

M MASTER

Intercultural Studies for Business

Company Operating in a B2B market: Case study on Marketing communication

Krystyna Holub

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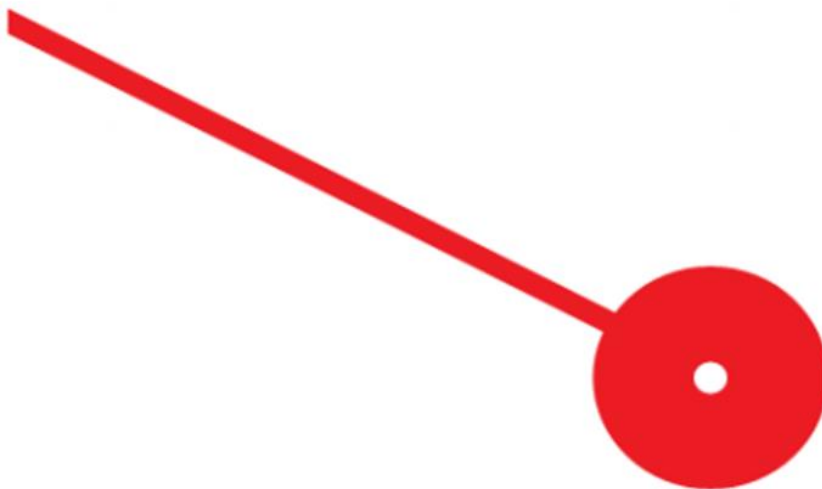
M MASTER

Intercultural Studies for Business

Company Operating in a B2B market: Case study on Marketing communication

Krystyna Holub

Internship Report presented to Instituto Superior de Contabilidade e Administração do Porto to obtain the Master's Degree in Intercultural Studies for Business, under the supervision of Doctor Carina Cerqueira



Resumo

No contexto de uma constante mudança e evolução, o marketing sempre foi uma ferramenta fundamental para acompanhar as alterações dos mercados, de forma a promover a adaptação das estratégias às novas condições das empresas.

O objetivo deste relatório do estágio é estudar e explorar o tema do mercado Business-to-Business e Business-to-Consumer, comunicações de marketing e a importância da comunicação intercultural nos negócios através da minha experiência adquirida durante o estágio na empresa Snow Factory, SLU.

O presente relatório do estágio tem como foco, em primeiro lugar, as especificidades dos mercados empresariais, planeamento de marketing e implementação da estratégia no contexto B2B, visão dos mercados e dos compradores, com base em estudos de diversos autores. Além disso, o estágio demonstra as diferenças entre o marketing B2B e B2C. Em segundo lugar, este relatório revela a função de atendimento ao cliente e as minhas principais responsabilidades durante o estágio. Em terceiro lugar, também será discutido o comportamento de compra da empresa e as potenciais circunstâncias de compra. Por fim, o relatório analisará os fatores interculturais envolvidos numa experiência de estágio, ilustrando conceitos e componentes importantes que contribuem para a definição do conceito.

Como vivemos em época de globalização, o público está cada vez mais atento à comunicação intercultural como imprescindível elemento para o sucesso, tanto na vida pessoal como na área profissional. Consequentemente, a comunicação intercultural é mais importante do que nunca para as empresas.

Este relatório se concentrará nas atividades desenvolvidas ao longo do estágio de seis meses na Snow Factory Company relativamente ao perfil da organização e a importância do mercado business-to-business e da comunicação intercultural na comunidade global.

Palavras-chave: Marketing, Estratégias de marketing, Atendimento ao cliente, Marketing B2B, Comunicação intercultural, Cultura, Negócio internacional.

Abstract

In the context of constant innovation and evolution, marketing has always been a fundamental tool to follow market changes, in order to help companies to adapt their strategies to the new conditions.

The goal for this internship report is to study and explore the theme of Business-to-Business and Business-to-Consumer market, marketing communications and the importance of intercultural communication in business through my internship experience at the company Snow Factory, SLU.

This internship report aims, firstly, on the specificities of business markets, marketing planning and strategy implementation in the B2B context, insight of the markets and the buyers, based on studies of several authors. Also, it will highlight differences between B2B and B2C marketing. Secondly, this report will focus on customer service role and my main responsibilities during the internship. Thirdly, it will also be discussed the business buying behaviour and potential buying circumstances. Finally, the report will analyze the intercultural factors involved in an internship experience, and so illustrating important concepts and components that contribute to the concept definition.

Living in globalized time, the public is increasingly paying attention to intercultural communication as a crucial element of success, both in life and at work. Consequently, intercultural communication is now more important than it ever was for companies.

This report will focus on the activities developed throughout the six-month internship at Snow Factory Company regarding the organization's profile and the importance of the business-to-business market and intercultural communication in the global community.

Keywords: marketing, marketing strategies, customer service, marketing B2B, intercultural communication, culture, international negotiation.

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I. Introduction

The present graduation project assumes the form of Internship Report and represents the final assignment to obtain the master's degree within the Intercultural Studies for Business course taught at ISCAP. The internship was executed from 1st February to the 31st of July in the Spanish company Snow Factory, more specifically, in the customer service and marketing department, working closely with various brands.

Choosing Snow Factory as the company to do my internship at was a clear step forward as it provided me with an insight on how the company was born. In other words, this company expansion was only possible due to globalization and the upcoming diverse needs of the business to thrive on market.

The function of marketing is to engage and maintain profitable customers, regardless of whether the business is developed in business environment or in a usual consumer market (Kotler & Keller, 2013). However, the entire marketing approach must be adapted to the type of market and, thus, marketing mix decisions should be taken under consideration, mainly focusing the specificities of both business and consumer markets.

While communicating through marketing, the company can open up a dialogue and establish relationships with consumers and reinforce customer loyalty. Moreover, marketing communications allows companies to create a relationship between brands and people, building in this way a representation of the brand in consumer's memory.

In other words, in order to survive and remain competitive, companies are looking to create different ways to distinguish themselves, to gain an advantage over their competitors and provide better service to their customers (Toledo, Prado, & Petraglia, 2007). In this context, marketing has an important role (Cruz, 2012), which is reaffirming itself as a strategic area playing one of the key roles in the company (Kotler & Keller, 2013; Sheth, 2020). Furthermore, the authors advance with the idea that it is through marketing that demand is established and that new products are introduced into the market, in order to conquer the consumer, awake the desire to buy and, consequently, generate revenue.

Nowadays, in a world economy, cultural awareness is crucial. As more companies continue to grow, and the global trade market becomes more accessible for small businesses, multicultural and cross-cultural groups are becoming more prevalent. This indicates that it is essential for businesses to understand the culture of their foreign market if they want to achieve international success.

In order to avoid cultural interference and make sure any issue is solved smoothly and quickly, the significant step is to know in depth the culture of the other side and give emphasis that holds in the field of international relations.

Organizations have to build strong relations with culturally distinct partners to keep their global competitive advantage. To establish connections effectively, companies have to develop their intercultural communication skills. International communication is a process that has to be managed effectively to promote an understanding of global business relations.

This report will describe not only my six-month internship in the company Snow Factory but will also address the importance of marketing strategy on business performance and approach the increasing importance of intercultural communication in the business area.

1. Objectives

This internship report has the following objectives:

- To be a conclusive step for the Masters in Intercultural Studies for Business;
- To describe the internship experience in Spanish company, Snow Factory;
- To analyze the importance of marketing strategy on business performance;
- To examine how B2B marketing promotes products and services to other businesses;
- To apply marketing communication in B2B and B2C markets;
- To study how business buyers answer to marketing *stimuli*;
- To analyze why culture plays a significant role when we are doing business on an international level;
- To analyze how intercultural communication is important in doing international businesses;
- To study the impact of globalization on intercultural communication;
- To improve international communication in the workplace.

2. Report Structure

This internship report begins by doing contextualization, identifying the objectives, and how the general organization of the document is presented.

The second chapter presents a theoretical background part about Market Business-to-Business and marketing planning and strategy implementation in the B2B context. Also, it will explain the meaning of customer experience and business buying behavior. Giving a good customer experience facilitates the customers coming back and it also enhances the image and the brand of the company. In this part, we will also see how business buyers answer to marketing *stimuli* and analyze a model of the business buying behavior in which marketing and other *stimuli* affect the buying company.

The third chapter of this report is focused on intercultural communication: in a globalized world, the public is increasingly paying attention to intercultural communication as a crucial element of success, both in life and at work. This chapter explains the definition of culture and intercultural communication. It will also illustrate elements and competences of intercultural communication. The intercultural communication competences imply the ability to be aware of the risks of not properly understanding the differences in speech, behavior and body language. Finally, the conclusions will close the document.

Then, the following chapter will present the hosting company, Snow Factory. First, contextualization and a general overview of the historical and contemporary backgrounds of the company. This part is dedicated to the description of the brands that the company distributes. Also, it is focused on “customer service” experience and main responsibilities and functions that were requested by the company.

The last part of this report illustrates descriptions of the programs that I worked with and its main functions.

3. Internship - contextualization and general overview

My internship took a place at Company Snow Factory a b2b sports distributor located in Barcelona. They have a broad experience in the sports industry and a great passion for it. They are focused on high added value brands. Additionally, they are proud of having a dedicated and committed team formed by enthusiastic professionals.

The company, Snow Factory was seeking to hire an intern, willing to assist and develop the Marketing department, learning the mechanics and needs of the trade, online and sports marketing. Dealing directly with the Key Account responsible and Marketing Manager for Spain, Andorra, and Portugal, and dealing with marketing departments from suppliers from the US, Italy, Germany and France. Operating with a team of 20 young people in a casual atmosphere. Through intense team, working candidates showed their best positive attitude and willingness to learn.

The main tasks that the company required from intern, are the following: assist and develop the customer service department, learning the mechanics and needs of the market, online and sports marketing, deal with national, Portuguese and Italian marketing representatives and marketing managers, deal with marketing department and their suppliers from the US, Italy, Germany, and France and develop the tasks as a team and individually showing interest in learning, optimistic attitude and positive approach.

Concerning the company's requirements, it should be a Marketing, Business, International Trade or related studies student. As I studied *International Relations* in bachelor's degree and continue studying *Intercultural Studies for Business* in master's degree, my profile corresponded to this vacancy. Also, the company asked for advance Spanish and English languages, other languages are a plus. We used English and Portuguese to communicate with company's customers.

Also, it was very important to be organized, active and have a cooperative role when working in teams and groups. I can easily adapt to different situations; then, I have the ability to effectively and efficiently accomplish the goals and tasks that are requested in the company. Taking into consideration the available information and resources, I am capable of finding solutions to different problems, recurring to my creativity – that's also an added trait in the working environment.

Regarding internship hours: working day takes eight hours, and it can be divided freely usually from 9h to 14h and 15h to 18h. If some marketing event takes place during the weekend, then some weekdays can be taken off in exchange.

In addition, I was pleased with my work environment and co-workers. My integration was great, and I adapt easily to the new workplace and built good relationships with my co-workers. In the company, when I start my internship, I was introduced to my colleagues from different departments by the CEO of the company, Alejo Garriga, and we had an open communication, everyone was friendly and welcomed me to the company.

During my stage in Snow Factory, I developed a new mindful and meet careful people, that wanted always to assist me in my tasks or simply support in a new job position. In the company, on the team we always had mutual respect, trust, friendly environment, and collaboration when it was necessary. So, I adapted well to the new working place, feeling that that was the right corporate structure, with a positive corporate philosophy. In addition, I had the opportunity to work with people from different countries and learned about other cultural values and perspectives on work. Also, working in the company showed me that there are different ways to deal with and handle situations that I probably would have never learned had I not made that internship abroad. Nowadays, employers want to see that their employees have experience working with people from diverse backgrounds.

Nowadays, networking is vital to reach success in the professional world, and I had the opportunity to communicate and create an international network. Through my internship, I was able to develop both professional and social relationships that have already and will continue to help me as I make my way into the working world. It is understandable that building a global network is an excellent way to set yourself up for a successful future.

Doing an internship in Barcelona allowed me to get vital work experience. I quickly adapted to the new city and understood the nuances of a new culture, language, and even workplace attitude. In Spain, during the internship I improved my language skills while communicating with my colleagues and roommates. A company, like Snow Factory, gave me an excellent opportunity to speak, practice and master daily the Spanish language, and to fully immerse myself in a foreign office.

Finally, my work experience has enriched me. Doing the internship allowed me to gain professional skills such as communication, appreciation for diversity, and confidence. It

was important for me to understand the daily work in another country and being able to navigate a new business culture. I have developed communication skills in a diverse, cross-cultural setting and built professional and interpersonal skills.

4. Communication in international environment

Through my internship in the company, Snow Factory, I got the important lesson, the success of long-term business relations is determined by every partner's willingness to invest in the development of effective communication. Without efforts to learn about each other's culture, the exchange of information and knowledge will be limited, and the sender and the recipient will be unable to completely benefit from their relationship.

On an international market, business success is no longer determined by the ability to skillfully formulate product and marketing offers, but by an in-depth understanding of the partner's unique cultural environment. Dynamic growth of companies which struggle to reinforce their competitive advantage requires a novel method to management, including on new markets.

From a practical point of view, the success of organization is closely related to its capacity of reading, analyzing and giving answers to the region's cultural peculiarities where it acts. The globalized world increased the presence of foreign organizations in all continents giving more attention to the cultural differences. Culture presents an impact in many dimensions of the management activity, such as marketing, production, and people.

In the marketing area, culture has a strong impact in the moment that influences tastes, preferences and customs of the consumers. This makes the company adjust its advertising policies, promotions, product development, location and pricing to the cultural specifications of the local community. In the production area, however, cultural influences the manner, the schedules and the individual and group activities. The ones responsible for the management of the production units abroad need to know the local culture in order to avoid their values clashing with local values.

Lastly, our world is represented by a great interaction among companies localized all over the world and by an intense movement of people, products and services. In this regard, the cultural dimension is constituted in a strategic element in the international businesses. These businesses demand from the companies, business trips and meetings among potential buyers, sellers and partners interested in expanding commercial relations and

negotiations. In these activities, problems of a cultural nature arise influencing, many times, the development of the negotiations. It is crucial that people who represent companies abroad become aware of the cultural differences and of the possible influences of these differences in the success of their jobs.

II. Theoretical framework

1. What is B2B Marketing?

After working six months in the company where B2B marketing is an indispensable tool of businesses to promote products or services to other businesses, it is important to mention what is the definition of B2B marketing.

Business-to-business marketing relates to the marketing of products or services to other businesses and organizations. It keeps several fundamental distinctions from B2C marketing, which is oriented toward consumers (Uzialko, 2020). B2B companies have an entirely different target audience. They offer the raw material, finished parts, services or consultations that other businesses need to operate, grow, and profit.

In broad terms, B2B marketing content inclines to be more informational and straightforward than B2C. This is because business purchase decisions, in comparison to those of consumers, are based more on bottom-line income impact. Return on investment (ROI) is a fundamental focus for corporate decision makers (Lessard, 2019).

In the modern world, B2B marketers often sell to buying committees with several key stakeholders. This originates for a complex and sometimes challenging landscape, but as data sources become more robust and accurate, the ability to map out committees and get buyers with important, personalized information is highly improving (Lake, 2019).

