

**AN EXPLORATION STUDY ON MARKETING COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES IN THE
GROCERY RETAIL SECTOR OF KWAZULU NATAL PROVINCE, SOUTH AFRICA**

by

MAKHOSI MAPHANGA (14794608)

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**SUPERVISOR: MRS N NEMTAJELA
CO-SUPERVISOR: MR D.B TSHABALALA**

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DECLARATION

Name: Makhosi Maphanga

Student number: 14794608

Degree: Master of Commerce in Business Management

An exploration study on marketing communication strategies in the grocery retail sector of Kwa-Zulu Natal Province, South Africa.

I declare that the above dissertation is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

I further declare that I submitted the dissertation to originality checking software and that it falls within the accepted requirements for originality.

I further declare that I have not previously submitted this work, or part of it, for examination at UNISA for another qualification or at any other higher education institution.



Miss M Maphanga

November 2023

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“But if I were you, I would appeal to God; I would lay my cause before him”

(Job 5 verse 8)

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DEDICATION

This research is dedicated to my family, especially my son Likhona Maphanga who made me see a need to finish this study.

ABSTRACT

Grocery stores in South Africa require both proactive and reactive communication methods to maintain sales owing to the country's competitive landscape, shifting consumer preferences, and rapidly evolving economic and technological advancements. The aim of the study was to investigate the MCS's in grocery retail sector of KZN Province, South Africa. Primary and secondary goals were established for this study in order to solve the aforementioned challenges: The primary objective of this study was to investigate the MCS's in grocery retail sector of KZN Province, South Africa. The following secondary objectives were set for this study to support the primary objective: to determine the MCS's adopted by the grocery retailers in attracting customers; to determine the application of the MCS's in the grocery retail industry. to determine the challenges of adopting and implementing MCS's in the grocery retail industry.

In view of this, a qualitative approach was adopted in the study and case study design with ten grocery retail stores. The study employed thematic analysis and data analysis was also done using Atlas.ti. The study found the specific MCS's adopted, namely; business sustainability strategy, customer loyalty strategy and effective customer acquisition strategy. The study also discovered that grocery retailers use both new and traditional media. In particular, social media and online marketing are frequently used in communicating and attracting customers. The findings reveal that the success of these MCS's is determined by improved customer satisfaction and business transformation.

KEY TERMS:

Marketing communication strategies; marketing communication mix; grocery retail sector; customers; customer-centric approach.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AIDA	Awareness, Interest, Desire, and Action
COO	Communicative Constitution of Organizations
GRS	Grocery Retail Stores
KZN	Kwa-Zulu Natal
MCS	Marketing communication strategies
ROE	Return on Equity
UNISA	University of South Africa

CHAPTER 1

ORIENTATION AND OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

It is expected of grocery stores worldwide to adapt to a rapidly changing environment. According to Ray and Sack (2020), the corona-virus-19 (COVID-19) pandemic has brought attention to and intensified technological advancements in the retail sector, particularly the increasing need for e-commerce and online food shopping in South Africa. Furthermore, demand for door-to-door consumer deliveries has increased, and with it, so have consumer expectations for free, quick delivery (Datex, 2017; Brink, Heyns, and Kilbourn, 2019). Owing to the enormous development of online sales in all major markets, traditional shops have implemented multi-channel and omni-channel approaches to trade and satisfy the expectations of their customers (Marchet et al., 2018). Various communication resolutions were first required to communicate with customers to address the issues raised by virtual market, which including several, disorganised supply frequencies to reach diverse market groups (Galipoglu et al., 2018).

Dacey (2016) asserts that outside variables, including social and environmental ones, along with their difficulties, have also had an impact on the retail industry in South Africa (SA). The economy in South Africa shrank by 0.3% in 2016 (Stats SA 2016). Marchet et al. (2018) revealed that the large grocery merchants have seen a decrease in larger consumer online purchases, which has been linked to both a slowdown in economic growth and an increase in the amount of foreign vendors joining the market. In 2017, the return on equity (ROE) of South African retailers was good, sitting at 22.3%, out of the 12 major retailers, despite all of these challenges. The retail industry continues to do well overall (Neboh and Mbhele, 2020). However, the COVID-19 pandemic in 2019 caused a drop in food retail performance (Ray and Sack, 2020). The retail competitiveness in South Africa has evolved into a marketing issue, prompting the use of various marketing communication strategies (Neboh and Mbhele, 2020).

Various academics (Yim, 2014, cited by Lekhanya, 2015; Aremu and Lawal, 2012; Mustapha, 2013; Mgisha, 2019) underscore the importance of marketing communication in such a competitive context. Most academics have maintained that MCSs are used in understanding consumers' purchasing habits, as well as how businesses can connect with their target audience and what their preferences are for particular products.

Mgisha (2019) asserts that further research is necessary to determine whether the MCS's used by retailers are effective in generating a sufficient ROE, as well as the scientific approach underlying these strategies in the grocery retail industry. These data are needed to help organisations do two things: first, keep customers longer so they can increase tax contributions and employment opportunities; and second, improve baseline data in the literature, particularly regarding how combined MCS's can be used to study how customers perceive any grocery store (Mgisha, 2019). Consequently, the perseverance of this study was to study the MCS's employed by grocery stores in the KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) Province of South Africa to draw in customers. KZN was selected since it would minimise travel expenses for the researcher.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Grocery stores in South Africa require both proactive and reactive communication methods to maintain sales owing to the country's competitive environment, shifting consumer preferences, and rapidly evolving economic and technological advancements. Because of this, the main effect of a MCS is a cycle of deals aimed at customers to sway their decisions and increase sales very quickly. An increase in the number of companies entering the South African retail sector presents unknown difficulties for established retailers, who then struggle to develop unique and successful strategies to stay in business and increase ROE. This is especially relevant to KZN grocery stores, who are under intense market competition (Motala, 2017; Ray and Sack, 2020).

In comparison to marketing management, the existing scholarly literature (Morrison, 2010; Berger, 2014) focuses more on how sales are perceived to be running. Although it is anticipated that consumers' experiences and satisfactions would influence marketing communication efforts, their opinions regarding effective marketing communication have not yet been studied. It is not the ideal scenario because marketing reviews are typically conducted when issues arise, at which point the marketing managers are considered (Lekhanya, 2015; Gossen and Kropfeld 2022). Moreover, effective MCS's require regular situational assessments, even in cases where marketing communication practices are operating well. This allows for pertinent adjustments to be made and updates to be made (Queenmary and Shivany, 2019).

According to Neboh and Mbhele (2020), managers can enhance their ability to respond appropriately and practically to the continuously evolving technology landscape and economic downturn by utilising MCS's. It is the responsibility of grocery retailers in KZN to do market research, ascertain client demands and create MCS's to meet those objectives (Brink, Heyns and Kilbourn, 2019). Therefore, there is a lack of empirical literature regarding the marketing communication tactics that work in this shifting environment to draw in clients and how well they accomplish that goal (Styger, 2018). According to Lekhanya (2015), failing to provide customers with information about MCS's that work and whether they want to improve their strategies could lead to a failure to influence the customers' purchasing decisions, which could also have an impact on their ability to increase revenue during a slow period. To keep such customers loyal to the firms, it is important to consider the empirical gap. Ray and Sack (2020) coincide with Neboh and Mbhele (2020) regarding the efficacious reaction strategies to the evolving environment. Furthermore, they state that recent research (Ray and Sack, 2020; Ogunlela and Tengeh, 2020) has demonstrated that the COVID-19 disease poses a challenge, as the majority of grocery shops adopted novel tactics for remaining competitive. Despite this, the topic of this pandemic is still relatively understudied. This insight led to the subsequent derivation of the research problem for this work.

According to this perspective, marketing managers must look into MCS's that work to draw clients, win their trust and loyalty and close sales to generate income for grocery stores. The majority of the relevant research to date is based outside of South Africa, and as far as the researcher is aware, no studies have been done to investigate the current MCS's among grocery shops in KZN (Queenmary and Shivany, 2019). Despite this, it was crucial for grocery stores to reach out to their marketplace, set aside money for marketing initiatives, communicate clearly with both present and potential customers, and promote and enhance the quality of their advertising materials (Mapheto, 2014; Hughes and Fill 2016; Thwala and Slabber, 2018).

Retailers must be able to modify their marketing strategy in response to the ever-changing retail landscape. Retail marketing can assist retailers in staying ahead of the curve and reaching their target clients as efficiently as possible so they can adjust to shifting market conditions (Zubdul, Hasrat, and Siti, 2023).

1.3. RESEARCH PURPOSE, OBJECTIVES AND MOTIVATION

1.3.1 Aim of the Study

The aim of the study was to investigate the MCS's in grocery retail sector of KZN Province, South Africa.

Research Objectives

Primary and secondary goals were established for this study in order to solve the aforementioned challenges:

1.3.1.1 Primary Objective

The primary objective of this study was to investigate the MCS's in grocery retail sector of KZN Province, South Africa.

1.3.1.2 Secondary Objectives

The following secondary objectives were set for this study to support the primary objective:

- a. To determine the MCS's adopted by the grocery retailers in attracting customers.
- b. To determine the application of the MCS's in the grocery retail industry.
- c. To determine the challenges of adopting and implementing MCS's in the grocery retail industry.

1.3.2 Research Questions

The study attempted to answer the questions stated below.

1.3.2.1 Primary Research Question

What are the MCS's used in grocery retail sector of KZN Province in South Africa?

1.3.2.2 Secondary Research Questions

- a. What are the MCS's adopted by the grocery retailers in attracting customers?
- b. How are the MCS's applied in the grocery retail industry?
- c. What are the challenges of adopting and implementing MCS's in the grocery retail industry?

1.4. PRELIMINARY LITERATURE STUDY

1.4.1 Introduction

The view of the literature for this research was informed by the nature of the study goals. Each of the planned study's objectives was broken down into subheadings in this literature review. This research used and analysed the discussion, as well as assess the body of existing literature, through global, regional, and local lenses. A literature review, according to Damon (2012), is a thorough account of knowledge found in the literature in relation to your personally chosen subject of research. In a literature review, literature is outlined, condensed, assessed, and explained.

Kotler and Keller (2012) claim that marketing is a collaborative process in which businesses create, deliver and run quality goods and services to satisfy customers' needs and aspirations. Furthermore, Mullins and Walker (2013) concur with Kotler and Keller (2012) that marketing is a set of activities assisting businesses and people in fulfilling their objectives and goals via mutual benefit and the establishment of enduring relationships. Lekhanya (2015) defines marketing as the process of producing and providing desirable products and services to potential clients, encompassing all activities associated with drawing in and keeping devoted clients. Consequently, competitors need to understand the needs, wants, and requirements of their target market before they can satisfy them with superior products, needs and wants as well as easily accessible customer services in order to keep them as clients.

Conversely, Armstrong and Kotler (2013) characterise marketing as "the profitable management of client connections that arise when people choose to satisfy their needs through a substitution association." Awan and Hashmi (2014) define marketing as a strategy for educating consumers about a business, its goods and services. Therefore, the direct approach a business uses to reach out to its target market is called marketing. To do this, the five components of the marketing mix are employed.

1.4.2 Theoretical Framework

Marketing strategies have been built upon the principles of the Communication Theory and Awareness, Interest, Desire, and Action (AIDA) model (Bagwell, 2013). Even during the midst of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, in a 21st century, important decisions that result in the execution of a marketing strategy are still made using this theory (Berger, 2014; James-MacEachern and Yun, 2017).

Communication Theory

Communication theory is a continuous process of interpretation. It makes the assumption that all levels of involvement are involved in the interactive process of communication. The Communicative Constitution of Organizations (CCO) approach is gaining popularity to analyse communication in strategic communication theory. According to James-MacEachern and Yun (2017), CCO thinking is based on the idea that communication is the main model for describing social reality rather than just a tangential by-product of human behaviour (Schoeneborn and Blaschke, 2014).

Awareness, Interest, Desire, and Action (AIDA) model.

To enable its products to be accepted by the target market, marketers should begin by attracting attention or acquiring awareness, stimulating interest, inspiring want, and inducing action or purchase in prospects, according to the Awareness, Interest, Desire, and Action (AIDA) model. According to the hierarchy of effects model, a buyer's purchasing choice is influenced by factors such as product benefits conviction, brand preference, brand liking, product advantages and features knowledge, and product awareness.

1.4.3 Marketing Strategy

Kotler et al. (2013) define marketing strategy as the process by which businesses use their marketing judgment to try and achieve their specific marketing objectives. A marketing plan should attempt to completely satisfy current customers, as they will then spread the word about the product or service. This is according to Berndt and Tait (2012). Retailers might benefit from starting their marketing plan development process with the definition of marketing. Marketing is described as the study, planning, carrying out, and monitoring of well-defined programs intended to induce voluntary value exchanges with a target market in order to attain (Kotler 2012). According to Kotler

and Fox (1995), marketing comprises developing an organization's services to align with the needs and preferences of the target market in addition to using effective selling techniques, communication, and distribution to educate, inspire, and service the markets. According to Kotler (2012), a business unit's marketing strategy is the marketing reasoning it uses to achieve its marketing objectives.

Marketing tactics are well known for significantly enhancing a company's performance. Furthermore, the growth of social networking campaigns and the evolution of promotional and advertising strategies have both served as evidence of their relevance. Owing to this, there are now new participants in the market and the established firms in the sector are using revolutionary marketing communication tactics (Gbolagade, Adesola and Oyewale, 2013; Marchet et al., 2018).

1.4.4 Marketing Communication Strategies

The MCS is the blueprint for utilising every aspect of the Promotional Mix (Lamb et al., 2012). Through persuading, instructing, educating, and reminding target markets of the advantages of the company's goods and services, the MCS promotes mutually beneficial interactions. Every component of marketing communications is managed and coordinated to help with the creation of a promotional composite (Lamb et al., 2012).

There seems to be a consensus definition of "marketing communication" among scholars. Marketing communications, according to Dmitrijevs and Dolbnev (2013), is the direct or indirect process used by businesses to educate, convince, or remind consumers about goods or services. Piercy (2013) and Fill and Jamieson (2006) define marketing communications as management's strategy for establishing a connection between a company and its various audiences. A definition more pertinent to the proposed study states that marketing communications encompasses all

planned message types employed to develop brand advertising, public relations, sales promotion, packaging, events and sponsorship, direct marketing, personal selling, customer service, and product placement (Ouwersloot and Duncan, 2008, cited by Oduniami and Emmanuel, 2014).

All businesses require a favourable and easily available medium that facilitates the target market's learning about the company's offerings (Odunlami and Emmanuel 2014). A well-intended MCS can even enhance the sales of a company's goods or services (Lamb et al. 2012). The development of promotion tactics is motivated by the company's positioning and the market. Building a marketing communication plan for a company entails a number of steps, according to Cravens and Piercy (2013).

1.4.4.1 Steps in Designing MCS

- a) Setting communication objectives – help in deciding how the MCS's elements are applied in the marketing platform; clearly defined objectives will guarantee that every effort is made in a particular area (Egan, 2011).
- b) Determining the functions of each component in the promotion component. – Setting up techniques for each component of the promotion's expected contribution is essential. It facilitates the development of the strategy for each promotion aspect (Silverman, 2013).
- c) Estimating the promotional budget – The goal of the corporate marketing budget is to improve the efficacy of advertising, not to determine the optimal budget size. A promotional budget in some industries might just include estimated promotions and "sales advertising" costs; nonetheless, the marketer believes that every dollar spent on marketing communication should help the organisation to achieve its objectives. The marketing manager must, therefore, ascertain which MCS's worked each year and which ones worked best for particular products (Khan, 2014). This will help to guarantee that the allocated money is used as effectively as possible.
- d) Collection of the approaches for each advertising component – These strategies have to support the intended brand positioning and be consistent with the target market plan. Strategies for every facet of promotion must take past occurrences into account (Silverman, 2013).

- e) Combining and implementing the promotional mechanisms strategies – Grocery stores need to develop and put into action an integrated communications plan for both business and consumer goods.

- f) Evaluating the utility of the integrated promotion strategies) To make sure a method is suitable for the intended use, it is imperative that it be thoroughly assessed.

To engage with customers and those who influence their purchase decisions, a company's MCS should help to manage its communication initiatives and coordinate and integrate all marketing communication aspects (Cravens and Piercy 2013). According to Egan (2011), if a company's products are appealing to customers, they will establish a relationship with it and be more likely to stick around and make future purchases. This enhances the company's reputation and increases its overall visibility. The goal of marketing communications, which is a part of the marketing mix, is to tell target customers about the firm, its products and services (Hughes and Fill 2016, referenced by Thwala and Slabber, 2018). Its function might change based on the circumstances and the task at hand. Therefore, it is not as straightforward as it might seem.

1.4.5 Application of MCS through Marketing Communication Mix (Promotion Mix)

Marketing techniques like promotions, commercials, and other marketing tools are used to successfully engage with potential customers to draw in buyers of goods and services. Retail establishments need to provide value in order to satisfy customer needs and maintain a competitive advantage. This is possible by using efficient marketing mix techniques to influence consumer demand for their goods and services (Khan, 2014).

Moogan (2011) asserts that while "hard copy" promotions like direct mail and catalogues and frequent "mass media" advertising are important components of the marketing mix, technology and e-documents are becoming more and more important sources of the promotional mix. According to Bagwell (2013), the organisation and its many investors still rely heavily on the website as a marketing communications tool. The versatility of smartphones and other mobile devices as helpful tools for connecting and drawing in new customers should be highlighted, though. Parallel to this, Allais (2016), cited by Motala (2017), concurs with Moogan (2011) that promotions and similar events represent the most effective forms of marketing communication, even in light of the growing significance of digital media. More is involved in promotion than merely participating in a range of communication-related activities. It is important to design and execute

the promotional mix in a way that aligns with the organisation's objectives (Berger, 2014). According to Styger (2018), the growing environment has played a significant role in the expansion of integrated marketing communication (IMC) as clients become more accustomed to technological advancements and alterations in the social milieu. These advances have an impact on consumer purchasing behaviours as well as how they receive and interpret marketing materials, as demonstrated by the growth of online commerce.

A generic term for various forms of planned messaging intended to promote a brand is marketing communications, according to its definition. According to Cravens and Piercy (2013), Polyorat (2014), Motala (2017), a few examples are product placement, events and sponsorships, packaging, public relations, sales promotion, direct marketing, personal selling, and events.

1.4.5.1 Elements of Marketing Communication Mix

The components of the Marketing Communication Mix are as follows:

- a) Advertising. This entails any kind of broad presentation and endorsement of concepts by a designated sponsor via print or digital media. Retail marketers use a range of communication channels to interact with their current and potential customers, including interactive advertising, print, television, sports, and the arts, to mention a few (Rațiu and Avram, 2014).
- b) Occurrences and encounters. These are corporately sponsored activities and initiatives aimed at fostering atypical or unexpected brand-related connections with customers outside of the formal arena, such as in the fields of entertainment, the arts and sports (Piercy, 2013).
- c) Sales promotion. Piercy (2013) highlights that this pertains to a range of temporary incentives designed to promote the trial or acquisition of goods and services. The list consists of trade promotions, employee promotions (such contests and drawings), and model and ticket promotions.
- d) Events and experiences. These are corporately sponsored activities and initiatives aimed at fostering atypical or unexpected brand-related connections with customers outside of the formal arena, such as in the fields of entertainment, the arts and sports (Piercy, 2013).
- e) Public relations. A range of initiatives, either internal or external, designed to safeguard a brand and its marketing messages. By responding to or dispelling unfavourable rumours, stories, and incidents, retailers can enhance their reputation (Kotler, 2012; Lamb et al.,

2012). Alhakimi and Qasem (2014) assert that the public perception of the store and the Customer Satisfaction Index play a significant role in fostering customer loyalty since contented customers advocate for the business and entice others to make purchases there.

- f) Direct Marketing. This includes speaking with prospective clients directly through communication channels such the phone, email, fax, mail, and the Internet (Kotler, 2012). Instead of the customer traveling to the market, Rațiu and Avram (2014) claim that direct marketing delivers the market directly into the offices of potential customers. Direct marketing is the process of speaking with consumers directly instead of through intermediaries in the form of commercial media.
- g) Interactive Marketing. This is founded on intentionally designed events and initiatives that draw in present or future clients in an online setting to increase brand recognition, enhance the brand's image, or encourage sales of goods and services, either directly or indirectly. A retail store, for instance, could provide an internship programme for a marketing and social media assistant. The intern would be responsible for managing and answering all inquiries on various social media platforms, maximising online presence through the application of strategic and creative marketing activities to increase customer interaction (Lekhanya, 2015).
- h) Buzz Marketing or Word-of-Mouth Marketing. This includes all oral, writing, or electronic correspondence between people regarding the acquisition or utilisation of a good or service (whether positive or bad) (Mapheto, 2014).
- i) Personal Selling. A face-to-face meeting allows a salesperson to provide a presentation, field questions, and build rapport with one or more potential customers. Offering a captivating speech to an audience in person is the essence of personal selling, a subset of interpersonal selling. It is the best strategy for influencing the preferences, convictions, and behaviour of consumers. According to Bangura (2011), attitude is the sole consideration in personal selling.

- j) New Media. Social networking sites provide as a platform for businesses to interact, communicate and exchange content with their target audience thanks to the New Media, a contemporary marketing communication tool (Schnalke, 2012).
- k) Packaging. When it comes to increasing a product's value, packaging is one of the most crucial and effective marketing communication tools. Packaging is an extremely effective tool for advertising and disseminating information about products (Mgayi, 2015:16). It permits an organisation to display its goods in opposition to those of other organisations.

1.4.6 Marketing Communication Challenges in Grocery Retail Stores

Today's market is characterised by simultaneous change, speed and intense competition. Modern business practices are impacted by new technologies, which also give enterprises access to new markets. Due to these pressures, businesses must swiftly adjust to new non-conformities and demand conditions within the short product lifespan. They do this by developing marketing strategies and marketing communication plans (Marjanova and Stajanova, 2012). According to Hadiyati (2015), as customers' expectations for new elements and regular product revolutions rise, the development of innovative technologies has an impact on the business system and increases opportunities for new markets.

Executives in marketing communications operate in an unpredictable environment, therefore they must prepare carefully (Bellamy, 2011 in Lekhanya, 2015). Sarma (2013) and Hadiyati (2015) claim that grocery retailers must overcome a significant marketing obstacle in order to prosper. The primary challenges are those related to products and markets, which result from heightened rivalry between identical products on the market that are priced differently based on the customer buying class that specific grocery shop is trying to reach.

The question of whether marketing initiatives improve a company's performance is not well-supported by scientific evidence. It seems that an organisation can grow and expand without a marketing plan to some extent because word-of-mouth (such as referrals, reviews, and prior stays) is so potent and raises demand (Lekhanya, 2015). Thwala and Slabbert (2018) propose that the implementation of many supplementary marketing tactics is deemed negative in retail enterprises. For instance, it is said that some of these businesses have shortcomings with regard to pricing and sales training.

1.5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodology, according to Sekaran and Bougie (2016), is the approach that must be used when conducting research, encompassing the theoretical and philosophical presumptions that research is built on as well as the implications for the process.

1.5.1 Research Approach, Design and Method

The study used a qualitative approach to comprehend opinions and viewpoints. By using analysis to delve deeper into issues, the qualitative approach facilitates the discovery of novel ideas and unique points of view. This approach collects data through a variety of semi-structured or unstructured methods, including one-on-one interviews (Creswell, 2014). Sekaran and Bougie (2016) define a qualitative approach as one in which the researcher regularly fabricates information claims that are mostly based on constructivist or participative attitudes. Examples of inquiry approaches include case studies, ethnographies, narratives, and grounded theory investigations. According to Berger (2014), a quantitative approach is one that makes use of a questionnaire in an empirical study of social phenomena that is methodically conducted using statistical, mathematical, or computational techniques. Research using mixed methods involves collecting data in both quantitative and qualitative forms, combining them and using a range of designs, such as theoretical frameworks and philosophical norms (Creswell 2014).

Open-ended interview questions were employed in the researcher's qualitative methodology. As defined by Silverman (2013), an interview guide is a set of questions and thematic ranges that the interviewer should cover during the process. Though this is only a guide, the interviewer will have a list of questions prepared; deviating from the format is encouraged and will not be viewed negatively. The researcher used semi-structured interviews to comprehend respondents' opinions and perceptions. By using analysis to delve deeper into issues, the qualitative approach made it possible to find fresh ideas and unique points of view. By using this method, the individuals were able to provide the data with additional context or depth. Therefore, the researcher started to understand the reasoning behind the response or attitude rather of just responding, "no," to a question.

According to Sekaran and Bougie (2016), a research design is a blueprint or strategy created to address the researcher's study question through the collection, measurement and analysis of data. To identify and characterise the features of the variables of interest in a scenario, the researcher employed a descriptive research methodology. The purpose of this study was to

gather respondents' opinions about the efficacy of marketing communication tactics employed by grocery stores in the South African province of KZN to draw in customers. The semi-structured interviews were employed with the variety of data.

As the researcher used qualitative approach, interviews were used to gather data for this study, it was situated within an interpretive research paradigm. Since the researcher had to comprehend the experiences, attitudes, customs, and behaviours of the managers, the research paradigm had a significant influence on this study. The researcher set out to find out what individuals thought about the most recent marketing communication tactics used by the grocery industry to attract new customers. Datex (2017) asserts that qualitative data generation techniques are incorporated into the interpretive research paradigm. Some have dubbed this type of study paradigm the "soft paradigm" (Forsey, 2012; Zohrabi, 2013).

The phenomenological approach was the main reason behind the qualitative research used in this study. A phenomenological approach centres research on people's first-hand experiences, with the writer's point of view serving as the actual beginning point (Datex, 2017). Semi-structured interviews were employed as the research approach for conducting a study. Accordingly, the researcher used the interview technique of research to determine and characterise the characteristics of the variables of interest in a given situation. The goal of the suggested study was to find out what respondents thought about the marketing communication tactics grocery stores in the KZN Province were doing to draw in customers. The process of gathering data included semi-structured interviews. The interview served as the data source for the study.

1.5.2 Data Collection

To accomplish the goals of this research, information was gathered and examined. As far as the researcher is aware, gathering data makes sample control easier. To increase reliability, a data collection tool was employed in this investigation. A data collection instrument is a device used to collect data for any kind of research (Mgisha, 2019). Creswell (2014) defines data collecting techniques as the procedures that include establishing the parameters of the study, gathering information through organized or unstructured observations, interviews, and graphic materials, as well as starting the data recording phase.

This study used semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions because they allow for flexibility in the interview flow and allow conclusions that align with the study's objectives to be

formed. The advantage of semi-structured interviews is that participants can provide historical information and much more particular information than with other methods of data collecting. According to Creswell (2014), there are limitations to interviews, such as the fact that not everyone is as perceptive and fluent. To help interviewees better understand each question and deliver the perceived correct answers, the researcher allowed them to reword each one.

