IMPACT OF MARKETING COMMUNICATION ON PURCHASE BEHAVIOUR IN RETAILING CONTEXT: AN EMPIRICAL DATA OF SUPERMARKETS IN VIETNAM

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the impacts of marketing communication on purchase behaviour at supermarkets of Vietnamese consumers. Based on reviewing preeminent literature, the conceptual model is developed to present the relationships between marketing communication tools in both traditional and modern forms and purchase behaviour. A paper-based survey was conducted with 403 consumers in their real shopping context. The results show that all marketing communication tools have an influence on consumers' purchase behaviour. The findings recommend that supermarkets should combine traditional communication activities and new communicative forms to promote consumers' purchase behaviour. It is advisable to enhance promotional activities on mobile apps, improve the quality of personnel, differentiate sales promotion strategies, as well as promote programs related to corporate responsibilities because of their strong impacts on purchase behaviour. Furthermore, improving the effectiveness of other communication including advertising, social media marketing and in-store promotion are needed to accelerate consumers' choices. Finally, limitations of the study and future research orientations are presented.

INTRODUCTION

Decisions regarding marketing communication are highly important for suppliers because of their significant impacts on consumer purchase behaviour and response (Keller, 2009). The power of marketing communication has been substantially recognized in this digital era when modern technologies are powerful information and purchasing aids for consumers, which makes consumers actively interacts with companies (Kotler & Keller, 2016). However, prior literature has mainly focused

on marketing communication of manufacturers, there is scant of research, especially quantitative-based research investigating how marketing communication tools impacts consumer behaviour in retailing context (Ailawadi, Beauchamp, Donthu, Gauri, & Shankar, 2009). Furthermore, little has been done on marketing communication concept in the context of modern tools (Bruhn & Schnebelen, 2017), which calls for comprehensive studies.

Marketing communication have influenced both habitual purchase and impulsive purchase (Duarte, Raposo, & Ferraz, 2013). Excellent marketing communication program contributes to development of brand equity (Westberg & Pope, 2012), as well as consumers' loyalty (Finne & Grönroos, 2009). In such emerging markets as Vietnam, modern retailing formats, typically supermarket has been rapidly developing, gradually becoming the new preferred shopping outlets (Euromonitor, 2020). The country is one of the most potential retailing markets in Southeast Asia with the emergence of the middle-income class who report that they are mainly purchasing in supermarkets instead of traditional retailing formats (Kantar, 2020). Due to aggressive competition and changes in consumer capabilities, likewise, other industries, supermarkets in the marketplace have understood the importance of marketing communication not only those traditional tools such as advertising on conventional media, but also modern tools, typically social media and mobile in attracting and persuading, and furthermore, engaging with consumers. To generate a well-designed marketing communication program and perform the program effectively, supermarkets need insights into how those tools trigger the purchase behaviour of consumers.

Therefore, the aim of the study is to reveal the collective impact of different marketing communication tools on Vietnamese consumers' purchase behaviour at supermarkets. Objectives of this study are: (1) to develop a conceptual model in which elements of supermarkets' marketing communication are fully identified; (2) to empirically test an integrative impact of marketing communication tools on consumers' purchase behaviour.

LITERATURE REVIEW
Marketing communication is a company's effort to communicate to its targeted consumers about the value they can get when purchasing, using products and services provided by the company (Bruhn & Schnebelen, 2017). This is a marketing capability that enables the optimization of communication efforts to obtain effectiveness of communication, which leads to benefits related to brand and financial performance (Luxton, Reid, & Mavondo, 2014). A handful of research has focused on the relationship between marketing communication and consumer behaviour, and most investigate communication efforts on basis of media including TV, radio, magazines, or some social platforms. For example, with the direction, Ayoma and Wanjira (2021) state that consumers' buying decisions in supermarkets are significantly influenced by personal sales, direct marketing, and digital marketing, but are not impacted by advertising and sales promotion. Potjanajaruwit (2014) find out that all marketing communication tools including advertising,

public relations, personal selling, sales promotion, and direct marketing are factors influencing the frequency of purchases over a three-month period, however, the study does not integrate new communication tools into the model.