Another important aspect to mention is that there are B2B companies in every industry, from manufacturing to retail. Wherever it exists business, you can be assured of the activity of many B2B suppliers and consulting firms. Every B2C company demands specific products, services, and professional advice, so every B2C company generates B2B activity (Uzialko, 2020).

Any business that sells to other businesses uses B2B marketing in order to help promote its products or services. There are many ways this can happen: software-as-a-service (SaaS) subscriptions, security solutions, tools, accessories, office supplies (Lessard, 2018). B2B marketing campaigns are directed at any individual(s) with control or influence over buying decisions. It can include a broad variety of titles and functions, from low-level researchers all the way up to the senior management. Some common B2B companies incorporate:

Software Companies. Concerning software, it contributes to businesses satisfy by assuring a more effectively their customers and work relationship. Whether it is enhancing productivity by blocking social media, promoting collaboration with project management

tools, or keeping track of work hours and costs, there is a solution to almost every business need through software.

Office Suppliers. Even though there are more people doing work electronically than ever before, it is still important to keep workplaces well supplied. Companies need to have furniture, telephone systems, security cameras, paper and printer ink, ID cards and much more, so employees are able to develop their daily tasks.

Marketing Agencies. Marketing is used to attract companies by offering to help them make more money. Recently, they are concentrating on digital marketing as more brands and customers bring their business online. Demand is very high for agencies that create websites, improving search ranking results and simplifying e-commerce payment processes.

2. How to develop a marketing plan for a B2B company?

It is important to mention that branding and marketing B2B products or services demands a special approach. Different from B2C companies, the target audience is not a consumer, but another company. This implies that B2B marketers must build a direct marketing experience to bring organic traffic from company decision-makers.

According to Uzialko (2020), driving sales signifies understanding another company's business methods, raise trust between both your organizations, and developing a business-particular strategy with your sales team to turn potential clients into buyers.

When the methods may be alike those of B2C companies, the messaging and branding are often different. Instead of talking about a consumer's desire for something new, interesting, B2B companies face the problem of persuading decision-makers that their products or services will bring a return on investment. This means there is less focus on social media, brand awareness, and the overall customer journey. Instead, the focus should be on building relationships with other businesses and increasing the overall return on investment.

Nowadays, business marketers can develop and decide how to apply B2B plan by indicating and understanding the value of the following points:

The product. There is an emotional element affected when marketing to customers. Persons are attracted to products because of emotions they evoke. With B2B customers, the customers are trained professionals who care about the quality of products, their cost-saving and revenue-producing advantages, and the service provided by the host company (Almquist, Cleghorn and Shere, 2018).

The target market. Many B2B marketers can focus on niche industries which represent specialized requirements. While this can make marketing more straightforward, it also demands a high level of knowledge outside of marketing specialists (Almquist, Cleghorn and Shere, 2018).

Pricing. Companies are normally more concerned with cost, value, and revenue potential than customers. However, they can also be more easily convinced to pay a lot of money, provided that the B2B marketing specialists do an excellent job of convincing them that the product, quality and customer service will be worth it (Fill & McKee, 2012).

Promotion. Regarding promotion, B2B marketers require to be specialist not only of marketing and advertising, but specialists within their spheres. And, when this happens, they will learn the best methods to market to this sphere, be it through blogs, magazines, tradeshow.

3. B2B digital marketing

The increase of B2B e-commerce solutions has reconsidered the relationship between businesses and suppliers. A product of the digital revolution, these businesses sell products directly to other companies using e-commerce platforms, while also sharing data and updates for products or services (Uzialko, 2020). Also, there are many kinds of B2B e-commerce companies, but three of the most common are web development, supply and procurement exchanges, and infomediaries.

The importance of digital marketing increased with the fast development of the internet. The concept of digital marketing can be characterized by Kotler, Keller, Brady, Goodman and Hansen (2012) as “the management and execution of marketing using electronic or digital media such as the web, email, interactive TV, wireless media, mobile technology, and self-service technology, in conjunction with digital data from a range of databases and

software applications.” The increasing popularity of technology by consumers for social and entertainment reasons has brought to a greater development of such technology.

B2B digital marketing is a term that has been developed over the last few years. B2B purchasing environment is currently influenced by the digital buying behavior of consumers in general. According to research carried out by the CEB Marketing Leadership Council (The Digital evolution in B2B Marketing 2012), B2B companies that fail to "prove themselves" in the context of effective use of digital and social media channels do not meet customers' expectations and risk losing sales opportunities.

Important to highlight that the digital environment can be used to reach multiple objectives in the B2B segment. The first thing is that the digital environment allows B2B companies to reduce expenses by improving the efficiency of exchanges in regard to communications and transactions (Walters, 2008). Secondly, digital tools allow B2B firms to provide brand and product related information and thus digital marketing can be used to build brands in terms of building awareness, boost brand attitude and enhancing acquisition purposes (Drèze & Hussherr, 2003)

At the end, in a B2B environment the customer relationship is generally established for a long-time perspective, and they depend significantly on face-to-face communication. Furthermore, managing various forms of customer interactions is affected by the organizational complexity of the B2B seller and buyer companies. In fact, all these special characteristics of the B2B sector establish the main components of digital marketing communications that B2B customers are looking currently while selecting a seller: strong brand, active customer interaction and excellent content.

4. The importance of market Business-to-Business (B2B)

Before any product reaches the hands of a consumer, it goes through a long supply chain that allows understanding its path from the raw material to the final consumer (Rushton, Croucher, & Baker, 2014). According to the same authors, in this process, industries like Helitene are between the producer of raw materials (or products) and a distributor, operating in B2B markets. Kotler and Keller (2013) define the organizational market as consisting of all organizations that purchase products and services, which will then be used in the production of other products and services and finally sold, rented, or supplied to third parties. Traditionally, the literature gave more importance to marketing linked to the

final consumer (Cruz, 2012). Although the markets have some similarities, it becomes important to meet their dichotomies, presented on Table 1. B2B and B2C Markets Comparison:

Table 1. B2B and B2C Markets Comparison

	B2B Market	B2C Market
Structure of market	Geographic concentration;	Geographic dispersion;
	Few buyers, with high purchasing power;	Many buyers, with relatively small purchasing power;
	Heterogeneous customers;	More homogeneous customers;
	Few consumers by segment.	Many consumers by segment.
Demand	Derived (from the demand of the final consumer);	Direct
	More volatile (less constant);	Less volatile;
	Inelastic (does not suffer alterations with the change in prices).	Elastic.
Products	They can be technically specific, complex and usually customized;	Standardized;
	Very important service, distribution and availability.	Service, distribution and availability more or less important.
Consumer Behavior	Person with professional training;	Individual purchase;
	High importance of personal relationship with the seller;	Less importance of the interpersonal relationship with the seller;
	Long-lasting and loyal relationships;	More distant relationships with little loyalty;
	Frequent purchase.	Usually, single purchase.
Marketing	Commercial team, direct sales;	Mass advertising;
	Limited and specific promotional strategy for each customer.	<i>Mass Market.</i>

Source: Adapted from Kotler, Armstrong, Saunders, & Wong (2008); Ross, Canning, & McDowell (2014); Vitale, Giglierano, & Waldemar (2011)

It can be observed that it is mostly structural differences that influence behavioral and marketing differences. The fact that the purchasing power of a B2B customer is greater, often implies giving more importance to strategies based on creating close relationships and developing tailor-made solutions (Ross et al., 2014). In this sense, B2B marketing has gained its relevance by seeking to meet the needs of other companies (Cruz, 2012).

5. Marketing and Strategy Applied to the B2B Market

Although marketing has been recognized since the 1900s, it can be considered as old as trade (Ornellas, 2013). Kotler and Keller (2013) argue that marketing, as we know it today, is responsible for much of the growth and economic development of businesses in particular and society in general, playing a key role in organizations in the 21st century.

Over the years, its role in society and organizations evolved in accordance with the needs of markets, customers and companies. What was initially seen as an auxiliary activity to production has become one of the company's strategic areas (Ornellas, 2013). Therefore, the most updated definition of marketing is that of the American Marketing Association (2017), which defines it as "activity, set of institutions and processes designed to create, communicate, deliver and exchange offers that have value to consumers, customers, partners and society in general.

Thus, it becomes important to deepen the concept of strategy associated with marketing, specifically corporate strategy, defined by Andrews (1987) as being:

the pattern of decisions of a company that determines and reveals its objectives, purposes or goals, creates main policies and plans to achieve these objectives and defines the company's business portfolio, the type of economic and human organization that it is or intends to be, and the nature of the economic and non-economic contribution you intend to make to your shareholders, employees, customers and communities (p.13).

Briefly, these are two periods of time and two distinct actions:

- determining directions in which the company will operate in the medium and / or long term;
- application and distribution of available means and resources in the short term, adapting to the circumstances and opportunities of the moment, but according on the outlined directions (Nunes & Cavique, 2008; Yuan, Lu, Tian, & Yu, 2020).

This division makes explicit the unfolding of the strategy on two levels, which Kotler and Keller (2013) call as corporate and as a strategic area. The former includes generic strategies such as growth, stability, defensive and combined (Teixeira, 2005). Those at the second level depend on the four main pillars of management: human resources, finance, production and marketing (Nunes & Cavique, 2008). Some examples of marketing strategies include the development of new product lines, cost leadership, differentiation and focus (Carmona-Lavado, Gopalakrishnan, & Zhang, 2020; Porter, 1988; Saab & Botelho, 2020; Teixeira, 2005).

However, the authors believe that strategic coherence between all areas is central to the efficiency, profitability and survival of the organization as a whole. Planning and communication between departments is thus essential for the entire organization to work towards the same goal. (Finoti, Toaldo, Schwarzbach, & Marchetti, 2019).

6. Marketing Planning and Strategy Implementation in the B2B Context

Naturally, studies show that strategy formulation alone does not bring positive results, since the implementation process is another important factor in this system (Finoti et al., 2019). According to Finoti et al. (2019), a well-implemented strategy can increase sales and profits, market share, customer satisfaction and the success of a new product.

Milichovský and Šimberová (2015) also argue that marketing planning is similar to the definition of a business unit's strategy and add that its effectiveness depends on the company's objectives. To achieve them, it is necessary to implement the strategy correctly, which is only possible with the planning, which, in most companies, is divided into three levels: strategic, tactical and operational (Hutt & Speh, 2010; Kotler, 2000; Teixeira, 2005).

In fact, it is strategic planning that defines the overall purpose of the organization; the businesses in which it must operate, in order to convert its strengths into a competitive advantage; the generic objectives and how to achieve them (Teixeira, 2005). According to Hutt and Speh (2010), the marketing role at this level involves assessing the attractiveness of the market, the most profitable segments, the competitive advantage of the company and formulating a value proposition based on its strengths.

At this level, the fundamental issue is the allocation of resources between the business areas (Kotler & Keller, 2013). Strategic planning is done by top management; however, to

be put into practice, it has to be implemented at the intermediate and operational management levels (Teixeira, 2005).

In fact, the unfolding of strategic plans results in a tactical planning that often corresponds to the functional areas of the company: marketing, finance, human resources, etc. (Teixeira, 2005). At this level, its course gains consistency and a more efficient use of its resources are established (Kotler, 2000). Hutt and Speh (2010) argue that it is here that the ways that each area must follow to lead the company to achieve competitive advantage and to position itself against its competitors will be discussed.

The formulation of the strategy at the operational level establishes the tasks through which a functional area will use its resources for the implementation of tactical strategies, in order to achieve competitive advantage and contribute to the growth of the company (Kotler, 2000; Teixeira, 2005). Therefore, the main focus of marketing at this level consists of defining specific actions, of assigning those responsible, of stipulating the time, people and funding necessary for its execution (Hutt & Speh, 2010).

Planning Characteristics - The characteristics of the plans are summarized in the Table 2.

Depending on the size of the company and especially in small companies, it is common for strategic and operational planning to be developed as a single process (Toledo et al., 2007).

Thus, the marketing role can be considered central to the creation and implementation of the strategy, since strategic management has to deal permanently with a constantly changing environment, with two main agents involved: the market and the competition (Dziubaniuk et al., 2020; Toledo et al., 2007). (Dziubaniuk et al., 2020; Toledo et al., 2007).

Table 2. Planning Characteristics

Planning Amplitude	Strategic The company as a whole.	Tactical A specific area.	Operational A task or operation.
Content	Generic and synthetic.	Less generic, more detailed.	Detailed and analytical.
Marketing tasks	Assess the attractiveness of the market and segments; identify the competitive advantage of the company.	Outline a path to achieve the company's objectives and gain competitive advantage	Define actions in detail and allocate resources to each task.
Deadline	Long term.	Mid-term.	Short term.
Degree of uncertainty	High.	Not that high.	Reduced.

Source: Adapted from Dziubaniuk et al. (2020); Teixeira (2005).

Taking into account the above, it is concluded that strategic planning is the most important, as it affects the organization in a global way, defines its long-term future and involves many or all available resources. Due to its complexity and high relevance, Teixeira (2005) unfolds its construction in four stages: the first involves the definition of the organization's mission, followed by the analysis of the internal and external environments, then the elaboration of specific objectives and, finally, the formulation of the strategy.

Teixeira (2005) explains that, after defining the mission, the second stage consists in identifying the company's competences that make it stronger in the face of competitors, to understand its weaknesses, better understanding its environment to analyze the opportunities that can be harnessed and, consequently, minimize the threats. After

gathering all the pieces together and forming a general picture of the company, we move on to define the strategy (Teixeira, 2005).

7. Growth as a Strategic Plan

The statements of Buzzell, Gale and Sultan (1975) maintain that the size of the company has a great impact on its strategy. If, on the one hand, a small company is able to be quicker in its response, more agile and more focused on its resources, on the other hand, it is easier to move forward with a long-term research project in a larger company with more resources at its disposal.

In the same article, the authors demonstrate that a business with a high market share per se already benefits from economies of scale, market power and a more qualified management. On average, a 10% difference in market share equals a 5% difference in return on investment (ROI) (Buzzell et al., 1975). These are probably the biggest motivations that lead a company to adopt growth strategies.

Effectively, the belief among academics and management professionals is that growth is indispensable for a company to achieve long-term profits (Mamilla, 2019). For its part marketing is one of the areas that most contributes to the progress and economic development through research, innovative ideas, offering new or improved products and services (Hutt & Speh, 2010; Kotler, 2000; Salum, Coleta, Rodrigues, & Lopes, 2019).

However, Pidun (2019) demonstrates that not all growth generates value for the organization, such as when the company is expanding into non-profit segments, when there is a lack of necessary skills and also when competition is underestimated or overpaid for acquisitions. In this way, it is understood that uncontrolled and unsustainable growth can bring losses not only to the entity itself, but also to the environment. Thus, it is understood that uncontrolled and unsustainable growth can bring losses not only to the entity itself, but also to the surrounding environment.