The researcher created a list of questions based on study prompts and questions to help with the interview process (Forsey, 2012). Interpreting the conversation involved both the interviewees and the researcher (Forsey, 2012). Consequently, after getting approval from the relevant authorities and the participants' assent, the researcher set up interviews with the subjects. Appointments were set up for telephone interviews based on the participant's request.

Before starting the interview, the researcher started by asking the participant's consent to record a session and gave a brief explanation of the purpose of the study. Then, questions about your life will be asked. In order to give the participant ample time to completely respond and offer follow-up questions as needed for clarity and depth, the researcher asked each interview question one at a time (Bunaiyan and Mcwilliams, 2018). Included in the Interview Guide was a list of inquiries pertaining to the study questions. During the interview, the researcher made notes on potential follow-up questions. Throughout the interview, the researcher made notes regarding potential follow-up inquiries. After the interview, the researcher asked the participant if there was anything further they would like to discuss. After transcribing the interview, the researcher expressed gratitude to the subject and informed them that there might be a chance for a follow-up interview (Forsey, 2012). Every interview had a recording.

1.5.3 Data Analysis and Interpretation

Sekaran and Bougie (2016) define data analysis as the act of assessing data by applying logical and analytical reasoning to analyse each element of the data. In this study, the researcher employed thematic analysis, and a software program called ATLAS.ti to effectively analyse, code data and interpret effectively. ATLAS.ti, according to Creswell (2014), is a sophisticated workspace for analysing massive amounts of written, graphical, audio, and video data qualitatively. It includes several advanced tools for carrying out the duties that come with any methodical approach to "soft" data. Coding entails segmenting phrases, sentences, or photos into categories and labelling those categories with a key term based on the text data or images acquired during data collection. There are several software's used in qualitative research, such

as NVivo, Quirkos, MAXQDA. However, the most sufficient software for this study was the ATLAS.ti with trusted results (Maree, 2016). The reason behind the selection of this software is that it is faster and the most efficient way of storing and locating qualitative data (Creswell, 2014).

1.5.4 Study Setting

The study was carried out in the KZN township of Richards Bay, which is located in the King Cetshwayo District. The grocery retail stores in Richards Bay were chosen as the study's target region because of their combination of food stores and commercial space, as well as because the study setting's size made data collecting feasible.

1.5.5 Population

According to Creswell (2013), a target population is any group of people, institutions or other entities from which a study's sample might be drawn. This group can significantly affect generalisability, or how broadly the study's conclusions can be extended to the target population. According to Abutabenjeh and Jaradat (2018), a target population is the subset of the broader population from which a researcher seeks to investigate and take conclusions.

The grocery-selling retail stores made up the study population. Supermarkets were among the retail stores that employed marketing managers. The study's target group comprised 30 retail managers of groceries in Richards Bay Township. The size of the retail store was the primary variable of interest. Supermarkets were defined as grocery retail stores with three or more pay points, and the participants in this category were marketing managers. Data were only gathered from the stores where permission to participate in the study was granted after an informed consent procedure.

1.5.6. Sample

According to Maree (2016), an excessively large sample size in qualitative research can impede the researcher's ability to gather comprehensive and detailed data. That being said, a sample size should not be so small that theoretical and data saturation are unachievable (Sandelowski 2016). The development of theory is, to put it simply, the focus of theoretical saturation, which is sample size and has to do with the number of participants and acts/episodes that have to happen before any more information can be received. Conversely, data saturation occurs when all themes and categories are fully occupied and no new data is produced (Maree, 2016).

Both probability and non-probability sampling are widely used techniques in sampling, while there are many more (Elfil and Negida, 2017). Probability and non-probability are the two categories into which Sekaran and Bougie (2016) subdivide sample techniques. The foundation of probability approaches is applied mathematics and the concept of randomness, while non-probability methods rely on selection through non-random processes. In contrast to non-probability sampling techniques, probability samples meet the prerequisites for using applied arithmetic to accurately simplify to the population.

The non-probability sampling approach was utilised in this inquiry. More importantly, the researcher received good theoretical reasons for the components included in the sample and improved data collection accuracy by using the purposive sampling approach. A relevant factor ensures that participants are chosen to reflect a group, phenomena, area, occurrence, or type, according to Creswell (2014), who describes this sort of non-random sampling. Accordingly, the researcher chose individuals who had at least five years of experience working in the marketing department and who met certain prerequisites.

According to Saunders and Lewis (2012), non-probability sampling techniques work best in situations where there is no complete list of population members and it is unknown which ones will be chosen. With the express purpose of increasing data collection accuracy and providing the researcher with sound theoretical justifications for the sample's constituent parts, the purposive sampling approach was employed. According to Creswell (2014), this kind of non-random sampling makes sure that participants are selected to reflect a group, phenomenon, location, occurrence, or type in respect to a pertinent criterion.

To gather information, the researcher deliberately selected ten marketing managers as a sample. The ten marketing managers who made up the purposive sample were chosen based on the positions they occupy, and the expectation is that they will supply the pertinent information required by the researcher to answer this study's research questions. One of the selection criteria was that the manager had to work in the marketing department of the grocery retail industry for at least five years. This decision was made with the understanding that all grocery retail store managers are in constant communication with both staff and consumers to meet their expectations. The researcher also aimed to comprehend the essence of experiences around an event, gather information through in-depth interviews, and analyse the information utilising

experience and meaningful themes. Since they meet the requirements, the researcher has set, up to ten individuals may be chosen purposefully.

1.6. TRUSTWORTHINESS

1.6.1. Credibility

According to Korstjensa and Moser (2018), credibility is the level of confidence that may be put in the veracity of study findings. The credibility of the research was proven in this study by proving that the conclusions accurately represent the original opinions of the participants derived from their original data.

1.6.2. Transferability

This speaks to how easily findings from qualitative research may be adapted to a variety of contexts or participants (Datex, 2017). It was simple to determine how trustworthy the study was. According to Khan (2014), it is not the responsibility of the researcher to assess the study's transferability, rather to ensure accuracy of data collection and data analysis allowing other researchers to judge the transferability of the study. The interview was recorded and transcription enhanced transferability as well. This would enable another researcher to use the study's methodology to replicate the findings.

1.6.3. Confirmability

1.6.4. Validity and reliability of the study

The research study's conclusions which could be verified by additional researchers is referred to confirmability. Verifying that the data and conclusions drawn from them are clearly derived from the data and are not the product of the researcher's imagination is the goal of confirmability (Korstjensa and Moser, 2018).

1.6.4.1. Validity of the Study

Qualitative validity, according to Gibbs (2007, cited by Creswell 2014), entail the methods used by the researcher to guarantee the accuracy of the results. To avoid embellishing or distorting the facts and occurrences, the researcher employed descriptive validity, describing instead the information that the participants would provide. The researcher presented to a group of three specialists to confirm the validity of this planned investigation. Member checking was used to

verify the accuracy of the qualitative findings, and an external evaluation of the entire project was conducted.

1.6.4.2. Reliability of the Study

A researcher's approach needs to be uniform across many researchers and organisations in order to maintain qualitative reliability (Creswell, 2014). Congruence within this planned inquiry would make advantage of reliability. The integrity within "defines the reliability of the findings distributed in a test, confirming that the multiple items employed to assess the various ideas produce trustworthy ratings," (Khan, 2014). Aspects of reliability include score consistency, the dependability and reproducibility of study results (Zohrabi, 2013), and the constancy of outcomes throughout time (Bashir, Afzal and Azeem, 2008, referenced by Tlapana, 2017). Sekaran and Bougie (2013) contend that a measure's dependability indicates how free of bias (i.e., inaccuracy) it is, allowing for consistent assessment across an extended period of time and in a range of circumstances. Put another way, a measure's reliability—a sign of the instrument's consistency and stability in measuring a concept—determines how valuable it is.

1.7. ETHICAL ISSUES

Since this study involved human participants and ethical approval was required, ethical considerations had to be considered. The clearance was received; more certificates and documentation are included in Appendix 2.

Ethics are the standards of behaviour that define what is and not appropriate (Styger 2018). The following factors were considered when gathering data. The researcher will ensure that the subjects of the study are not misled about the nature of the investigation and will avoid exposing them to personal or potentially upsetting information.

The researcher applied to the UNISA Research Ethics Committee for ethical clearance. Accordingly, the University of South Africa's ethics committee was consulted for permission to carry out the study. The investigator made certain that the investigation complied with UNISA's Policy on Research Ethics (UNISA, 2017). Furthermore, the goal of the study was communicated to the managers and owners of grocery stores. All participants received certificates of ethical clearance, and the study's specifications were explained.

Participants were given the choice of a phone interview owing to the COVID-19 pandemic in the nation. In this regard, the researcher sent a complimentary letter outlining the specific reasons why this research study was required at this time. Most importantly, the UNISA Ethics Review Committees (ERCs) accepted and reviewed petitions for research ethics in compliance with the shutdown requirements. Nevertheless, they made it apparent that they did not want the study to start right away in those cases. The interview conversation style chosen by the participants was considered. Every participant had the chance to respond to the questions posed by the researcher. It was planned that the interview would last for 45 minutes. In semi-structured interviews, pre-planned questions helped to direct the conversation and cut down on idle chatter. The investigator ensured that participants understood the UNISA research ethics policy, which includes their right to confidentiality and voluntary participation; refraining from engaging in harmful, harassing, or discriminatory behaviour toward them; protecting and upholding their privacy, confidentiality, and dignity; treating research participants as distinct individuals and appreciating their differences; and optimising imprecision. To ensure objectivity, the researcher gave participants the ability to access, view and identify materials they had contributed both before and after the data analysis procedure.

1.8. PRE-TEST

Before the final interview questions were finalised, pretesting was conducted to explore difficulties that may have developed throughout the study. A pilot study is a small-scale evaluation of a research approach that was utilised in a bigger, more rigorous investigation. Because the goal of a pilot research is to avoid costly mistakes, such as a pricey but flawed large-scale study, it is also known as a feasibility study. A pre-test, according to Janghorban, Latifnejad and Taghipour (2014), is guided by the objectives such as how it will take you to finish the survey. If there are any queries that need to be answered or if there are any themes that need to be clarified; if there are any questions that are confusing, ambiguous, or redundant; if there are any questions that can be answered with a simple yes or no; What do participants think about the survey's overall format and if a face-to-face interview or a self-administered questionnaire should be used; and whether there are any additional questions that may be asked? Hence, based on the findings of the pre-testing, the interview protocol was improved accordingly. Janghorban, et al. (2014) argue that the interview questions should at least be several times for interview protocol. Therefore, in this study, three participants were part of pre-testing.

1.9. STUDY LIMITATIONS

The study's worth is not diminished by the following limitations, but they are nonetheless important to note. The study's sample consisted solely of KZN retail marketing managers. Because retail managers from other provinces in South Africa were not included in the study's sample, there was a geographical bias and the study's findings could not be extended to the entire nation. The study's geographic reach was limited to a single province owing to budgetary, COVID-19, and scheduling constraints, as visiting multiple locations could have disseminated the virus.

1.10. FEASIBILITY OF THE STUDY

This study was made possible by the uninterrupted collection of data from the King Cetshwayo District in the KZN Province of South Africa, as well as the availability of the necessary respondents. Their involvement made the study to be concluded successfully. Primary data from the interview responses of the participants was used in this study.

1.11 KNOWLEDGE DISSEMINATION

Several thesis formats were used to describe the results and analyses of the intended research. The researcher also hopes to publish this study's results in journals, seminars, conferences, and other venues. According to Parekh et al (2010), distribution bias occurs when the results of a study's dissemination profile are dependent on the direction or intensity of their findings. They maintain that a distribution profile is characterised by potential users' awareness of the accessibility of analytic findings or results.

1.12 CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY TO ACADEMIA

The study's deeper scholarly contribution is found in its examination of marketing communication strategies used in the grocery retail industry in the South African province of KZN. Through an examination of this particular setting, the research provides insights into the distinct opportunities, problems, and dynamics that are present in this industry. It also broadens the understanding of marketing communication strategies by presenting the actual data from the location that may not have received enough attention in scholarly literature. Future research, legislative choices, and business practices in the grocery retail sector in South Africa and possibly other similar places across the world can all benefit from this study.

1.13 CHAPTER OUTLINE



Figure 1.1: Thesis chapter layout

1.14 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter serves as a roadmap for the research through discussing the problem statement and outlining the research objectives, aim of the research and the outlining of the research project questions. The next chapter is postulated on the number of studies conducted by scholars, and it views various articles and authors about the problem that is being researched.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE STUDY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, a general idea of the topic is presented with a background of it. This chapter discusses the relevant literature review that assisted in answering the research questions of this study. This chapter included a discussion on marketing strategy, MCS, application of MCS's using marketing communication mix, and marketing communication challenges in grocery retail stores. The chapter concluded with a discussion on the theoretical framework.

2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theory of communication serves as the foundation for this study. Communication theory is an ongoing process of meaning construction. According to this theory, strategic communication must be viewed as an agile management process, with a focus on providing these spaces for strategy formulation and execution as well as testing decisions through continuous loops of negotiation and presentation (Gossel, 2022).

2.2.1 Communication theory

Communication theory is a continuous process of interpretation. It makes the assumption that all levels of involvement are involved in the interactive process of communication (Zubdul, Hasrat, and Siti, 2023). This process, which focuses on the internal and exterior arenas of continuing negotiations, constructions, and meaning presentations, is omnidirectional rather than necessarily two-way (Betteke van Ruler, 2021).

The model of communication, commonly known as Laswell's model, was created by Lawswell in 1948. A number of distinguishing features of this model were employed to regulate the kind of communication that was transmitted from the sender to the recipient. This covers the sender, the content, the medium, and the impact of the message's dissemination. All of this will have an impact on the way the communication works as well as the recipient's final reaction. How you communicate with your clients and consumers is outlined in a communication model. The way you engage with various people is what we mean when we discuss the models of communication

(Styger 2018).

The Communicative Constitution of Organizations (CCO) approach is gaining popularity to analyse communication in strategic communication theory (Berger, 2014). According to Mafofo and Banda (2014), CCO thinking is based on the idea that communication is the main model for describing social reality rather than just a tangential by-product of human behaviour (Schoeneborn and Blaschke, 2014). With their explanation that reality is not something out there, but something that humans make themselves, Berger (2014) popularised this interpretation, which draws on the Chicago School of Urban Sociology. The notion that this building is accomplished through participatory interactions between individuals is typical of CCO and related techniques (Gossel, 2022).

Using speech theory as their foundation, Taylor and Van Every (2002) developed the Montreal CCO model and took a co-orientational approach to communication. They concentrated on regular human interactions because, according to them, organisation develops through members' layered sense-making processes that are always renegotiated (Taylor and Van Every, 2002). They advocate for people to go near one another, which could result in moments of agreement, but these agreements are always renegotiated. Co-orientation, according to Taylor and Every, is an ongoing, evolving process of these relationships (Gossel, 2022).

2.2.2 AIDA Model

The AIDA model has dominated the literature, and AIDA was a major influence on the beginnings of advertising research. In 1925, Strong modified it for advertising. Attention, Interest, Desire, and Action are all shortened to AIDA. This idea follows a linear path, starting with drawing attention in order to raise awareness and unveil the brand. Next, through its communication about the goods, the advertisement need to pique people's curiosity and foster a favorable attitude. An advertiser can create desire by persuading the consumer to feel a certain way about the product or the way a problem-solution is executed. The final step is action, so there must be some incentives for the buyer to purchase the goods (Gossel, 2022).

AIDA pros and cons

AIDA is well-known and simple to explain to other members of the team or organization. AIDA is still accurate in my opinion, and it's a wonderful place to start for those who aren't big model fans. Even though this is a basic methodology to ensure goal accuracy, AIDA can help define more

meaningful goals for marketing communications. The issue lies in the fact that consumers do not always follow this logical, sequential thought-feel-action sequence. It depends on the product, the individual using it, and even the person's everyday disposition; some people are more impulsive than others (Koekemoer, 2014)

AIDA considers the product to be for all markets, regardless of the type of product market. It also disregards the incentive type and circumstance. AIDA asserts efficacy throughout the entire marketing communications process as well. Lately, there has been an increased emphasis on awareness and comprehension as the two primary behavioral responses in advertising. Not every stage is equally crucial for advertising. The hierarchy-of-effects model, which comes next, will account for even more layers (Zubdul, Hasrat, and Siti, 2023).

2.2.3 The hierarchy of effects model

To enable its products to be accepted by the target market, marketers should begin by attracting attention or acquiring awareness, stimulating interest, inspiring want, and inducing action or purchase in prospects, according to the Awareness, Interest, Desire, and Action (AIDA) model. Before the customers buy in any grocery retail store, they look for what the store offers, reviews and if the grocery retail stores are offering products that will satisfy their needs. The goal of the grocery retailers is to promote their offerings to their target audiences (Mafofo and Banda, 2014).

1961 In 1961, Lavidge and Steiner presented an additional paradigm for useful assessments of the efficacy of advertising. In a way, this marked a revolution in marketing communications. Since then, this model has proven helpful. The concept is meant to be based on a traditional psychological paradigm that categorizes behavior into three states: motivational, emotional, and cognitive (Korstjensa and Moser, 2018).

They were interested in learning the roles that advertising should play in order to increase its efficacy. Although most advertising serves to increase sales, not all advertising does. There are some long-term repercussions. According to this approach, most customers go through seven stages before becoming convinced about a product (Korstjensa and Moser, 2018).

According to the hierarchy of effects model, a buyer's purchasing choice is influenced by marketing communication strategies as well as factors such as product benefits conviction, brand preference, brand liking, product advantages and features knowledge, and product awareness. Customers use a variety of media to choose retail stores when they want to purchase goods and services, and they tailor the media to their needs. The basic conclusion of these models is that persuasive communication should be adequately done at each level of the adoption buying process (Abaya 2004; Koekemoer, 2014; Zubdul, Hasrat, and Siti, 2023).

The hierarchy of effects model pros and cons.

The hierarchy-of-effects approach proposed by Lavidge and Steiner is not without its benefits and drawbacks. Similar to AIDA, clients don't necessarily move through the phases in a straight line. It is also criticized for placing insufficient emphasis on innovation, as many advertising makers strive to come up with the next big, original idea. Another is that it does not link to empirical verifications and is not thorough enough. 16 However, the reason I like it so much is that it has a lot more levels than the AIDA model and offers a lot of helpful advice on how to set goals at each level. However, the notion of high or low involvement is absent. The FCB-grid, the upcoming model, incorporates these features.

According to Gossen and Kropfeld (2022), marketing communication technologies can help businesses to gain a competitive advantage, increase sales and profits, and save money, time, and worry. Marketing communication encircles customers and assists them in moving through the various stages of the purchasing process. At the same time, the organisation solidifies its image, builds a discourse, and nourishes its client relationship. Customers can be protected against the inevitable onslaught of competition by using 'Relationship Marketing,' which cements a relationship of loyalty with them. A competitive advantage is the capacity to keep a customer for life.

2.3 MARKETING STRATEGY

Marketing is well-defined as the study, planning, execution, and management of well-defined programmes meant to induce voluntary value exchanges with a target market to meet business objectives (Kotler and Fox, 1985, quoted by Polyorat, 2014). Kotler et al., (2013) define marketing

strategy as the business decision-making process that companies use to try to achieve their specific marketing objectives. It is said that marketing comprises tailoring an organisation's offerings to the needs and preferences of the target market in addition to using effective distribution, communication, and pricing strategies to educate, inspire, and service the markets (Kotler and Fox 1995, referenced by Motala, 2017). Marketing strategy is described by Kotler (2012) and Khan (2014) as the marketing reasoning used by a business unit to achieve its marketing goals. The goal of a marketing strategy, according to Balouei Jamkhaneh, Pool, Javad, et al. (2015), is to satisfy current customers completely and utterly, who will then spread word-of-mouth advertising about how happy they are with the product/service.

The development of this strategy considers organisational decisions as well as the overall business plan. The researchers had a very inconsistent definition of marketing strategy. Cravens and Piercy (2013) and Polyorat (2014) buttress that the firm's current operations serve as a representation of the marketing strategy. They do, however, have different perspectives on the connections between marketing strategy and competitive advantage. Furthermore, Piercy (2013) asserts that competitive advantage results from surpassing competitors in certain activities. In the same vein, Polyorat (2014) view marketing strategy as including all actions that contribute to maintaining competitive advantage. Additionally, Polyorat (2014) views marketing strategy as a directive for the action. In a different vein, Speculand (2014) defines marketing strategy as the distribution of resources devoted to marketing to achieve corporate objectives. When defining marketing strategy as decisions and actions designed to meet customer expectations, Ullal and Thonse Hawaldar (2018) and Mustafa and Al-Abdallah (2020) presented a more creative insight. In both studies, marketing strategy was defined as the process through which the organisation chooses its target markets, segmentation, and positioning. According to Kotler (2012), strategy determines target markets and the value proposition for the customers based on earlier analysis of the prospects. In addition, Mustafa and Al-Abdallah (2020) articulate that the term "marketing mix" is a foundation model for businesses, historically centred around product, price, place, and promotion.

The description offered takes a broad view of the marketing strategy, serving as a guide for the company's marketing initiatives. Using segmentation, targeting and positioning as a foundation, strategic decisions were made regarding the general direction of the product. The marketing mix and the implementation techniques of the strategy are related to the tactical choices. The sub-

headings that follow look more closely at these marketing strategy elements (Ullal and Thonse Hawaldar, 2018).

2.3.1 Segmentation

A marketing strategy known as segmentation separates a large, diverse market of consumers into smaller groups known as segments based on characteristics that the segments' participants share (Kotler, 2012; Bagwell, 2013; Sulikova, 2019). Therefore, segments are tiny, focused groupings that have some shared traits. The company can select the segment or segments of clients it will target and modify its marketing plan as necessary based on the analysis of the segments. A corporation with a single focus can offer more suited products and services to its clients and increase communication effectiveness. Companies are said to find it easier to concentrate on the needs of many market segments than to market to every customer by creating only one product (Khan, 2014). According to Sulikova (2019), buyers behave differently and have various demands and perceptions.

2.3.2 Targeting

Making targeting decisions is the next step in creating a consistent marketing plan. The segmentation that was previously established is eroded by targeting. The company must determine which of the 17 segments it should serve once the clients have been divided into those categories (Silverman, 2013; Balouei Jamkhane et al. 2015). According to Khan (2014), the corporation must consider both the segment's appeal and its fit with the company when deciding which segment to concentrate on. A determination of a segment's attractiveness is established by examining a variety of financial factors, including its size, growth, purchasing power, competitors, and suppliers. When evaluating the overall profitability of the segments, these factors must be considered. Prior to choosing a target market sector, the business fit must also be assessed. According to Balouei Jamkhane et al. (2015), businesses should consider their goals and available resources in addition to any potential consequences on the macro environment, including the environment, politics, and other macro-environmental factors. The segments that the organisation will focus on in their strategy can only be sensibly chosen after careful study of the aforementioned factors (Zubdul, Hasrat, and Siti, 2023).

2.3.3 Positioning

After identifying segmentation and targeting, the positioning is the final component of the strategic decisions. Positioning is a company's effort to shape a customer's view of its unique offering and image (Kotler, 2012). When discussing positioning, Silverman (2013) refers to the idea of brand image, which is, in their opinion, a collection of choices that result in the targeted customers having the intended feelings about the company. Positioning is done through the marketing mix, which creates the desired perception, and results in improved distinction from competitors working in the same industry. According to Kotler (2012) and Shah and Nair (2011), a perceptual map is a useful tool for assessing rival positioning and choosing the company's own position. By displaying the market environment and client perspectives on several dimensions, it is accomplished. Blind spots can be identified, and a new positioning opportunity is discovered by examining client perceptions and propensities (Sulikova, 2019).

2.3.4 Marketing mix

According to Shah and Nair (2011), there are two model variables that make up the conceptual model of marketing mix. The first has a direct impact on customer satisfaction, while the second is about customer loyalty. The first product and location-related variables, on the other hand, include brand, quality and distribution channels, all of which have an impact on consumer satisfaction. Advertising, price strategy and communication are the second sorts of variables that influence consumer loyalty. Any of these elements has an impact on the marketing mix notion.

The creation of the marketing mix reflects tactical marketing choices. Four components make up the marketing mix, as outlined by McCarthy's 4Ps: price, place, product, and promotion. These demand both financial and skill resources and are best suited for large organizations. The item or service that the business sells to clients is referred to as the product (Khan, 2014). Price is the sum of money that consumers must pay for the good or service they have acquired (Rațiu and Avram, 2014). Place refers to the store where the product is sold, and promotion is the message that the marketing teams create to inform consumers about what is available (Balouei Jamkhaneh, et al., 2015).

Marketing strategies have been developed using the concept of the marketing mix (Bagwell, 2013). In the Fourth Industrial Revolution of the 21st century, this concept is still used to guide important choices that result in the implementation of marketing plans. A marketing mix theory aims to arrange every element of a marketing strategy according to the behaviours, preferences, and psychological makeup of the target market (James-MacEachern and Yun, 2017).

2.4 ADVANTAGES OF MARKETING STRATEGY

The following are the advantages of marketing strategy:

2.4.1 Promotes Your Business to a Target Audience

Without attracting the customers who are most likely to purchase your goods or services, you cannot expect to succeed in business. A marketing strategy is the most efficient way to connect with this crucial demographic, which is referred to as your target audience (Balouei Jamkhane et al., 2015). According to Morgan and Whitley (2019), if you have successfully targeted this audience, you are aware of their customs, tendencies, demands, and preferences, as well as the social media platforms where they prefer to congregate. The ways you will advertise your firm are shaped by this information. To reach your audience on social media platforms, for instance, if you run a comic book business, internet marketing may be more advantageous than traditional advertising (Mustafa and Al-Abdallah, 2020).

2.4.2 Helps You Understand Your Customers

According to Khan (2014), before creating a marketing strategy, market research must be conducted, which can provide reams of information that you can use repeatedly to improve the product development and stay on top of trends and changes in your target audience's behaviour (Mustafa and Al-Abdallah, 2020). **Helps Brand Your Business**

Your marketing strategy should, according to Ullal and Thonse Hawaldar (2018), convey the culture, values and purpose of your company in addition to increasing leads and turning them into customers. The process of communicating that vision to your audience is the heart of branding. For instance, simplicity, elegance, design, and function are the core components of Apple's marketing approach. Their products are elegant, straightforward, stunning, and functional in many ways. When people think of Apple, they envision a business whose products are constantly at the forefront of technology, design and aesthetic appeal.

2.5 DRIVERS AND BARRIERS OF MARKETING STRATEGY

2.5.1 Drivers of Marketing Strategy

According to Morgan and Whitley (2019), innovation, focus and leverage are drivers of the firm's marketing strategy. The organisation incorporates these three key principles of marketing

excellence into their methods and strategy for conceptualising, planning and carrying out your marketing endeavours. They can greatly boost the return on your market investments when combined.

2.5.1.1 Innovation

Only a thorough understanding of customers' constantly changing needs can lead to true market innovation. By understanding what is valuable, to whom, and why is made possible by this knowledge, companies can develop and fine-tune a solid market-driven business plan armed with this customer and market insight. This understanding also enables companies to create appealing, distinctive offers that cater to the demands of a precisely defined market. Greater customer value, higher barriers to entry for competitors, and profitable growth are all benefits of differentiated offerings (Morgan and Whitley, 2019).