Advertising is the classical element of marketing communication which plays a vital role in a marketing program. Companies in the retailing industry spent over 10 billion dollars in 2014, equal to 1.4% of gross sales (Seiler & Yao, 2017). Companies use different advertising media such as television, printed media (e.g., magazines, newspapers), Internet (e.g., Facebook, email), banners to promote messages regarding products, brands to their target customers. Opeodu and Gbadebo (2017); and Singh (2012) indicate that the right mix of advertisement media platforms plays an important role in influencing consumers' choices and even contribute to brand image (Latif & Abideen, 2011). The relationship between advertising policies and purchase behaviour has been tested in numerous studies. Boyland and Halford (2013) conclude that TV advertising has a strong association with food choices at stores of UK households and a significant impact on food brands. Kumar and Raju (2013) also discover a strong link between advertising capability and consumer purchasing behaviour in India, however with a small sample size (113 respondents), it is difficult to generalize the study's results. Advertising keeps consumers' interest in products and forms brand associations in their minds, which subsequently influence their consideration, evaluation and final purchase (Romaniuk & Sharp, 2003).

H1: Advertising has a positive impact on consumers' purchase behaviour in supermarkets.

Sales promotions is one of the heaviest invested marketing communication tools to directly and immediately stimulate consumer purchase behaviour. According to Laroche et al. (2003) sales promotion has generated the strongest impacts on short-term consumption behaviour. Retailers as supermarkets are strongly exploiting sales promotions to attract consumers and accelerate their purchase decisions, thus measuring the effectiveness of the tool is those companies' concern. Shi et al. (2015) investigate consumers' perceptions regarding sales promotions used by Hongkong supermarkets. The results show that price discounts, coupons, and buy-one-get-one-free offers are considered the most effective promotional tools for inducing them to spend more, while sweepstakes and games have a negligible impact on their responses. Consumers have a proclivity to purchase the high-equity brand during a sales promotion period because of higher perceived benefits (Chandon et al., 2000). In contrast, some studies are suspicious about the effectiveness of sales promotion. For example, the study by Das and Kumar (2009) conclude that sales promotion has little impact on buying behaviour, only a small percentage of respondents in the study are induced by retailers' sales promotion programs. Alvarez and Casielles (2005) also confirm that consumers have perceptions of sales promotion used by manufacturers, and retailers but their behaviour is not directed by those programs.

H2: Sales promotion has a positive impact on consumers' purchase behaviour in supermarkets.

Personal selling has a close relationship with the sales increase of retailers because of its capability in providing product information and services (Yousif, 2016; Azam et al., 2016). The study of Punwatkar and Verghese (2014) expresses the importance of salespeople' listening and relational skills in consumers' purchasing decisions. In the other words, consumers are likely to perform purchase behaviour and repeat the behaviour in the outlet when their needs are cared about and fulfilled properly and satisfactorily. Reynolds and Arnold (2013) also point out the significant link between customer's loyalty to the salesperson and store loyalty in retailing context, which finally impacts share of purchases, word of mouth and competitive resistance. Contrarily, Yousif (2016) confirms that when consumers perceive insufficiency regarding the skills of salespeople, they tend to lower trust for the supplier, which leads to failure in purchase behaviour.

H3: Personal selling has a positive impact on consumers' purchase behaviour in supermarkets.

Public relations (PR) activities such as sponsorship, corporate social advocacy are widely used to develop corporate image and strong brands for companies (Johnston & Sheehan, 2009). Nour et al. (2014) indicate that because PR enhances the credibility of communication messages, the tool can support and impact buying behaviour. There is a strong positive significant link between PR activities and customer loyalty in the services sectors of Pakistan, consumers who perceive well-implemented PR programs of the retailer keep using its services and performing word of mouth behaviour (Rahi, 2016). PR activities improve the likeliness of first purchase and repurchase behaviour when brand image is strong in the study of Hanzaee and Farsani (2011).