One of the responsibilities of marketing is to prevent these scenarios (Toledo et al., 2007), therefore, the authors suggest three basic assessments. The first consists in determining the competitive advantage of the company and its positioning before the competition, in order to highlight its offer. The second intends to stipulate the profiles, characteristics and means to reach the most profitable segments, emphasizing that this task presupposes the recognition of the heterogeneity of the B2B market and, consequently, the need for

segmentation. From here emerges the third step, which establishes the development of a strategy that satisfies the desires and needs of each segment.

Therefore, although growth is important for organizational development, it is necessary to outline a strategy that establishes the time horizon and the paths to follow (Pidun, 2019). In this sense, the Ansoff matrix is a tool that acts as a link between marketing and the organization strategies (Loredana, 2017).

8. Insight of the markets and the buyers

It is important to identify and recognize customer needs and wants, it should be the first thing to do for a seller. Furthermore, understanding the marketplace in which they are working is essential. It is hard for the seller to create and add value for the customer if there is no information about their needs. (Kotler 2009, 123). First, we must focus on the essence of selling, it is very important to understand the consumer markets that are here called also B2C markets and the business markets, called B2B markets. Second, it is essential to first understand how the market operates and particularly why the buyers behave in determined way before attempting to affect them. In the end, it is easier to adjust for example your product and your sales strategy, when you know better what the buyers want, what they think and how they feel.

Overall, the buying decision method can be split into five different phases. It is crucial for also the seller to recognize these phases, as it helps the seller to know how to influence the buyer in order to get the decision made. These five phases are represented in the figure below.

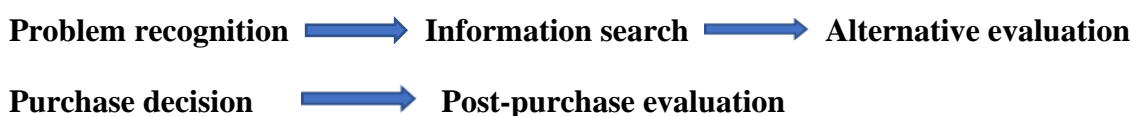


Figure 1. Five general steps of a buyer's purchase decision process

Source: Fill 1997, 96.

In addition, it may be possible to influence any or all of these phases with marketing communications and correspondingly these communications affect with different phases of efficiency. It may look like that selling is in a secondary role here, but generally also the

salesman influences the buyer in different ways. The seller may be the one finding the buyer's difficulty; the seller gives the buyer more information and also leads the buyer to do the greatest acquisition decision.

Important to note, buyers in B2B and B2C situations make choice in different ways during the purchasing process, as they are all human beings. More frequently, regardless of the business environment, people tend to reason their purchases by reading advertisements about their acquired tangible or intangible items. This is known as a "cognitive dissonance", presented by Festinger (1957) to "explain the anxiety felt by many buyers of expensive items shortly after purchase" (Jobber & Lancaster 2000, 38). Therefore, salespeople make after sales contact with the customer to comfort and assure them of the correct acquisition and bring up the value of customer experience.

Then, after sales contacts are made more in B2B environment, since the number of customers tends to be smaller and consequently more important in B2B than in B2C, where there are a large number of buyers. However, customers buying expensive tangibles or intangibles items are contacted, as a rule personally by the sellers but this is less frequent in the B2C field.

Getting in touch with the customers personally is not only enough to reassure them about their purchase: the level of after-sales service and the quality of the product will together merge the customer's goodwill. Notwithstanding, sellers are personally in charge of matching the customer needs. Combining the needs and wants with an appropriate solution will create more satisfaction and guarantee than selling unnecessary things to the customers with higher price. This may increase short-term revenue but does not last in the long run as customers will have the opportunity to another producer or product to replace their previous purchase. This is the case in higher-priced goods in B2C, and in B2B this usually a programmed method at all price level.

a. Consumer market

All the people and families who buy goods and services for their own use and consumption together build the consumer market. (Kotler 2009, 158- 159). From this perspective, it can be said that everyone in the world is a part of a consumption market. It does not matter if you are living on the other side of the world, whether you are young or old, whether your revenue level is different or whether you are educated in another way.

As we know, all over the world there are different customers, as people are of different age, they have a different salary and education level and also their taste differs greatly while the diversity of goods and services bought is great. Another buyer affects others in how they choose between different products, services and companies, and how they associate with one another. (Kotler 2009, 159) This signifies that everyone is an exclusive consumer and the sellers must discover out how to serve every single one.

Several major qualities of the consumer market are that the target market is very large, the sales cycle is quite short, and the market is product oriented and that the value of the transaction is maximized. Generally, the purchasing decisions are also based on feeling, status or cost more than pure sense. These decisions are frequently streamlined later and the consumer commonly comes up with different reasons why something must have been purchased. Sometimes purchasing decisions are very fast someone can buy something right away just because they want it now.

Additionally, there is other feature for the consumer market is that the consumers have many choices in products and services to select from, but the tailoring options are very close to none. Even though the consumer market is already huge, it has been increasing more and more lately thanks to the online market. Access of the public to the Cyberspace has made it much simpler for the potential customer to get more information about the products or services and buying can be done easily online with just a few clicks.

As the sales cycle is shorter, the salesperson must run different campaigns to ensure that the buyer is aware of their products and that the customer's need is met quickly. The customer experience is crucial to consider although it may seem that the level of customer relationship is not that high. Other important aspect is having a strong brand implies almost everything in the consumer market, because it creates long-term customer relationships and it also influences more customers at the same time. In conclusion, it is easier to maintain the existing customers than to obtain new ones.

9. The meaning of customer experience

The customer always has an experience when cooperating with the selling company. Purchasing products, ordering services and dealing with the customer service create an experience for the customer. Companies have to consider this when designing their operations and they should also manage the experience that the customers come through.

Small alterations do not really make a difference for the customer and the company is very likely to fail if they do not concentrate on the experience comprehensively and completely (MIT Sloan 2002).

While companies often accept that customers are the foremost people of all for them, it is not always clear for the companies how much effort needs to be made to give a good customer experience. Giving a good customer experience facilitates the customers coming back and it also enhances the image and the brand of the company. Almost half of the client's experience is subconscious for the customer and by controlling the client experience the company can really control what kind of an image about the company is transmitted to the clients. (Beyond Philosophy 2013)

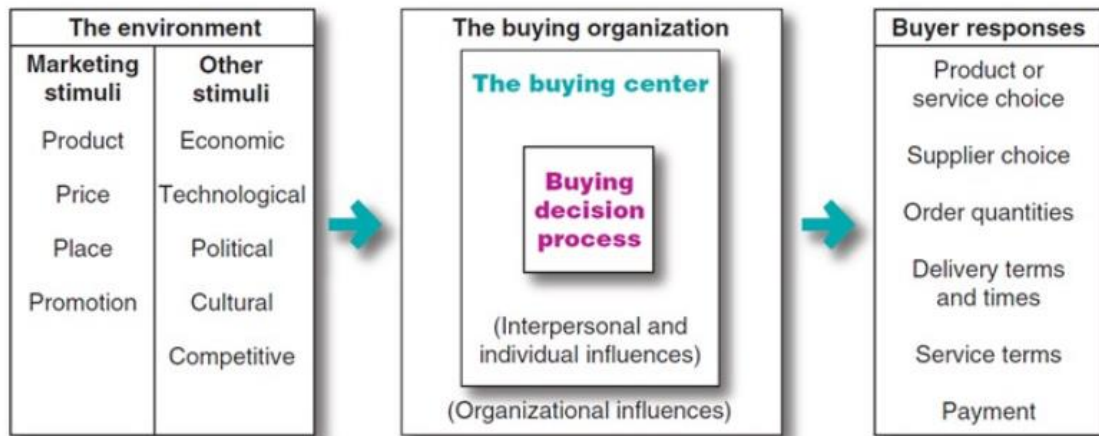
Some companies who are customer-oriented only talk about customer satisfaction or customer relationship management. Even though the companies think that the customer is essential and that they have a customer-oriented method, the reality might be another thing. Traditional marketing is often still sales-oriented as customers are viewed only as rational buyers and not as emotional and often irrational decision-makers. Furthermore, customer satisfaction is not really involving the customer, as it only focuses on the result, not the process itself.

In addition, companies sometimes have also problems concerning the quality of customer experience. It is difficult to keep an excellent quality due to different customers and particularly new customers differ from existing customer in several ways. (DiJulius 2008, 190) Often companies put more effort on obtaining new customers and due to this their experience might sometimes be better than for the present customers who have been loyal to the company for ages. Gaining new customers is also more costly than retaining these current, loyal customers and customer experience management is the easiest way of maintaining all the customers satisfied and faithful.

10. Business Buying Behavior

It is very important to understand how business buyers answer to marketing stimuli. Figure 2 presents a model of the business buying behavior in which marketing and other stimuli affect the buying company and make determined responses.

Figure 2. Model of Business Buyer Behaviour



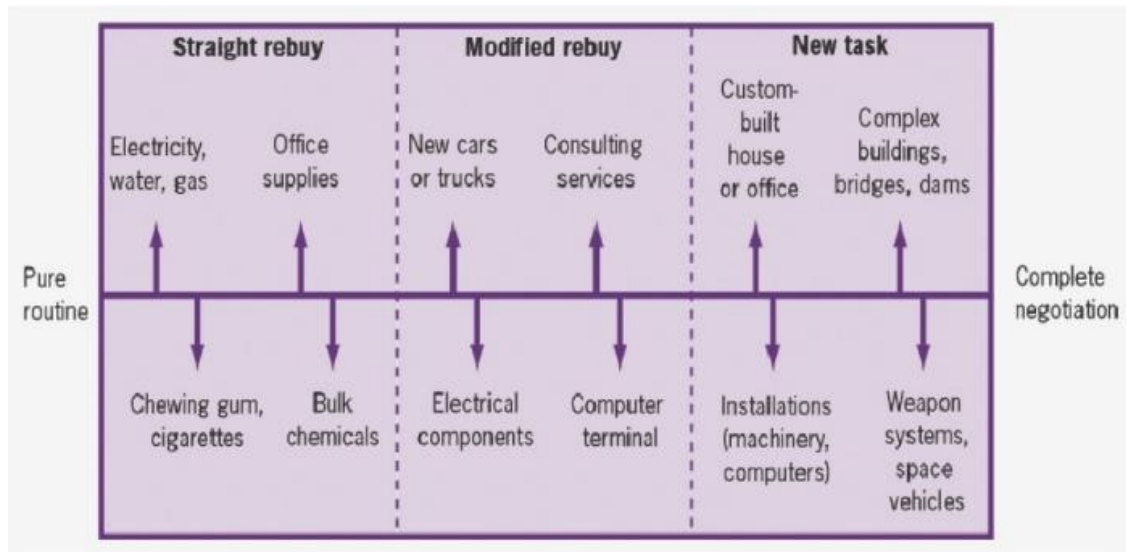
Source: Kotler and Armstrong, 2011

Likewise to consumer goods purchase, the stimuli for business buys includes in the 4 P's: Product, Price, Placement and Promotion. The other incentives are concerned to aspects within the economic, technological, political, cultural, and competitive environments. Together, both types of incitements permeate the organization, are processed by the buyer and in the end turned into a response: the option of product or service, selected supplier, order quantity, terms of payment, etc. (Kotler & Armstrong, 2007). To plan effective marketing strategies, marketers must understand what happens within the organization to transform those stimuluses into purchase answers.

11. Potential buying circumstances

The type of buying relies on the complexity of the problem being solved, the originality of the buying requirement, the number of people engaged, and the time needed for the entire process (Akhtar, 2015). Considering these variants, there are three main types of purchasing situations: straight rebuy (that is a regular decision), modified rebuy (that needs some research) and new task (requires complete research). Figure 3 illustrates some of the possible buying situations.

Figure 3. Types of industrial buying situations



Source: Kotler et al., 2013

– Straight rebuy

A straight rebuy is the buying or reordering of supplies on a routine basis from a supplier – based on past buying satisfactions, the purchaser simply chooses from the several suppliers on its list. For the supplier profiting from the repurchase this situation is ideal once the buyer is not looking to evaluate other products. For competitors who are not getting the order it may require broad marketing efforts to convince the buyer to consider other product or service alternatives (Kotler & Armstrong, 2007).

– Modified rebuy

Modified rebuy is a buying situation in which an individual or company buys goods that have been purchased before but changes either the supplier or some other parts of the previous order. There are many explanations why a product is moved to the status of a modified re-purchase. Some of these reasons comprise: end of purchase contract period, change in who is involved in making the purchase, supplier is removed from an approved suppliers list, mandate from top level of organization to reassess all purchasing, or strong marketing effort by competitors. In this situation the “in supplier” has to protect his account while the “out supplier” sees it as an chance to make a better offer and gain some business. A modified rebuy is less critical and consumes less time. A new product

introduction from the earlier version always creates a modified rebuy situation (Kotler & Armstrong, 2007).

– New task

When purchasing a product or service for the first time, organizations face big costs and risk. The buyer must decide on product specifications, suppliers, price, payment terms, order quantities, delivery terms and service terms. This requires a great number of decision members and a greater need to gather information (Kotler et al., 2013). Many business buyers prefer to buy a packaged solution to an issue from a single seller – systems buying. Buying a packaged solution to a particular problem avoids making all the separate decisions involved in purchasing each article or service separately. Systems selling is a crucial business marketing strategy for winning and holding accounts (Kotler et al., 2013).

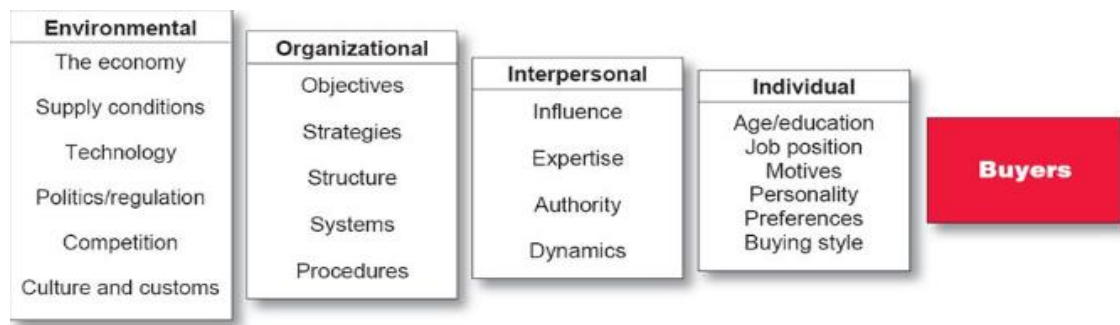
12. Major influences on Business Buyer Behavior

Concerning to purchasing decisions, business buyers are exposed to many influences. Some companies consider the major influences are economical, and consequently they attempt to offer great economic advantages to potential buyers. Thought, industrial buyers are human and react towards reason as well as emotion (Pickton and Broderick, 2001). By way of example, when suppliers' offers are very similar, the business buyer option is not strictly reasonable – whether it is possible for the company to reach its objectives with any of the supplier, then the buyers allows for personal influences to interfere in their decision process (Kotler & Armstrong, 2007).

The buying action is comprised of two parts: the individuals who affect the decision making and the buying decision process. Both are influenced by internal organizational, interpersonal and individual factors and also by external environmental factors.