Since there has been so much research on innovation, there are different definitions of the concept. Porter (1990) argues that innovation is the key to achieving sustainable competitive advantage in the 1990s (Slavkovic and Babic, 2013). Innovation is the application of knowledge to create novel goods and services (Wilson, 2007). Since people's expertise, technological advancements and organisational cultural elements, innovation has also been described as a practice that encompasses organisational learning, with a degree of ambiguity and an inherent

probability for transformation, necessitating the clarification of issues during its implementation (Souza and Bruno-Faria, 2013). Some people define innovation as the enhancement and implementation of unique ideas by professionals who interact with others throughout time within an organisation.

2.5.1.2 Focus

Having distinct goods and services and noticeably well-defined markets, it is essential to concentrate your efforts on target categories. Companies engage the market in two different ways: proactively and reactively. When acting receptively, you choose whether to take advantage of any opportunities, only using the opportunity cost of the present. First, you must comprehend how distinct groups' requirements differ from one another. Then you can carry out market segmentation in a way that makes it possible for you to pinpoint your highest-value market segments. You can optimise effect and lower go-to-market risk by concentrating your efforts on the market segments with the highest value (Styger, 2018). When you have selected a small number of high-value market segments, you can develop very specific value proposals and convincing market messaging (Morgan and Whitley, 2019).

2.5.1.3 Leverage

After creating a unique offering, a message that is focused, and a persuading value proposition for your target market, it is time to increase market penetration and your impact. Too many companies are either too slow, too inefficient, or neglect to conduct top-notch sales and marketing campaigns and accompanying deliverables, which leads to them underperforming once they reach this point even though they have a superior offering and value proposition. According to Morgan and Whitley (2019), it is imperative to utilize appropriate resources at the appropriate time and cost to ensure a prompt, efficient, and economical execution of your go-to-market strategy.

2.5.2 Barriers of Marketing Strategy

Balouei Jamkhane et al. (2015) assert that the most crucial management factor in the process of strategic marketing is the effective implementation of marketing strategy. Most businesses encounter obstacles while executing marketing strategy, according to research on the topic. Hence, the following are the barriers of marketing strategy:

- Insufficient communication insufficient communication;

- Lack of control over or attention to the marketing environment forces; and
- Lack of understanding customers.

Operational problems in marketing are said to be caused by improper and ineffective communication between the product management, sales and customer support groups. The development of a concurrent marketing strategy that closely coordinates and effectively integrates key operations is necessary. Therefore, this interaction should be strengthened to bring the perspectives of clients and designers even closer together. By engaging with customers and involving them in the design and manufacturing processes, the issue will, therefore, be lessened (Balouei Jamkhane et al., 2015).

2.6 MARKETING COMMUNICATION

The definition of the term "marketing communication" appears to have been agreed upon by academics. Marketing communication is characterised by Dmitrijevs and Dolbnev (2013) as a direct or indirect procedure used by businesses to educate, convince, or remind customers about goods or services. Furthermore, Piercy (2013) describes marketing communications as management's strategy for establishing a connection between a company and its many audiences, which was further clarified by Fill and Jamieson (2006). A definition of marketing communications more relevant to this study is that it is defined as a communal term for all the different types of planned messages used to build a brand: advertising, public relations, sales promotion, direct marketing, personal selling, packaging, events and sponsorship, customer service, and product placement.

All organisations need an easily navigable and user-friendly medium that enables their target market to understand more about their offerings (Odunlami and Emmanuel, 2014). A well-intended marketing communication strategy, according to Lamb et al., (2012), eventually increases business, product, or service sales. The development of promotion strategies is influenced by the company's market and positioning. Building a marketing communication plan for a firm, according to Cravens and Piercy (2013), entails several steps.

2.6.1 Marketing Communication Strategies (MCS)

The plan for making use of every element of the promotional mix is known as the MCS (Lamb, et

al., 2012). Through convincing, instructing, enlightening, and reminding target markets of the Advantages of the company's goods and services, the MCS fosters equally fulfilling interactions. To help with the creation of a promotional composite, every facet of marketing communications is managed and coordinated (Lamb et al., 2012). The steps involved in creating a MCS are as follows.

2.6.1.1 Steps in Designing MCS

- a) Setting communication objectives – help determine the application of the MCS's elements on the marketing platform; clearly defined objectives will guarantee that every effort is made in a designated area (Egan, 2011).
- b) Determining the functions of each component in the promotion component. – Establishing methods for every aspect of the promotion's anticipated impact is essential. It helps to establish the strategy for every promotion element (Silverman, 2013).
- c) Estimating the promotional budget – The goal of the company's marketing budget is to improve the efficiency of advertising, not to determine how much money is best to spend. In many industries, estimated promotions and "sales advertising" charges make up the majority of a promotional budget; nonetheless, every rand spent on marketing communication must help the marketer achieve their marketing communication objectives. As a result, the marketing manager needs to evaluate which tactics and marketing communication methods performed better year over year for particular commodities (Khan, 2014). This will make it easier to guarantee that the budget's allotted funds are used as effectively as feasible.
- d) Collection of the approaches for each advertising component – Both these tactics and the target market approach need to support the desired brand positioning. Previous events must be considered while developing approaches for each promotion component (Silverman, 2013).
- e) Combining and implementing the promotional mechanisms strategies – Grocery stores have to design and put into action an integrated communications plan for both consumer and commercial products.

- f) Evaluating the utility of the integrated promotion strategies – To ensure that each strategy is appropriate for the intended usage, it is critical to evaluate it in detail.

The function of a MCS is to support the management of a business's communication campaigns, as well as the synchronisation and integration of all marketing communication components in order to engage with consumers and those who impact their purchasing decisions (Cravens and Piercy, 2013). According to Egan (2011), customers who find a business's products or services appealing will develop a relationship with the business, stay longer and spend more money. These actions contribute to the business' overall visibility and reputation. The objective of marketing communications is to convey different types of information about the business, its products and services to target consumers (Hughes and Fill 2016, cited by Thwala and Slabber, 2018). Its purpose, however, is situational and task-specific; so it is not as simple as it seems.

To effectively interact with potential customers and draw in buyers of goods and services, marketers employ techniques including promotions, advertisements and other marketing tools. Retail establishments must provide value to their clients to expand and create a long-lasting competitive advantage. According to Khan (2014), companies can do this by utilising effective marketing mix strategies to impact consumer demand for their goods and offerings.

2.7 APPLICATION OF MARKETING COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

The MCS's are grounded by how they are developed, implemented and applied in sending the business message to the target audiences. When applying the MCS's, the marketing communication mix is the main method implemented (Allais, 2016).

2.7.1 Marketing Communication Mix (Promotion Mix)

Moogan (2011) asserts that conventional marketing mix elements include regular mass media advertising and hard copy promotions like catalogues and direct mail; yet e-documents and technology are starting to play a bigger role in the promotional mix. According to Bagwell (2013), the company's website continues to be a crucial marketing communication tool for its numerous investors. However, it is important to emphasise the adaptability of mobile and smart phones as useful tools for communication and attracting new customers. Similarly, Allais (2016), quoted by Motala (2017), agrees with Moogan (2011) that the best MCS's are promotions and similar events, even in light of the growing importance of digital media. Promotion calls for more than just partaking in a range of communication-related activities. According to Berger (2014), the

promotional mix need to be devised and executed in a manner that accomplishes the goals of the organisation. According to Styger (2018), the expansion of IMC has been significantly impacted by the changing environment since clients are exposed to changes in the social context and technical improvements. These developments influence customer purchasing patterns and their perception of and response to marketing materials, as seen by the growth of e-commerce.

Styger (2018) defines marketing communications as a catch-all word for any type of prepared message meant to build a brand. A few examples include customer service, product placement, events and sponsorships, packaging, direct marketing, sales promotion, public relations, and personal selling (Cravens and Piercy, 2013; Polyorat, 2014; Motala, 2017).

2.7.2 Elements of Marketing Communication Mix

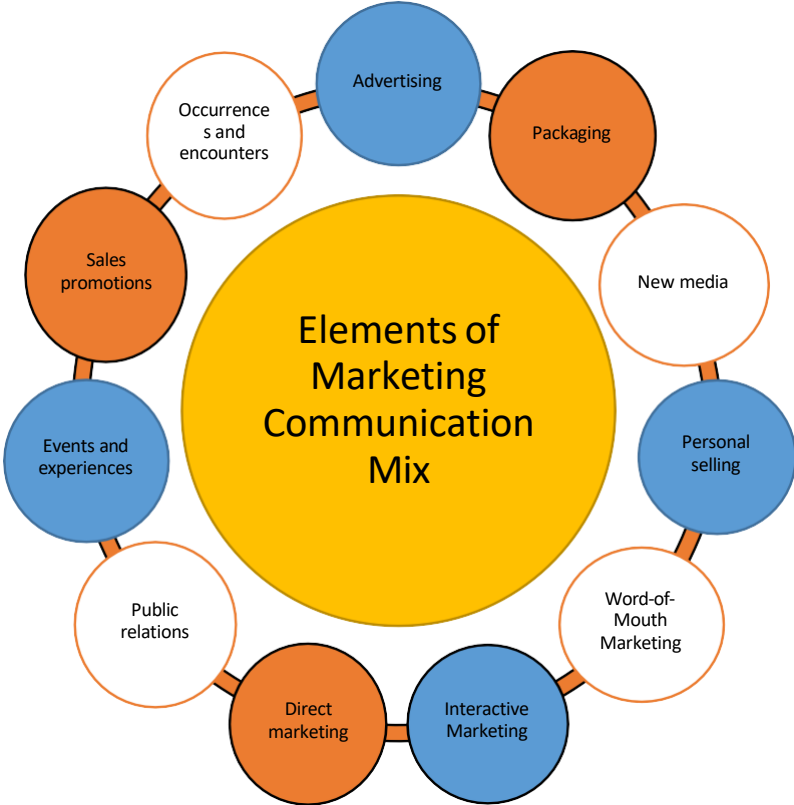


Figure 2.1: Elements of the Marketing Communication Mix

Source: Adapted from Rațiu and Avram (2014) and Lekhanya (2015).

The eight components of the Marketing Communication Mix are as follows:

- a) Advertising. This describes any kind of broad presentation and endorsement of concepts by a designated sponsor via print or digital media. Retail marketers use a range of communication channels to interact with their current and potential customers, including interactive advertising, print, television, sports, and the arts, to mention a few (Rațiu and Avram, 2014).
- b) Occurrences and encounters. These are corporately sponsored activities and initiatives aimed at fostering atypical or unexpected brand-related connections with customers outside of the formal arena, such as in the fields of entertainment, the arts and sports (Piercy, 2013).
- c) Sales promotion. Piercy (2013) highlights that this pertains to a range of temporary incentives designed to promote the trial or acquisition of goods and services. The list consists of trade promotions, employee promotions (such contests and drawings), and model and ticket promotions.
- d) Events and experiences. These are corporately sponsored activities and initiatives aimed at fostering atypical or unexpected brand-related connections with customers outside of the formal arena, such as in the fields of entertainment, the arts and sports (Piercy, 2013).
- e) Public relations. A range of initiatives, either internal or external, designed to safeguard a brand and its marketing messages. By responding to or dispelling unfavourable rumours, stories, and incidents, retailers can enhance their reputation (Kotler, 2012; Lamb et al., 2012). Alhakimi and Qasem (2014) assert that the public perception of the store and the Customer Satisfaction Index play a significant role in fostering customer loyalty since contented customers advocate for the business and entice others to make purchases there.
- f) Direct Marketing. This includes speaking with prospective clients directly through communication channels such the phone, email, fax, mail, and the internet (Kotler, 2012). Instead of the customer travelling to the market, Rațiu and Avram (2014) claim that direct marketing delivers the market directly into the offices of potential customers. Direct marketing is the process of speaking with consumers directly instead of through intermediaries in the form of commercial media.

- g) **Interactive Marketing.** This is founded on intentionally designed events and initiatives that draw in present or future clients in an online setting to increase brand recognition, enhance the brand's image, or encourage sales of goods and services, either directly or indirectly. A retail store, for instance, could provide an internship programme for a marketing and social media assistant. The intern would be responsible for managing and answering all inquiries on various social media platforms, maximising online presence through the application of strategic and creative marketing activities to increase customer interaction (Lekhanya, 2015).
- h) **Buzz Marketing or Word-of-Mouth Marketing.** This includes all oral, writing, or electronic correspondence between people regarding the acquisition or utilisation of a good or service (whether positive or bad) (Mapheto, 2014).
- i) **Personal Selling.** A face-to-face meeting allows a salesperson to provide a presentation, field questions and build rapport with one or more potential customers. Offering a captivating speech to an audience in person is the essence of personal selling, a subset of interpersonal selling. It is the best strategy for influencing the preferences, convictions, and behaviour of consumers. According to Bangura (2011), attitude is the sole consideration in personal selling.
- j) **New Media.** Social networking sites provide as a platform for businesses to interact, communicate and exchange content with their target audience thanks to the New Media, a contemporary marketing communication tool (Schnalke, 2012).
- k) **Packaging.** When it comes to increasing a product's value, packaging is one of the most crucial and effective marketing communication tools. Packaging is an extremely effective tool for advertising and disseminating information about products (Mgayi, 2015:16). It permits an organisation to display its goods in opposition to those of other organisations.

When using the elements of the marketing mix, according to Bagwell (2013), there are challenges you encounter in the business which may come from internal or external forces. It is, therefore, essential to know possible challenges, research about them and plan accordingly in advance to

overcome them without a backward fall in terms of the market share.

2.8 MARKETING COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES IN GROCERY RETAIL STORES

The market of today is defined by intense rivalry, rapidity and ongoing change. Modern technologies have an impact on how organisations operate, and they also help enterprises reach a wider market. These dynamics force businesses to quickly adapt, through marketing and the development of MCS's, to new nonconformities and demand conditions within a condensed product lifecycle (Hadiyati, 2015; Gossen and Kropfeld 2022). According to Allison (2022), the emergence of new technologies affects the corporate system and opens up new markets since consumers have increased expectations for novel features and the ongoing innovation of existing products.

As per Thwala and Slabber (2018), marketing communication managers need to make adequate plans due to their work in an unpredictable setting. The most important obstacles to success for grocery retailers, according to Mustafa and Al-Abdallah (2020), are product and market competitions. This is because there is more competition in the market for the same products, which are sold at different prices based on the consumer buying class that the grocery store is targeting.

The idea that marketing operations boost a company's performance is not well supported by scientific research. It seems that a firm can grow and flourish to some level without a marketing plan because word-of-mouth (such as referrals, reviews, and past stays) marketing is so powerful and generates demand (Lekhanya, 2015). Furthermore, Thwala and Slabbert (2018) contend that retail companies suffer when additional marketing strategies are implemented. For instance, it is thought that some of these companies have problems with pricing and sales training.

The supermarket industry has never been the same since the COVID-19 outbreak. In 2020, customer behaviour was substantially affected by the retail market, unlike any other year in recent memory (Allison, 2022). Global public health initiatives in reaction to the COVID-19 epidemic had an immediate and significant impact on consumers' capacity for and desire for in-person shopping. Grocery stores, therefore, suffered the considerable effects of changing consumer behaviours, perceptions and expectations on retailers because they were considered "vital companies" and were not prone to long-term closure (Gossen and Kropfeld 2022). Additionally, stockpiling

behaviours affected customer loyalty to brands and stores by posing new inventory management issues for grocery stores (Allison, 2022).

2.9 CHAPTER SUMMARY

A literature review on marketing, integrated marketing and MCS was provided in this chapter. According to the chapter, marketing is about more than just managing products and services; it is also about managing stakeholder relationships, which benefits both parties. The marketing literature states that by creating and implementing targeted resource deployment plans meant to achieve marketing objectives in a target market, a company's marketing efforts have an impact on both its financial performance and its market.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. INTRODUCTION

The second chapter acknowledged the literature review on MCS's, including the discussion on marketing strategy, MCS, application of the MCS using marketing communication mix (promotion mix), and marketing communication challenges in grocery retail stores. Chapter 3 denotes the overview of the research methodology implemented in this study to answer the research questions. Research technique, according to Marchet et al. (2018), explains the framework in connection to a particular set of presumptions that can be utilised to perform research. It provides a framework that shapes the conclusions of the inquiry. According to Sekaran and Bougie (2016), it is crucial that the researcher explains the rationale behind the methodologies chosen and offers evidence for those choices. This chapter covered each step-in detail, including the research paradigm, approach, design, site selection, participants, and justification. Additionally, ethical considerations and reliable methods employed in the study were reviewed in an endeavour to investigate the MCS in grocery retail stores.

3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM

According to Cohen, Marion, and Morrison (2018), paradigms are diverse ways of viewing the world and assumptions about its nature and our ability to understand or know about it. Ling and Ling (2017) contend that identifying the research paradigm makes the reasoning behind a certain research exercise transparent and testable. Empirical-analytic, pragmatic, interpretive, critical, post-structuralist, and transcendental research paradigms are among the six categories identified by Cohen et al. (2018).

According to Cohen et al. (2018), a paradigm is a shared interpretation of reality and a worldview that consists of a set of expectations about how things should operate. According to Burlew (2015), there are two primary areas of philosophy: ontology and epistemology. Ontology entails the study of facts as they exist and the general nature of things that exist is the subject of ontology. Ontology views social entities' nature as either objective or subjective (Burlew, 2015). From an ontological perspective, humans are viewed as anticipatory, meaning-making entities that actively

generate and interpret their own meanings (Cohen et al., 2018). Furthermore, the proponents of ontology posit that various interpretations of a situation are legitimate and that facts are able to support different interpretations.

On the contrary, epistemology is the approach to understanding the nature of reality (Burlew, 2015). Knowledge and methods of knowing are encapsulated in it. Epistemology addresses the necessity to provide an answer to the question of what constitutes or ought to be considered acceptable knowledge in a profession and might be positivist or interpretivist (Ling and Ling, 2017). With Burlew (2015), positivist and interpretivist are sometimes known as quantitative and qualitative paradigms. There have, however, been numerous more iterations of these (Datex, 2017). The paradigm variants that are more well-known are pragmatism paradigm, constructivist paradigm, post-positivism paradigm, and transformative paradigm.

Myers (2019) asserts that pragmatics subscribe to the theory that reality is dynamic due to the constantly shifting conditions. As such, they employ the framework that most closely matches the research topic they are examining rather than a single research paradigm. The constructivist paradigm holds that people develop their own ideas about the world by reflecting on their past experiences. Understanding the meanings people make of their experiences is the aim of constructivist inquiry. Consequently, qualitative techniques such as case studies and interviews are frequently utilized (Myers, 2019). In order to gain a more individualized viewpoint, post-positivists depart from the notion that reality is a given and embrace a more probabilistic view of it. They contend that research findings can never be completely objective and that a researcher's perspective and biases can never be completely removed from the data (Korstjensa and Moser, 2018). Transformational researchers generally integrate qualitative and quantitative methodologies to enhance comprehension of the variations in community interactions, advance social justice, and ultimately accomplish transformative change (Myers, 2019).

Interpretivism pertains to qualitative research investigations and is employed to get a knowledge of the world as perceived by the individuals themselves (Rossman and Rollis, 2012; Datex, 2017). Businesses can face distinctive and complex situations - situations that are the result of a specific set of circumstances and people coming together at a specific time. –An interpretivist philosophy has been argued to be ideal when conducting business and management research, particularly in a field like marketing (which serves as the foundation of this research) (Saunders, Lewis and

Thornhill, 2016).

With participant interviews serving as the primary method of data collection, this study fell under the interpretive research paradigm. This study was heavily influenced by the research paradigm since it required the researcher to comprehend the experiences, attitudes, customs, and behaviours of the managers. Therefore, finding out how people felt about the latest marketing communication tactics used by the grocery industry to attract new customers was the researcher's goal.

According to Junjie and Yingxin (2022), interpretivism promotes researchers to seek out first-hand knowledge and consider multiple viewpoints on a certain social setting. In this situation, the researcher looked for varied viewpoints on MCS's from marketing managers who might elaborate on their personal experiences with the phenomenon. Cohen et al. (2018) claim that the interpretivist paradigm similarly tries to delve inside the subject and comprehend from the inside. The aforementioned outcome was achieved by conducting participant interviews and questioning them regarding the marketing communication tactics they use to draw customers in the grocery retail sector.

3.3 RESEARCH APPROACH: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

It was crucial to weigh all the options before selecting a particular approach for gathering data for the study. In doing so, it is important to distinguish between qualitative and quantitative research methods. According to what their names imply, qualitative studies rely on qualitative information (i.e., words, sentences, and narratives) while quantitative studies depend on quantitative information (i.e., statistics and figures) (Niholm, 2021).

The research used a qualitative methodology. A qualitative research strategy, according to Myers (2019), is a notion that incorporates a range of non-numerical data gathering and analysis techniques, with the goal of studying characteristics or attributes that are difficult to quantify. The complex nature of a given event is usually studied using qualitative research methods to comprehend and explain it from the viewpoint of the participants. Not only do researchers seek to understand what is occurring, but also how and why it is occurring in the particular manner that it is (Myers, 2019).

The goal of qualitative research was to better understand individuals as well as the social and

cultural environments in which they live. The intricacy and diversity of the environment under investigation can be explored and expressed through this kind of research (Myers, 2019). The qualitative method excludes data and empirical calculations, in contrast to the quantitative approach. As opposed to this, data are descriptive and come in the form of observations and interview notes (Mahajan, 2018). Instead of precise responses, participants provided in-depth explanations of the phenomenon under investigation (Nilholm, 2021). The researcher used semi-structured interviews to communicate with marketing managers to comprehend the complexity of the situation. As such, this method assisted the researcher in answering the study questions and developing the marketing communication plans in the grocery retail stores in KZN Province, South Africa, with a focus on Richards Bay.

The method that was selected has benefits. According to some, one advantage of qualitative research is the "ability to build theory" because data alone cannot produce a theory; rather, the researcher must use data to do so (Mahajan, 2018; Shufutinsky, 2020). When conducting a qualitative investigation, it is possible for events to take unexpected turns and for items to appear that were not initially anticipated.

Wilkinson and Birmingham (2003) contend that counting numbers (often associated with quantitative research) dilutes the quality of information acquired, making it of little utility. This suggests yet another advantage of the qualitative approach. Rather, qualitative researchers visit the people, places, institutions, and situations to examine behaviour in its "natural setting" (Mahajan, 2018). Similar to this, the researcher went to the grocery retail establishments where the marketing managers were and asked them for permission to collect data and then report using the participants' answers (Creswell, 2017).

Equally, qualitative research has been criticised for lacking analytical discipline, scholarly rigour, and being fundamentally biased despite all of its complexity and potential for discovery (Shufutinsky, 2020). One explanation for this is that the researcher is the primary instrument in a qualitative study, which increases the possibility of bias depending on the researcher's beliefs and background in interpreting data and findings. According to Shufutinsky (2020), using one's "self" is a crucial strategy for combating potential bias. By engaging in self-reflection and introspection, the researcher was able to identify her own biases and determine how likely it was for them to affect the study's findings.

Another drawback of a qualitative study is that interactions with participants and the researcher

might have a significant impact on participants' experiences (Boje, 2019). Prior to the interview, the researcher developed an excellent rapport with the participants. More importantly, each interview's introduction was designed to make participants feel comfortable. The introduction reemphasised the issues of confidentiality and anonymity, the goal of the study, and the handling of data.

It became clear that there is no perfect research strategy; each one has benefits and drawbacks. No research methodology can be seen as superior to another, according to Creswell (2017), because they are all applied in various circumstances. As a result, it is up to each researcher to implement procedures that lessen the influence of its drawbacks.

3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

A research design is an outline or strategy for collecting, evaluating and interpreting data that is created to address the study question posed by the investigator (Sekaran and Bougie, 2016). To fully comprehend the marketing communication techniques employed by grocery merchants in Richards Bay, KZN, South Africa, to draw customers, a qualitative approach was deemed the most appropriate for this study (Saunders et al., 2016). The philosophy of naturalism or interpretivism, which tries to comprehend phenomena in context-specific circumstances, frequently has qualitative research as an essential component (Shufutinsky, 2020). According to Silverman (2013) and Sekaran and Bougie (2016), it frequently concentrates on a small number of cases in an effort to acquire detail (such as people's perceptions of and interactions with specific environments). According to Marshall and Rossman (2016), the intricacy of social connections represented in daily life and the meanings that people ascribe to these interactions interest qualitative researchers.

The descriptive research was adopted in this study. According to Van Wyk (2012), the primary goal of descriptive research is to give a true and reliable depiction of the variables or elements that are related to the research topic. It is created so that researchers can watch, note and characterise significant traits of the individuals or phenomenon to form hypotheses for further research. For the purpose of gathering data for descriptive studies, case studies and survey instruments such as questionnaires, interviews, rating scales, and checklists are frequently used (Bhandari, 2021).

The study adopted a case study design. Theoretically, a case study could be an individual, group,

community, episode, or event, according to Kumar (2011), who also notes that the entire study population is viewed as a single entity. In this instance, the chosen retail sector (grocery retail sector) served as a case study since it was viewed as one entity made up of various entities, specifically various grocery stores providing the groceries. Bhandari (2021) adds that, similar to how the study was conducted directly with the marketing managers, case studies examine institutional behaviour directly rather than indirectly or through an abstract manner.

3.5. POPULATION AND SAMPLING

The entirety of subjects or members who meet a certain set of requirements or characteristics is known as the population (Bhandari, 2021). In this instance, the populace consisted of supermarket retail stores. Supermarkets and marketing managers were employed by retail stores. Richards Bay, a settlement in KZN's King Cetshwayo District and under the uMhlathuze Municipality, is where the study was carried out. The selection of the focus area for this study was the grocery retail stores in Richards Bay, which was made possible by the study setting's size, mix of grocery stores and commercial spaces, and feasibility of data collecting. Thirty grocery retail managers from Richards Bay Township made up the study's population. The retail store's size was the primary variable of interest. Supermarkets were defined as grocery retail stores with three or more pay points; managers were the participants in this category.

According to Sekaran and Bougie (2016), there are two categories: probability and non-probability. While probability approaches are grounded in the ideas of randomness and applied mathematics, non-probability methods rely on selection using non-random techniques. Therefore, when non-probability sampling techniques do not meet the conditions for accurately simplifying to the population through applied math, probability sampling does.

The non-probability sampling strategy was used in this investigation. To be more precise, the purposive sampling strategy was used to increase the accuracy of the data that was gathered and to provide the scholar with sound speculative justification for the selection of sample components. In respect to a critical benchmark, Creswell (2014) claims that this sort of non-random selection ensures that participants are selected to reflect a group, phenomenon, place, incident, or type.