H4: PR has a positive impact on consumers' purchase behaviour in supermarkets. Retailers value in-store marketing as many consumer decisions are made in stores. Fam et al. (2011) declares that two-thirds of brand decisions for supermarket items are made when consumers are browsing the store. Supermarkets and other retailers employ in-store marketing tools including price markdowns, in-store promotions, displays, store atmosphere, service, stock-outs and store layout to attract consumers and stimulate their buying behaviour. The study of Fam et al. (2011) focuses on two dimensions named in-store promotions and price markdowns which are believed to have a tremendous impact on consumer choices. Han et al. (2021) reveal the role of in-store displays and suggest that display allocation optimization possibly increases supermarkets' revenue by 11.15%. The study also supports the contribution of price and discounts in enhancing the influence of displays on consumer purchase behaviour and brand choice.

H5: In-store marketing has a positive impact on consumers' purchase behaviour in supermarkets.

The emergence of social media has significantly changed the way businesses communicate with their target markets. According to Rapp et al. (2013), over half of online shoppers interact with a retailer on social networking sites (e.g., Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter), and the new communication tool is applied by retailers and brands to strengthen relationships with consumers. The study confirms that social media marketing usage enhances retailer performance and consumer-retailer loyalty. According to Kim and Ko (2012), social media marketing are clustered into five categories in term of activities, namely entertainment, interaction, trendiness, customization, and word-of-mouth. The study also states that social media enhance customer equity which is measured partly by their repurchase behaviour toward brands and products. Sharma et al. (2021) also recommend social media usage because of its ability to improve trust in a retailer, which subsequently triggers consumers' purchase intention.

H6: Social media marketing has a positive impact on consumers' purchase behaviour in supermarkets.

Mobile marketing is another modern marketing communication tool invested in recently. In some countries, mobile media usage even outstrips conventional computer usage, and marketing activities on mobile platforms create essential touchpoints to form consumers' experience on the path of purchasing products. According to Persaud and Azhar (2012), there are three reasons for companies developing mobile marketing strategies: (1) today consumers do not separate mobile marketing from the rest of the company's marketing efforts; (2) marketers may be able to deliver greater value incorporating mobile marketing activities into the marketing plan (3) consumers are increasingly using their smartphones for many daily tasks and thus smartphones are the primary channel to reach and serve today consumers. Trimonoda and Sandada (2013) mention that consumers' acceptance of mobile marketing activities generates the intention of purchasing products through SMS. The study of Bues et al. (2017) investigate how mobile in-store advertising impacts purchase intention, concluding that all three values provided by mobile advertising (price promotion, location, personalization) have an impact on consumers' intention of purchasing supermarket items, and the location of receiving mobile ads is the strongest driver of intention while price promotion is the least important driver.

H7: Mobile marketing has a positive impact on consumers' purchase behaviour in supermarkets.

The conceptual model is presented in figure 2.1, showing a set of hypotheses that indicates the causal-effect relationships between marketing communication and consumer purchase behaviour in supermarkets.

METHODOLOGY
This study applied a quantitative-based methodology to reveal the impacts of marketing communication on the purchase behaviour of Vietnamese consumers at

supermarkets. Measures of constructs were developed after reviewing validated results from prominent previous studies and conducting a focus group with eight consumers.

Independent variables: There were six items of advertising – AD1 to AD6 (e.g., Ads on mass media of supermarket A is attractive; Ads of supermarket A provides clear information); five items for sales promotions – SP1 to SP5 (e.g., supermarket A frequently launches price discount programs; supermarket A frequently give me free gifts when I do shopping); six items for personal selling – PS1 to PS6 (e.g., Personnel of supermarket A has excellent attitude; Personnel of supermarket A has expertise in products); three items of public relations – PR1 to PR3 (e.g., events celebrated and sponsored by supermarket A is attractive; supermarket A effectively uses media for public relations activities); five items of in-store marketing – IM1 to IM5 (e.g., visual merchandising of supermarket A helps me navigate where I could find products I want to buy; supermarket A provide free sample and trial for new products); nine items of social media marketing – SM1 to SM9 (e.g., messages on social media generated by supermarket A are attractive; messages on social media generated by supermarket A are fresh); seven items of mobile marketing – MM1 to MM7 (e.g., messages on mobile apps generated by supermarket A contain rich information; I am favorable of use QR code to receive information from supermarket A).