Kotler and Armstrong (2011) visualize the factors affecting business buyer behavior as illustrated below in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Main influences on Business Buyer Behavior



Source: Kotler and Armstrong, 2011

– Environmental factors

Business buyers are greatly affected by factors in the present and expected economic environment. As economic uncertainty increases, business buyers tend to cut back on new investments and try to decrease their inventories. Beside these problems, another unease is the level of primary demand due to its influence in B2B markets (Kotler & Armstrong 2007). Ever more important element is the supply of key materials. Many companies are now disposed to maintain larger inventories of sparse materials or to commit to long-term price contracts to guarantee properly supply. In addition, business decisions are influenced by technological and competitive developments as well as possible changes in the political conjecture. Finally, culture and costumes can affect buyers' responses, specifically in an international environment.

– Organizational factors

Business marketers need to comprehend individual organizations objectives, policies, procedures, structure and systems, since these differ from company to company. Considering the internal organizational factors of a specific company, marketers understand how many people, and who, are engaged in decision making and based on what criteria do they buy (Kotler et al., 2013).

– Interpersonal factors

Considering that generally decisions are made by more than just one person, interpersonal factors are also present in business buying process, when these decision makers affect each other – these factors comprise authority, status, empathy and influence. Interpersonal aspects and group dynamics are often delicate and complicated to assess. Some may affect

a buying decision because they are well liked, have determined skill, control rewards or have specific relationship with key decision makers. Whenever possible, business marketers should attempt to create strategies that take interpersonal factors in account if possible. (Kotler et al., 2013).

– Individual factors

Each member of the buying process has different incentives, insights and preferences that are influenced by individual characteristics like age, revenue, level of education, job role, individuality and attitudes towards risk (Kotler & Armstrong 2007). In addition, purchasers have different buying styles. Some might be technical forms, who make thorough analysis of competitive offers before choosing a supplier, while others may be instinctive negotiators looking to find the best deal possible.

13. Decision buying procedure

Business to business buying decision process is more deliberate and differs from the consumer decision process (Kotler et al., 2013) – table 3 summarizes its distinctions with respects to the main purchasing situations.

Table 3: Comparison of business and consumer buying process in relation to major buying situations

Buying Step	B2B	B2C
1. Problem recognition	Anticipates and plans for a purchase on a routine basis	Reacts to needs when they arise
2. General need description	Extensive, objective, cost-benefit analysis	Limited analysis of benefits Concern with total cost
3. Product specification	Precise Technical description	Description more in terms of benefits
4. Information and supplier research	May take a long time Thorough research Extensive Several possibilities are selected	Limited – geographically and in terms of sources (internet, WoM, magazines, so on)
5. Proposal solicitation	Generally, follows a formal procedure	May be verbal
6. Supplier selection	Made after extensive analysis of objective information	Limited analysis, with subjective and circumstantial information influencing the decision
7. Post-purchase performance	Extensive comparison made and review feedback given Concern with quality of service	Little basis for comparison management at source

Source: Adapted from Kotler et al., 2013

14. The value of relationships in B2B markets

Developing the right relationships with business is chief for any integrated marketing program. To improve effectiveness and efficiency, business suppliers and customers are exploring different methods to manage their relationships – as never before, companies are using information about customers to enact precision marketing intended to establish strong long-term relationships (Kotler & Keller, 2011). Customer relationship management (CRM) makes more sense than ever as a tool to carefully dealing with detailed information about individual customers and all customers clashes with the brand and product (Kotler and Keller refer to these encounters as “touch points”) in order to increase loyalty. Reaching out to CRM companies takes the position of offering excellent real-time customer service through the effective use of individual account information. In reference to what they know about each valued customer, companies can adjust their market offerings, services or programs. Furthermore, CRM is quite crucial because a main driver of company prosperity is the total value of the company’s customer base.

As stated by Ahmad & Buttle, (2001), during literature it is very usual for authors to concur that relationships are especially pertinent in business markets, interaction and relationships can certainly add importance to the simple product an industrial player is offering. The fundamental environment where business relationships can be promoted and the reasons for its significance, however, are not strictly defined, as there are many different opinions on the subject.

Personal relationships are certainly vital for business. The author Blombäck, (2005) argues that building relationships beyond the business-tasks obligation gives a base on which business networks can be established. Likewise, Dubois and Håkan (2002) defend strong relationships may not only be used to enhance cost efficiency (business concern) but may also function as an important basis for value creation (in addition to concern of business). Equally, as stated by Blombäck (2005), recognizing business relationships are established upon personal reciprocity emphasize the need for sellers to work on enthusiasm and consciousness if they want to maintain a positive, long-term relationship – stagnation and routine might be dangerous.

Emphasize the buying process, Håkansson and Gadde (1992) differentiate between simple and complex buying situations and suggest that the complexity of a buying situation might

generate lower or higher levels of insecurity, which on their own might underline the need for confidence between actors. The authors show insecurity can never be wholly removed, but there is the opportunity for its management. Thus, trustworthy, and close relationships can work as a reassuring element for the buyer. In the same way, Anderson and Narus (1998) claim trust and commitment are essential elements of working relationships on the industrial market. Near to Håkansson and Gadde position, trust is one of the components that minimize the recognized risk for actors when acting in a business relationship.

With a similar perspective, Kotler and Keller (2011) support that building confidence is one precondition to healthy long-term relationships and a number of forces influence the improvement of a relationship between business partners. As reported by these authors, it is possible to name four pertinent elements: availability of options, importance of supply, complexity of supply, and supply market dynamism. Founded on these influential factors, the authors further classify buyer–supplier relationships into eight groups:

1. Basic buying and selling: simple, routine exchanges with moderate levels of cooperation and information exchange.
2. Bare bones: relationships require more adaptation by the seller and less cooperation and information exchange.
3. Contractual transaction: the exchanges are defined by formal contract and generally have low levels of trust, cooperation, and interaction.
4. Customer supply: this traditional custom supply situation, competition rather than cooperation is the dominant form of governance.
5. Cooperative systems: partners in cooperative systems are united in operational ways, but neither demonstrates structural commitment through legal means or adaptation.
6. Collaborative: with regards to collaborative exchanges, much trust and commitment lead to true partnership.
7. Mutually adaptive: buyers and sellers make many relationship-specific adaptations, but without necessarily achieving strong trust or cooperation.
8. Customer is king: in this close, cooperative relationship, the seller adapts to meet the customer's needs without expecting much adaptation or change in exchange.

Over the years, however, roles in the relationship may change or be triggered under in different circumstances. For example, some needs may be fulfilled with reasonably basic

supplier performance, and buyers then neither want nor demand a close relationship with a supplier. Similarly, some suppliers may not find it value their while to invest in customers with limited growth potential. An interesting research concerning business relationships concludes that the closest relationships between customers and suppliers emerge when the supply is vital to the customer and there are purchasing obstacles, such as complex purchase requirements and few alternative suppliers.

III. Intercultural Communication

Business relations at global level involve significant effort on the partners' behalf in terms of intercultural and national communication. Over the past 20 years, researchers have placed increasing emphasis on the effect of culture on values, communication styles, business ethics, and practice. Researchers observed that cultural diversity that comes with globalization is applied to all aspects of international business (Frey-Ridgway, 1997).

In a world economy, cultural awareness is crucial. As more companies continue to grow, and the global trade market becomes more accessible for small businesses, multicultural and cross-cultural groups are becoming more prevalent. This indicates that it is essential for businesses to understand the culture of their foreign market if they want to achieve international success.

Culture plays a significant role when we are doing business on an international level. This particularly happens when we are doing business with a company from a country that speaks a different language. Given that you must take into account what can you say and what should not say. As it may be understood in a wrong way.

Many people only recognize their own culture when travelling abroad or when meeting someone with different cultural aspects. Our way of thinking, what we believe to be right or wrong or how to act in certain situations are affected by the culture in which we are born and raised (Jandt, 2004). While talking or interacting with someone from the same cultural background, communication barriers are generally not expected. Though, when there is a conflict with people from different cultures, each one has its own perspective, with its own values, beliefs, and practices, leading their thoughts and behaviour (Maude, 2016).

For this reason, this chapter analyzes the intercultural side of an internship experience, and it is necessary to discuss important concepts and components that define intercultural communication. This chapter demonstrates the definition of intercultural communication and its different types, intercultural communication competences, and lastly the significance of effective intercultural communication for business.

1. Culture

This chapter described the common meaning of culture and how culture presents itself in many different ways.

1.1. Definition of culture

Before continuing, it is necessary to determine how the term culture has been interpreted for the context of this study. Culture consists of the language patterns, values, attitudes, beliefs, customs and patterns of thought (Barnett & Lee 2002, 276).

Geertz (1973, 89) defines culture as a system of meanings and symbols, in which social interaction happens:

[Culture is] an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life.

Barnett and Lee (2002, 277) as well approach culture from the perspective of meanings and symbols. Culture is a “group’s shared collective meaning system through which the group’s collective values, attitudes, beliefs, customs, and thoughts are understood”. Meanings are ascribed to verbal and nonverbal symbols. Culture is the consensus about the meanings of symbols which are owned by the members of a society. The consensus is important for understanding, encoding and decoding messages.

Nowadays, company and its workforce become constantly global and diverse; the term of “culture” becomes more and more significant for leaders, managers and their organizations. Hofstede and Hofstede (2005, 4) define culture as “the collective programming of the mind [...]” which distinguishes one group from another, or the “unwritten rules of the social game”, indicating the unspoken norms of behaviour.

Persons represent culture in different ways based on their personal experience during their lives. Individuals learn culture along their lives so there may be appropriate changes to each person's experience. Furthermore, every person has own perspective about culture. Nevertheless, for certain lifestyle to become a culture, it should be shared by a large group of people in society (Jandt, 2004).

In brief, culture is a way of life and worldview that is shared by people in a society. All individuals learn the lifestyle, that consists of beliefs and values accepted by a society, through interaction and communication within the society. These beliefs and values are rooted in individuals’ behaviour and the way they perceive specific events during their

lives. As individuals move along their lives, cultures can be shaped and changes in line with their experiences in life.

2. An important factor in international business: the culture

When an entrepreneur decides to make their way overseas, it is often not to repair the cultural issue, because it is more concerned with other aspects that play an important role during its cross-border negotiations. Thinking like this, taking the role of culture to a second level, and in most cases, feared culture shock is so terrible that it brings to the failure of the negotiations even before you even start.

Nowadays, we can observe that the business environment is changing in many ways. Also, the cultural environment is one of the most challenging fields for most international marketplaces. With the aim of understand and affect consumers' desires and needs, foreign businesses must understand the different cultures. As stated by Morrison (2002) cultural symbols involve religious rituals, language, and art whose shared meanings from the exclusive fingerprint of a certain society.

Culture is the secondary component of international negotiations, which is only taken into consideration when it meets face to face with our foreign partner and the first misunderstanding arises due to the unavoidable cultural contrast between the both sides (Maldonado, 2006).

In order to avoid cultural interference and make sure any issue is solved smoothly and quickly, the significant step is to know in depth the culture of the other side and give emphasis that holds in holds in the field of international relations.

For a deeper understanding of culture, the author, Hofstede illustrate 'onion diagram' (2005), which analyzes culture in different aspects. The diagram can be found in figure 5. According to the diagram, culture manifests itself in several ways: symbols, heroes, rituals and values.

Symbols are formed by language, gestures, images or objects carrying a particular meaning, which are recognized by people from the same culture background. Dress code, slang words, flags also belongs to this group. New symbols can be developed easily every year.

Heroes can be real or imaginary individuals, who are highly respected in a culture, consequently, can represent a standard for social behaviors. Rituals are activities, which

are considered to be crucial in the society, such as greetings, paying respects to others, or religious practices. As these activities are necessary, thus, they are performed of good will. All three components are designated as practices.

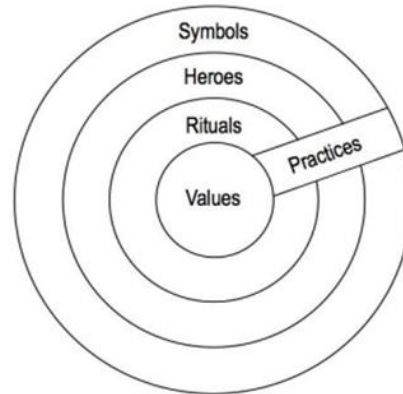


Figure 5: The “Onion Diagram”: Manifestations of culture at different levels of depth

(Source: Hofstede 1991:9)

The core of ‘culture’ is established by values. They represent the deepest level of a culture. Values are preferences or inclinations of people’s feelings toward certain issues. Values are among the first things people learning at the early age. As they are obtained early, people are not always aware of them. Consequently, they cannot be discussed or observed. They can only be brought out by the way people act under specific circumstances. Edward T. Hall (1959) also affirmed “culture controls behavior in deep and persisting ways, many of which are outside of awareness and therefore beyond conscious control of the individual”.

Even within one cultural group, an individual knows that himself/herself is different from others. Furthermore, nowadays, there are cultures within cultures, which create a great variety of culture in a cultural group. Consequently, the diversity within culture may also surpass the differences between cultural groups.

3. Intercultural communication

With the rapid globalization of the times, the public is increasingly paying attention to intercultural communication as a crucial element of success, both in life and at work. Nowadays, people cannot live without communication and due to the influence of

globalization. Consequently, intercultural communication is now more important than it ever was for companies. The number of interactions introduced by businesses continues to grow. Companies are increasingly willing to initiate business contacts with partners on international markets. Business activities are no longer limited within national borders. The success of these measures is mainly determined by effective intercultural communication.

Organizations have to build strong relations with culturally distinct partners to keep their global competitive advantage. To establish connections effectively, companies have to develop their intercultural communication skills. International communication is a process that has to be managed effectively to promote an understanding of global business relations. Those relations are described by a diversity of forms and distinctive characteristics.

Usually, the central purpose of communication is self-expression. There exist different modes of expression and also different types of communication, for example, cross-culture communication. Intercultural communication is the way of sending and receiving messages between individuals or groups whose cultural background can significantly influence to the different understanding of verbal and non-verbal signs. In light of globalization, the ability to communicate across cultures will give any company a competitive advantage.

Nowadays, multinational companies attempt to serve global needs. Serving these needs can also mean adapting to the local market of a country. The subsidiaries of the multinationals are located outside the country of the head office, taking several cultures under their wing. The situation of most countries this day follows this hypothetical idea: a company sets itself in a foreign country. It sends out recruitment announcements. The people who respond to these ads are not natives of that country, but also immigrants, who also trying to make a living in there as well. Thus, while hiring the best candidates, the company will not hire only one culture.

Important to highlight that an intercultural team can bring both advantages and disadvantages to a company. There exist advantages such as a growing power of creativity, different ideas, as we are dealing with a diverse group of people whose backgrounds has bring them to see the same challenge from different perspectives. It also leads to an increase of the variety of services.

On the contrary, when having diversity in a work team, disadvantages can emerge in the shape of misconceptions, integration problems, and lack of language skills.

Still, if the team is well trained and prepared, the chances of winning may be higher. This brings us back to cross-cultural training. It is advisable to start with the value of cultural tolerance, a significant issue that needs to be discussed these days. Tolerance is the willingness to accept behavior and/or beliefs that are different from our own¹.