In this study, information-rich subjects were found via non-probability purposive sampling. Based on Creswell (2014), the researcher could not have found the participants' qualities and knowledge

anywhere else. Because the researcher has employed the purposive sampling, the people who provided the required information were ten out of 30 grocery retail managers. To gather information, the researcher deliberately selected ten marketing managers as a sample. The ten marketing managers that make up the purposive sample were chosen based on the positions they occupy, and they were expected to supply the pertinent information the researcher required to respond to the questions this study posed. One of the selection criteria required of the manager was that they work for at least five years in the grocery retail industry's marketing department.

The decision was made based on the observation that all grocery retail store managers interact with both staff and customers to meet their expectations. Managers with different levels of experience bring unique perspectives to the research study. More experienced managers have a wealth of knowledge and insights gained through years of working in the industry, while newer managers may provide fresh ideas and perspectives. Understanding their experiences and expertise can help to identify best practices and uncover any industry-specific challenges that need to be addressed. Hence, five years was selected purposively as it falls within the criteria the researcher was looking for.

The researcher also aimed to comprehend the essence of experiences around an event, gather information through in-depth interviews, and analyse the information utilising experience and meaningful themes. As a result, up to ten volunteers were chosen on purpose because they met the requirements the researcher had set out.

According to Maree (2016), an excessively large sample size in qualitative research can impede the researcher's ability to gather comprehensive and detailed data. That being said, a sample size should not be so small that theoretical and data saturation are unachievable (Sandelowski 2016). The development of theory is to focus on theoretical saturation, which is sample size and has to do with the number of participants and acts/episodes that have to happen before any more information can be received. Conversely, data saturation occurs when all themes and categories are fully occupied and no new data is produced (Maree, 2016).

Moser and Korstjens (2018) address the difficult issue of how large of a sample is sufficient, contending that the sampling strategy is suitable when the chosen participants and settings are adequate to produce the data required for a thorough knowledge of the phenomenon under research. Moser and Korstjens are supported by Mousin (2019), who contends that the crucial inquiry to make is whether the sample gave the researcher access to enough data to answer the research questions. In the end, Mousin (2019) concludes that the major problem with qualitative

sampling is how to focus deliberately and profoundly rather than how to characterise. As a result, the sample of ten individuals is justified because it gave sufficient data to answer the study objectives.

3.6 DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUE

A data collection procedure consists of a set of connected actions or techniques used to obtain data and prepare it for analysis. The purpose of gathering data is to document information, make decisions, address significant issues, and distribute the information (Creswell et al., 2009; Creswell, 2014). As examples of data collection techniques are focus group talks, interviews, observations, and textual and visual analysis (Islam and Aldaihani 2022). The chosen method of data collection was semi-structured interviews.

3.6.1 Semi-structured interview

Researchers use open-ended questions to get data from participants during a semi-structured interview (Desorickheere and Vanghn, 2018). According to Cheron, Salvagni and Calomby (2022), an "interview" is just an exchange of opinions between two persons about a subject that interests them both. Additionally, according to Cheron, et al. (2022), the interview allows for the co-production of data with all participants rather than just data collection. When the researcher asked the questions, probed, rephrased, and created follow-up questions to help participants comprehend and answer by sharing personal experiences on the topic, data were co-produced. To provide "rich data" (Creswell, 2014), semi-structured interviews also give participants the freedom to respond on their "own terms" (May, 2011).

Ten participants (marketing managers) participated in the data collection. According to Creswell (2017), there should be a limited number of questions that are designed to elicit the ideas and opinions of the participants. Inquiries centered on the application of the MCS's used to draw in consumers, the use of marketing strategies, and the difficulties in establishing and putting into practice MCS's in the grocery retail sector. Prior to the interview, the participants got access to the interview guide, which helped them prepare more effectively and provide relevant information. In addition, ten marketing managers participated in interviews and filled out the interview guidelines. In the meantime, the researcher took notes, clarified questions as needed, and provided more information. As a result, this made it possible to draw findings that satisfied the study's goals.

Advantages

Semi-structured interview questions can be changed, added to, or taken out (Urais 2021). Furthermore, Urais (ibid) emphasises the adaptability of the selected data collection method. According to Kumar (2011), unlike a questionnaire, there is no opportunity for outside consultation during an interview; hence, the results are a real reflection of the target population. The study employed semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions because they permit flexibility in the interview's flow, facilitating the development of findings that align with the study's goals. In the end, semi-structured interviews are suggested by Islam and Aldaihani (2022) as the most practical approach for exploring rich material. Additionally, they point out that participants can offer historical information and that semi-structured interviews yield far more extensive information than other methods of data gathering.

Disadvantages

Creswell (2014) asserts that there are certain restrictions on interviews, such as the fact that not everyone is as perceptive and fluent as others. To remedy this, the researcher gave the respondents the opportunity to restate each question in a way that helped them comprehend it better and hence deliver the right perceived replies. In general, interviews take too much time (Kumar, 2011).

Saturation

Throughout the study process, the saturation of data was carefully taken into account to guarantee completeness and comprehensiveness in capturing the viewpoints and insights of the participants. Every interview was done until new theme or data could be discerned, a sign of saturation. Furthermore, triangulation was used to increase the validity and reliability of the results by combining several data sources and methodologies.

3.7 DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis, according to Sekaran and Bougie (2016), is the process of analysing data by looking at each component of the given data using logical and analytical reasoning. The analysis of data involves grouping the information gathered, in this case from interviews, into components

that are then individually reviewed to draw conclusions and inferences that are coherent and relevant. Meaningful conclusions imply that the findings must be pertinent to the stated study aims. The study employed thematic analysis. Thematic analysis, according to Maree (2016), involves looking for, analysing, and reporting recurring or frequent patterns within a data set. Through the data analysis process, the researcher was able to discern common experiences among participants in the form of patterns and themes. Data for analysis was coded using the qualitative computer data analysis tool Atlas.ti. According to Creswell (2014), manual coding is a difficult and time-consuming procedure, and using a computer like this is a quicker and more efficient approach to store and locate qualitative data. The study employed the methodologies delineated by Creswell (2014) for the purpose of qualitative data analysis, as elaborated below.

First, data were organised to get them ready for analysis. The raw data from the interview was acquired through interview guides and audio recordings. To ensure that the participants' opinions and ideas were accurately recorded, a word document containing the raw interview data transcription was sent to them. The information was categorised and put in a tabular format according to the question number, label, questions and answers description, and other factors. According to Asiedu (2020), setting up files for analysis include thinking about safe file storage and choosing the analysis technique.

Reading over all of the data was the next stage. Getting a general understanding of the material and having the opportunity to consider its overall significance, depth, reliability, and application are the steps in this process (Creswell, 2014). Upon closely examining the raw data transcribed, it became apparent that some of the information was not relevant enough to be used. To focus exclusively on the data pertinent to the study and eliminate the less important ones, the study employed the "winnow" approach suggested by Guest, MacQueen, and Namey (2012). Data were put through the coding process using some of the concepts from the codes that were obtained through winnowing.

Coding every piece of data was the next stage. To create descriptions and themes through open coding, the study classified the phrases into categories and then segmented the data depending

on the originality and commonality of the participants' responses (Creswell, 2014; Rossman and Rallis, 2012; Asiedu, 2020). These include groupings and subgroups within the data, the quantity of codes (grounded), the density of quotations, the objects connected to the codes (network), and so on.

Interpreting the themes and descriptions was the final phase. As claimed by Asiedu (2020), the study evaluated the meaning of themes by carefully selecting what makes sense in the themes and the categories generated by the analysis. In Chapter 4, the results are provided.

3.8 TRUSTWORTHINESS

According to Nemouch and Holmes (2002), trustworthiness in qualitative, interpretative research is defined as the calibre of the data and findings. According to Nemouchi and Holmes (2022) and Johnson, Adkins, and Chauvin (2020), the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability were utilised to determine the study's overall trustworthiness.

3.8.1 Credibility

According to Korstjensa and Moser (2018), credibility is the level of confidence that may be put in the veracity of study results. By proving that the conclusions accurately reflected the participants' initial thoughts derived from their original data, the research's legitimacy was proven. To help participants in preparing for the interview, participants should be given pertinent information prior to the interview (Saunders, et al., 2016). This will help participants establish their credibility. For this study, the researcher meticulously transcribed the interviews and checked each one for accuracy. Additionally, in order for the participants to prepare for the interview, they were given the interview guide and details on important terms used in this study.

3.8.2 Transferability

This is the degree to which findings from qualitative research can be utilised with other respondents or scenarios (Datex, 2017; Maree, 2017). Transferability was achieved by the researcher by providing sufficient information for readers to decide whether the findings hold true in other contexts. Using the perspectives of the participants (marketing managers) who shared their personal experiences of the phenomenon to provide a comprehensive understanding, the

use of marketing communication tactics in the grocery retail sector to draw customers was explained in depth.

3.8.3 Dependability

Dependability is the quality of the qualitative data collection process (Haven and Van Grootel, 2019). According to Johnson et al. (2020), reliable research includes detailed descriptions of the study procedure that allow the work to be replicated. The question that should be asked in terms of dependability, according to Haven and Van Grootel (2019), is: Are the research questions explicit, and are the characteristics of the research study consistent with them? The researcher made sure that interpretations were supported by data while analysing the data. The dependability of the research was improved by using an independent consultant appointed by UNISA to assist with how to analyse data using an online software called Atlas. The study's objectives and research questions were both made apparent. Dependability also refers to the extent to which the study's findings may be verified by additional sources (Maree, 2017).

3.8.4 Confirmability

According to Korstjensa and Moser (2018), confirmability is the process of proving that the data and resultant interpretations are derived directly from the data and are not the product of the inquirer's imagination. Confirmability, according to Maree (2017), refers to the audit trail of the research. If an external researcher were to follow the audit trail i.e. the same data and research context, they would have comparable findings. In this study, the research findings were examined to see if evidence gathered during the literature review may support any of them. The goal of research is to enable readers or other people to "mimic your study" (Grad Coach, 2020).

3.9 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

According to Saunders et al. (2016), researchers can also change the definitions of reliability and validity to fit a qualitative approach.

3.9.1 Validity of the study

Validity of results includes evaluation of the measuring instrument in terms of the degree to which such an instrument accurately measures what it claims to measure (Grad Coach, 2020). More specifically, validity in qualitative research refers to the researcher's capacity to access participant's knowledge and experiences and determine whether they are able to deduce the participants' intended meaning. In contrast, it could be how precisely the participant's story captures the social phenomenon that it refers to (Silverman, 2013).

Techniques such as face validity; content validity, convergent validity and discriminant validity are often used to make such a determination (Cheron et al., 2022). Therefore, to avoid exaggerating or manipulating the data and events, the researcher employed descriptive validity, describing instead the facts that the subjects had provided to her. The researcher presented to a group of two specialists to ensure the validity of the intended investigation.

3.9.2 Reliability of the Study

The data gathering method of semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions was employed to ensure reliability. According to Gibson (2007), referenced in Creswell (2014), semi-structured interviews offer flexibility in the interview flow, enabling the creation of findings to match the study's objectives. This study made advantage of reliability. According to Khan (2014), the internal cohesion measures the validity of the results presented in an examination by verifying that the numerous items used to rate the different concepts yield reliable ratings. A study's dependability and reproducibility, the consistency of results across time, and the consistency of scores are all aspects of reliability (Bashir, Afzal, and Azeem, 2008, quoted by Tlapana, 2017). Sekaran and Bougie (2013) contend that a measure's dependability indicates how free of bias (i.e., inaccuracy) it is, allowing for consistent assessment across an extended period of time and in a range of circumstances. Stated differently, the usefulness of a measure can be ascertained by looking at its reliability, which is a measure of the instrument's consistency and stability in measuring a concept.

3.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2014), qualitative research has the potential to compromise privacy; as a result, researchers must take precautions. According to Johnson et al. (2020), ethical conduct describes how moral standards and values are integrated into the research process. According to Marshall and Rossman (2016), a study's trustworthiness should

not only be determined by its design but also by the strategy for the researcher's ethical interaction with the participants. It is especially crucial to take any ethical concerns into account because qualitative research entails interaction with other people. The majority of ethical issues, according to Leedy and Ormrod (2010) and Silverman (2013), fall into one of four categories: voluntary participation and the right to withdraw, protection from harm, informed consent (respect), and right to privacy or protection of research participants.

3.10.1 Permission and ethical clearance

The authority must provide ethical clearance and explicitly state that each person engages of their own free will and may withdraw from the study at any moment if they so choose. The researcher followed UNISA research ethics guidelines. In this study, the researcher adhered to all ethical guidelines, and in compliance with the research ethical policy, permission to carry out the investigation was obtained from all relevant institutions. The owners and managers of food stores provided a gatekeeper's letter, granting permission to conduct research. Subsequently, the UNISA's Research Ethics Committee was consulted and provided ethical clearance. Participants and business owners were given the assurance that the information gathered would only be utilised for this study, and that the researcher and her supervisor would be the only one with access to it. Moreover, participants were also given the assurance that only pseudonyms and codes would be used, and that their names would in no way be mentioned in the study's results.

3.10.2 Informed consent

The most often used strategy in the sector is to ensure that participants and, if needed, those in charge of them, give their informed consent. The rights towards informed consent and privacy are particularly crucial for the semi-structured interview conducted as part of the research. According to Locke and Struck (2019), informed consent refers to the process through which a researcher assists participants in understanding not just what they are consenting to by taking part in this research study, but also the potential consequences of doing so. Informed consent, according to Cohen et al. (2018), apportion participants some of the blame if something goes wrong with the study. When individuals are knowingly recruited for a study, they should be told of the goals and advantages of the study as well as of their rights and protections as participants. Acquiring informed consent is likewise required (Cooper and Schindler, 2014). By signing the consent form, participants declared their approval. Process consent was used in addition to informed consent, in which participants were only asked once to consent to the study based on their understanding

of the information given to them.

According to Cohen et al. (2018), letting individuals know about the study could disrupt the participants' normal behaviour, reduce the scope of the data collected, and cause the richest and most genuine data to be overlooked. Further critiquing the usage of ethics committee models, Cohen et al. (2018) claim that panels may be unduly concerned with upholding their institution's reputation and may obstruct researchers who attempt to question choices.

3.10.3 Anonymity and confidentiality

According to Nyumba et al. (2018), anonymity is the capacity of the researcher to conceal the identity of participants. To maintain confidentiality, information from a participant must not be disclosed in a way that could be used to identify the person (Cohen et al., 2018:130). Participants received guarantees that any information they supplied would not be talked with or made public. The selected grocery businesses received letters of informed consent. These letters raised ethical concerns, and confidentiality and privacy were assured to each and every participant.

3.10.4 Protection from harm

The protection of participants' interests and safety, as well as those of those who may be impacted by the research, is the primary concern of research ethics (Liu et al., 2015). There are various methods to break down these principles. The right of an individual to decline participation in the planned study was honoured to safeguard participants' rights. There was no physical, psychological, or emotional harm done to participants. During the interview sessions, no delicate issues were brought up.

3.10.5 Voluntary participation

Ensuring that people freely choose to participate is necessary for voluntary participation. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2014), voluntary participation prohibits participants from being forced, threatened, or obliged to engage. All participants signed consent forms and participated voluntarily. Additionally, participants were made aware of the provision allowing them to withdraw from the study at any time without incurring any penalties (McMillan and Schumacher, 2014).

In this context, it is appropriate to discuss plagiarism, which is defined as explicitly replicating someone else's work or utilising their ideas without giving credit to the original author, as well as data manipulation or fabrication (Kraak, 2003; Johnson et al., 2020). To prevent plagiarism, the researcher cited and included a list of references for each source that was used to obtain the data.

3.11 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study's worth was not diminished by the following limitations, but they are nonetheless important to note. The study's qualitative research approach encountered the typical challenges associated with a limited sample size of respondents. It is crucial that the researcher emphasises that the study is not fully typical of all grocery store managers in KZN owing to the small sample size of ten respondents.

The qualitative technique was applied as a single-reach strategy. However, if other methods, such as quantitative and mixed methods, were investigated, they might produce different outcomes. Similar to interviews, other qualitative data collection methods, including focus groups and questionnaires, may produce varied results.

For this study, only KZN retail marketing managers were involved. As a result, the study's conclusions were not applicable to the entire country, resulting in a geographical bias because the sample of retail managers from other provinces was excluded. The geographic scope of the study was limited to a single province owing to budgetary and scheduling constraints.

3.12 MY ROLE AS A RESEARCHER

Owing to the possibility that certain interpretations may be influenced by personal opinions, the researcher cannot entirely dissociate themselves from the study (Creswell, 2017). Participants must confirm interview transcripts for them to be reliable (Butler, 2016). The marketing managers included in the study were permitted to read the transcriptions of the interviews to confirm that they accurately captured the words of the participants by the grocery store owners and those in charge of authorising participation (general or store managers) (Creswell, 2017). As a result, the study's conclusions are produced as the result of widespread interpretations (Lock and Struck,

2019). The validity and authenticity of the research are also increased through common interpretations (Creswell, 2017).

If methods are not properly handled, bias problems will unavoidably emerge during a backyard study. The researcher used reflectivity to lessen this. According to Creswell (2017), reflection places the reader as a component of the data being studied. The researcher also considered how she contributed to the collection and analysis of data (Mouson, 2002). The researcher is the main source of data, therefore according to Shufutinsky (2020), the research should be aware of and responsive to current events. Throughout the investigation, the researcher was accommodating of different viewpoints and receptive to constructive criticism.

3.13 CHAPTER SUMMARY

An elaborate summary of the technique used in this research has been given in this chapter. As the methodologies used in this research study, the researcher had described the qualitative. Examining the marketing communication tactics used by grocery stores in KZN Province to attract new consumers was the primary goal of the study. It was determined that the semi-structured interview was the best strategy for gathering data to meet the goals of the study. The chapter ended with a discussion of the reliability of the data gathered, the research's ethical implications, and its limits. The key information gathered from the interviews was transcription and content analysed. In the next chapter (Chapter 4), the results of this analysis and the research findings will be covered in more detail.

CHAPTER 4:

DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides the results and findings of the data collected by the interview guide regarding the MCS's particularly within the grocery retail sector in KZN Province, under uMhlathuze Local Municipality. The main aim of the study was to explore the MCS's in grocery retail sector at uMhlathuze Local Municipality which is under KZN Province in South Africa. This study sought to guide KZN grocery retailers in decision-making and create an environment for independent food chains to expand marketing departments and use customer service tools to meet product and customer needs.

4.2 DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Determining the demographic characteristics of the study's sampled participants was the aim of this section. Demographic characteristics were deliberated as fundamental in this research on the basis that it is important to know the level of experience that the participants have, it is imperative to know their gender distribution, and it is also important to know their age, whether the industry is youth dominated or adult dominated. Hence, all the aforementioned factors make the demographic profiling of participants essential in this study.

In line with this, the findings from the demographic analysis are shown in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Summary of demographic information

Company code	Respondent code	Respondent Gender	Respondent Age	Respondent Position	Respondent Years of Experience	Respondent Key Role
#GRS 1	#1	Female	25	Marketing manager	5	The task involves managing stock, budgeting for the branch, and tracking stock profit and loss.
#GRS 2	#2	Female	28	Marketing manager	6	The role involves maintaining stock availability, advertising on social media, and addressing customer concerns or inquiries.
#GRS 3	#3	Male	33	Store manager	5	Focus on customer interest by engaging with them on social media and posting products that meet their needs.
#GRS 4	#4	Male	38	Marketing manager	7	The role involves managing the floor, ensuring tasks are completed, informing customers about products and services via social media, and planning, organizing, and implementing strategies.
#GRS 5	#5	Female	36	Marketing manager	6	The process involves planning, implementing, organising, controlling, and bringing clients and management at the centre.
#GRS 6	#6	Male	42	Store manager	6	The role involves defining and managing brands, monitoring social media, producing internal communication, and training employees about new and promoted products.
#GRS 7	#7	Female	45	Marketing manager	7	The role involves ensuring product availability, timely promotions, and open trade doors to ensure customer satisfaction.
#GRS 8	#8	Female	47	Store manager	5	The role involves enhancing employee satisfaction by creating effective staffing strategies, attracting talent, building a successful sales team through weekly training, and regularly checking and recording sales.
#GRS 9	#9	Male	47	Store manager	6	The manager oversees the store's front, oversees the promotional team, plans the monthly schedule, organizes paperwork, and ensures timely completion of employee duties.
#GRS 10	#10	Female	55	Store manager	9	The role involves promotion, sales, product management, and financial management for the marketing department and distribution.

In order to be eligible to participate in this study as outlined in Table 4.1, the participants had to meet one of the following requirements:

- Be the retail store owner or manager;
- Be in the grocery retail industry;
- Have adequate experience in the retail industry of at least five years or more; and
- Be part and parcel of the marketing department, amongst other things.

4.2.1 Age and Gender

The age of the respondents has been categorised in a range. Within the context of this study, age 18-37 are considered as youth, from age 38-47 they are considered as young adults, and from 48 years and above they are considered as adults. Between the ages of 18-27, only one participant fell under this category, while the ages between 28-37, only three participants fell under this category. Most of the participants who were working in the managerial position fell under the category between the ages of 38 and 47 with the total number of five participants. Under the category of ages above 48, only one participant was found in this category. Based on the findings from Table 4.1, it is clear that the youth are falling behind in terms of the managerial positions. The majority that was found to be active and well represented in terms of the association between age and managerial position were young adults (age between 38-47).

Understanding the age range and gender of the participants provide insights into their perspective and preferences. Different age groups and genders may have varying shopping habits, preferences, and needs (Islam and Aldaihani, 2022). This information helped the researcher to tailor marketing communication strategies to specific target demographics. By considering the age and gender of participants, the research study gained a comprehensive understanding of the marketing communication strategies employed in grocery retail stores. This insight can be used to develop targeted and effective communication strategies that resonate with the store's target audience and align with the company's goals and values.

From the findings presented in Table 4.1, it is suggested that females were dominant and the business is more attractive to females than males in terms of the participation rate and in

management positions with the total number of six out of ten. The participation rate of males was four in total out of ten. On the basis of the data depicted in this category of gender, females are leading in terms of the managerial position, especially in the retail shops that were available for interviews.

4.2.2 Position and Experience

All participants hold the managerial positions, play the managerial role in managing the store, planning, implementing, organising, controlling, and communicating with their target market. They all have adequate experience in the retail industry of five years and above and were part and parcel of the marketing department. Hence, all managers fit the researcher's sampling criteria.

Youth participation in managerial positions in the grocery retail sector is very low and the information depicted on Table 4.1 suggests that young people are not well represented in leadership positions. The prevalence of this group among participants may be explained by the fact that grocery retail outlets employ managers over the age of 46, who are likely to have considerable and relevant work experience.

Table 4.1 shows that the young adults are the majority in terms of employment, they are dominating the employment space in both on managerial positions as well as in terms of number of years employed. The researcher discovered that the higher the age, the higher the years of experience. Furthermore, the study established the positions respondents held, and the number of years in the management position. All the participants fell under the study's selection criteria as they all have been in the management positions for five years and above. The findings showed that three respondents have five years, four respondents with six years, two respondents with seven years and one participant with nine years of experience in the management position.

Therefore, having qualifying respondents helps to gain much clarity on the MCS used in the grocery retail sector to draw consumers and enhances the quality of the study's findings. It is essential to note that the participants were store managers and marketing managers and all of them were part and parcel of the marketing departments.

4.3 OVERALL AIM OF THE STUDY

For this study, the main aim was to explore the MCS in retail industry for groceries at uMhlathuze Local Municipality which is under the province of KZN in South Africa.

4.4 SUMMARY OF THE CODING PROCESS

The study coded the data for analysis using the qualitative computer data analysis tool Atlas.ti. Manual coding is considered a tedious and time-consuming operation, atlas.ti is a quicker and more efficient program to save and locate qualitative data. The study employed thematic analysis. The data from interviews were organised and transcribed into a word document. The data were then reviewed to identify relevant information and eliminate irrelevant data. The study used coding to categorise and segment the data, and themes and descriptions were created based on the coding. The results of the analysis are presented in this chapter.

4.5 DATA ANALYSIS

This section discusses the analysis of data. To analyse the data, the researcher used Atlas ti version 7.5. The ATLAS ti user guide and reference (2013) describes this qualitative data analysis program as a potent workbench for qualitative analysis of substantial amounts of textual, graphical, audio, and video data. The researcher gave close attention to the participants interpretations, synthesising them into ideas that accurately reflect the study population and study circumstances.

4.5.1 Research Question 1: What are the MCS's adopted by grocery retailers to attract customers?

The first research question sought to determine the MCS's (MCS) adopted by grocery retailers to attract customers in the grocery retail sector at uMhlathuze Local Municipality which is under the province of KZN in South Africa. In answering this question, the study focused on three overarching dimensions namely, the specific strategies adopted, the factors that contribute to the development of these strategies, and the relevance of adopting such strategies as shown in

Figure 4.1 and elucidate thereof.

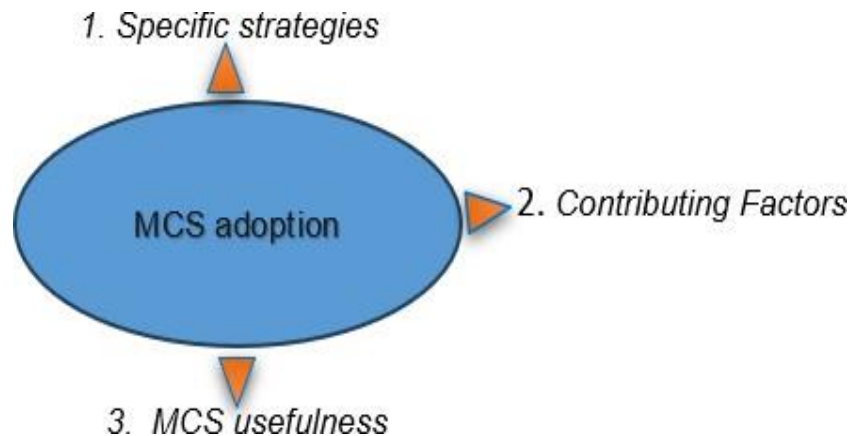


Figure 4.1: The dimensions of MCS adoption

Source: Researcher's own construct from the field data (2023)

4.5.1.1 MCS adoption

Figure 4.2 shows the three themes that emerged from the in-depth examination of the strategies implemented within the grocery retail sector. These are *business sustainability strategy*, *customer loyalty strategy*, and *effective customer acquisition strategy*. Each theme encapsulates the list of codes that culminated in it (refer to Figure 4.2). These themes are elaborated next:

- ***Business sustainability strategy***

The *business sustainability strategy* is the first theme that emerged from the study's quest to determine the specific strategies adopted by the grocery retail section. This is a strategy the business uses to ensure operational continuity. This strategy is carried out through the offering of discounted sales and adapting to the market trends or changes as alluded to by #5, and #6 respectively:

"Our campaign has an interest to increase the profit in terms of sales" (GRS 5, Marketing Manager).

"...we are more into social media pop up ads, YouTube and sale papers. Through all these we are

able to notify our customers when there is a sale” (GRS 6, Store Manager).