Dependent variable:

Five items were developed for the dependent variable – purchase behaviour – PB1 to PB5 (e.g., I believe purchasing products from supermarket A is the right decision; I frequently purchase products from supermarket A).
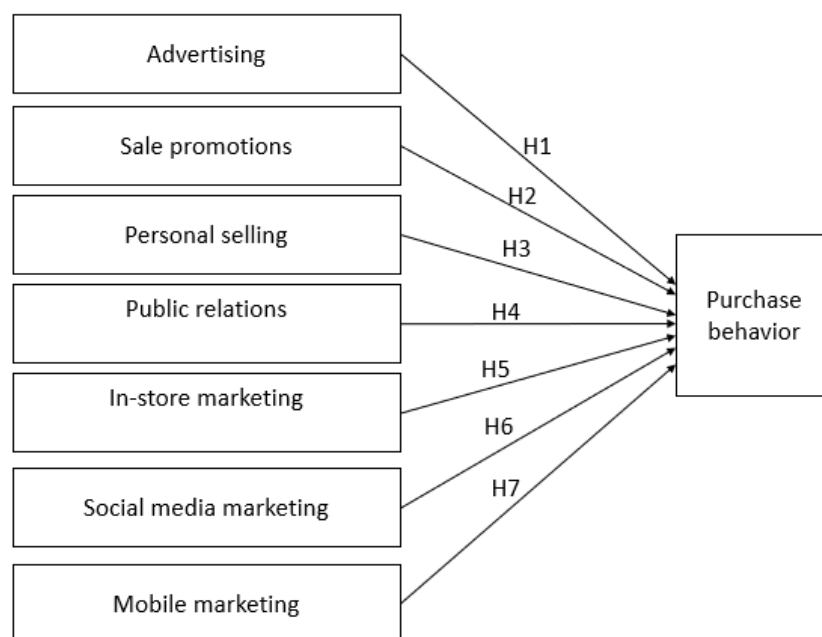
Figure 2.1. The conceptual model of this study (developed by the authors)

In this study, items were measured with 7-point scale labelled at the endpoint, from 1 for 'strongly disagree' to 7 for 'strongly agree'.

Paper-based questionnaire was employed because of its higher response rate than those of other data collection techniques in emerging markets (Chen et al., 2014). Every seventh consumer who visited stores of a popular supermarket chain in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh city, the two biggest retailing markets in term of value and size of Vietnam, was invited to participate in the survey. Eligible respondents were consumers from 18 years old, and decision makers for their household' groceries purchase. 521 consumers completed the survey, and after the data screening process 430 questionnaires (82.53%) – 199 of Hanoi and 231 of Ho Chi Minh city - were valid to be further analyzed. Respondents' demographic profiles are presented in table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Demographic profiles of respondents.

Demographic variable		No	%	Demographic variable		No	%
Gender	Male	126	29.3	Income	Under 10 mil VND	17	4
	Female	304	70.7		10 – 20 mil VND	211	49.1
Age	18-24	14	3.3		20 – 30 mil VND	95	22.1
	25-34	146	34		Over 30 mil VND	107	24.9
	35-54	227	52.8	Marital status	Single	57	13.3
	Over 54	43	10		Single mum/dad	18	4.2
Education	College	1	0.2		Married, no child	52	12.1
	Graduate	390	90.7		Married, at least 1 child under 10	113	26.3
	Post graduate	39	9.1		Married, children from 10 – 17 years old	72	16.7
					Married, grown-up children	118	27.4

RESULTS

Information relating to purchase behaviour

24.7% of respondents reported that they did shopping at supermarkets once a week, while 16.7% has frequency twice a week, 14% visited supermarkets every two weeks. It is interesting that most respondents (92%) visited more than one supermarket chain, meaning that they were not loyal to one unique retailer. In the dimension of spending, 33.5% of respondents paid over 1.000.000 VND for a shopping trip at supermarkets, which suggested that consumers spent a large share of wallet for supermarket items.