4. Definition of Intercultural Communication

According to Lustig and Koester (2006, 46) intercultural communication is “a symbolic, interpretive, transactional, contextual process in which people from different cultures create shared meanings.”. Thought, each culture has its method of interpreting information. The way how people communicate is also different in each country. The differences that exists in communication between cultures are mainly associated to cultural models and practices, verbal and nonverbal rules, relationship standards and social concepts. When the degree of difference between cultures becomes relatively large, it will lead to misunderstandings and differing expectations about how to communicate effectively.

According to J. Allwood (1985) culture as an important component of intercultural communication. The author’s definition of the concept focuses on communication, a process of sharing information and knowledge, as well as the level of awareness in interactions between people representing different cultures.

The concept “communication” is defined by Law (2009) as the product of any action, be it physical, written, or verbal, that transmits information between individuals. In addition, communication is not only defined as a combination of natural sciences and social sciences but is also a crucial and effective element for the management of a company (Snell, 1985). The rapid advancement in information technology, the consequent globalization has led to communication becoming more complex in the 21st century.

People always lived in an extraordinarily complex world, with many different cultures, languages, and beliefs. Today, thanks to the development of new technologies and information systems, as well as to changes in the global economy and people’s movement, people can travel, work and exchange messages and information like more than ever.

¹ Definition according to Cambridge Dictionary, taken from the website:
<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/tolerance>

5. Positive work environment

As working places become multicultural, intercultural communication increases as a solution/skill that can help mitigate the differences between people from different cultural backgrounds. Intercultural communication is a skill that includes the ability to communicate and exchange information between people from different cultures and social groups. This implies that people understand what is unknown to them; they recognize that people from another culture have different culture models, thoughts, principles and social morals.

Each person wants to be respected and recognized by others and society in order to find his or her self-esteem. Employees are an important resource of any company, small or large, that wants to earn the respect of others as well as social recognition. Because employee commitment and business success are closely interconnected, healthy relationships must be built in the workplace to build good business sense (Hynes, 2012). That is to say, a company that includes active and dedicated employees will have greater innovation and productivity and, in the end, increased profitability. The motivational language used by management is one of the crucial components in strengthening employee self-efficacy and improving the performance of employees (Mayfield & Mayfield, 2012). Managers can adopt the use of culture-related motivational language to encourage employees to create a positive work environment. Conversely, employees without energy will significantly affect the performance of the company.

Individuals who want to achieve success in professional career, must be prepared to work in networks, communicate, share knowledge and learn in teams, and to be aware that they must keep an open mind concerning who they might work with.

Nevertheless, cooperation between different cultures can have barriers based on language, if there are different native languages and no common language. In today's world the English is the only language that is used in almost all the fields, such as science and technology, medicine, education, tourism, entertainment, information and technology, business, trade and commerce and the internet. This indicates that English, which has been deprived of its culture, is now the language of international communication. Companies need it as a skill to have, give training to its employees in case they need to improve it.

Right now, intercultural workplaces are a phenomenon that describes the twenty-first century's world. Cultures collide with each other day to day as they work together to achieve the same objectives. Simply put, we talk about cross-cultures management, which usually happens when intercultural communication is largely involved (Gullestrup, 2002, p. 3).

We are part of an intercultural environment, we may start to question how to build relationships or how to overcome specific communication obstacles. One of these obstacles is culture shock. The cultural difference is found in the form of customs, symbols or beliefs presented by each group (Fernandes, 2014). This culture shock occurs because we all learn the habits, symbols and beliefs of our culture when we are still children, and they became something natural and unconscious (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010).

6. Elimination of Conflicts

Nowadays, with international migration becoming increasingly available, employees work in progressively diverse environments, in this way being exposed to diverse cultures. Each individual has their own culture which affects their mode of thinking, feeling and behavior and these differences can and will result in conflict. The concept conflict is described as a type of disagreement, discord and even expressed struggle between at least two interdependent parties who perceive incompatible objectives, scarce resources, and interference from others in achieving their objectives (Adams, 2009). However, a counterproductive labour conflict can have many negative consequences. With the aim of eliminating the conflict at a fundamental level, communication is required. Relationship conflicts, a disagreement or an argument that takes place between two or more people within a relationship, most likely occurs when an individual behaves in a negative manner (Pelled, 1993).

Employees in companies come from different cultures and backgrounds, resulting in different personalities. When such diverse individuals work in a company to accomplish a common goal, it is common that the disagreements between personalities arise, creating interpersonal tension, and disappointment (Jia-Chi, 2010). The general group performance of the company can decline significantly if such conflicts of personalities are not resolved and they do not cross a common ground for collaborative work (Pelled, 1993).

Accordingly, intercultural communication is extremely important in order to prevent conflict caused by a culturally diverse working environment.

7. Elements of intercultural communication

There are two main aspects that define intercultural communication: cultural factors and communicative competencies. The first deals with the broad concept of culture in general, with hundreds of definitions proposed in the literature. The author will first differentiate between two types of culture and will then continue to explain their nature in detail.

The success of long-term business relations is driven by every partner's disposition to invest in the progress of effective communication. Without efforts to learn about each other's culture, the share of information and knowledge will be reduced, and the sender and the recipient will not be able to fully benefit from their relationship. The cultural framework must be studied from the point of view of a nation as well as an organization. National culture includes values, beliefs and principles which determine the life style of social groups and populations by relying on fundamental concepts that had been transmitted to individuals in the early stages of development (Griffith & Harvey, 2001). National culture is not only embedded in everyday life, but also determines the way a social group perceives reality, explains mutual relationships, the roles individuals play, their mutual commitments and duties towards an organization. Factors such as social customs, space, friendship, cohesion, time, class systems, religion, gender, ethical standards, individualism and society's attitude to these values, which differ widely across national cultures, play a key role in shaping effective intercultural communication

National culture is not only rooted in daily life, but it also shapes the way reality is perceived by a social group, it describes reciprocal relationships, the roles played by persons, their mutual commitments and duties to an organization. Aspects such as social customs, space, friendship, cohesion, time, social class systems, religion, gender, ethical norms, individualism and society's attitude towards those values, which vary extensively across national cultures, play a central role in building effective intercultural communication (Wells & Spinks, 1994).

Even though national culture has a direct relationship to an organization, an organization's culture is shaped by the cultural standards of its members, its principles, operational processes and procedures. National culture has an inevitable influence on organizational

culture. Members of an organization transmit their own cultural standards to the corporate level, thereby participating in the process of cultural change. Organizational culture is perceived as a group of shared values, behaviours and beliefs that encourage an understanding of a company's operating principles and rules that determines the performance of its employees (Griffith, 2002). It merges the culture of a nation with that of the communities present in the organizational environment. Interactions between the two cultures can enhance or restrict the effectiveness of communication and should consequently be considered fundamental elements in international business relations.

8. Intercultural communication competences

Intercultural communication competence implies the ability to be aware of the risks of misconception through differences in speech, behaviour and body language. Furthermore, it involves the ability to adapt the person's speech and behaviour according to the situation. Intercultural communication skills include ethical behaviour such as

- Respecting for individuals from other cultures.
- Being non-judgmental towards members of other cultures.
- Taking appropriate turns in intercultural dialogues.
- Being empathy for individuals from other cultures.

Intercultural communication competence can be divided into four fields: personality strength, communication skills, psychological adjustment and cultural awareness (Jandt, 2013).

Personality strength are personal characteristics that influence intercultural communication. These personal characteristics are self-concept, self-disclosure, self-control and social relaxation. For instance, self-concept relates to the way how an individual view oneself. Self-disclosure indicates the willingness to reveal information about oneself to the partner. Self-control consists of using social information to modify self-presentation and behaviors to adapt to the situation. Finally, social relaxation simply involves the skill to communicate conveniently and showing little anxiety. Accordingly, an effective intercultural communicators have to present themselves well and initiate positive image through their self-awareness. In addition, is significant for the individual to show their friendly personality in intercultural communication as well.

Psychological adjustment implies the ability to cope with the 'culture shock'. 'Culture shock' usually occurs when a person is moving to a new culture, where they might experience stress and unpleasant situations. While we are in new environment, the feelings of 'culture shock' can transform into disappointment and stress. The common reasons of 'culture shock' are disturbing cultural customs, complicated living conditions, lack of family and friends.

Nevertheless, looking from a different point of view, joining a new cultural environment would give persons a good opportunity to learn and grow both professionally and emotionally. Furthermore, they can learn more about their culture's strength and weakness through living and working in a different cultural environment. Thus, a competent communicator must be able to maintain oneself and adapt to new environments.

9. Barriers to intercultural communication

Individuals from all around the world are born and grown up in a particular culture and subculture, which teaches norms, values, and rules of how to live in a society. While people interact, they do so according to their cultural background. Simply put, people send and receive messages driven by communicative rules of their culture.

In an intercultural environment, there is a high risk of misunderstanding because of the difference between cultures. We can observe that the higher the difference, the more difficult will be an effective intercultural communication. Lack of communication can cause conflict or even worsen one already existing. Indeed, it is too easy to fall into the traps caused by the obstacles to intercultural communication. They are very difficult to perceive and the only way to prevent them is to learn to recognize those obstacles and avoid making the mistakes associated to them (Jandt, 2009; Jayaswal, 2009).

LaRay M. Barna (1997) identified a list of six barriers to intercultural communication: anxiety, assumption of similarities instead of difference, language differences, nonverbal misinterpretations, stereotypes and prejudice, and ethnocentrism.

Assumption of similarities relates to the assumption that people are just like us or that they are in a similar situation as our own, when it cannot be the case. Individuals can assume that the basic human needs make everyone similar to some extent. However, they do not consider that cultures around the world found different forms of adaptation to those same needs, which resulted in the norms and rules that distinguish each culture (Barna, 1997)

One of the most evident barriers to intercultural communication may be language. If there is no common language between people to understand each other, it can be very difficult to communicate verbally. Even when there is a common language, there exist elements that can hinder with communication, as accents or slang, different vocabulary (Vieira & Sousa, 2015).

As discussed previously, nonverbal communication can also represent a barrier to effective intercultural communication. There is ambiguity and imprecision of nonverbal signals, which leads to misinterpretation, the inability for nonverbal communication to work as a public tool for communication, or the distortion of information (Hans & Hans, 2015).

Stereotypes “exist because they offer the individual a shorthand way of engaging with and understanding the world around them” (Locke & Johnston, 2001, p.109). This means, stereotyping is an outcome of people trying to expect and predict what other people would do to decrease the uncertainty of others. This could constitute a barrier in intercultural communication because of its “oversimplified, overgeneralized, and exaggerated” (Samovar and Porter, 2004) nature. Furthermore, stereotyping is unacceptable because people who stereotype frequently assume that they are superior to others and take ethnocentric views of others.

In relation to ethnocentrism, it is defined by LaRay M. Barna (1997, p.342) as “each person’s culture or way of life always seems right, proper, and natural. This bias prevents the open-minded attention needed to look at the attitudes and behavior patterns from the other’s point of view”. It is a concept close to prejudice and stereotypes as it enables to instantly approve or disapprove something done or said by others without taking into consideration their culture and different viewpoint of the world (Gudykunst, 1991).

Anxiety happens because of not knowing what one is expected to do, and centering on that feeling and not be fully present in the communication process. For example, individuals might have faced anxiety on their first day on a new university campus or in a new job. Also, anxiety can be very common in an intercultural communication since it is formed by uncertainties. Because of the search for similarities, it is difficult for people to reduce the uncertainty of other people with different cultural backgrounds (Samovar and Porter, 2010). When meeting with people, who are members of different groups and unknown to you, people have uncertainty about unknown persons. On the other hand, people try to decrease uncertainty about others by forecasting their possible behaviour.

Moreover, anxiety and stress affect the mind and body. In certain instances, people may need a relief and use defensive processes that can go from distortion of insights to hostile ones. During a cross-cultural meeting where people are suffering from high anxiety, the other barriers to communication can emerge and make the encounter disastrous and drive to a failed intercultural communication (Barna, 1997).

IV. Host entity

1. The company – Snow Factory

This chapter will allow me to contextualize the report through the presentation of the location of my training – Snow Factory, SLU. First of all, I will talk about the company and the sector to which it belongs to, then I will be describing the brands that the company distributes. Finally, I will talk and describe the customer service experience and main responsibilities and functions that was requested of me during the internship in the company.

2. General presentation of the company

My internship took place in a sports distribution company based in Barcelona. The Snow Factory was established in 2006 (Snow Factory, 2019). A long experience in the industry and a passion for sport gave the team from Snow Factory the idea to start its own project. Nowadays Snow Factory (see Figure 6) is constituted by a team of enthusiastic professionals; dedicated and commitment to their daily activities. The total number of employees is 20.

Figure 6. The logotype of the company Snow Factory SLU



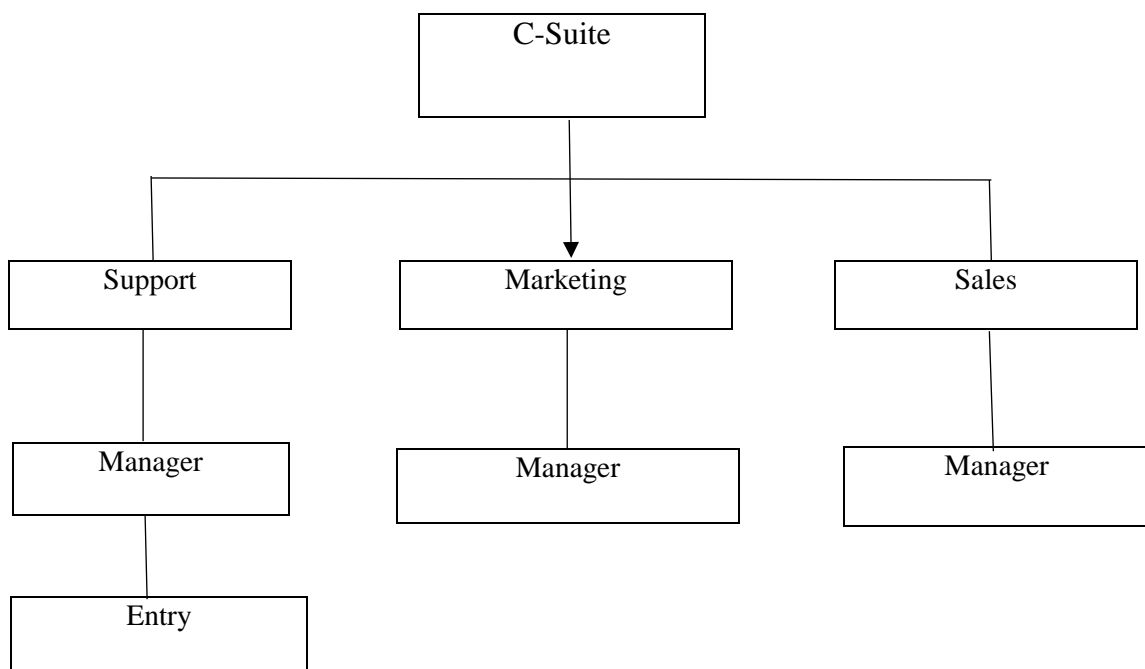
Source: Snow Factory, 2019

The company has showrooms that allow them to demonstrate products and develop industry-broad credibility. Showrooms in Snow Factory is a way to introduce new audiences to the brands that Snow Factory distributes and it is permanent setups to encourage customers to consistently interact with products and hopefully place orders. Increase awareness of the brands and increase customer trust base are important elements for the Snow Factory company.

