's or product's reputation. If customers or potential customers share good experiences with others, the brand or product is more likely to be perceived as reliable, quality and trustworthy, which strongly attracts new customers. (Gavin, 2022; Szyndlar, 2023). In any case, strengthening customer relationships and gaining a great reputation is not only done through communication on social networks, but also through physical contact, phone, email and forums. Whatever the medium of communication, it is important that the company always ensures continuous and effective communication and, above all, a reliable and rapid response to customers, especially in the event of any problems or complaints.

The process of raising awareness, building a positive brand image and attracting new customers can be accelerated through advertising and a rewards programme. In addition to Google advertising, we also recommend advertising on Facebook and YouTube, as these platforms allow for a large reach, micro-targeting and displaying ads in different formats (Flamingo Marketing Strategies, 2022). A clearly defined target group is crucial for effective delivery of the advertising message on Facebook and YouTube. To reach the right audience, relevant demographics such as age, gender, location and other segmentations need to be set. If this data is not defined or not defined correctly, the ad will not be shown to the first audience and the advertising investment will be ineffective. The key message and the format of the advert are also important, as they must engage the target audience to the extent that they click on the advert. The message should be supported by visual elements and should relate to home burglar alarms, evoking a sense of security and peace of mind. Clicking on the advertisement should lead to a landing page in the form of a pop-up before entering the homepage. The function of the landing page is to convert the



visitor into a potential customer and should therefore include a short and clear message about the benefits the visitor can expect and a call to action (CTA). In the case of the Brand X, this should be a sign-up to a newsletter about special offers and discounts for subscribers only. The landing page should also be supported by survey data, i.e. a positive rating from existing users of the Brand X alarm system. Social proof helps to establish trust in the credibility of a product or brand (Moore, 2023). When a company receives a visitor's email address, it means that it receives a potential customer's contact and thus a great opportunity to convert a potential customer into a customer through email. While the results of the primary research show that consumers are not receptive to e-mail advertising, the fact is that all visitors who subscribe to the newsletter from the landing page expect it in their e-mail inbox, otherwise they would not have subscribed to it. In addition, consumers are very receptive to special offers and discounts and, as such, are more likely to make a purchase of a product. (Hoffman, 2021). When creating this type of newsletter, we recommend offering a time-limited discount or an exclusive offer only to the first 10 customers, which encourages the potential customer to act quickly. As with social media communication, it is important that the email marketing process is carried out regularly, even if subscribers do not read each message or respond to the available prompt. The point of sending regular emails is to maintain the presence of the Brand X in the minds of the subscribers. This approach increases the likelihood that when a potential customer feels the need for this type of product, they will buy an alarm system of this brand.

It is also important in the landing page that the visitor who has arrived at the landing page continues on to the home page, whether or not they have entered their e-mail address. (Steinbrinck, 2023). On the homepage, in addition to a good presentation of the product, which the Brand X already has in place, there are two very powerful marketing moves to be ensured: (1) reviews from satisfied customers, which make it easier for potential customers to make a purchase decision and (2) several different calls to action (CTAs), e.g. encouraging the visitor to read the blog, to explore the product's capabilities, to subscribe to the e-newsletter, to follow the Facebook page, to follow the YouTube channel, to buy the product, etc. The CTAs are also very powerful marketing moves, e.g. (3) the visitor's ability to read the blog, to explore the product's capabilities, to subscribe to e-newsletters, to follow the Facebook page, to follow the YouTube channel, to buy the product, etc. Exactly what we encourage the visitor to do depends on the content the visitor is reading at the time. With the help of a well-chosen CTA, we maintain the visitor's interest in the product and, as a result, convert him/her into a potential customer or a buyer.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The results of the survey provided insight into the key message for advertising purposes, namely: (1) the most important motives for buying an alarm system from the target customers' point of view are a sense of security and peace of mind, either when away from home or when at home, and (2) the primary factors that target customers look for when choosing this type of product are burglar-proof security and the reliable performance of the alarm system. It was also found that the target audience most frequently uses the online environment to search for information on products worth around €300. The most popular sources of information are the seller's or manufacturer's website, forums and platforms with user reviews and ratings. Therefore, as part of the marketing communication plan, we focused on the use of digital channels such as the website and social networks. We proposed the introduction of a blog with content that might be of interest to the target

audience and regular improvements to the SEO content on the website. We also suggested regularly posting interesting content on Facebook and YouTube, as these two social networks are the most popular among the target audience. We stressed that the activity of users on these media, and on the various forums, should be monitored on a daily basis and responded to immediately in the event of a query. This approach demonstrates the company's interest in its target audience, instils confidence and, as a result, contributes to positive word-of-mouth marketing, which, according to the survey, is the most powerful channel for increasing brand awareness. To speed up the recognition process, we also recommended that the Brand X should pay for advertising on Facebook and YouTube and maintain Google advertising through keyword optimisation. We also detailed an email marketing strategy to convert target customers into customers. Although we have not included traditional channels such as radio, television, print media in the marketing communication strategy for the Brand X, we believe that our plan is effective in increasing awareness and sales of the Brand X alarm system, as all decisions are supported by qualitative, quantitative and secondary data research. At this point, it is worth noting that a certain degree of risk should be taken into account when making decisions based solely on the findings of a quantitative survey, as our sample is ad hoc and as such limited to a specific geographical area and therefore cannot be generalised to the whole population. For accurate and reliable results, it would be reasonable to repeat the survey using a probability sampling method.

During the preparation of this article, we also realised that continuous and accurate analysis of target customers and rapid adaptation of communication approaches are key to successful marketing communication, but this is not possible without process automation and technological support. Therefore, we also proposed the use of a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) software tool for all marketing communication activities, which enables automated collection, storage and analysis of customer data and simplified collaboration between all team members, helping to achieve competitive results, as well as saving time, labour and money.

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