Additionally, the shops carrying out activities as building strong brand, financial planning and align marketing channels, leading to ensure business sustainability as indicated by **#9** and **#10** respectively:

“We account for the financial in planning for creating a marketing communication strategy” (GRS 9, Store Manager).

“We align our marketing channels to promote our products and services and always make sure our customers are happy with what they buy from us” (GRS 10, Marketing Manager).

- ***Customer loyalty strategy***

The second theme emerged from the data analysis is *customer loyalty strategy* in establishing the specific strategies adopted by the grocery retail section. This is the strategy the business uses to ensure customer satisfaction. This strategy is implemented by knowing the needs of customers, customer attraction, customer engagement and customer communication, as **#3** opined: *“By the use of social media, we communicate easy with customers and get to know their needs. We collect data to cater for their needs or preferences”,* and **#4** stated *“...we advertise our products in that it attracts customers... Through surveys about how people become aware about their surroundings, that helps us realize what platforms should we use for marketing”,* and **#8** opined *“normally we use social media platforms to attract customers”.* In addition, businesses use customer attention to comprehend the customers buying behaviour, in view of this **#3** stated: *“We use celebrities as brand ambassadors to use our products and that attract their follower to come and buy the same products”.* In doing all these, the shops seek to build strong customer loyalty and this then constitutes the customer loyalty strategy.

- ***Effective customer acquisition strategy***

The data analysis revealed a third theme, which is *effective customer acquisition strategy*. This theme helped to identify the particular tactics that the grocery retail area had implemented. The effective customer acquisition is the strategy businesses use on how they get their customers. In getting more customers, shops use unique selling proposition and do target marketing by firstly identifying and then segment target audience according to their needs they offer them with, as alluded by **#6**: “*Doing surveys to get to know our target market better to offer what they need*”, **#7** added that “*we introduced a free call store number for customer surveys*”.

From the findings, grocery retailers do market research and collect data in analysing what customers want so that they will be able to get those customers to acquire their products and services, and to obtain a competitive advantage, as alluded by **#2**: “*Through data collection making sure that social media platforms do work in attracting customers using pop up ads*” Similarly, **#3** stated that “*We collect data to cater for their needs or preferences*”.

Additionally, grocery retailers use customer acquisition to draw clients because it enables consistent and pertinent message across several media. By using this strategy, you may draw customers in, keep them informed about the products available in the store, and increase brand recognition. It allows for the development of a distinctive selling offer and the ability to target various societal groups. This strategy is generally seen as being successful in luring new clients and keeping existing ones, as opined by both **#7** and **#9** respectively:

“The marketing strategies we use are social media, TV Ads, newspapers, Billboards, and door to door handouts. We normally do it repeatedly to reach our target market. In the past, we have developed a store merchandising and inventory description available on shelves for customers to easily be answered for new introduced brands they are not familiar with” (GRS 7, Marketing Manager).

“We are still using a blueprint strategy in identifying our target market and target customers, match our customer problems with our offerings and provide the best products and services for customer satisfaction. When customers are satisfied, they repeat buys and recruit others to buy the same offerings” (GRS 9, Store Manager).

The MCS adopted by Grocery Retail Shops

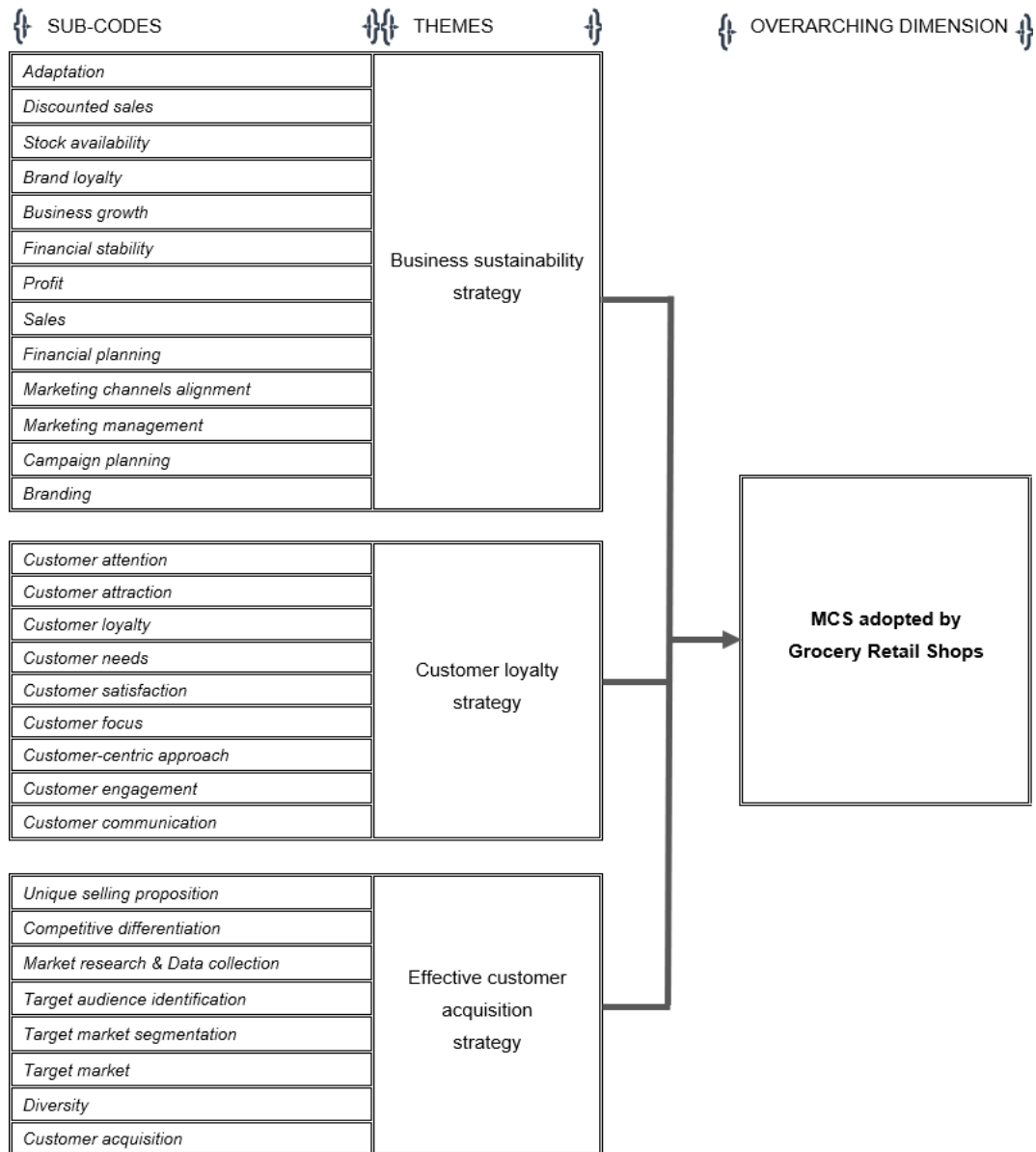


Figure 4.2: The MCS adopted by Grocery Retail Shops

Source: Researcher’s own construct from the field data (2023).

4.5.1.2 The usefulness of MCS adoption by Grocery Retail Shops

This section shows the findings of the factors that contribute to MCS development. There are two distinct themes that have emerged from the analysis. These themes comprise *business advancement* and *customer engagement*. A collection of distinct codes shapes each theme. Please see Figure 4.3. A detailed explanation of these concepts will be given in the following sections.

The usefulness of MCS adoption by grocery retail shops

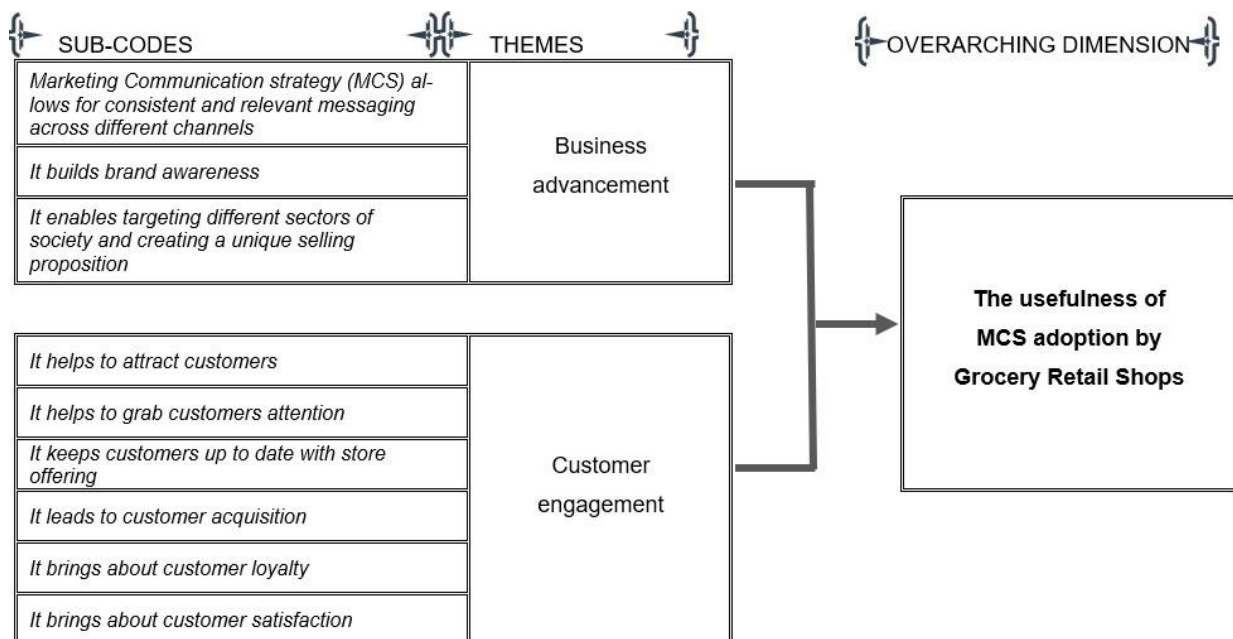


Figure 4.3: The usefulness of MCS adoption by grocery retail shops

Source: Researcher’s own construct from the field data (2023)

- *Business advancement*

First, the data analysis revealed a theme of *business advancement* in determining the utility of

MCS adoption by grocery retail stores. Within the context of this study, business advancement is used to advance the business and to draw customers since it enables consistent and multichannel communication. Grocery retailers use MCS for consistence and relevant messaging across different channels to advance their businesses. In support of this, as opined by both **#1** and **#2** respectively:

“It does attract customers as everyone now is into media, distress by viewing media and our pop-up ads then attract and grab their attention to come and buy our products” (GRS 1, Marketing Manager).

“It does attract customers. Through social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and tweeter...” (GRS 2, Marketing Manager).

The findings revealed that the use of MCS in grocery retail shops promotes brand awareness, attracts clients, and keeps them informed about the offers of the store, as **#7** stated *“...it ensures that our customers can expect the same calibre of experience from our brand every time they buy from us, for example, brand awareness building”*. The use of MCS also enables targeting various societal groups and developing a unique selling proposition, as **#8** opined *“people are on social networks more than before so there is no easier way to attract and get customers beside social media”*.

- *Customer engagement*

The second element that surfaced from the data analysis to determine the utility of MCS adoption by grocery retail stores is *customer engagement*. This is explained in the study that MCS's to attract customers and brings about customer loyalty, as **#1** asserted that *“It does attract customers as everyone now is into media...”*, similarly **#2** adds *“It does attract customers”*. MCS also help to retail customers, as opined by **#6** *“...it will attract customers and has always attracted the right customers who are in need of our products. It also makes customers refer other customers when our product satisfied their needs”*.

Additionally, customer engagement as suggested in the study helps to grab customers' attention, keeps them up to date with store offerings, as #2 stated “Through social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and Tweeter make sure that we keep our customers up to date with everything in the store”.

4.5.1.3 Factors contributing to the MCS development

The results of the data analysis are shown in this part, which also identifies three major themes that emerged. These three themes encompass *research analysis findings*, *external factors*, and *business performing factors*. Every theme consists of a set of particular codes that have helped shape it. (A graphic representation can be found in Figure 4.2.) A thorough explanation of these concepts has been provided in the sections that follow.

The factors contributing to MCS development

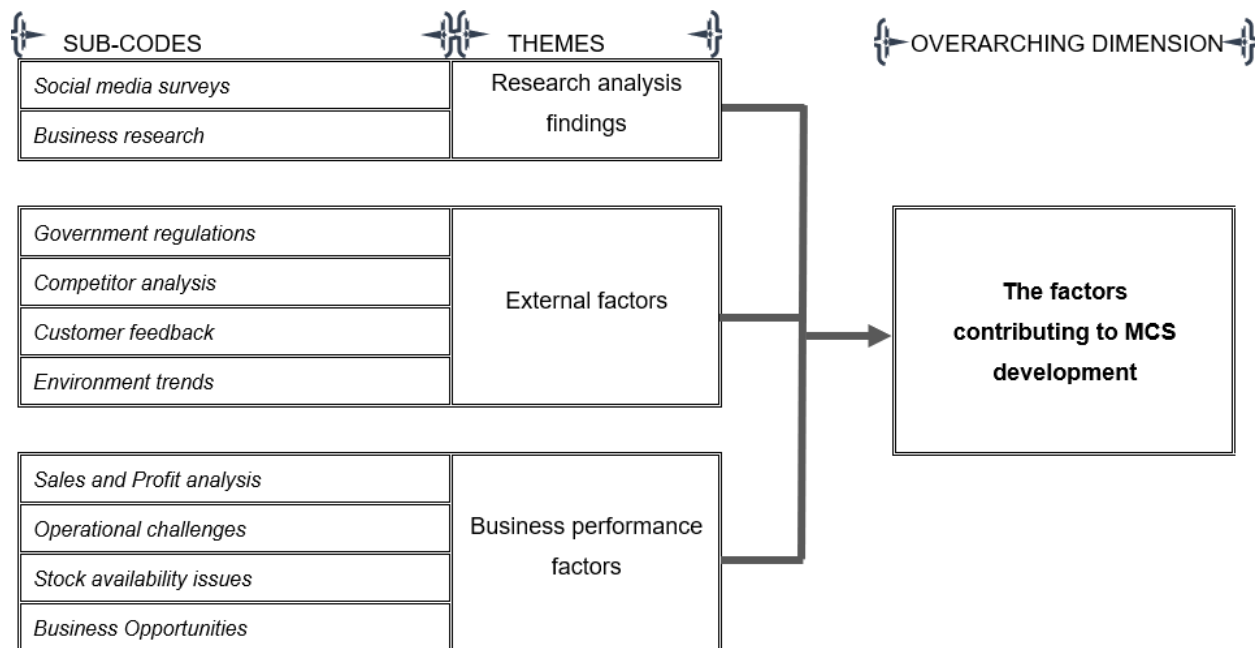


Figure 4.4: The factors contributing to MCS development

Source: Researcher’s own construct from the field data (2023)

- *Research analysis findings*

Research analysis findings is the first theme that arose from the study into what influences MCS

development. This factor clarifies that through social media surveys and business research, grocery retailers get customer opinions and reactions about their satisfaction regarding the product or service that the business is offering to its customers, as alluded by **#3** *“By comparing past and recent ways in which the business is conducted and also used social media surveys for customer suggestions to overcome changes”*.

- *External factors*

The data analysis revealed a second theme, which is *external factors* in identifying the elements influencing the development of MCS. With regards to this factor, the findings reveal that major changes in the business environment can be identified through external factors such as government regulation, customer feedback and environmental trends contributing to the development of the MCS. Grocery retailers operate by following government regulations, as opined by **#1**: *“We are going according to government regulations, e.g., with COVID-19 we were using essentials like sprays making sure that customers come and be safe within the store”*.

From the findings, grocery retailers also use customer feedback to regularly check what makes customers happy and steaking to that and apply the fact that the customers are key to business success, as opined by both **#2** and **#3** respectively:

“Checking what makes the customers happy and applying the fact that the customers are always right” (GRS 2, Marketing Manager).

“By comparing past and recent ways in which the business is conducted and also used social media surveys for customer suggestions to overcome changes” (GRS 3, Store Manager).

Additionally, the findings reveal that grocery retail stores also use environmental trends as dynamics in the environment to improve and manage change, as stated by both **#6**: *“Through environmental trends on social media and by including customer suggestions and opinions we manage to solve customer-based problems easily”*, and **#7**: *“The effect of external factors in the business such as economic, technological, societal and governmental influences affect how we operate. We always adapt and improve our strategies in a way that it suites the changes at that time”*.

- *Business performing factors.*

Business performing factors in identifying the components leading to MCS development is the third theme that came from the data study. Business performance, within the context of this study, is determined by sales and profit analysis, as **#8** and **#9** opined respectively:

“I realize when I started to have more foot at the business and the sales started to improve and they were much better than before” (GRS 8, Store Manager).

“I identify major changes through ongoing sale and profit out of the operational expenses” (GRS 9, Store Manager).

The results show that in order to overcome operational challenges in a retail sector, the development of marketing communication is one of the most important elements of current marketing, while being difficult to develop and undergoing substantial changes, as opined by both **#5** and **#6**:

“We always play as a team and strategize. We had Covid19 challenges through our operations, however, I managed to restructure our daily schedules and successfully implemented new strategies and took advantage by following government regulations. Customers trusted us and kept on coming to buy” (GRS 5, Marketing Manager).

“I plan for any risks that could arise unexpectedly” (GRS 9, Store Manager).

From the findings, the stock availability issues due to unforeseen circumstances has major impact on the effectiveness of the business, as alluded by **#4**: *“Delays in the availability of stock when there are protests. In these instances, we make sure that stock is limited per customer and if stock is delayed, we make sure that there are home deliveries”*.

4.5.2 Research Question 2: How are MCS’s applied in grocery retail stores?

The second study question was to ascertain how grocery retailers applied marketing communication methods to draw clients in the grocery retail sector. In answering this question, the study focused on three overarching dimensions namely, the methods adopted, the success determining factors and the stakeholder satisfaction and sustainability as shown in Figure 4.5 and elucidate thereof.

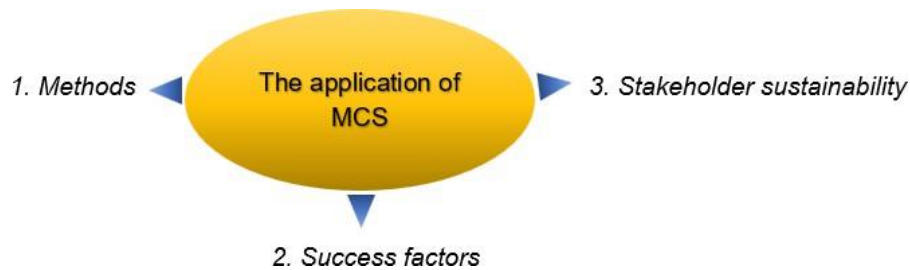


Figure 4.5: The MCS application methods

Source: Researcher’s own construct from the field data (2023)

4.5.2.1 The MCS (MCS) application methods

This section discusses the three topics that arose from the grocery retail businesses through analysis of the MCS application methods, as seen in figure 4.6. These are *digital marketing, social media marketing, word-of-mouth marketing, advertising, sales promotion and direct marketing*. Each theme encapsulates the list of codes that culminated in it (refer to Figure 4.6). These themes are elaborated below:

- *Digital Marketing*

The *digital marketing* is the first theme that emerged from the study’s search to determine the MCS application methods by the grocery retail section. In this regard, the findings imply that digital marketing is about promoting the business and to connect with customers using the internet. Grocery retailers make sales online using online marketing and google advertisement, as #10 alluded:

“We are currently using... and YouTube popup ads” (GRS 9, Store Manager).

“We also use Google advertisements” (GRS 10, Marketing Manager).

From the findings, grocery retail stores also make use of mobile app marketing where customers download the application, register and get store notifications whenever there is an update or sale, as opined by #5: “We have an app for the store where if you have downloaded and registered you automatically receive updates like sales we have in our retail”. The purpose of the grocery retailers is to drive discovery and increase buyer engagement.

compared to other forms of advertisement tools. According to the study social media marketing have resulted in a change in the MCS's used by the grocery retail store marketing communication departments. Hence, retail businesses must give value to their customers' desired demands in order to succeed and create a long-lasting competitive edge.

In this regard, the study suggest that the relevancy of the retail stores has been demonstrated by the rise in social media links, it appears that social media promotions do draw a lot of customers, as alluded by **#2**, **#4** and **#5**:

"We are using social media platforms to keep the communities posted when there are sales and discounts on items in the store" (GRS 2, Marketing Manager).

"The strategy we use is social media. By alerting them about sales, discounts, stock that we have added that is essential to their daily living" (GRS 4, Marketing Manager).

The best recent method for engaging with potential clients and luring them to buy products and services is advised to be social media marketing, as opined by **#5** *"We communicate with our customers through different platforms such as social networks (twitter, Facebook)"* and **#9** *"We are currently using social media..."*.

The study also suggests that the application of social media marketing in the grocery retail sector is a successful strategy for marketing and finally attracting more customers, as alluded by **#6** and **#9** respectively:

"We now have fast ways of reaching customers like social media posting which spread news all over the country. If one customer has bought our advertised product and is satisfied, his or her comment grabs the attention of others to come and buy" (GRS 6, Store Manager).

"With these social platforms we build a good relationship with our customers and attend complains if there are any and come up with a win-win solution to keep them happy it" (GRS 9, Store Manager).

The research showed that grocery retail stores use social media as a versatile marketing tool to boost connection, develop a communication strategy, and monitor results. This makes it evident

that a social media strategy can help with marketing communication objectives in a way that is intangible.

The MCS application methods by the Grocery Retail Shops

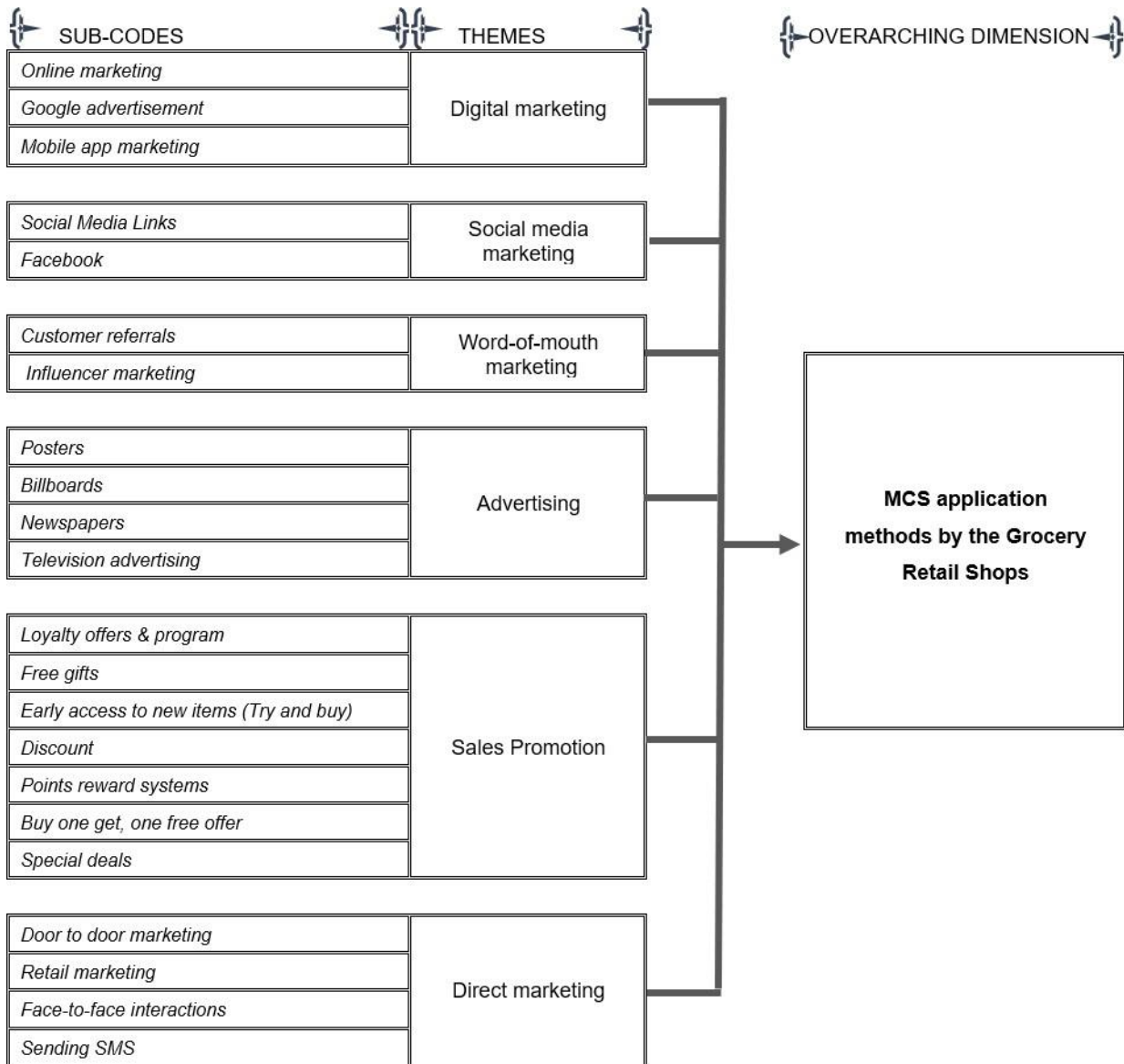


Figure 4.6: The MCS application methods by the Grocery Retail Shops

Source: Researcher’s own construct from the field data (2023)

- *Word-of-mouth Marketing*

The *word-of-mouth Marketing* is the third theme that emerged from the study's quest to determine the MCS application methods by the grocery retail stores. In grocery retail stores, according to the findings, MCS's are applied through various channels such the word-of-mouth. Word of mouth is about spreading the information about the business products and services. Grocery retailers use customer referrals and influencer marketing, as #6 alluded:

"...If one customer has bought our advertised product and is satisfied, his or her comment grabs the attention of others to come and buy" (GRS 6, Store Manager).

- *Advertising*

The fourth element that surfaced from the data analysis was *advertising*, which stemmed from the study's attempt to identify the MCS application techniques used by supermarket retail outlets. With regards to this, advertising is the promotional technique used to bring the message about the business products and services. The findings suggest that grocery retailers use advertising to repeat the message of their offerings over and over again by using billboards advertising where one advertisement is repeatedly to reach many people at the same time, as #3 alluded: *"... we use billboards and sometimes posters"* and #7 *"We use advertising..."*

The findings also revealed that grocery retail stores are still using traditional means of advertising such as newspaper advertising in order to send the message of their offerings to existing and potential customers, as #3 mentioned: *"We communicate with customers via newspaper..."*

- *Sales Promotions*

The fifth theme that came from the study's attempt to determine MCS application strategies by grocery retail outlets is sales promotion. Sales promotion is the marketing technique used to increase sales in the business. In line with this, the findings suggest that grocery retailers engage in promotional efforts such as free gifts, points rewards system and special deals to encourage consumers to make quick purchases. The goal is to provide consumers with a more immediate reward and access them to new offerings, as #8 said:

"We use, sales promotion.... We developed a loyalty program for customers and offer them free gifts, samples, or points towards rewards. We sometimes offer them special deals, discounts or early access to new items" (GRS 8, Store Manager).