The company distributes brands, communicating their stories and values. The company's philosophy is to treat customers as friends, establishing a long lasting relationship. It is also

important to emphasize that Snow Factory serves more than 450 clients across Spain and Andorra, divided into three departments: Snow, Performance and Outdoor. Concerning the organization chart, the company has departments sorted by size: support, marketing, sales and manager department. Below, the Figure 7 shows the functional organization chart. Moreover, the company distributes brands (Snow Factory, 2019): La Sportiva, Ferrino, Ultimate Direction, Icebreaker, Picture, Stockli, Alpina and Zoggs.

Figure 7. Organization Chart of Snow Factory SLU



Source: Snow Factory SLU, 2020

3. Personal interaction: Description of the brands

3.1. La Sportiva

La Sportiva distributed by Snow Factory, was established in 1928. Narciso Delladio hand-crafted wooden leather boots for many lumber-jacks and farmers of the Fassa and Fiemme valleys (Dolomites, Italy). Notably, after the war, the desire for boots grew complaisant Narciso to hire new workers: the good name of "Calzoleria Sportiva" came out the boarders of the valleys. Starting from that period of time the *La Sportiva's* history

continued to develop. Nowadays, the firm produces boots and shoes for all kind of outdoor activities, from climbing and mountain running, trekking and the ski mountaineering in Fiemme Valley, categories in which *La Sportiva* is the market leader. Not long ago the company joined the ski mountaineering section and in the apparel market with a complete choice of technical clothes for running and climbing. Particularly, *La Sportiva* who produces mostly in his headquarter at Ziano di Fiemme, is distributed in more than 70 countries global (La Sportiva, 2019). All companies sell winter and sport products, like tents, backpacks, sleeping gears, snowshoes, vests, bottles and reservoirs. In general, it's the equipment used by all those who want to have great adventures.



Figure 8. The logotype of the brand La Sportiva

Source: Milano Climbing Expo, 2020

The brand *La Sportiva*, was created to attend the needs of athletes and mountaineers, all the time in contact with extreme mountains. When the mountaineers visit the factory, they request products that meet their demands. Additionally, at La Sportiva things have always worked in that method, starting from shoes developed for alpinists which were created from shoes for woodsmen, and that is why La Sportiva shoe factory is called La Sportiva shoe factory: to differentiate from all the others who made shoes for working in the woods. Essentially, La Sportiva makes shoes for alpinism, for climbing and for people who go the mountains.

Also, another relevant aspect is that since 1928 *La Sportiva* has had its headquarters in Val di Fiemme, in the Dolomites which were declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2009. A place that carries with it a special social and environmental responsibility, deeply felt within the company. Since the brand conception, it focuses on a sustainable and eco-compatible approach, constantly worked on so to reach the definitive creation of the finished product. (La Sportiva, 2019). *La Sportiva* attention is focused on respecting the environment and trying to implement solutions and possible procedures to decrease CO2 emissions and waste of raw material.

3.2.Ferrino

The other important brand is Ferrino, relevant by its cultural and historical issues, the brand has a century and half of history and experience dealing with great adventures. The story: It is 1870, Cesare Ferrino had created a method able to waterproof canvases and fabrics. The first clients of Ferrino were Fiat and the Italian Army. Since that time, they have started a productive dialogue with mountaineers and explorers, to which Ferrino company provides its experience and expertise acquired over the years.



The figure 9. The logotype of the brand Ferrino

Source: Ricochet, 2019

Since 2017 Ferrino has been supporting the legendary Polish expeditions with tents, sleeping bags and backpack from the Ferrino High Lab collection, and the also being the partner to the Basque mountaineer Alex Txikon on his winter adventures in Antarctica and on Everest (Ferrino e C. S.p.A., 2019).

Additionally, the company, *Ferrino* is based on five pillars: freedom, future, adventure, awareness and passion. According to Ferrino brand philosophy, quality is more than just a detail (Ferrino, 2019). A base camp and exclusive laboratory establish to experiment materials and prototypes in extreme conditions. A project that demonstrates the principles of Ferrino: outdoor without limits, investing in research and technology. This is the origin of HighLab, where a range of products created to meet the highest quality standards, guaranteeing maximum performance in any climate conditions, even the roughest. The laboratories of Ferrino are located on one of the Europe's main glaciers Rifugio Quintino Sella, (Italy; Monte Rosa).

It is also important to mention an interesting fact: Ferrino has always been an important partner in preserving the environment, maintain dialogue and awareness on the subject.

The TRES (Turismo Responsabile - Responsible Tourism) plan was founded in 2006. Its goal has been to actively encourage ethical travel, respecting different areas and the traditions of the people who live there. In general, we can say that Ferrino tourism structure is a mouthpiece, set on principles of fairness, sustainability, and tolerance (Ferrino, 2019).

3.3. Stockli

Stöckli brand history started in 1935 when Josef Stöckli started by making a solid ash ski at his parent's carpentry shop in Wolhusen, Switzerland. More than 80 years later, people can still try out Stockli's passion, and feel many years of experience in ski construction in every handmade ski (Glaser, 2020). The search for excellence brings forward sports-obsessed development team.



Figure 10. The logotype of the brand Stockli

Source: Get Logo Vector, 2020

Concerning the brand Stöckli, skis are exclusive pieces made from premium materials, such as wood, bamboo or carbon fiber, handcrafted chiefly in the heart of Switzerland. The manufacturing facility in Malters near Lucerne completes every step of the production themselves (Stockli, 2020). That helps to create an international success.

According to the history about the brand Stockli (2020), the main principle of Stockli brand is innovation. Josef Stöckli was very creative from the beginning. When he was making his first pair of skis, he was already considering how he could pare back some weight, so he fluted the surface of the ski. As we can read in the story about the brand, Josef Stockli was always searching for something new. In 1945, he made his first pair of laminated wood skis combining hickory and ash with screwed-on steel edges (Stockli,

2020). Moreover, he also experimented with gluing on celluloid edges on top. He was the first, in 1957, to make metal skis, taking on an idea from Head. In 1965 Stöckli made the first skis of plastic compounds. In addition, Josef Stöckli only sold skis that he himself had tested.

Since 1935, Stockli has progressed hugely, from when they were a small production line over a washbasin, where 50 pairs of skis were created. Ski production has stayed mainly in Malters outside of Lucerne since 1986 (Stockli, 2020). Nowadays, Stöckli Swiss Sports AG sells more than 60,000 pairs of skis annually. Combination of the most modern computer-controlled (CNC) milling machines and hand finishing, 80 coworkers build today's high-tech ski products. Count on its more than 80 years of experience and implementation of successful new ideas from racing and growth departments, Stockli ensure a wide-reaching collection sure to meet the requirements of every skier (Gläser, 2020).

3.4. Picture

In 2008, Julien, Jérémy, and Vincent, Picture's 3 co-founders, followed through with their original idea of establishing an environmentally and socially responsible clothing brand (The Picture, 2020).

The brand has a clear idea founded on strong values. Picture is the environmentally friendly product design. Exclusive designs that distinguish for their fresh colors and appreciated for their good quality. Regarding cost prices, they are regulated to ensure that Pictures products are a true option to traditional industrial production (Picture-organic-clothing, 2020).



The figure 11. The logotype of the brand Picture Source: B Corporation, 2020

It is important to consider that Picture products are made from 100% recycled, organic or responsibly sourced materials (Picture-organic-clothing, 2020). Furthermore, all products are designed to last as much time as possible. This is crucial in decreasing the product's general impact on the environment. Also, the clothing brand does its best to repair the rips, tears, and other damage a product incurs when used. Repairing a product raises its durability, decreasing its overall impact on the environment (Picture-organic-clothing, 2020). Even in cases where the guarantee no longer valid, the company puts the customer in contact with one of the repair centers where the products can still be repaired.

At the moment, some Picture Stores now include recycled furnishings and decorations made with Precious Plastic machines. As example, polypropylene waste from fabrication was recycled to create different forms of ornamental panels.

4. Customer Service experience

My first day at the company was interesting and exciting, my colleagues did a presentation about the company and products that they distribute in Spain and Andorra. The presentation was about the main functions of the company and how it worked. Then, it was explained that each brand has its own products and the main goal is to attract potential customers by answering product and service questions, providing helpful information about other products and services. Process orders, prepare correspondences and fulfill customer needs to ensure customer satisfaction. Also, the head of customer service department explained that the customer service is the front line of support for customers and I have during my work process to ensure that clients are satisfied with products, services, and features.

In addition, I needed to learn about the products, services and prices within the company. My colleagues clarified that knowing what the Snow Factory does is hugely important. The main responsibility that I had in customer service department was: to maintain a positive and professional attitude toward customer at any moment; to respond punctually to customer questions; to solve product or service problems by clarifying the customer's complaint, defining the cause of the problem, explaining the best solution to solve the problem, accelerating correction, and following up to ensure resolution; communicating

with clients through several channels; processing orders, forms, and requests and finally, ensure customer satisfaction and provide professional customer support.

Also, I had to recommend potential products or services to management by collecting customer information and analyzing customer needs and communicating with colleagues as necessary. Other duty was keep records of customer interactions, comments and complaints. It was necessary to contribute to the team effort by accomplishing related results as needed and provide feedback on the efficiency of customer service process.

In the same way, working as a part of the team is crucial in the company. It was identified by my coordinator that teamwork lies at the center point of any company. Therefore, the role includes working as part of a team. This implies that if one of the colleagues is doubtful on how to deal with a customer or some particular issue, the others must help out. This also means that customer service assistants do not only work on a specific part of the services, but in general. Everyone has to agree with this, so the same consistent working practices is used at all times by all team members.

During the first part of the working day, I worked in customer support department and I needed to manage different orders that we received from the customers, send emails, verify stock and enter into the system all orders that have been requested by customers. All these processes that I managed in customer service department is called B2B marketing. Business-to-business refers to business that is leaded between companies, rather than between a company and individual consumer. B2B marketing is the process of business promoting their products and service to other businesses, including common strategies like email marketing, SEO, and social media marketing.

In the context of communication, business-to-business refers to methods by which employees from different companies can connect with one another, such as through social media. This type of communication between the employees of two or more companies is called B2B communication.

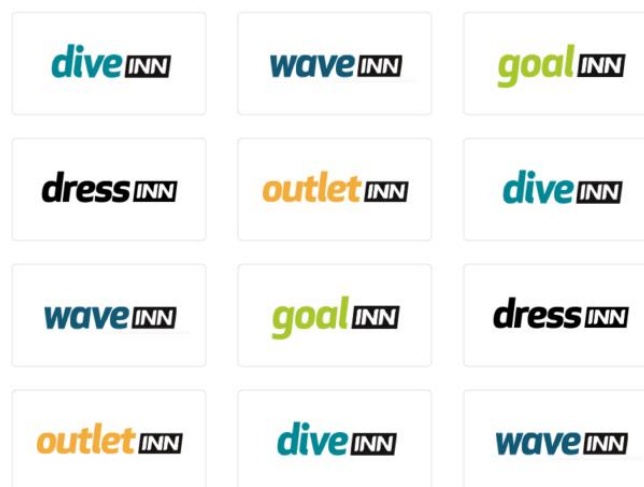
V. Descriptions of the programs and its functions

1. The program - Trade INN

The Tradeinn is an affiliate program specialized in selling sport equipment, with 12 lines of business: running, cycling, swimming, mountain, ski, tennis and paddle, football, diving, sailing and fishing, fitness, sports fashion and equipment for motorcyclists. Nowadays, this e-commerce sells worldwide and its sales continue to increase (Tradeinn, 2020). Owner and CEO of Tradeinn, David Martin explains that in today's global marketplace, creating a climate of security and trust is key to the success of online shops (London Stock Exchange Group, 2020).

In addition, tradeinn offers more than 750,000 products of 1500 top brands in its 13 online stores: Diveinn, Waveinn, Swiminn, Snowinn, Trekkinn, Runnerinn, Bikeinn, Traininn, Smashinn, Goalinn, Motardinn, Dressinn and Outletinn. Their program includes online stores available in 18 countries, 12 currencies, 75 payment methods, 22 local phone numbers and different price rates according to each market (Tradeinn, 2020).

Figure 12. Tradeinn online stores



Source: Tradeinn, 2020

The Tradeinn team is in a constant process of innovation providing its customers new products and services. In fact, its success is based on the use of ethical values, innovation and business practices aimed at meeting customer satisfaction.

From tradeinn point of view, creating a safe climate and adapting to the ideas, trends and tastes that are developing around the world are the essential to success in e-commerce. It is

always important to searching for new ways to surprise customers. The platform build business around customer satisfaction providing the best service.

2. The process of working with Trade Inn

With the objective to manage the orders of different brands that I have received daily by email from Tradeinn, Barrabes and Alpina (company's customers), I needed to use the platform of Tradeinn. My task was checking the PDF document and availability of the orders sent by our clients, enter them in Aqua program, create delivery note and then inform about the quantity and availability of the products in Tradeinn platform.

Firstly, it needs to open the website of Trade INN to access the order. Once we have the orders for the brand in question on the screen, click on the Excel icon to download the order. Afterwards, you must click on the icon to start a "New" order. In the header, must be filled the following data within the "General" tab:

Client: 1451

Delegation: 0

Order brand: La Sporica (005), Ultimate Direction (001), Zoogs (002), Ferrino (016), Alpina (007)

Channel: Repo

Trader: 101 (La Sportiva, Ultimate Direction, Zoggs), 500 (Alpina), 580 (Ferrino).

Needed / Planned: date of the following day

On the other hand, we have to download a stock status of the brand in question, to check the availability of all the references requested by the customer. Once we have obtained the stock status, it is crossed with the order in CSV using the EAN, with the SearchV function.

Important: in case of lack of stock, you must make a copy / paste of the affected lines and send it by e-mail to Trade Inn, so that they can inform and eliminate the unavailable references of your their order. In this way we also avoid future complaints about products that have not arrived (because we have not been informed of these faults).

Now you can enter the order in Aqua (the program where I have entered all orders of customers) with the lines of everything we have checked that is available (what is not available is not entered in the order in Aqua, so that it does not remain pending).

Within "Sales" (1) we select the "Sales order entry" (2) to open the "Sales order creation" tab. In the "Comments and observations" tab, it is indicated "REPO + ACRONYMS BRAND + SEASON" followed by the date and the Trade INN order number:

Abbreviated nomenclature of each Brand:

La Sportiva (LS), Zoogs (ZG), Ultimate Direction (UD), Ferrino (FE), Alpina (AL), Sportlast (SP).

Season: From February 1 to August 31: Spring Summer (SS + year) / From September 1 to January 31: Fall Winter (FW + year).

Once the header has been filled in, we click on the icon to enter a new line in the order.

You can enter the line by EAN (for a single unit) or by reference, by clicking F2 to display the reference options. Once selecting the item, we open the size chart to enter the quantities. After the reference and the quantities per size have been indicated, we can now indicate the discount.