Cronbach alpha and EFA

Cronbach Alpha coefficient is used to determine the reliability of each observed measure that of the independent variable and the dependent variable. According to Hair et al., (2013), the Cronbach's alpha of each construct should be greater than 0.7 to ensure a significant correlation of the variable.

After analyzing the reliability of Cronbach's alpha, all independent variables and dependent variable have Cronbach alpha greater than 0.7. Items PS4, IM5, SM9 are deleted to improve reliability coefficient. EFA is run to evaluate whether indicators are unique for one construct and distinct from other indicators of different constructs. KMO coefficient = 0.860> 0.5, 0.000 significance in Bartlett's test allows to completely reject the hypothesis that observed variables are correlated with each other on the overall scale. With factor load factor satisfying> 0.5, each variable is described by its observed variables. Therefore, the independent variables will be the same from the initial hypothesis set as Advertising, sales promotion, PR, personal selling, in-store marketing, social media marketing, mobile marketing. Purchase behaviour is stably dependent variable. Results of Cronbach alpha and factor loadings are described in table 4.1.

Table 4.1.
Cronbach alpha and factor loadings

		α	Corrected correlation	Factor loading
AD		0.918		
	AD1		0.898	0.822
	AD2		0.910	0.709
	AD3		0.896	0.818
	AD4		0.911	0.678
	AD5		0.901	0.813
	AD6		0.899	0.815
PS		0.907		
	PS1		0.896	0.794
	PS2		0.872	0.883
	PS3		0.884	0.830
	PS5		0.906	0.769
	PS6		0.872	0.874
SP		0.898		
	SP1		0.864	0.848
	SP2		0.873	0.846
	SP3		0.892	0.742
	SP4		0.891	0.757
	SP5		0.853	0.906
PR		0.839		
	PR1		0.788	0.785
	PR2		0.775	0.823
	PR3		0.766	0.837
IM		0.879		
	IM1		0.805	0.873
	IM2		0.857	0.792
	IM3		0.860	0.708
	IM4		0.851	0.728
SM		0.925		
	SM1		0.923	0.700
	SM2		0.910	0.832
	SM3		0.911	0.829
	SM4		0.924	0.671
	SM5		0.910	0.805
	SM6		0.914	0.820
	SM7		0.912	0.830
	SM8		0.915	0.795
MM		0.933		

	MM1		0.922	0.788
	MM2		0.925	0.789
	MM3		0.929	0.701
	MM4		0.926	0.708
	MM5		0.921	0.816
	MM6		0.915	0.816
	MM7		0.919	0.817
PB		0.876		
	PB1		0.856	0.799
	PB2		0.854	0.808
	PB3		0.867	0.760
	PB4		0.841	0.845
	PB5		0.830	0.876

Hypotheses test results

Linear regression analysis is used to examine relationships between dependent variable and the seven independent variables. Table 4.2 shows the results from linear regression analysis.

Table 4.2.
Table of results of linear regression analysis.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	
1	.854[a]	.730	**.726**	.38914	

ANOVA						
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
	Regression	172.803	7	24.686	163.019	.000[b]
1	Residual	63.904	422	.151		
	Total	236.707	429			

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	-.215	.131		-1.644	.101		
AD	.132	.023	.179	5.616	.000	.631	1.584
SP	.187	.029	.174	6.335	.000	.852	1.174
PS	.155	.019	.225	8.054	.000	.816	1.225
PR	.180	.026	.200	6.940	.000	.767	1.304
IM	.082	.031	.083	2.625	.009	.632	1.581
SM	.132	.026	.141	4.983	.000	.805	1.243
MM	.240	.023	.352	10.455	.000	.565	1.768

Adjusted R^2 coefficient equals 0.726, meaning that the independent variables – marketing communication can explain 72.6% of the variation of the dependent variable – purchase behaviour. The value of the model's conformity test with the coefficient of F = 163,019 with the coefficient of p-value = 0.000 indicates that the model is consistent with the population. The VIF ranging from 1.174 to 1.768, under 2, together with low tolerance coefficients suggest that there is no sign of the multicollinearity phenomenon and no correlation among the independent variables.