Additionally, grocery retail stores also use buy one and get one free for same item as part of

promoting their products, as #3 mentioned “...*promoting goods and services to our customers through sales, buy one get one free*”

- *Direct Marketing*

The *direct marketing* is the sixth theme that appeared from the study’s search to regulate the MCS application methods by the grocery retail stores. Within the context of this study, direct marketing is the form advertising by communicating with customers directly. From the findings, the grocery retailers use direct marketing informing consumers about goods and services. This is done through face-to-face interactions and sending SMS to customers, as #7 and #10 opined respectively:

“We use...and face-to-face giving sale papers to customers” (GRS 7, Marketing Manager).

“We use SMSs to inform our customers about any sale, changes in our operations” (GRS 10, Marketing Manager).

4.5.2.2 The MCS success determining factors.

The results of our data analysis are shown in this section, where two main themes that emerged from the data study are presented. These two themes encompass *improved customer satisfaction and business transformation*. Each theme encompasses a collection of specific codes that have contributed to its formulation. (Please refer to Figure 4.7 for a visual representation.) In the subsequent sections, a detailed elaboration of these themes has been explained.

The MCS success determining factors

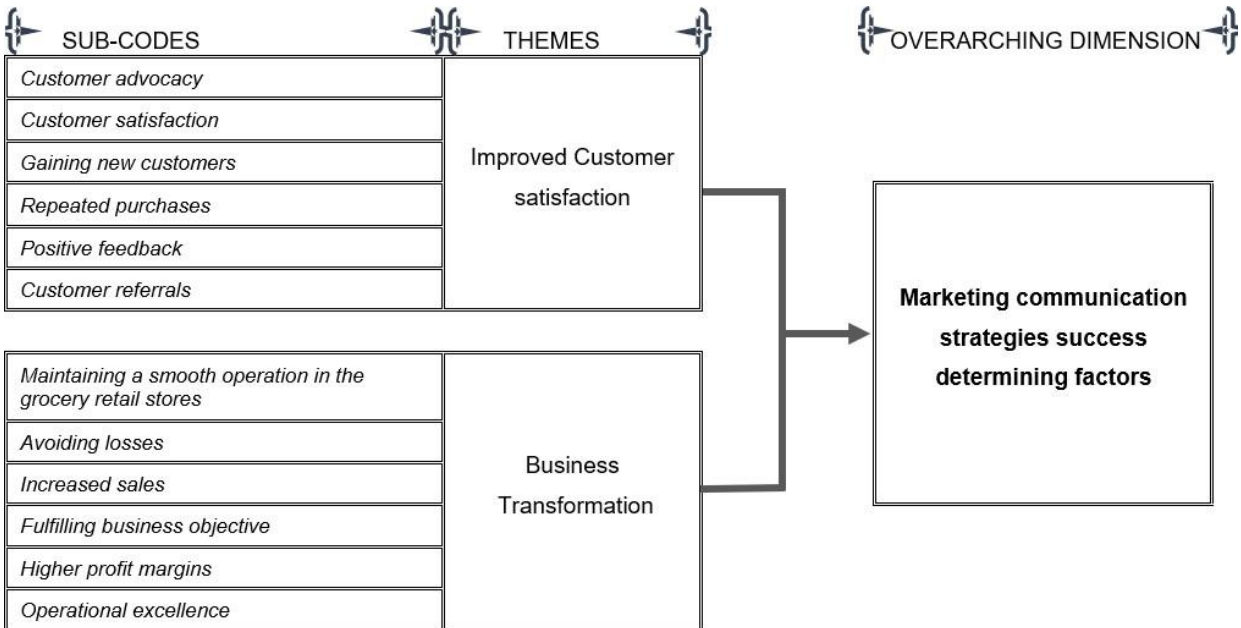


Figure 4.6: The MCS success determining factors

Source: Researcher's own construct from the field data (2023).

- *Improved customer satisfaction*

The first theme that arose from the study's pursuit to look at the MCS success determining factors by the grocery retail section is *improved customer satisfaction*. This factor is defined as measurements used to determine the satisfaction of customers pertaining the business offerings. In line with this, the findings revealed that grocery retailers use customer satisfaction, repeated purchases and positive feedback to keep their customers satisfied, as **#2**, **#8** and **#9** alluded:

"The current strategies are successful because the more we use these certain strategies is the more the customers come in their numbers as many as they are" (GRS 2, Marketing Manager).

"I believe they are successful, because the products that are selling more are the ones that we advertise on the one of our social media platforms, so it means people did see them advertised and they are running to buy" (GRS 8, Store Manager).

"...for each promotional goods and sales advertised on social platforms we do get customers buying and most of them come to buy in bulk it" (GRS 9, Store Manager).

Additionally, customer satisfaction is suggested to be seen through customer referrals and gaining new customers showing that customers are still satisfied with their product and services, as #3 opined: "...customer repeating buy and also encouraging others to buy from us".

- *Business transformation*

The study's second theme, *business transformation*, arose from its attempt to examine the MCS success deciding elements by the grocery retail area. Business transformation refers to an initiative that makes operational changes in the business. In this regard, the grocery retailers use increased sales and maintaining a smooth operation in the grocery retail stores as the success determining factors in the transformation of their businesses, as alluded by #1, #4 and #5 respectively:

"We promote back to school via SMS and Facebook and that increase our sales, we even make 100% profit" (GRS 1, Marketing Manager).

We have gained more customers which means more sales for the store" (GRS 4, Marketing Manager).

"...our operations are smooth" (GRS 5, Marketing Manager).

From the findings, these strategies have led to fulfilling business objectives and higher profit margins, as #3, the store manager opined: *"Yes, they are successful because most of fundamentals aims of the business are fulfilled, such as increasing profit"*.

Additionally, the grocery retailers use avoiding losses factor as a major of business transformation. as #5, #6 and #9 stated:

"They are successful because we have not made a loss through using them in our marketing campaigns..." (GRS 5, Marketing Manager)

"Yes, they are active since we have not made a noticeable loss that could lead to a backward shift in the market share scheme" (GRS 6, Store Manager)

"We have not made any loss from our sales..." (GRS 9, Store Manager).

"The store has not made any loss since the development of new strategies" (GRS 4, Marketing Manager).

4.5.2.3 The Stakeholder satisfaction and sustainability

The results of the data analysis are presented in this part, which highlights three main themes that emerged from it. These three themes encompass *customer focus and sustainability*, *shareholder engagement and satisfaction*, and *ensuring operational excellence*. Each theme encompasses a collection of specific codes that have contributed to its formulation. (Please refer to Figure 4.8 for a visual representation.) In the subsequent sections, a detailed elaboration of these themes has been explained.

Stakeholder satisfaction and sustainability

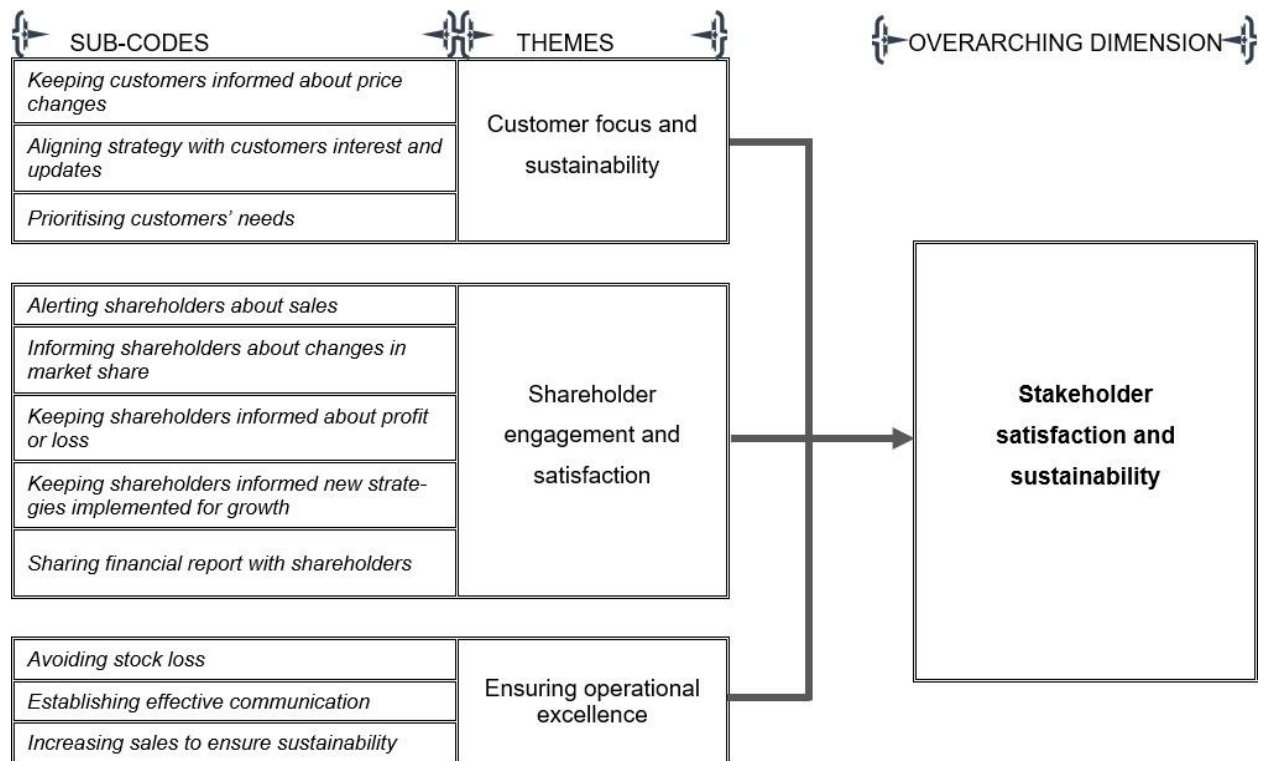


Figure 4.6: Stakeholder satisfaction and sustainability

Source: Researcher's own construct from the field data (2023)

- *Customer focus and sustainability*

The first theme that emerged from the study's search to determine the stakeholder satisfaction and sustainability in the grocery retail section is *customer focus and sustainability*. Within the context of this study, customer focus and sustainability means to build a good relationship with

customers focusing on them and satisfying their needs and attract them to buy from your grocery stores in order to ensure sustainability. Grocery retail stores prioritise customer needs, as #5 opined: “We ensure that at all costs we put our customers first...”.

Additionally, the findings reveal that grocery retailers also ensure customer satisfaction and sustainability by aligning strategy with customers’ interests, as #6 mentioned “We ensure that the store is always in line with trends...”, and by ensuring that they keep customers informed about price changes and sales, as alluded by #4 “By alerting the community about our sales and in that way our sales within the store increases”, and #10: “. We do monthly discount sales to attract working consumer class for the 15th, 25th and month end sale. We also make combo sales”.

- *Shareholder engagement and satisfaction*

The study's pursuit of identifying sustainability and stakeholder satisfaction in the grocery retail sector gave rise to a second theme: *shareholder engagement and satisfaction*. In this regard, shareholder engagement and satisfaction refers to all ways that are used to influence shareholders and satisfy them. Grocery retailers do that by keeping stakeholders informed about price changes, as #6 alluded: “...inform them of all improvements or changes and be sustainable”.J

From the findings, grocery retailers maintain shareholder engagement and satisfaction through loyalty, reporting back to shareholders with financial reports yearly as the key to retaining of their stakeholders, and informing them about any changes in the market share, as asserted by #3: “alerting them of all the goods and bad happening in our store, changes in the market share and send them our financial reports yearly”. Moreover, grocery retail stores also engage and satisfy shareholders by informing them about profit and loss and new strategies implemented for growth, as #2 opined: “Letting the shareholders know whenever there is a price increase, profit or loss and new strategies implemented for growth”.

- *Ensuring operational excellence*

Ensuring operational excellence is the third element that came to light during the study's investigation of stakeholder satisfaction and sustainability in the grocery retail sector. This is about delivering value through continuous operational improvements. With regards to this, to ensure

operational excellence, marketing communication management department in the grocery retail stores focus on strategies such as avoiding stock loss, as opined by #1 *“by making sure that we are not having stock loss”*, increasing sales to ensure sustainability and make sure that they keep their stakeholders updated with their operations, #1 adds, *“increase sales to gain more profit, that gives assurance and trust that we are sustainable”*, and #3 *“By increasing sales...”*.

The findings also revealed that grocery retailers establish effective communication with their shareholders to keep a good relationship and retain them, as alluded by #5, #7 and #9 respectively:

“...update our target market with all relevant information and that increase sales which also attract stakeholders. We make sure we are sustainable to keep our stakeholders' trust”, (GRS 5, Marketing Manager).

#7 By ensuring that we communicate with them and making sure everyone is on the same page, identifying their interests and send them appropriate level of engagement, such as having meetings with them for any available updates”, (GRS 7, Marketing Manager).

#9 “We let them know everything we are doing that is about the development, innovation, external threats from external factors affecting the company growth and our increase in sales and competitive edges. We do this to keep them updated and avoid surprises of any unknown risks it”, (GRS 9, Store Manager).

4.5.3 Research Question 3: What are the challenges of adopting and implementing MCS's in grocery retail stores?

Within the uMhlathuze local Municipality, situated in the KZN region of South Africa, the third research question was to ascertain the obstacles associated with the adoption and execution of MCS's in the grocery retail sector. In answering this question, the study focused on three overarching dimensions namely, the challenges of implementing MCS and the ways of improving an adoption and implementation of MCS's success as shown in Figure 4.9 and elucidate thereof.



Figure 4.9: The challenges of implementing MCS

Source: Researcher's own construct from the field data (2023).

4.5.3.1 The challenges of implementing MCS

This section presents the outcome of our data analysis, revealing four distinct themes that have risen from the data analysis. These four themes encompass *limited communication channels leading to potential brand criticism going unnoticed, disadvantaged individuals without access to smartphones and are not familiar with the internet, unpredictable environmental factors and potential risks associated with advanced technology*. A variety of particular codes have contributed to the development of each theme. For an illustration, please see Figure 4.10. The explanations of these themes have been provided in the following sections.

The challenges of implementing MCS

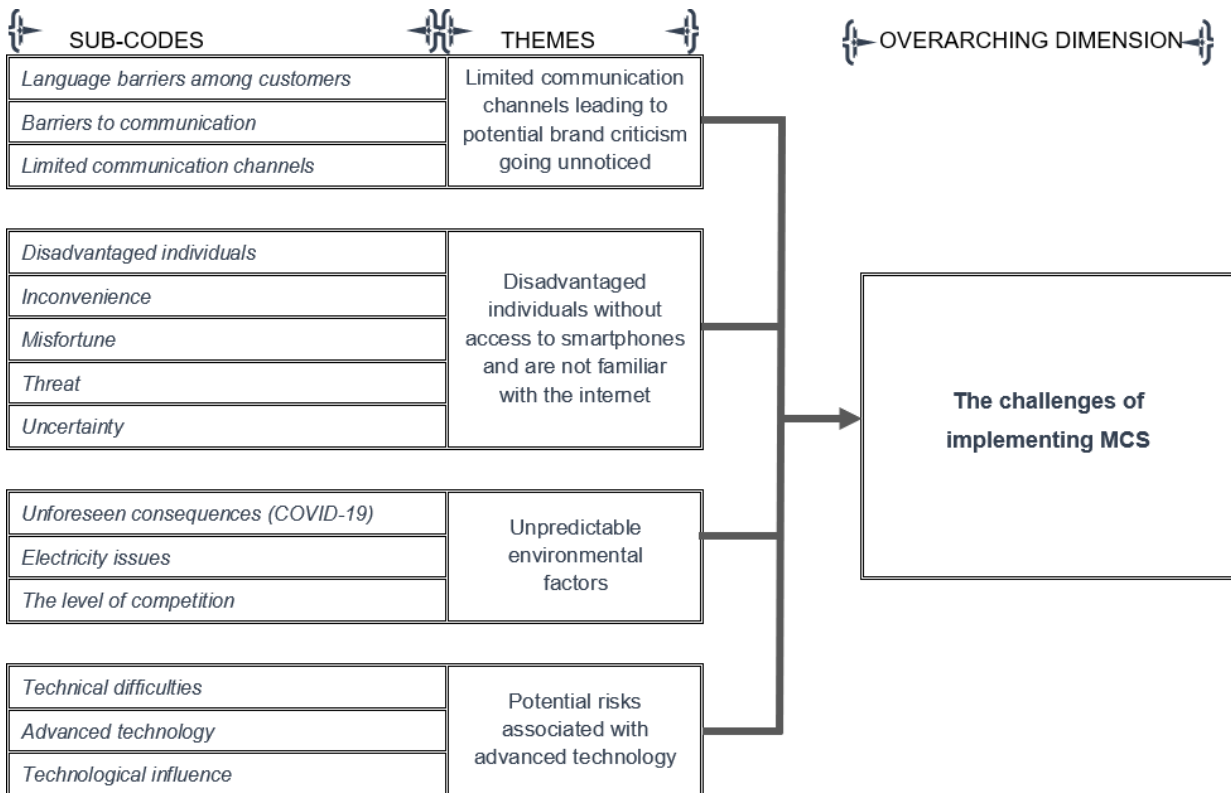


Figure 4.10: The challenges of implementing MCS

Source: Researcher's own construct from the field data (2023)

- *Limited communication channels leading to potential brand criticism going unnoticed.*

The initial finding from the study aimed at identifying the obstacles associated with implementing MCS in the grocery retail industry is that there are *"limited communication channels leading to potential brand criticism going unnoticed*. In this regard, the findings revealed that the challenges of adopting and implementing MCS's in grocery retail stores include language barriers among customers, barriers to communication and limited communication channels, as #2 and #6 opined respectively:

"...for implementing a new way of including all 11 languages when advertising on social platforms which will benefit young and old stakeholders since South Africa is a diverse country", (GS 2, Marketing Manager).

"There are too many communication channels, but we only use the few. This poses a challenge because when a potential customer criticises our brand, we may not see it, that becomes a threat" (GRS 6, Store Manager).

- *Disadvantaged individuals*

Within the context of this study, the disadvantaged individuals are the persons without access to smartphones and are not familiar with the internet. This is the second theme of this section. In this regard, the findings suggest that marketing grocery retail stores encounter challenges of implementing MCS since their communications do not reach all their target market as there are disadvantaged individuals living in rural areas without internet access. In support of this, #2 stated:

“Considering that there are disadvantaged people from rural areas who do not have access to television, smart phones with internet poses a problem since face-to-face campaigns are no longer effective” (GRS 2, Marketing Manager).

Moreover, the findings also suggest that there are misfortune and inconveniences in reaching other buyers who are not familiar with the internet, as #4 stated:

“With the use of internet marketing, the challenges that we face include that our communique won't be able to reach senior buyers (pensioners) since they are not familiar with the internet” GRS 4, Marketing Manager).

- *Unpredictable environment factors*

The study's attempt to identify the difficulties in applying MCS in the grocery retail industry gave rise to this third theme. This refers to the uncertainty about the future outcomes of the environment. In line with this, the findings revealed that grocery retail sector had unforeseen consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic with the intensive and massive competition, as mentioned by #4: *“Face-to-face competitions after covid19 because we do not know how people would receive it. Since there are many changes after the pandemic”*.

The findings also suggest that customer behaviour was affected by the COVID-19 with high level of competition. The grocery retail stores suffered the unbearable effects of changing customer behaviours and their expectations, and the need to adapt to changing consumer preferences and prioritise health and safety, as #7 alluded:

“There are challenges. COVID-19 brought with a high standard of health and safety and now customers only buy fresh and latest food. That poses challenges for us to not only buy goods from suppliers but long-lasting goods that will satisfy customers” (GRS 7, Marketing Manager).

Additionally, the issue of electricity has a negative impact in the grocery retail stores, as #3 opined:

“As there is loadshedding taking place, some products do not absorb ice for so long, ending up being

taken back to suppliers for some bad reasons; this creates a bad impact to us. The issue of electricity is affecting us as grocery retailers and seemingly this issue is slowly fragging us down” (GRS 3, Store Manager).

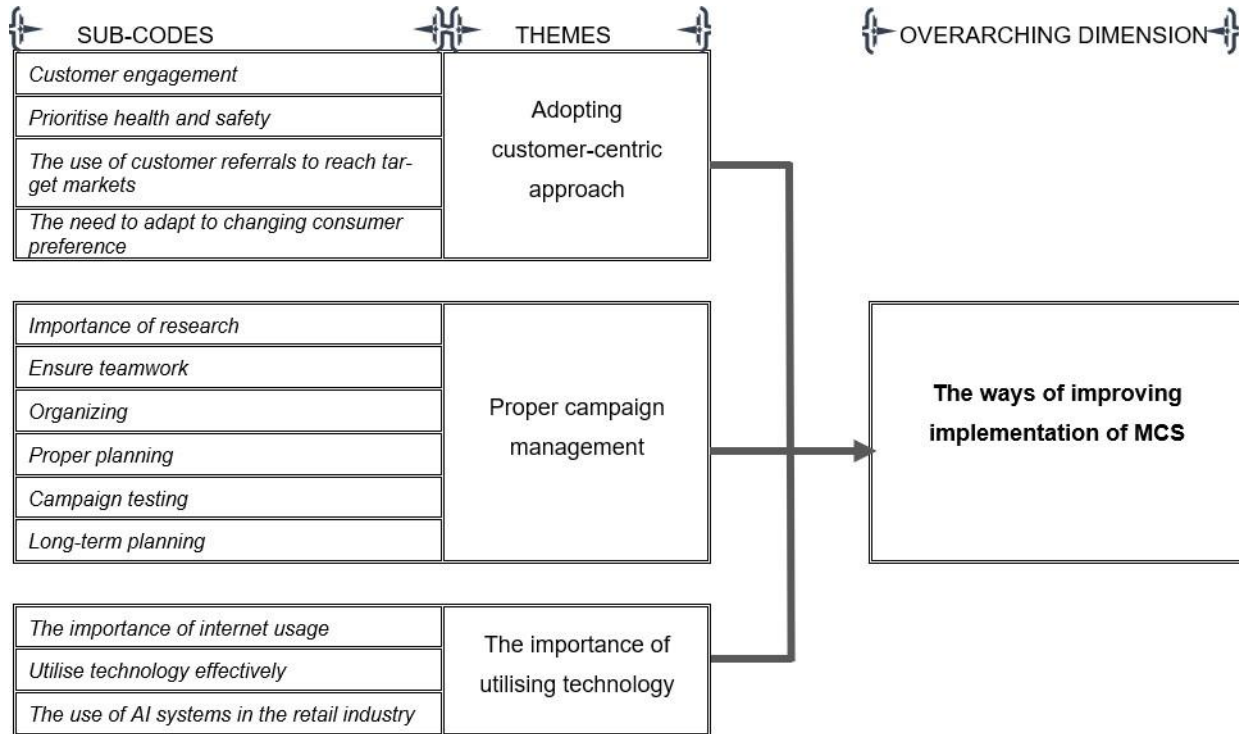
- *Potential risk associated with advanced technology.*

This is the fourth theme that resulted from the investigation into the difficulties associated with deploying MCS in the grocery retail industry. In this regard, potential risks associated with advanced technology, such as technical difficulties, advanced technology and technological influence poses challenges of implementing MCS's, as #9 alluded:

“Yes, because we are approaching 5th Industrial Revolution with highly advanced technology and this artificial intelligence system that makes things easy with lots of uncalculated risks that might rise any time. However, we are doing our best to overcome all challenges encountered by us and our customers it” (GRS 9, Store Manager).

4.5.3.2 The ways of improving an adoption and implementation of MCS's success

The results of our data analysis are shown in this section, where three main themes that emerged from the data analysis are presented. These three themes encompass *adopting customer-centric approach, proper campaign management and the importance of utilising technology*. Every theme consists of a group of particular codes that have helped shape it (For a graphic illustration, please see Figure 4.11). These concepts have been elaborated and explored in detail in the following parts.



4.11: The ways of improving implementation of MCS

Source: Researcher's own construct from the field data (2023).

- *Adopting customer-centric approach*

The first theme that came out of the study's attempt to figure out how to better deploy MCS in the grocery retail industry was *adopting customer-centric approach*. In this regard, adopting customer-centric approach in improving implementation of MCS is about engaging with customers to overcome challenges interrupting the implementation of MCS. In support of this, the findings suggest that grocery retailers use customer engagement as a way of improving the implementation of MCS, as #9 opined:

“We did a live competition on Facebook and our official page was new, with technical problems we ended up not been able to read all comments for answers. We then did a survey on the best method to use for promoting our no name brands. Now we create an online competition, and the system picks the winner for us” (GRS 9, Store Manager).

From the findings, the grocery retailers have the need to adapt to changing consumer preferences and prioritise health and safety. They ensure that they follow external threats trends and come up with strategies to overcome them. They do this by considering and adapting to changing consumer preferences, as #6 mentioned:

“...there was a Rainbow chicken disease that trended on social media while we had advertised it on sale prior without knowing there will be a problem. Our campaign was going to be a competition. People did not enter in numbers because they feared for their life. We changed from rainbow chicken 2kg to Sasko bottle, container and two [loves of] bread for the winner” (GRS 6, Store Manager).

- *Proper campaign management*

The second theme to emerge from the study's search to find strategies to improve MCS implementation in the grocery retail sector is proper campaign management. In line with this, the need for proper research before executing marketing campaigns is referred to proper campaign management. The findings suggest that grocery retailers improve the implementation of MCS by considering the importance of research, as #8 opined:

“We tried advertising using billboards in and around town and that did not go well until we chose to use social media platforms. What I learned from that was that it's important to do proper research before you do something because if we did our research, we were going to come right” (GRS 8, Store Manager).

From the findings, for some grocery retail stores there has been unsuccessful marketing campaigns while other grocery retail stores have not had any unsuccessful campaigns because they do proper planning, organising campaigns, testing campaigns before reaching their target market, as #3, the store manager stated: *“There has not been an unsuccessful campaign. This is due to that I plan, organise and test all store marketing campaigns before we go to people”*, and #5, the marketing manager also added *“There has not been an unsuccessful campaign; all the campaigns have*

been and always successful. This is because we plan, test and implement". The findings also reveal that grocery retailers ensure teamwork as #5 opined "We work as a team". Additionally, the lessons learned included the importance of proper planning, organisation and testing before implementing the MCS.

- *The importance of utilising technology*

The *importance of utilising technology* is the second theme that appeared from the aggregation of improving the implementation of MCS in the grocery retail sector. In this regard, the fundamental importance of technology in a business environment is shown to be a very important tool for business success today. The relevance of the grocery retail stores has been demonstrated by the importance of internet usage, as #4 opined:

"During the pandemic we conducted a face-to-face campaign about promotions, and people did not come. Lesson learnt is that the internet is very vital in our community because our sales peaked" (GRS 4, Marketing Manager).