Discounts for FW18 (by brand):

La Sportiva: 9% ULTIMATE: 10% ZOGGS: 8% FERRINO: 8% ALPINA: 7% y 8% (depending on the product / this is indicated on the website).

In order to continue entering lines, it must be validated in the accept button and when we no longer want to enter more lines, we click on the cancel button

When the order is entered correctly, we can validate the order and write down the order number that appears in the box. To be able to inform the order number, it is opened by clicking on the "view products" button. And once opened, the order number is entered in the "your reference" box and then validated with the "insert" button.

Now it can be created the delivery note order at Aqua, ensuring that there is no other item that cannot be served due to lack of stock. It will be necessary to check the units of delivery notes contrasted with the order units on the website of Trade Inn.

Returning to the Internet (Trade Inn website), to indicate that products do not arrive due to lack of stock, you will have to specify it in the drop-down menu, choosing the option "never": (the rest of the products that are in stock, will leave the "OK" by default).

When the information is correctly completed, it can be validated with the "modify all products" button. Finally, but most importantly, it must be uploaded the CSV order to their application. This is the only way Trade Inn registers and uploads the order into their system.

The values are copied from column "B" and pasted into column "A". If there are variations, they must be indicated. If the order is complete, it is copied and pasted in its entirety without any changes. This file is saved without modifying the format or the name of the file in the following way:

(G) LEIGH TRADE INN FW18 CSV (corresponding folder according to the brand of the order).

A message will appear asking if this format should continue to be used, to which a "Yes" will be answered. At the time of closing Excel, it will ask if you want to save the changes, to which it should be answered "Do not save".

To access the button that loads the CSV, it is necessary to return to the general view of the orders, by clicking on "pending purchase orders".

At the bottom of the order list, there is a button to select the CSV (following the path where they have previously been saved) and once selected, the delivery note number created in Aqua will be indicated.

It is very important to be sure of the information provided, because if you do not have to report errors by email so that they can correct it in their system. Once everything has been reported on the website of Trade Inn, it can be closed the application (or continue with other brands) and return to Aqua to print the generated invoice in PDF, proceed to answer

the e-mail with the PDF for the customer, taking advantage (if necessary) of the lack of stock (or any other necessary mention). This is done by answering everyone and adding shipping-info@tradeinn.com and admin@snowfactory.es and purchase-orders@tradeinn.com. When there is a lack of stock it needs to be responded to product-availability@tradeinn.com.

3. Orders management of ALPINA

With the aim of manage the orders of different brands that I have received daily by email, I needed to use the platform of Tradeinn as I mentioned before. During the first part of my work, generally I downloaded stock to check the availability of requested products.

When I had new requests of Alpina (German brand that Snow Factory distributes), firstly I should send them to my colleague from Germany by email and receive an answer with acceptance or rejection of products. Once I had received an email with the reply and order confirmation and delivery note, I started to manage them in the system *AQUA*.

Orders are downloaded from the website Trade INN. Selecting the entire file, it is transformed with the macro, to convert it into the format used to order from Alpina by mail and send it to whoever is in charge of the mailing. Once transformed, the order is entered in Aqua, with the following observations: (ENVIO DIRECTO) REPO AL SS20 – 30062020 / 378490. Annual discounts can be consulted on the Trade INN website. To be able to inform the order number, it is opened by clicking the "view products" button. Once opened, the order number is entered in the "your reference" box and then validated with the "insert" button

If Alpina reports the out of stock, it will also be necessary to inform it on the internet and indicate which products do not arrive by specifying in the drop-down the option "never". (The rest of the products that are in stock will leave the "OK" by default).

Finally, and most important, the CSV order must be uploaded to application of Trade Inn. This is the only way Trade Inn registers and uploads the order to their system. It is very important to be sure of the information provided, because if you do not have to report errors by email so they can be corrected in their system.

Once everything has been informed on the website, the application can be closed and returned to Aqua to print the generated delivery order in PDF, the email is answered with the PDF for the client, taking information of the necessary case of the lack of stock.

4. Aqua eSolutions

In Snow Factory, after receiving the orders from the customers, we have to make a confirmation of existence of the products that were ordered by customers and then enter them in to the system Aqua. Then, we have to create the delivery note for every order and send by email to Tradeinn or Barrabes.

Aqua eSolutions is a manufacturer of Business Software solutions for small and medium sized businesses. Founded in 1989, the essence of Aqua eSolutions has always been Enterprise Software engineering (Aqua e Solutions, 2020). The contribution of innovative business software solutions with high added value that enhance the competitiveness of companies.

Aqua eSolutions has from its origin, the concepts of innovation, development and latest technology. The serious research carried out by its R + D + I (research + development and innovation) centre, in order to locate the most avant-garde technological projects, the deep knowledge of the business and the experience accumulated over more than 31 years, has positioned Aqua eSolutions as one of the reference suppliers in the Spanish market.

In addition, aqua eSolutions carries out the design, development, commercialization, implementation and support of an extensive set of software solutions: Erp, crm, hr, scm, sga, tpv, bi, project management, ecommerce and apps with sectorial specialization, through its own resources and a network of certified partners (Aqua Certified Partner) (Aqua e Solutions, 2020).

Also, aqua eSolutions has a solid group of clients, of more than 29,000 users, made up of solid and profitable companies of all sizes, from start-ups to large companies, belonging to the most varied sectors of activity. Aqua eBS 2020 is a powerful suite of business management solutions specially developed to solve and automate all business operations of small and medium-sized companies. It integrates, connects and resolves in an integral and

efficient way all the activity areas of the company, optimizing business processes, improving productivity and increasing profitability. (Aqua e Solutions, 2020).

5. Aqua web order

B2B is Snow Factory's sales platform: <http://b2b.snowfactory.es/home> The website through which customers make their orders. Once the order is confirmed in the B2B platform, it appears in Aqua, where we can generate all orders and send them to our clients.

1. Order confirmation

Web orders are the orders that customers make through B2B. Once the client has made/requested an order, it will appear in Aqua and the first thing to do is confirm them to enter them into the system and be able to manage an order:

Go to the menu "SNOW. SnowFactory specific adaptations" (1), click on the option "Confirmation of WEB orders" (2), and once the list appears, click on "Generate prepared prop" (3).

Once the proposal is generated, the orders disappear from the screen because they have been processed. If not, we have to check that they are actually selected in the "tick" in the "ready" column.

2. Modification of WEB orders

Go to the menu "Sales" - "Consultation of sales orders": the screen "select filter" will appear - click on accept and a box will appear with the entity: leave it blank so that it takes all the customers and "accept".

In the list of pending orders, we filter them by "Series = web (4) and order by" Commercial name "(5) to be able to check if there are customers with more than one order and thus consider it for the payment and shipping conditions:

We select an order and double click to open it: before starting to edit the order, we have to click on the "Assign web rep" icon: it is used to sign the correct representative. Usually it works out fine but there are some cases where they need to be changed.

Then click on "Edit" to be able to modify the order header.

3. General

1) Client

The customer name is always given. In some cases, we will have to change it. In case of having to change the name of the client, it will always be indicated in the observations.

For example, they can enter orders made by marketing, client 2777 (JULIO) OR 2554 (CRIS PLANAS) and in observations indicate that it must be in the name of an athlete or for a store. In this case we must change the customer number in the corresponding code box. (To know the code of a client you can look for it in the menu "Master client file).

2) Delegation - delivery address

The delegation serves to indicate to SEUR the delivery address of the order so it can never be blank. A customer can have different delegations or delivery addresses. In this case it will be necessary to specify it correctly.

In general, the delegation is indicated but there are times when you will find this box blank and you will have to fill it in. Delegation 0 is usually the main customer address. Also, if you click on the "18" icon you will see all the delegations that the client has. A screen will open and clicking on the icon of "cuadrilla" in the menu below will display the list.

If you have more than one delegation, you should indicate the name of the delegation in observations.

- Comments and observations

In the tab "Comments and observations" you have to fill in the two boxes underlined in red. In comments it is written who has requested the order: it can be the customer or marketing. We will put it in the "Comment 1" box. We write:

- CLIENT
- REP (+name)
- MARKETING

In "observations and comments" is also the space where the customer when ordering can write something related to the order to be taken into account. In case of the Promos is where the indications of the order will appear. We will delete what appears and write: ORDER TYPE + BRAND + SEASON + YEAR. (For example: REPO LS FW or PR FE SS18).

Table 4. The brands that Snow Factory distributes

Brands	
LS	La Sportiva
FE	Ferrino
UD	Ultimate Direction
ZG	Zoggs
PI	Picture
AL	Alpina
MH	Miha Bodytech

If there are several delegations, the name of the delegation will be written below as: REPO LS FW18 – IRABIA LECCRERC. In the case of Promos, the destination of the promo must be indicated: PREMIOS ULTRA PIRINEU.

6. The concept of marketing strategy

Business markets are described by a number of components, the fundamental ones being the nature of demand, the buying processes, international dimensions and, perhaps most

importantly, the relationships that develop between organizations in the process of buying and selling (Fill & McKee, 2012).

The nature of demand in business markets is one of the main elements. Three features of demands are considered: derivation, variance and elasticity.

The first aspect, derived demand is the marketing practice to treat demand by consumers as direct and demand from businesses as derived. This idea began with the economist Alfred Marshall. In its simplest way, it is supposed that consumers only buy goods and services to satisfy their needs, whereas businesses only buy things to facilitate the production of goods and services. Then, consumer demand is wholly direct while business demand is wholly derived. In this way there is a chain derived demand: for example, final consumer demand (direct demand) for cars and diesel fuel creates a derived demand for steel (to manufacture cars), ships (to transport crude oil), and many other goods and services as well. The entire chain of derived demand is driven by the direct demand of consumers (Fill & McKee, 2012).

Regarding to the accelerator effect, the most direct effect of derived demand in business markets is that marketers need to be aware of advances, both upstream and downstream segments, that may affect their marketing strategy. In specific, it is the demand for descending products that brings the level of derived demand in a certain business market.

This is evident, if the demand for new housing rises then obviously after a time lag, the derived demand for housing materials such as steel and wood will also increase. Over time, the derived demand for capital equipment used in the construction industry, such as backhoe loaders and cement mixers, may well also grow (Fill & McKee, 2012). However, the percentage change of initial demand is less evident. This phenomenon can happen in capital equipment industries and is known as the accelerator effect. Despite numerous objections, there is a substantial evidence that the acceleration principle plays a significant role in explaining the demand for capital equipment.

Concerning the concentration ratio, generally, business-to-business markets are considered by a higher centralization of need than consumer markets. The reference measure that is used is the concentration ratio. A concentration ratio is characterized as the combined market shares of the few biggest firms in the market. For the purposes of

economic analysis and economic policy, concentration ratios are important because it is assumed that the higher the concentration ratio, the more likely firms in the industry will collude to increase prices above those that would be found in a real competitive market. Economists also believe that where concentration ratios are comparatively high, industry will be less innovative and production volumes less stable (Fill & McKee, 2012).

The position taken by economists, when studying concentration ratios, is overall that of the customer of the industry in question and the economic efficiency of the structural conditions of the industry. For the entrepreneur marketer it is the position of the industry supplier that is as a rule most pertinent, along with the implications of the industry structure for sales and marketing strategy. Whereas economists are usually most worried about the monopoly power that businesses have over their consumers due to the concentration of market share, business marketers are usually more curious in the monopsony power that businesses have with respect to their suppliers because of the concentration of buying power.

The degree of monopoly power in the supply market is symmetrical with the degree of monopoly power in the customer market; firms that control a large share of the customer market are also the largest consumers for suppliers in the industry. Thus, researchers use concentration ratio (market share concentration) as an indicator for the concentration of buying power within an industry.

A comprehension of derived demand, the accelerator effect and concentration ratios offer a basis for analyzing many of the structural differences between typical consumer and business markets. Though, there are other methodical differences between consumer and business markets. The elasticity of demand is one of these dimensions: first, it is argued that businesses have less freedom to simply stop buying things than consumers, so business demand is likely to be less price elastic (that is, less sensitive to price changes) than consumer market. demand. Second, it has been proposed that there will be more instances of reverse price elasticity of demand in business markets, that in consumer markets. Businesses need critical resources if they want to keep trading (Brennan, Canning, & McDowell, 2017).

International aspects. More and more B2B organizations are involving in international markets. Progresses in technology, most particularly the Internet, have enabled

organizations to do business greater or lesser anywhere. Compared to consumer markets, international business is easier. In B2C markets, exist a wide range of issues regarding the culture and values that consumers maintain, and how products and promotional activities need to be adapted to accommodate color, ingredient, style, buying processes, packaging and language requests to ensure success.

On the other hand, B2B organizations gain from a lower diversity in product functionality and performance. This is partly because of the intrinsic nature of the products and materials but also because of several trading associations across the world agreeing norms concerning to content and performance. For example, the steel, plastic, chemicals, and paper industries all have common agreed norms, which enable the interorganizational exchange process. Therefore, B2B organizations can work together to facilitate shape their trading environment.

Concerning to relationships, an essentially element characteristic of business marketing applies the importance of relationships. In B2C markets, the relationship between producer and consumer, at least in the past, has been somewhat weak and insignificant. While many organizations now recognize the value of developing these relationships, the nature of products, their perceived value to consumers, and competitive factors, particularly in fast moving consumer goods (FMCG) markets, suggest that these relationships will remain complex and expensive to set up and maintain.

In contrast, in B2B markets, a key element of success is creating and maintaining positive relationships between buying and selling organizations. Cooperation and contribution over the growth, supply and support of products and services is seen as a core element of B2B marketing. Insight B2B relationships now include networks of relationships in which members are considered interactive, different from consumer markets, where relationships are often seen as focusing on the active seller and passive buyer. This signifies that both buyers and sellers are actively engaged in starting and maintaining relationships. All parties to a network have the capacity to affect a broad range of relationships, either expressly or implicitly.

7. What is B2C?

Concerning the term business-to-consumer-marketing, it is a method by which a company uses a platform, for example Facebook, to find communities of people that seem like good potential buyers and promotes their products directly to that group.

Take for example, a company that produces clothing from recycled plastic fabrics can find and advertise to a group dedicated to reducing plastic waste.

It is important to note that in the B2C markets, consumer behavior is the main driver. When we understand what customers want and how to motivate them to make that purchase, we can reach success. That drive is what create the B2C sector, but that indicates it is also one of the big challenges for any business organization working in B2C.

Determining what customers want and deciding how to discern your products or services from those of other sellers are key interests for market research and R&D divisions in the 21st century.

Business-to-consumer (B2C) is the term used to describe commerce transaction in which businesses sell products or services directly to consumers (Business News Daily, 2020). For the first time, there is an opportunity for small businesses to actively sell products directly to consumers. Most recently, thought, the term B2C relates to the online selling of products, or e-tailing, in which manufacturers or retailers sell their products to consumers over the internet. While there are services that are set up to provide direct-to-consumer services, such as eBay to sell goods or Amazon, small business owners were given the opportunity to can establish their own storefronts through e-commerce.