According to multiple regression analysis, purchase intention is influenced by all seven factors including (1) advertising, (2) sales promotion, (3) personal selling, (4) public relations, (5) in-store marketing, (6) social media marketing, and (7) mobile marketing as they both have significant p-value <0.05. As a result, seven hypotheses in the conceptual model are accepted. Table 4.3 summarizes results of hypothetical test.

Table 4.3: Results of hypothesis testing

Hypothesis	Hypothesis	Conclusion
Advertising → Purchase behaviour	H1	Accepted
Sales Promotion → Purchase behaviour	H2	Accepted
Personal selling → Purchase behaviour	H3	Accepted
Public Relations → Purchase behaviour	H4	Accepted
In-store marketing → Purchase behaviour	H5	Accepted
Social media marketing → Purchase behaviour	H6	Accepted
Mobile marketing → Purchase behaviour	H7	Accepted

Among these seven marketing communication tools, mobile marketing shows the strongest impact on purchase behaviour with the coefficient β = 0.240 (P-value = 0.000), followed by sales promotion with β = 0.187, P-value = 0.000). In-store marketing has the lowest impact with the coefficient β = 0.083, p-value = 0.009. Advertising and social media marketing generate slighter impacts, with β = 0.132, p-value = 0.000.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION
This study has shown that marketing communication involving both traditional tools -advertising, sales promotion, personal selling, public relations, and modern tools – social media marketing, mobile marketing, positively impact the purchase behaviour of Vietnamese consumers at supermarkets. However, the effect of each tool differs, with mobile marketing being the strongest driver of purchase behaviour, whereas in-store marketing stands at the bottom in terms of influential

power. As consumers increasingly interact with supermarkets on mobile platforms, it is critical to frequently update information on mobile apps, especially those related to sales promotion programs and new products and services. Personal selling also shows its importance, meaning that consumers value the knowledge, skills, and attitude of in-store personnel, and are ready to purchase if their problems are realized and solved in time by personnel of supermarkets.

Sales promotion and public relations are of great importance to maintain or create purchase behaviour, thus supermarkets should continue exploiting benefits from price discount programs in flexible ways to create better experiences for consumers. Corporate responsibilities should be focused on because they can enhance consumers' advocacy for supermarkets, which leads to their purchase performance. Besides, sponsorship decisions should be made carefully as it has the power to attract consumers and stimulate their actions.

Although advertising and social media marketing generate lower impacts on purchase behaviour, supermarkets should care about those activities because they can integrate them into the entire marketing communication plan and support other tools to attain sales goals. Advertising can increase consumers' awareness regarding products and services provided by supermarkets and has the power to establish the brand image in long term. In addition, social media marketing can build a positive image for supermarkets and improve interaction with their targeted consumers. With the positive online presence on social media platforms, supermarkets can induce consumers to care about what they provide, and the value consumers can gain from their offerings.

It is surprising that in-store marketing has the lowest impact on purchase behaviour compared to the impacts of other marketing communication tools. It might be explained because consumers tend to do frequent shopping trips at supermarkets near to their location, thus, convenience is considered higher important than point of purchase promotions. However, because they value visual merchandising and free samples, supermarkets should make the right decisions regarding those issues.

This study provides consumer insight to enhance the effectiveness of marketing communication activities and strategies for supermarkets in Vietnam. Those retailers should incorporate all types of marketing communication and have meticulous decisions regarding resource allocation for communication tools to obtain marketing goals. There are several limitations of the study. First, although the sample size is sufficient for the quantitative analysis process, it is difficult to generalize the findings with the size. Second, the model shows only direct impacts of marketing communication on purchase behaviour. Third, purchase behaviour is measured by self-reported data, which may raise the bias in the results. Some future research directions are proposed. Future research may add new variables (e.g., attitude) playing mediating roles which influence the relationship between marketing communication and purchase behaviour. Future studies may use sales data from retailers to reveal the actual purchase behaviour of consumers. New

research may investigate the impacts of marketing communication on online purchase behaviour. In addition, the model may be tested for different markets.

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