The findings suggest that utilising technology effectively has become one of the most essential aspect of business in the grocery retail sector. Grocery retail campaigns are changing as a result of the technological advancement such as the use of artificial intelligence systems, as the grocery retail business models rely on electronic commerce to communicate with customers. Grocery retail stores rely more on utilising technology and other grocery retail stores are now using only online campaigns to advertise and communicate with their customers, as #1, #2 and #6 opined:

"There were a limited number of customers arriving in the retail store while we planned an in store campaign. The marketing campaign was to use the advertisements only on television and I learned that technology is essential" (GRS 2, Marketing Manager).

"Since we no longer doing a face-to-face campaign for over six years now, I cannot say there is any that has not been successful." (GRS 1, Marketing Manager).

"We are using e-commerce campaigns now..." (GRS 6, Store Manager).

4.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter described the main aim of the study which was to explore the MCS's in grocery retail sector at uMhlatuze Local Municipality which is under the province of KZN in South Africa. The objectives of the study were to determine the MCS's adopted by the grocery retailers in attracting customers, to determine the MCS's adopted by the grocery retailers in attracting customers, and to determine the challenges of adopting and implementing MCS's in the grocery retail industry.

To determine the MCS's adopted by the grocery retail stores, the study found business sustainability strategy, customer loyalty strategy, and effective customer acquisition strategy as the most adopted strategies by the grocery retailers. To determine application of MCS's by the grocery retailers in attracting customers, the study found digital marketing, social media marketing, word-of-mouth marketing, advertising, sales promotion and direct marketing as the most used methods in applying MCS's.

To determine the stakeholder satisfaction and sustainability, the study found customer focus and sustainability, shareholder engagement and satisfaction, and ensuring operational excellence as the most important aspects that help the businesses to be sustainable and engage with stakeholders. In determining the challenges of adopting and implementing MCS's in grocery retail stores, the study found limited communication channels leading to potential brand criticism going unnoticed, disadvantaged individuals without access to smartphones and are not familiar with the internet, unpredictable environmental factors and potential risks associated with advanced technology as the main challenges that businesses encounter in implementing MCS's in the grocery retail sector.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapters represented the research question, objectives, literature review, methodology and the empirical findings of the study. This chapter presents the summary of the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the study.

5.2 DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

The purpose of the study was to investigate the MCS's in the grocery retail sector of KZN Province, South Africa. Therefore, utilising the following research questions, this study sought to investigate the marketing communication techniques in the grocery retail sector at uMhlatuze Local Municipality, which is under KZN Province in South Africa:

5.2.2 Research question 1:

What are the MCS's adopted by the grocery retailers in attracting customers?

According to Khan (2014), marketing strategies including advertisements, promotions and other tools are used to effectively connect with potential clients to draw in buyers of goods and services. Therefore, retail establishments need to provide value to meet the needs of their customers and maintain a sustainable competitive advantage. This can be achieved by influencing consumer demand for their goods and services through the effective use of marketing mix strategies. To this end, the study found the specific strategies adopted, namely business sustainability strategy, customer loyalty strategy and effective customer acquisition strategy. The business sustainability strategy focuses on ensuring operational continuity through discounted sales, adapting to market trends, building a strong brand, financial planning, and aligning marketing channels. It also includes building strong customer loyalty. Lastly, the effective customer acquisition strategy involves unique selling propositions, target marketing, market research, data collection, and consistent messaging across various media channels. It aims to attract new customers and retain existing ones. The aforementioned strategies as part of the findings seems to be the new knowledge adding to the literature, therefore, narrowing the knowledge gap on MCS's.

The study found the usefulness of adopting MCS's in grocery retail shops. The two factors are

business advancement and customer engagement. Business advancement focuses on using MCS for consistent and multichannel communication to attract customers, promote brand awareness and develop unique selling propositions. Customer engagement emphasises using MCS to attract and retain customers, grab their attention and keep them informed about store offerings. Furthermore, the study found that there are factors contributing to MCS development, namely; research analysis findings, external factors and business performing factors. Research analysis findings involve using social media surveys and business research to gather customer opinions and reactions. External factors include government regulations, customer feedback and environmental trends that influence MCS development. Business performing factors consider sales and profit analysis, overcoming operational challenges and stock availability issues. Customers are exposed to changes in the social context and technical improvements, which supports Styger's (2018) claim that the environment has had a major impact on the growth of marketing communication methods. These developments influence customer purchasing patterns and their perception of and response to marketing materials, as seen by the growth of e-commerce.

5.2.2 Research question 2:

How are the MCS's applied in the Grocery Retail industry?

The objective of Research Question 2 sought to examine the application of the MCS's in the grocery retail sector. The study found that digital marketing, social media marketing, word-of-mouth marketing, advertising, sales promotion, and direct marketing are the main methods used. Digital marketing involves promoting the business and connecting with customers online through platforms like Google ads and YouTube popup ads. Social media marketing is widely used. The literature presented the methods used in the application of MCS's for business prepared message intended to develop a brand. These 11 marketing communication tools make up the marketing communication mix: advertising, promotion of sales, occurrences and encounters, sales promotion, new media, events and experiences, public relations, direct marketing, interactive marketing, buzz marketing or word-of-mouth marketing, personal selling and packaging (Cravens and Piercy, 2013; Polyorat, 2014; Motala, 2017; Styger, 2018). However, social media marketing was not indicated as the most used method. Hence, the study adds on the existing literature that social media as part of new media marketing has become the number one effective method among all the methods applied, with Facebook being the most used social media platform.

Additionally, grocery retail stores use social media to advertise and promote their products and services. Word-of-mouth marketing involves spreading information about the business through customer referrals and influencer marketing. Advertising is done through billboards and posters, as well as traditional means like newspaper ads. Sales promotions include offering free gifts, points rewards systems, special deals, and buy one get one free promotions. Direct marketing involves face-to-face interactions and sending SMS's to customers.

The findings reveal that the success of these MCS's is determined by improved customer satisfaction and business transformation. Grocery retailers use customer satisfaction, repeated purchases, positive feedback, increased sales, and smooth operations as indicators of success. The present study's results are consistent with earlier research (Cravens and Piercy, 2013; Hughes and Fill, 2016; Thwala and Slabber, 2018), which found that the goal of a MCS is to support an organisation's communication initiatives and the integration and coordination of all components of marketing communication to engage with consumers and influential individuals. If a company's products are appealing to customers, they will spend more money and develop a stronger tie with the business. Overall visibility and reputation of the business are boosted by this. Reaching potential customers with different types of information about the business, its products, and services is the aim of marketing communications (Hughes and Fill 2016; Thwala and Slabber, 2018).

The findings further revealed that stakeholder satisfaction and sustainability are achieved through customer focus and sustainability, shareholder engagement and satisfaction, and ensuring operational excellence. Grocery retailers prioritise customer needs, align strategies with customer interests, keep stakeholders informed about price changes and sales, and engage with shareholders to build trust and retain them. In line with the findings, Sulikova (2019) in the

literature revealed that there are two model variables that make up the conceptual model of marketing mix. The first has a direct impact on customer satisfaction, while the second is about customer loyalty. The first product and location-related variables, on the other hand, include brand, quality and distribution channels, all of which have an impact on consumer satisfaction. Advertising, price strategy and communication are the second sorts of variables that influence consumer loyalty.

5.2.3 Research question 3:

What are the challenges of adopting and implementing MCS's in the Grocery Retail Industry?

The objective of Research Question 3 sought to focus on the challenges of adopting and implementing MCS's in grocery retail stores. The study found four main challenges: limited communication channels leading to potential brand criticism going unnoticed, disadvantaged individuals without access to smartphones and familiarity with the internet, unpredictable environmental factors such as the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and electricity issues, and potential risks associated with advanced technology.

The way businesses operate nowadays is impacted by new technologies, which also help companies to reach a wider market. Due to these dynamics, businesses must quickly adapt to new nonconformities and demand circumstances during the short product lifespan. They achieve this by using marketing and developing MCS (Hadiyati, 2015; Gossen and Kropfeld 2022). According to Allison (2022), the emergence of new technologies affects the corporate system and opens up new markets since consumers have increased expectations for novel features and the ongoing innovation of existing products.

According to Thwala and Slabber (2018), the literature showed that the main obstacles facing the grocery retail industry are product and market competitions brought on by heightened competition for the same products, which are offered at varying prices based on the customer buying class that the grocery store is targeting. However, the study contradicts literature as the findings revealed the recent challenges are limited communication channels leading to potential brand criticism going unnoticed, disadvantaged individuals without access to smartphones and familiarity with the internet, unpredictable environmental factors (COVID-19 pandemic and electricity issues, and potential risks associated with advanced technology).

Global public health initiatives in reaction to the COVID-19 epidemic had an immediate and significant impact on consumers' capacity for and desire for in-person shopping. Grocery stores suffered the considerable effects of changing consumer behaviours, perceptions and expectations on retailers because they were considered "vital companies" and were not prone to long-term closure (Gossen and Kropfeld 2022). Additionally, stockpiling behaviours affected customer loyalty to brands and stores by posing new inventory management issues for grocery stores (Allison, 2022).

The study further found that to improve the adoption and implementation of MCS's, adopting a customer-centric approach, proper campaign management and the importance of utilising technology do improve the implementation of MCS in the grocery retail sector. Grocery retailers engage with customers and prioritise health and safety, conduct proper research before executing campaigns, and utilise technology effectively through internet usage and e-commerce campaigns.

5.3 CONCLUSION

Chapter 5 presented and explained the results of the empirical research about the MCS's in grocery retail sector at uMhlathuze Local Municipality which is under KZN Province in South Africa. On the basis of the outcomes, this study concluded that there are indeed MCS's used in the grocery retail sector in communicating, attracting and promoting the business. The MCS is the heart of the business, particularly in grocery retail stores. The rationale behind this assertion was based on the fact that without marketing, the store can never have customers. Additionally, it was crucial that the grocery retailers understand the perceptions and expectations of customers and translate them into marketing communication activities that would attract both the existing and potential customers.

The study also concluded that grocery retailers use both new and traditional media, the analysis added new knowledge of the MCS's used to attract customers in the retail industry. In particular, this study discovered that social media and online marketing are frequently used in communicating with customers, attracting them and advertising the business offerings. Furthermore, all of the research participants use online and social media marketing as their main means of marketing communications, indicating that the digital revolution has had a significant impact on them.

Based on these revelations, the researcher concludes that the increase in completion in the market of the similar offerings at different prices could have a greater impact on the success of the business. It is crucial that grocery retailers understand that using a successful marketing mix will result in more effective marketing communications.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

The primary research conducted confirmed the MCS's used in the grocery retail sector in attracting customers, and the following recommendations were made:

- a. It is recommended that the grocery retailers make use of these strategies and measure the effectiveness of their current MCS to stay competitive and advance their businesses and engage with customers.
- b. It is recommended that marketing communication departments plan properly when they are to embark on the marketing process to keep up with technological advancements and avoid risks associated with technology.
- c. It is also recommended that the grocery retailers plan and maintain customer-centric approach and proper campaign management to improve the adoption and implementation of the effective and proficient MCS's in the grocery retail sector.
- d. The marketing communication managers are recommended to plan properly because they work in an uncertain environment. The COVID-19 pandemic may not be the last one to occur. Keeping in mind the interests of its stakeholders and the organisation as a whole, grocery merchants must establish procedures and be prepared to act quickly in the event of future emergencies.
- e. A structural shortage of energy supply will remain one of the nation's most urgent issues as its antiquated infrastructure deteriorates and needs to be upgraded. Owing to the complicated and ever-changing impact load shedding has on consumers, all South African firms, particularly those in the retail sector, need to consider the economic impacts of this practice.

5.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The limitations of this study are worth mentioning, however, they did not limit the value of the study.

The limited sample size (ten participants) was the primary constraint of the study. Consequently, it is not possible to extrapolate some of the findings to a wider population. Future research might take a wider sample size. Furthermore, the only method of gathering data that was employed was semi-structured interviews. Different outcomes might be obtained with different instruments, such as document analysis, focus groups and questionnaires. Moreover, as the study exclusively employed a qualitative methodology, outcomes from other quantitative and mixed methodologies techniques may differ.

This study only covered KZN retail marketing managers. The study's conclusions were not applicable to the entire country because of geographical bias resulting from the exclusion of retail managers from other provinces in South Africa from the sample. The study's geographic scope was limited to a single province owing to budgetary and scheduling restrictions. Future research might take a look at multiple cities.

5.6 AREAS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study included strategies for gathering qualitative data. Comparing qualitative with quantitative data reveals that the former is significantly "thicker" in information. But when compared to samples of quantitative data, the sample size for qualitative data is noticeably less. Because of this, it becomes more difficult for qualitative research to be broadly applicable. To enhance the generalisability of the research findings, a quantitative questionnaire might be developed based on the qualitative findings of this study and evaluated on a larger sample of participants in subsequent research. Further areas for research that could follow on this study include the following:

- a. The future study can look at social media marketing strategy as it was found as the most used platform to communicate with customers.
- b. The future study could have a direct input from customers to hear the voice of the customer and better understanding on which MCS's attract potential customers to choose buying from a specific grocery retail store.
- c. Additionally, there is the shortage of South African specific literature regarding the MCS's that the grocery retail stores use to attract customers. Therefore, more qualitative studies based on the attraction of potential customers using MCS's are recommended.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: PROOF OF REGISTRATION



2321

MAPHANGA M MISS
P O BOX 1786
ESIKHAWINI
3887

STUDENT NUMBER : 14794608
ENQUIRIES TEL : 0861670411
FAX : 0124294150
EMAIL : mandd@unisa.ac.za
2023-10-25

Dear Student

I hereby confirm that you have been registered for the current academic year as follows:

Proposed Qualification: NCOM: BUS MAN (98582)

CODE	PAPER	S NAME OF STUDY UNIT	NQF crdts	LANG.	PROVISIONAL EXAMINATION	
					EXAM DATE	CENTRE(PLACE)
DFOP593		Dissertation: Operations Management	**	E		

Study units registered without formal exams:

You are referred to the "MyRegistration" brochure regarding fees that are forfeited on cancellation of any study units.

Your attention is drawn to University rules and regulations (www.unisa.ac.za/register). Please note the new requirements for reregistration and the number of credits per year which state that students registered for the first time from 2013, must complete 36 NQF credits in the first year of study, and thereafter must complete 48 NQF credits per year. Students registered for the MBA, MBL and DBL degrees must visit the SBL's ESOnline for study material and other important information.

Readmission rules for Honours: Note that in terms of the Unisa Admission Policy academic activity must be demonstrated to the satisfaction of the University during each year of study. If you fail to meet this requirement in the first year of study, you will be admitted to another year of study. After a second year of not demonstrating academic activity to the satisfaction of the University, you will not be re-admitted, except with the express approval of the Executive Dean of the College in which you are registered. Note too, that this study programme must be completed within three years. Non-compliance will result in your academic exclusion, and you will therefore not be allowed to re-register for a qualification at the same level on the National Qualifications Framework in the same College for a period of five years after such exclusion, after which you will have to re-apply for admission to any such qualification.

Readmission rules for MEd: Note that in terms of the Unisa Admission Policy, a candidate must complete a Master's qualification within three years. Under exceptional circumstances and on recommendation of the Executive Dean, a candidate may be allowed an extra (fourth) year to complete the qualification. For a Doctoral degree, a candidate must complete the study programme within six years. Under exceptional circumstances, and on recommendation by the Executive Dean, a candidate may be allowed an extra (seventh) year to complete the qualification.

BALANCE ON STUDY ACCOUNT: 0.00

Yours faithfully,

Prof MM Sepota
Acting Registrar

1031 0 00 0



University of South Africa
Preller Street, Muckleneuk Ridge, City of Tshwane
PO Box 392 UNISA 0003 South Africa
Telephone: +27 12 429 3111 Facsimile: +27 12 429 4150
www.unisa.ac.za

APPENDIX 2: ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE



COLLEGE OF ECONOMIC AND MANAGEMENT SCIENCE RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

28 November 2022

Dear Miss Makhosi Maphanga

**Decision: Ethics Approval from
2022 to 2025**

NHREC Registration # : (if applicable)
ERC Reference #: 2022_CRERC_068(FA)
Name #: Miss Makhosi Maphanga
Student No #: 14794608

Researcher(s): Miss Makhosi Maphanga; 14794608@mylife.unisa.ac.za; 078 186 2256
College of Economic and Management Sciences
Department of Operations Management
University of South Africa

Supervisor(s): Mrs Ndivhuwo Nemtajela, nemtan@unisa.ac.za; 012 429 6165
Mr Bonginkosi Tshabalala, dtshabal@unisa.ac.za; 012 429-3776
College of Economic and Management Sciences
Department of Operations Management
University of South Africa

**"An Exploration Study on Marketing Communication Strategies in grocery retail
sector of KwaZulu Natal province, South Africa"**

Qualification: Masters

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the Unisa College of Economic and Management Sciences Research Ethics Review Committee for the above-mentioned research. Ethics approval is granted for 3 years **November 2022 until November 2025**).

*In compliance with the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics, Risk Assessment, the **College of Economic and Management Sciences Research Ethics Review Committee reviewed the low risk application on 12 September 2022.***

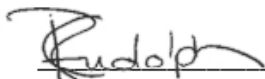
The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:

1. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.
2. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study should be communicated in writing to the College of Economic and Management Sciences Research Ethics Review Committee.
3. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.
4. Any changes that can affect the study-related risks for the research participants, particularly in terms of assurances made with regard to the protection of participants' privacy and the confidentiality of the data, should be reported to the Committee in writing, accompanied by a progress report.
5. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Adherence to the following South African legislation is important, if applicable: Protection of Personal Information Act, no 4 of 2013; Children's act no 38 of 2005 and the National Health Act, no 61 of 2003.
6. Only de-identified research data may be used for secondary research purposes in future on condition that the research objectives are similar to those of the original research. Secondary use of identifiable human research data requires additional ethics clearance.
7. No field work activities may continue after the expiry date **(November 2025)** Submission of a completed research ethics progress report will constitute an application for renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.
8. Permission is to be obtained from the university from which the participants are to be drawn (the Unisa Senate Research, Innovation and Higher Degrees Committee) to ensure that the relevant authorities are aware of the scope of the research, and all conditions and procedures regarding access to staff/students for research purposes that may be required by the institution must be met.
9. If further counselling is required in some cases, the participants will be referred to appropriate support services.

Note:

*The reference number **2022_CRERC_068 (FA)** should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication with the intended research participants, as well as with the Committee.*

Yours sincerely,



Dr Elizabeth Cornelia Rudolph
Acting Chairperson, CRERC
E-mail: rudolec@unisa.ac.za
Tel: 012 429 2586



Prof Mathukhu Thomas Mogale
Deputy Executive Dean: CEMS
E-mail: mogalmt@unisa.ac.za
Tel: 012 429 4805

APPENDIX 3: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT STUDY



J1 Esikhawini
Richards Bay
3900

03 March 2022
CBD Retail Store
Richards Bay
3900

Dear Sir. / Madam.

Request for permission to conduct research

My name is Makhosi Maphanga and I am currently enrolled for Masters in the Operations Management Department (Student number: 14794608) at the University of South Africa. The topic for my research study is an exploration of marketing communication strategies in grocery retail sector of KwaZulu Natal province, South Africa. I would like to request permission to conduct research within the marketing department of your organisation.

The study aims to determine the Integrated Marketing Communication tools adopted by the grocery retailers in attracting customers; to determine the application of Marketing Strategy in the grocery Retail Stores; and to determine the challenges of adopting and implementing Marketing Communication Strategies in the Grocery Retail Industry.

I request that you permit the marketing managers of your organisation to be part of this study. Marketing managers are targeted to provide the relevant data the researcher needs to answer the research questions posed in this research. The selection criteria include that the manager must have the minimum of 5 years within the Marketing Department under the Grocery Retail Industry. The rationale behind this selection is the fact that all managers in the grocery Retail Stores are communicating with both employees and customers to accomplish the customers' expectations

Granting the permission for this investigation to be disseminated, you acknowledge that the information you submit will be utilized for research purposes, including dissemination through peer-reviewed papers and conference proceedings. Interview data is anticipated to aid our investigation on the marketing communication tactics employed in the grocery retail industry to attract customers. This study will aid retailers since improved ways to engage with their target audience, communicate effectively with potential and present buyers, and market and improve the quality of their advertising materials are still important for grocery merchants. I would like to request the following information from the organisation:

- Assistance with identification of participant (marketing managers) and their contact details (phone number and email addresses).

The research will be reviewed and approved by the UNISA the Ethics Review Committee. The primary researcher, Makhosi Maphanga, can be contacted during office hours at 078 186 2256. The study leader, Mrs Nemtajela, can be contacted during office hours at 061 228 2633.

Kind Regards
Makhosi Maphanga

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. Maphanga", is written over a faint circular stamp or watermark.

APPENDIX 4: PERMISSION LETTERS FROM GATEKEEPERS



**Cambridge
Gatekeeper form.pdf**



**Makhosi Maphanga
gatekeeper's letter.pdf**



**Food lovers
Gatekeeper form.pdf**



**Game Gatekeeper
form.pdf**



**Roots Gatekeeper
form.pdf**



**Shoprite
Gatekeeper form.pdf**



**AI Computer Retail
gatekeeper form.pdf**



**Umar retail store
gatekeeper form.pdf**



**Buy The Bay
Gatekeeper form.pdf**



**Jwayelane
Gatekeeper form.pdf**



**Chester retail store
gatekeeper.pdf**

APPENDIX 5: LANGUAGE EDITING CERTIFICATE

22 Oshe Street

The Reeds

Centurion

0157

06 November 2023

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This certificate serves to confirm that I have edited M Maphanga's dissertation entitled, **AN EXPLORATION STUDY ON MARKETING COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES IN GROCERY RETAIL SECTOR OF KWAZULU NATAL PROVINCE, SOUTH AFRICA.**

I found the work easy and intriguing to read. Much of my editing basically dealt with obstructionist technical aspects of language, which could have otherwise compromised smooth reading as well as the sense of the information being conveyed. I hope that the work will be found to be of an acceptable standard. I am a member of Professional Editors' Guild.

Hereunder are my contact details:

Jack Chokwe (PhD)

Contact numbers: 072 214 5489

jackchokwe@gmail.com



APPENDIX 6: INFORMATION SHEET



INFORMATION SHEET

Dear Prospective participant,

You are invited to participate in a semi-structured interview conducted by Makhosi Maphanga, student number 14794608, under the supervision of Mrs. N Nemtajela, a Lecturer in the Department of Operations Management towards a Master of Commerce degree at the University of South Africa.

You were selected to participate in this semi-structured interview because you are the marketing manager in a grocery store, and you have been in this industry for longer enough to have the relevant experience about marketing communication strategies. You will not be eligible to participate if you have less than 5 years' experience in the marketing department. By participating in this project, you agree that the information you provide may be used for research purposes, including dissemination through peer-reviewed publications and conference proceedings.

It is anticipated that the information we gain from this semi-structured interview will help us to determine the Integrated Marketing Communication tools adopted by the grocery retailers in attracting customers; to determine the application of Marketing Strategy in the grocery Retail Stores; and to determine the challenges of adopting and implementing Marketing Communication Strategies in the Grocery Retail Industry. You are, however, under no obligation to participate and you can withdraw from the study prior to completing the interview. If you choose to participate in it will take up no more than 45 minutes of your time.

You will not benefit from your participation as an individual, however, it is envisioned that the findings of this study will be shared with the participants. Hence, the different marketing communication strategies used by other marketing managers will help other participants by implementing them in the company's communication initiatives, as well as the coordination and integration of all marketing communication aspects to connect with customers and those impacting



University of South Africa
Preller Street, Muckleneuk Ridge, City of Tshwane
PO Box 392 UNISA 0003 South Africa
Telephone: +27 12 429 3111 Facsimile: +27 12 429 4150
www.unisa.ac.za

their purchasing decisions. This will help them to raise the company's general visibility and improve its reputation.

We do not foresee that you will experience any negative consequences by completing the survey. The researcher(s) undertake to keep any information provided herein confidential, not to let it out of our possession and to report on the findings from the perspective of the participating group and not from the perspective of an individual.

The interview will be recorded. The records will be kept for five years for audit purposes where after it will be permanently destroyed, hard copies will be shredded, and electronic versions will be permanently deleted from the hard drive of the computer. You will not be reimbursed or receive any incentives for your participation in the survey.

The research was reviewed and approved by the UNISA Ethics Review Committee. The primary researcher, Makhosi Maphanga, can be contacted during office hours at 078 186 2256 or 14794608@mylife.unisa.ac.za. The study leader, Mrs. N. Nematajela, can be contacted during office hours at 061 228 2633 or nemtan@unisa.ac.za. Should you have any questions regarding the ethical aspects of the study, you can contact Dr Marianne Engelbrecht of the CEMS Research Ethics on engelm1@unisa.ac.za. Alternatively, you can report any serious unethical behaviour at the University's Toll Free Hotline 0800 86 96 93.



APPENDIX 7: CONSENT FORM



PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Date: 30 August 2022

Title: An Exploration Study on Marketing Communication Strategies in grocery retail sector of KwaZulu Natal province, South Africa.

Dear Prospective Participant

My name is Makhosi Maphanga, student number 14794608, and I am doing research with Mrs. N. Nemtajela, a lecturer in the Department of Operations Management towards a Master of Commerce Degree at the University of South Africa. We have funding from NRF for pursuing research studies. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled:

An Exploration Study on Marketing Communication Strategies in grocery retail sector of KwaZulu Natal province, South Africa.
--

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?

I am conducting this research to find out the Marketing Communication Strategies suitable for attracting customers to gain customer trust and loyalty and make sale for revenue in grocery retailers. As far as the researcher can evaluate, no studies have been conducted so far to examine the current Marketing Communication Strategies among grocery Retail Stores in the Kwa-Zulu Natal Province of South Africa, and much of the related research to-date is based outside the country. Despite all that, it remains vital for grocery retailers to communicate with their target audience; budget for marketing campaigns; communicate effectively with potential and current buyers; and do market and improve their advertising material's quality.

WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO PARTICIPATE?

You are invited because you are the marketing manager in a grocery retail store and you have been in this industry for longer enough to have the relevant experience about the marketing communication strategies.

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF MY PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY?

This study involves semi-structured interviews. The researcher will conduct face to face interview. Your role as a participant will be to answer the questions that will be asked during the interview. Questions that will be asked in the interview are:

1. Please tell me more about yourself, your experience, how long you are in your current post, etc?
2. Can you describe your key performance areas?
3. Could you tell me more about the different functions, responsibilities, and activities of the Marketing Communication Department within this grocery store?
4. Would you tell me how you execute a fully integrated strategic marketing communication plan?
5. Do you think following an integrated marketing communication approach in a marketing campaign will attract customers?
6. How have you developed marketing communication strategies in the past?
7. Describe the marketing communication strategies you are using to build a relationship with your customers to attract them to buy from your grocery store?
8. How does the Communication Management Department attract and maintain its stakeholders?
9. How did you identify major changes in the business environment and how did you develop a strategic plan to take advantage of them?
10. If you think the current marketing communication strategies are successful, can you explain why you think so?
11. Are there any challenges you are facing in implementing your marketing strategies? Please explain your answer.
12. Tell me about a marketing campaign you conducted that was not successful. What did you learn from that?
13. Can you briefly describe any other aspect about the marketing communication strategies that was not addressed in the interview

CAN I WITHDRAW FROM THIS STUDY EVEN AFTER HAVING AGREED TO PARTICIPATE?