Also, B2C play important role once is one of four categories of e-commerce, together with B2B (business to business), C2B (customer to business) and C2C (customer to customer) (Business News Daily, 2020). However, of the four types, B2C is the most popular among most people. Almost any product can be sold through e-shops, also known as virtual storefronts. This concept was first developed in 1979 by Michael Aldrich, an English inventor who connected a television set to a transaction processing computer using a telephone line and coined the term "teleshopping" (Business News Daily, 2020).

8. Edicom

Concerning Edicom, I used this program during my work in a field of customer service in order to manage orders of El Corte Inglés and Forum (will be explained more about these programs below). Important to highlight that Edicom is one of the biggest international leaders in development of systems for data transmission between companies by EDI technology (Electronic Data Interchange) or e-Invoicing (Edicom, 2020).

Nowadays, Edicom is one of the most experienced companies in the market offering customer support from the start-up to the evolution of their communication platforms. Edicom design high performance transactional systems to cover the needs of B2B e-commerce projects. The development solutions that, after more than a decade, have positioned them as a benchmark that has risen the value of the transactions of thousands of clients worldwide.

Edicom has permanent headquarters in Europe and America that allow to handle major international corporate projects. Additionally, Edicom solutions allow the exchange of more than 400 million transactions a year through a powerful technology infrastructure in ASP-SaaS mode, with guaranteed high availability and constant monitoring (Edicom, 2020).

Furthmore, Edicom is related with programs such as IaaS (Infrastructure as a Service), ASP (Application Service Provider) or SaaS (Software as a Service), Cloud Computing is established on outsourcing the resources needed to start up an IT project. The activities such as hardware, software and maintenance are managed in a DPC (Data Processing Centre) run by the service provider, which the user can gain access at a distance through the different connection possibilities provided by technologies associated with internet (Edicom connecting business, 2020).

EDI, or Electronic Data Interchange, enables the exchange of standardized documents between the information systems of those who involved in a business relationship.

The standard nature of these documents is what essentially differentiates EDI from other information exchange systems: orders, shipping notices, electronic invoices, inventories, price catalogues, among others, can be exchanged electronically between different

partners, thanks to the use of a common language that allows different information systems to interact with each other.

EDICOM's technological solutions allow the automatic processing of these exchanges thanks to their ability to interact with the Internal Computer Systems or ERP's of the market, so that orders, shipping notices, electronic invoices or any other transaction, can be processed automatically without human intervention.

Edicom provides all services in **ASP-SaaS** mode from integral **EDICOM B2B Cloud Platform**. ASP corresponds to the initials of the acronym Application Service Provider, which would literally translate as "Application Service Provider". ASP function involves delegating to a third party all the maintenance of the hardware and software resources necessary to start up B2B projects (Edicom ASP, 2003).

This involves the subcontracting of the entire technological platform for the transformation, sending, reception and integration of messages, to a service provider who is responsible for maintaining and updating the software.

The service provider also assumes the maintenance of all the technological infrastructure necessary to guarantee the optimal functioning of the applications made available to users. This infrastructure includes the hardware resources, and an adequate dimensioning of the communications to guarantee a seamless access to the technological platform from which the user manages the applications used in their EDI and Electronic Invoicing transactions (Edicom ASP, 2003).

In relation to EDICOM B2B Cloud Platform (see figure 13), it supplies a high availability framework for all types of data integration projects between companies. The state-of-the-art technological elements and integrated maintenance and management services ensure swift and permanent access to the user framework and a continuous, fluid and secure interchange of all types of transactions with complete integration in the management system or ERP guaranteed (Edicom connecting business, 2020).

Figure 13. Edicom B2B Cloud Platform



Source: Edicom connecting business, 2020.

VI. Conclusion

In the starting moment of this report, which is follow-up on the internship taken at the Spanish company Snow Factory, it was created a list of objectives.

Taking a decisive step in the development and conclusion of the Masters in Intercultural Studies for Business, this work presents put into practice insights on topics for which I had been academically prepared before taking on a multinational job environment.

Over the chapters of this project, I have created an association between a theory-based background and the internship that took place at Snow Factory in Barcelona. Assessing all the performed work, the internship was a very positive and enthusiastic experience that has improved my knowledge and future opportunities. Embracing this project was a professional and personal challenge.

In the context of constant change, for a company to be successful, it is not enough to achieve operational efficiency, it is necessary to be different and know how to preserve its position (Keller, 2001). Currently, companies are forced to adapt to face external challenges, namely, the greater demands of their customers and a competitive environment more intense (Luiz, 2020).

Business to business marketing is bigger and different from consumer marketing. The business market includes all businesses, institutions who buy virtually every product and service to help them in turn provide products and services to other businesses and to consumers. Marketing to these customers involves a different orientation than that used in consumer marketing. Briefly conclude, the most effective B2B marketing programs focus on one of three basic calls: increasing sales, reducing costs, meeting government regulations. The Internet is changing how customers buy but the need for a basic marketing orientation remains.

It is especially important that every company has a new product development process. Managers must decide what their fundamental competencies are and develop programs to improve their products and services for customers while carefully considering outsourcing non-essentials. A product is an offering of the company which satisfies the needs of customers.

As a whole, B2B marketing in the twenty-first century presents many new challenges. Shrinking markets, runaway advances in communications technology, and rapidly-

changing public attitudes toward consumption and communication establish major changes not only in marketing techniques but in corporate strategy. The role of marketing is to meet customers' needs in the most effective, efficient, and sustainable way possible for as long as it is possible to do so.

In practice, the report also showed the importance of a good relationship between employees. The appreciation of their work and the enhancement of their daily effort, despite not bringing a sudden increase in production, improve the environment and make employees more open to accepting change and working as a team towards the same goal.

This way the internship can be considered as having fulfilled its objectives as it constituted a continuous contribution to Snow Factory's overall growth. The results achieved are expected to bring an increase in the number of customers and orders, but also to improve the current positioning of the company and serve as a basis for marketing actions in the future.

Lastly, the internship at Snow Factory was the perfect link between the academic knowledge acquired during the first year of this Master's and the contemporary reality of international companies and the importance given to the business-to-business market and marketing. Personally, it helped me grow as a professional and gave me the great experience and the excellent example of what to expect in the international market.

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Annex 1 – Training plan

CARTA DE ACEPTACIÓN

Esto es para certificar que

Nombre del estudiante: Krystyna Holub,

Ha sido aceptado para una periodo de prácticas no laborales en

Nombre de la institución: **Snow Factory SLU**, domicilio legal: Carretera de Cornellá 140, 7oA, 08950, Esplugas de Llobregat (Barcelona), España

Bajo la supervisión de

Nombre del supervisor: Alejo Garriga

Posición y datos de contacto: CEO - agarriga@snowfactory.es

Información sobre el programa de pasantías / prácticas:

Número de horas de trabajo por semana: 40 horas / semana

Periodo previsto de la movilidad: del 01/02/2020 al 31/07/2020

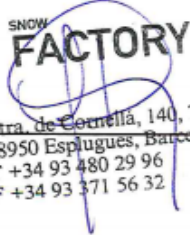
Idioma (s) de trabajo: Inglés, Español

Beneficio: 400 € / mes

Nombre del programa de prácticas: Asistente en prácticas no laborales del departamento de marketing

Tareas:

- Asistir y desarrollar el departamento de marketing
- Aprender la mecánica y las necesidades del mercado
- Gestión del Marketing online del sector deportes
- Trato con representantes de marketing nacionales y portugueses, así como gerentes de marketing
- Trato con el departamento de marketing de los proveedores de la empresa en Estados Unidos, Italia, Alemania y Francia
- Desarrollar las tareas tanto en equipo e individualmente brindando la mejor actitud positiva y disposición para aprender



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22/11/19

Annex 2 - Distribution of tasks per week

	LUNES	MARTES	MIERCOLES	JEVES	VIERNES
	BARRABES	MIRAKL	BARRABES	MIRAKL	BARRABES
	AMAZON	AMAZON?	AMAZON	AMAZON?	AMAZON
	EDICOM *	EDICOM?	EDICOM	EDICOM?	EDICOM?
	TRADE INN	TRADE INN	TRADE INN	TRADE INN	TRADE INN

Annex 3 - El Corte Inglés and Forum order management

El Corte Inglés

In this section, I will explain the process by which I managed orders that I have received by email from El Corte Ingles and Forum.

1. Download stock status in Aqua

Search for the word "stock." Go to "Generate an Excel file of stock status" and select brand or not to put any to make the stock of all brands. Then click "finish". Important to note that if you have several brands they can be done at the same time. Get a stock status of all brands.

It is also important when creating a file that is saved directly to Aquadrive in the "Shared Files" folder - Stock Status.

2. Select orders in Edicom - create document for the dump in the APP

Enter the Edicom page: <https://clients.edicomgroup.com/ediwin-viewer-extended-access.htm>. Then, enter the "Pending Treatment" section and filter by "Date" of the last four days and by "Type of Document" by orders. Next, we must print the pending orders by selecting the first one and with shift pressed choose the last one.

In order to export data to use the app, all orders are selected using the shift key. When all are selected, select with the right button the option "Export" and then "Content". Then, another screen opens and we click "Accept". A file will be downloaded and with the right button, choose the third option from the drop-down: "Extract in specific folder". Select the "EDI Orders" folder in the following path: G - Delivery notes for SEUR - 2019 - EDICOM - Dumps APP ECI (from EDI). And finally, another window opens where it is confirmed that the file is saved (which will replace the previous one). Once it has been saved, the WinRAR window can be closed.

3. APP - Edicom order dumps

In the first place, the application for dumping Edicom orders is opened, in the following path: G: Delivery notes for SEUR 2019 EDICOM APP_Volcado orders Edicom_3.

It is important to bear in mind that sheet 1 will be where we put the Edicom file with the new orders. On sheet 2 the final orders will appear, once the available stock has been calculated. It will be the document that we will upload to Aqua to manage the final orders. The STOCK sheet is where we will put the current stock status.

Once opened, in the "Stock" sheet, paste the stock status file that you downloaded in point 1. It can be find it in Aquadrive: Shared files: Stock status.

Next step is to go to the "Developer" or "Programmer" menu and click on Macros. A box will open where we must click on "A-Macro_Leigh" and execute. The path will be followed until reaching the folder where the file from point 2 was saved: G: Leigh: APP ECI dump (from EDI).

4. Update order information with what will be served (Sheet 1)

The orders we have printed from Edicom need to be updated with the information from Sheet 1 of the App. On Sheet 1, order the orders from lowest to highest number by "DocNum". For greater visibility, it is recommended that you separate the different orders by inserting a blank row. And then we must print Sheet1.

Sheet 1 printed, will be used to cross out in red the units of which there is no stock in the printed Edicom orders. To find out if there is no stock, look in the "serve" column. If it is equal to 0 it means that there is no stock. It is important to note that the column "units" (ordered) is the same as the column "serve", if you do not serve everything you must also indicate this on the printed order form. In Zoogs (one of the brands) the packs are of 6 units so if you order 6 units 1 pack will be served. Doing this process will help to be able to create later the delivery notes in Edicom in an easier way.

5. Create document to upload to Aqua (Sheet 2)

With the cursor over the "Sheet2" tab and with the right button, the drop-down opens and the option is selected: "Move or copy": new book and create copy. The generated file

(Book1) will be saved in the orders folder to be dumped in Aqua: G - Delivery notes for SEUR - 2019 - Edicom - ECI dump (Aqua order charge). It is also necessary to change the format to "Excel Book" and rename it like the rest, changing the date and indicating the brand in parentheses.

Once the order sheet has been saved correctly, it must be uploaded to the Cloud (to be downloaded later in Aqua) in the following path: Home - Shared files - Leigh - Repos Edicom. Next, the order is loaded into the Cloud by clicking on the "Choose files" button and importing the Excel that has previously been saved in the "ECI Dump (loading of orders in Aqua)" folder. We must click on Upload.

6. Generate Aqua Orders

Firstly, it is necessary to upload a file with the orders. When it is saved in the Cloud, you can access Aqua, and open the automatic order dump assistant. Search: "import of orders / multiple delivery notes". Secondly, a window opens where it must be clicked on "Select file" to import the order previously uploaded to the Cloud. Once the chosen order has been selected, click on the "Open" button and then "Finish" in the Aqua wizard. And finally, the order import process will begin. It is necessary to wait for the "cancel" button in the Aqua wizard to change to the "Close" message.

7. Product labels

Regarding labels, it is necessary to make the labels of all the products that we are going to deliver. For this you have to select all the references that we serve and the units. To do this, the Excel is recovered from the dump app and in Sheet 2 the columns from J to N are selected and copied into a new Excel.

In the new Excel, the columns "Item" and "Size" are concatenated in a column (E) added before the units column. It is important to keep in mind that in Zoogs normally all sizes are 1siz so concatenate is not necessary. Columns "A" through "D" are then removed and a new column (B) is inserted between the two resulting columns "A" and "C".

Next step, the file to make product labels is located, saved in the Leigh folder in G: and copied and pasted into a second tab of Excel with the list for the labels previously created. The FindV function is applied to get the information for the labels. It is mandatory to copy

and paste stock and make the pivot table to get the sum of labels by reference. After that, print this file to make the labels.

The application for ECI labels is opened and “Shoe Store Retail Price” is selected in the case of La Sportiva or “Retail Price without size” in the case of Zoggs. Then all the data are filled in the corresponding boxes: Series equal to 0 and when one is already filled in, click on Accept and then Insert. When we make the last one after accepting, click on Print. Once created, they are saved in XPS format in the Product Labels folder.

8. Edicom - Generate delivery notes and package labels

In order to create delivery notes in Edicom, we need confirmation from SEUR that everything has been served. The portal opens, in the "Orders" menu and with an order selected, click on the "Generate Document" button. When the window to generate the delivery note is opened, there are three elements to fill in:

- Delivery note number (with full alphanumeric delivery note being 7 digits)
- Notice number (our delivery note number - only numerical - preceded by the necessary zeros so that it has 7 digits).
- Check the Pallets box in SSCC

Once the header has been completed, it is necessary to check if there are any lines that must be eliminated due to lack of stock. If this is the case, it will have to be deleted from the delivery note by selecting the line and clicking on the "Delete" button. When the delivery note matches the one created in Aqua, you can "Save and Send" when SEUR has confirmed that there are no physical shortages of stock. After the delivery notes have been generated and sent, enter Document Sent - Delivery Notes and select all the delivery notes generated with the Ctrl key, and once highlighted in blue, click on the icon of the package label. And in the next window, click on "Accept".

Aparecen en pantalla el PDF con todas las etiquetas de bulto y se clica en el botón de “Guardar”. Se guardan en la carpeta de “Etiquetas Bulto” renombrando el archivo tal y como se indica en la carpeta, cambiando únicamente la serie de numeración de albaranes.

The PDF with all the package labels appears on the screen and the "Save" button is clicked. They are saved in the "Bulk Labels" folder renaming the file as indicated in the folder, changing only the numbering series of delivery notes.

The company, Snow Factory, uses the platform Edicom because it facilitates the process of sending and receiving electronic invoices in international environments. It is a good solution for the company as Snow Factory operates in different markets from centralized management systems and the company has to be able to deal with these documents according to the legislation currently in force in each country.