Participating in this study is voluntary and you are under no obligation to consent to participation. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a written consent form. You are free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

There are no potential benefits but participating in the study will help to identify the marketing communication used to attract customers that are effective and sustaining the grocery retailers

in KwaZulu Natal province, Richards Bay City, and how they can be improved through the active strategies.

ARE THERE ANY NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES FOR ME IF I PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT?

There will be no negative consequences or any inconveniences as participants will not be exposed to any harm. The researcher will make sure this research is conducted in a manner that will minimize possible harm. However, should the researcher perceive any participants to be negatively affected by the research a debriefing session would be conducted. Participants will only answer the questions during the interview and confidentiality will be maintained.

WILL THE INFORMATION THAT I CONVEY TO THE RESEARCHER AND MY IDENTITY BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?

Your name will not be recorded anywhere and no one will be able to connect you to the answers you give. Your answers will be given a code number or a pseudonym and you will be referred to in this way in the data, any publications, or other research reporting methods such as conference proceedings. These documents will be in my possession and it will not be mentioned to any report. All responses will be dealt with confidentially. The recordings and transcripts of the interview will be in a locked cabinet. The research information will be accessed by the researcher and the supervisor because they are able to maintain confidentiality.

The anonymous data of participants may be used for other purposes such as research report, journal articles and conference proceedings. Although individual participation will not be identifiable in such reports.

HOW WILL THE RESEARCHER(S) PROTECT THE SECURITY OF DATA?

Hard copies of your answers will be stored by the researcher for a period of five years in a locked cupboard at the researcher's home for future research or academic purposes; electronic information will be stored on a password protected computer. Future use of the stored data will be subject to further Research Ethics Review and approval if applicable. Hardcopies be shredded and the electronic copies will be permanently deleted from the hard drive of the computer using relevant software programs.

WILL I RECEIVE PAYMENT OR ANY INCENTIVES FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY?

Participation in the research is voluntary so there will be no money or incentives given to participants.

HAS THE STUDY RECEIVED ETHICS APPROVAL?

This study has received written approval from the Research Ethics Review Committee of the University of South Africa (UNISA). A copy of the approval letter can be obtained from the researcher if you so wish.

HOW WILL I BE INFORMED OF THE FINDINGS/RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH?

If you would like to be informed of the final research findings, please contact Mrs. N Nemtajela on 061 228 2633 or nemtan@unisa.ac.za. The findings are accessible for five years. Please do not use home telephone numbers. Departmental and/or mobile phone numbers are acceptable. Should you require any further information or want to contact the researcher about any aspect of this study, Makhosi Maphanga on 078 186 2256 or 14794608@mylife.unisa.ac.za.

Alternatively, you can contact the CEMS Research Ethics and Integrity Advisor if you have any concerns:

Dr Marianne Engelbrecht
engelm1@unisa.ac.za

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet and for participating in this study.
Thank you.



Makhosi Maphanga.

APPENDIX 8: INTERVIEW GUIDE



The following interview guide will be used:

Opening the interview (all covered in less than 5 minutes)

1. Thank the participant for the time taken to contribute to the research.
2. Outline the purpose of the research and progress.

SECTION A

1. Gender

Male	
Female	

2. Race

African	
Colored	
White	
Indian	

3. Nationality

South Africa	
Non-South African	

4. Age

18 – 27	
28 – 37	
38 – 47	
48 +	

a. Please tell me more about yourself, your experience, how long you are in your current post, etc.?

b. Can you describe your key performance areas?

c. Could you tell me more about the different functions, responsibilities, and activities of the Marketing Communication Department within this grocery store?

SECTION B

What are the Marketing Communication Strategies used in grocery retail sector of KwaZulu Natal province in South Africa?

1. What are the Marketing Communication strategies adopted by grocery retail shops in attracting customers?

- a. what are the marketing communication strategies you are adopting in attracting customers?
- b. Do you think using marketing communication strategies in grocery retail sector attract customers?
- c. what are the factors contributing to the development of marketing communication strategies?

2. How are the Marketing Communication Strategies applied in grocery Retail Stores?







- a. How are you applying the marketing communication strategies to build a relationship with your customers and attract them to buy from your grocery store?
- b. Do you think the current marketing communication strategies are successful? Briefly explain why you think so.
- c. How does the Communication Management Department satisfy and sustain its stakeholders?

3. What are the challenges of adopting and implementing Marketing Communication Strategies in grocery Retail Stores?

- a. Are there any challenges you are facing on implementing your marketing communication strategies? Briefly explain.
- b. Tell me about a marketing campaign you conducted that was not successful. What did you learn from that?
- c. What are the ways of improving the implementation of marketing communication strategies?

Thank you for participating!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

APPENDIX 9: TURNITIN REPORT

Dissertation final			
ORIGINALITY REPORT			
11 %			
SIMILARITY INDEX	INTERNET SOURCES	PUBLICATIONS	STUDENT PAPERS
PRIMARY SOURCES			
	Submitted to University of Zululand Student Paper		
	uir.unisa.ac.za Internet Source		
	core.ac.uk Internet Source		<1 %
	Submitted to University of South Africa (UNISA) Student Paper		<1 %
	Ernest Marfa Asiedu, Marcia Mkansi. "A comprehensive assessment of time overruns in Ghanaian telecom cell site construction", Cogent Engineering, 2022 Publication		<1 %
	Submitted to Western International College (WINC London) Student Paper		<1 %
	Submitted to Midlands State University Student Paper		<1 %

APPENDIX 10: COMPREHENSIVE FINDINGS WITH RESPECT TO THE KEY QUOTES, AND KEY WORDS FROM THE PARTICIPANTS ON MCS ADOPTION IN GROCERY RETAIL SECTOR.

OBJECTIVE 1: To determine the Marketing Communication Strategies (MCS) adopted by the grocery retailers in attracting customers.			
INTERVIEW GUIDE QUESTIONS	KEY QUOTATIONS	KEY ELEMENTS FROM THE NARRATIVES	ATLAS tj. REFERENCE
Marketing Communication Strategies adopted by Grocery Retail Shops (1)	<p>#1. We are more into social media links as we are no longer into radio advertisements. From newspaper to flyers and now we are using social media I think it's going accordingly with the 4th industrial revolution. (GRS 1, Marketing Manager)</p> <p>#2. Ensure that all branded contacts a customer or prospect receives for a product, service or organizations are relevant to that person and consistent over time. Through data collection making sure that social media platforms do work in attracting customers using pop up ads (GRS 2, Marketing Manager)</p> <p>#3. I be..use..ot social media, we communicate easy with customers and get to know their needs. We collect data to cater for their needs or preferences. We use celebrities as brand ambassadors to use our products and that attract their follower to come and buy the same products. This is how we have been developing our strategy (GRS 3, store Manager)</p> <p>#4. We use directed and internet marketing strategic plans. For example, we advertise our products in that it attracts customers, and that is done successfully through planning. Through surveys about how people become aware about their surroundings, that helps us realize what platforms should we use for marketing. (GRS 4, Marketing Manager)</p> <p>#5. A fully integrated communication strategy means that there should be ways to consolidate all sectors in the organization. Our campaign has an interest to increase the profit in terms of sales. With technology becoming a centre of transformation there is also a team of management we have that I lead to make sure we develop working strategies. We consider trends and plan how to win them and use them as our strategies (GRS 5, Marketing Manager)</p> <p>#6. By establishing our overarching campaign goals. Create adaptable marketing assets and messaging. Doing surveys to get to know our target market better to offer what they need, before we were more on TV advertisements and radio ads, however, now we are more into social media pop up ads, YouTube and sale papers. Through all these we are able to notify our customers when there is a sale (GRS 6, Store Manager)</p> <p>#7. The marketing strategies we use are social media, TV Ads, newspapers, Billboards, and door to door handouts. We normally do it repeatedly to reach our target market. In the past we have developed a store merchandising and inventory description available on shelves for customers to easily be answered for new introduced brands they are not familiar with. We introduced a free call store number for customer surveys. (GRS 7, Marketing Manager)</p> <p>#8. Normally we use social media platforms to attract customers simply because in these days few people are not on social media networks, so even most of our customers are on social networks. That makes it easier to showcase whatever we want to show. Hence, I would say social media is our main communicating tool. In the past it was difficult but back then we were using Billboards or pamphlets to try and reach out to our customers (GRS 8, store Manager)</p> <p>#9. As the marketing management team, we account for the financial in planning for creating a marketing communication strategy. It is always a must that we work on having our own unique selling proposition at all costs in order to differentiate us from the competitors. We then come up with the marketing strategies to use in reaching target market and maintain those strategies. If the strategy works well, we then continue with it. We are still using a blueprint strategy in identifying our target market and target customers, match our customer problems with our offerings and provide the best products and services for customer satisfaction. When customers are satisfied, they repeat buys and recruit others to buy the same offerings. (GRS 9, Store Manager)</p> <p>#10. The first and foremost thing we do is to firstly identify our store target audiences and if they are in need of our offerings. We align our marketing channels to promote our products and services and always make sure our customers are happy with what they buy from us. We developed marketing strategies by setting our goals, objectives and mission using our mission statement to reach our company objectives. Developing a strategy needs a deep plan, testing the strategy and implementing it (GRS 10, Marketing Manager)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business growth • Financial stability • Profit • Sales • Financial planning • Marketing channels alignment • Marketing management • Campaign planning • Branding • customer attention • customer attraction • customer loyalty • customer needs • customer satisfaction • customer focus • customer-centric approach • customer engagement • customer communication • Unique selling proposition • Competitive differentiation • Market research & Data collection • Target audience identification • Target market segmentation • Target market • Diversity • customer acquisition 	<p>Transcript 7: 1 - 2</p> <p>Transcript 8 : S</p> <p>Transcript 4: 2- 15</p>
MCS usefulness in the grocery business (2)	<p>#1. It does attract customers as everyone now is into media, distress by viewing media and our pop-up ads then attract and grab their attention to come and buy our products. (GRS 1, Marketing Manager)</p> <p>#2. It does attract customers. Through social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, we make sure that we keep our customers up to date with everything in the store. (GRS 2, Marketing Manager)</p> <p>#3. It is effective in attracting customers because customers have easy access to the updates concerning the goods in our store, and also inform others about the products we offer, which is good for the business. (GRS 3, Store Manager)</p> <p>#4. Yes. When working with people you need to have an integrated strategy that will grab and attract customers to buy your products. (GRS 4, Marketing Manager)</p> <p>#5. Yes, because clients are based on different sectors and being able to tap into all sectors of society through your advertising that will yield better results. (GRS 5, Marketing Manager)</p> <p>#6. Yes, it will attract customers and has always attracted the right customers who are in need of our products. It also makes customers refer other customers when our product satisfied their needs. (GRS 6, Store Manager)</p> <p>#7. Yes, it does attract customers because this strategy for us it ensures that our customers can expect the same calibre of experience from our brand every time they buy from us, for example, brand awareness building. (GRS 7, Marketing Manager)</p> <p>#8. As I mentioned above people are on social networks more than before so there is no easier way to attract and get customers beside social media. (GRS 8, Store Manager)</p> <p>#9. Yes, simply because after implementing the strategy and seeing the change in sales proves that integrated marketing communication strategies are more effective in attracting customers compared to previously used strategies, such as giving out pamphlets. (GRS 9, store Manager)</p> <p>#10. According to my side it does attract customers to buy our products because we are using it and we also make sales. The store is in a good condition financially and we hope we will continue like this. (GRS 10, Marketing Manager)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ IMC strategies allow for consistent and relevant messaging across different channels. ▪ They build brand awareness. ▪ They enable targeting different sectors of society and creating a unique selling proposition. ▪ They help to attract customers. ▪ They help to grab customers attention. ▪ They keep customers up to date with store offering. • They lead to customer acquisition 	<p>Transcript 7: 3</p> <p>Transcript 4: 20-22</p>

CONT: OBJECTIVE 1: To determine the Marketing Communication Strategies (MCS) adopted by the grocery retailers in attracting customers.			
INTERVIEW GUIDE QUESTIONS	KEY QUOTATIONS	KEY ELEMENTS FROM THE NARRATIVES	ATLAS ti REFERENCE
The factors contributing of MCS development. (3)	<p>#1. We are going according to government regulations, e.g., with Covid19 we were using essentials like sprays making sure that customers come and be safe within the store. (GRS 1, Marketing Manager)</p> <p>#2. Checking what makes the customers happy and applying the fact that the customers are always right. (GRS 2, Marketing Manager)</p> <p>#3. By comparing past and recent ways in which the business is conducted and also used social media surveys for customer suggestions to overcome changes. (GRS 3, Store Manager)</p> <p>#4. Delays in the availability of stock when there are protests. In these instances, we make sure that stock is limited per customer and if stock is delayed, we make sure that there are home deliveries. (GRS 4, Marketing Manager)</p> <p>#5. We always play as a team and strategize. We had Covid19 challenges through our operations, however, I managed to restructure our daily schedules and successfully implemented new strategies and took advantage by following government regulations. Customers trusted us and kept on coming to buy. (GRS 5, Marketing Manager)</p> <p>#6. Through environmental trends on social media and by including customer suggestions and opinions we manage to solve customer-based problems easily. (GRS 6, Store Manager)</p> <p>#7. The effect of external factors in the business such as economic, technological, societal and governmental influences affect how we operate. We always adapt and improve our strategies in a way that it suites the changes at that time. (GRS 7, Marketing Manager)</p> <p>#8. I realize when I started to have more foot at the business and the sales started to improve and they were much better than before. So, my plan was to have more, and enough stock of what people want so that I will take advantage of the sudden food count change of the store. (GRS 8, Store Manager)</p> <p>#9. I identify major changes through ongoing sale and profit out of the operational expenses. I plan for any risks that could arise unexpectedly it. (GRS 9, Store Manager)</p> <p>#10. By testing working strategies' effectiveness. As the retail store we offer short term goods like vegetables for a specific time. When the is less sale we then identify major changes and make discounted sales to avoid a huge loss. A decrease in sale might come from a higher price compared to competitors and small business vendors, so a price decrease has always been a working strategy for us. (GRS 10, Marketing Manager)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Social media surveys ▪ Business research ▪ Government regulations ▪ Competitor analysis ▪ Customer feedback ▪ Environment trends ▪ Sales and Profit analysis ▪ Operational challenges ▪ Stock availability issues • Business Opportunities 	<p>Transcript 8 : 3</p> <p>Transcript 4 :</p>

OBJECTIVE 2: To determine the application of Marketing Communication Strategy in the Grocery Retail Industry.			
INTERVIEW GUIDELINES QUESTIONS	KEY QUOTATIONS	KEY ELEMENTS FROM THE NARRATIVES	ATTACHMENTS, REFERENCE:
Application of MCS (1)	<p>#1. Sending SMS for any communication gives customers an assurance that we keep their details, when we have a sale, coupon or have anything to contact them with. (GRS 1, Marketing Manager)</p> <p>#2. We are using social media platforms to keep the communities posted when there are sales and discounts on items in the store. (GRS 2, Marketing Manager)</p> <p>#3. We communicate with customers via newspaper and promoting goods and services to our customers through sales, buy one get one free, etc. We use billboards and sometimes posters. (GRS 3, store Manager)</p> <p>#4. The strategy we use is social media. By alerting them about sales, discounts, etc. that we have added that is essential to their daily living. (GRS 4, Marketing Manager)</p> <p>#5. We communicate with our customers through different platforms such as social networks (twitter, Facebook). We have an app for the store where if you have downloaded and registered you automatically receive updates like sales we have in our retail. (GRS 5, Marketing Manager)</p> <p>#6. We now have various ways of reaching customers like social media posting which spread news all over the country. If one customer has bought our advertised product and is satisfied, his or her comment grabs the attention of others to come and buy. (GRS 6, Store Manager)</p> <p>#7. We use advertising, direct marketing, internet marketing, sales promotion and face-to-face greeting sale papers to customers (GRS 7, Marketing Manager)</p> <p>#8. We developed a loyalty program for customers and offer them free gifts, samples, or points towards rewards. We sometimes offer them special deals, early access to new items. (GRS 8, store Manager)</p> <p>#9. We are currently using social media such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube and with these social platforms we build a good relationship with our customers and attend complaints if there are any and come up with a suitable solution to keep them happy. (GRS 9, Store Manager)</p> <p>#10. We use SMS to inform our customers about any sale, changes in our operations. We use Facebook to advertise and promote goods and services. We also use Google advertisements. (GRS 10, Marketing Manager)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Online marketing ▪ Google advertisement ▪ Mobile app marketing ▪ Social Media Links ▪ Facebook ▪ Customer referrals ▪ Influencer marketing ▪ Posters ▪ Billboards ▪ Newspapers ▪ Television advertising ▪ Loyalty offers & program ▪ Free gifts ▪ Early access to new items (Try and buy) ▪ Discount ▪ Points reward systems ▪ Buy one get one free offer ▪ Special deals ▪ Door-to-door marketing ▪ Retail marketing ▪ Face-to-face interactions ▪ Send SMS 	<p>Transcript 18 : 1</p> <p>Transcript 5 : 1 -18</p>
Assessing MCS application success (2)	<p>#1. Yes, I think so. We profit back to school via SMS and Facebook and finally increase our sales, we even make 10% profit. Hence, our current strategies are successful and satisfying. (GRS 1, Marketing Manager)</p> <p>#2. The current strategies are successful because the more we use these certain strategies the more the customers come in their numbers as many as they are. (GRS 2, Marketing Manager)</p> <p>#3. Yes, they are successful because most of the business aims of the business are fulfilled, such as increasing profit, customer repeat buy and also encouraging others to buy from us. (GRS 3, Store Manager)</p> <p>#4. The store has not made any loss since the development of new strategies. We have gained more customers which means more sales for the store. (GRS 4, Marketing Manager)</p> <p>#5. They are successful because we have not made a loss through using them in our marketing campaigns and our operations are smooth. We see a working strategy by using it and testing it before implementing in the store. (GRS 5, Marketing Manager)</p> <p>#6. Yes, they are successful since we have not made a noticeable loss that could lead to a backward shift in the market share scheme. (GRS 6, Store Manager)</p> <p>#7. They are doing well for us because in our implementation we have sent messages through the use of them to the right people and at the right time. This is adjusted in our sales. (GRS 7, Marketing Manager)</p> <p>#8. I believe they are successful, because the products that are selling more are the ones that we advertise on the one of our social media platforms, so it means people did see them and buy. (GRS 8, Store Manager)</p> <p>#9. We have not made any loss from our sales and for each promotional goods and sales advertised on social platforms we do get customers buying and most of them come to buy in bulk. (GRS 9, Store Manager)</p> <p>#10. They are definitely working as we are still using them. Our marketing strategies turned into our number one approach to communicate with customers. When a strategy is not working, we change it without hesitating. (GRS 10, Marketing Manager)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Customer advocacy ▪ Customer satisfaction ▪ Gaining new customers ▪ Repeated purchases ▪ Positive feedback ▪ Customer referrals ▪ Maintain a smooth operation in the grocery retail stores ▪ Avoiding losses ▪ Increased sales ▪ Fulfilling business objective ▪ Higher profit margins ▪ Operational excellence 	<p>Transcript 8 : 4</p> <p>Transcript 5 : 20-45</p>

CON'T: OBJECTIVE 2: To determine the application of Marketing Communication Strategy in the Grocery Retail Industry.

INTERVIEW GUIDE QUESTIONS	KEY QUOTATIONS	KEY ELEMENTS FROM THE NARRATIVES	ATLAS ID, REFERENCE
<p>Stakeholder satisfaction and sustainability</p> <p>(3)</p>	<p>#1. By making sure that we are not having stock loss and increase sales to gain more profit, that gives assurance and trust that we are sustainable. (GRS 1, Marketing Manager)</p> <p>#2. Letting the customers, shareholders, employees know whenever there is a price increase, profit or loss and new strategies implemented for growth. (GRS 2, Marketing Manager)</p> <p>#3. By increasing sales, alerting them of all the goods and bad happening in our store, changes in the market share and send them our financial reports yearly. (GRS 3, Store Manager)</p> <p>#4. By alerting the community about our sales and in that way our sales within the store increases. (GRS 4, Marketing Manager)</p> <p>#5. We ensure that at all costs we put our customers first, update our target market with all relevant information and that increase sales which also attract stakeholders. We make sure we are sustainable to keep our stakeholders' trust. (GRS 5, Marketing Manager)</p> <p>#6. We ensure that the store is always in line with trends, make profit, inform them of all improvements or changes and be sustainable. (GRS 6, Store Manager)</p> <p>#7. By ensuring that we communicate with them and making sure everyone is on the same page, identifying their interests and send them appropriate level of engagement, such as having meetings with them for any available updates. (GRS 7, Marketing Manager)</p> <p>#8. Know your stakeholders, prioritize your stakeholders, understand your stakeholders, establish effective communication, and align current strategy with your stakeholders. (GRS 8, Store Manager)</p> <p>#9. We let them know everything we are doing that is about the development, innovation, external threats from external factors affecting the company growth and our increase in sales and competitive edges. We do this to keep them updated and avoid surprises of any unknown risks it. (GRS 9, Store Manager)</p> <p>#10. By designing attracting advertisements, making bright and full of relevant information posts and promotional advertisements. We do monthly discount sales to attract working consumer class for the 15th, 25th and month end sale. We also make combo sales. (GRS 10, Marketing Manager)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Keeping customers informed about price changes. ▪ Aligning strategy with customers interest and updates ▪ Prioritising customers' needs ▪ Alerting shareholders about sales ▪ Informing shareholders about changes in market share ▪ Keeping shareholders informed about profit or loss. ▪ Keeping shareholders informed new strategies implemented for growth. ▪ Sharing financial report with shareholders ▪ Avoiding stock loss ▪ Establishing effective communication ▪ Increasing sales to ensure sustainability 	<p>Transcript 8 : 2</p> <p>Transcript 5 : 45 - 50</p>

OBJECTIVE 3: To determine the challenges of adopting and implementing Marketing Communication Strategies in the Grocery Retail Industry.			
INTERVIEW GUIDE QUESTIONS	KEY QUOTATIONS	KEY ELEMENTS FROM THE NARRATIVES	ATLAS ti. TRANSCRIPT REFERENCES
Challenges of implementing marketing communication strategies (1)	<p>#1. We don't see difficulties as yet because our team work hard to ensure everything is under control. Other strategy we use is calling customer at the store for our promotions. This strategy is seasonal and working for us to attract passing by. (GRS 1, Marketing Manager)</p> <p>#2. Recently there are no challenges except for implementing a new way of including all eleven languages when advertising on social platforms which will benefit young and old stakeholders since South Africa is a diverse country. Considering that there are disadvantaged people from rural areas who do not have access to television, smart phones with internet poses a problem since face-to-face campaigns are no longer effective. (GRS 2, Marketing Manager)</p> <p>#3. As there is load shedding taking place, some products do not absorb ice for so long, ending up being taken back to suppliers for some bad reasons, this creates a bad impact to us. The issue of electricity is affecting us as grocery retailers and seemingly this issue is slowly fragging us down. (GRS 3, Store Manager)</p> <p>#4. With the use of internet marketing, the challenges that we face include that our communique won't be able to reach senior buyers (pensioners) since they are not familiar with the internet. Face-to-face competitions after covid19 because we do not know how people would receive it. Since there are many changes after the pandemic.(GRS 4, Marketing Manager)</p> <p>#5. As much as there are daily basic challenges when you work with different people as a manager I plan for situations in advance and solve them immediately. Hence, I don't take them as successful challenges because I manage to overcome them. We also meet our target market through customer referrals because we excel in our operations.(GRS 5, Marketing Manager)</p> <p>#6. There are too many communication channels, but we only use the few. This poses a challenge because when a potential customer criticizes our brand, we may not see it, that becomes a threat. (GRS 6, Store Manager)</p> <p>#7. There are challenges. Covid-19 brought with a high standard of health and safety and now customers only buy fresh and latest food. That poses challenges for us to not only buy goods from suppliers but long-lasting goods that will satisfy customers. (GRS 7, Marketing Manager)</p> <p>#8. So for everything seems fine I have not come across any challenges. So, I believe that it is working right for us. (GRS 8, Store Manager)</p> <p>#9. Yes, because we are approaching 5th industrial revolution with highly advanced technology and this Artificial Intelligence system that makes things easy with lots of uncalculated risks that might rise any time. However, we are doing our best to overcome all challenges encountered by us and our customers it. (GRS 9, Store Manager)</p> <p>#10. I cannot say there any challenges as yet. Marketing communication strategies can work for you for a short period of time or a long time. You can plan a strategy for a short term and only to find that it works for over 3 years. (GRS 10, Marketing Manager)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Considerations for face-to-face competitions post-COVID-19 ▪ Difficulty in reaching senior buyers who are not familiar with the internet. ▪ Language barriers in diverse countries ▪ Limited communication channels leading to potential brand criticism going unnoticed. ▪ Potential risks associated with advanced technology. ▪ Prioritise health and safety. ▪ The challenge of reaching disadvantaged individuals without access to television or smartphones with internet ▪ The level of competition ▪ The need for proper research before executing marketing strategies. ▪ The need to adapt to changing consumer preference. ▪ the use of AI systems in the retail industry ▪ The use of customer referrals to reach target markets. ▪ The impact of electricity issues on grocery retailers 	Transcript 9: 1 – 3

CON'T: OBJECTIVE 3: To determine the challenges of adopting and implementing Marketing Communication Strategies in the Grocery Retail Industry.			
INTERVIEW GUIDE QUESTIONS	KEY QUOTATIONS	KEY ELEMENTS FROM THE NARRATIVES	ATLAS ti. TRANSCRIPT REFERENCES
The ways of improving the implementation marketing communication strategies (2)	<p>#1. Since we no longer doing a face-to-face campaign for over 6 years now, I cannot say there is any that has not been successful. (GRS 1, Marketing Manager)</p> <p>#2. There were a limited number of customers arriving in the retail store while we planned an in store campaign. The marketing campaign was to use the advertisements only on television and I learned that technology is essential. (GRS 2, Marketing Manager)</p> <p>#3. There has not been an unsuccessful campaign. This is due to that I plan, organise and test all store marketing campaigns before we go to people. (GRS 3, Store Manager)</p> <p>#4. During the pandemic we conducted a face-to-face campaign about promotions, and people did not come. Lesson learnt is that the internet is very vital in our community because our sales peaked. (GRS 4, Marketing Manager).</p> <p>#5. There has not been an unsuccessful campaign, all the campaigns have been and always successful. This is because we plan, test and implement. We work as a team.(GRS 5, Marketing Manager)</p> <p>#6. We are using e-commerce campaigns now, but there was a Rainbow chicken disease that trended on social media while we had advertised it on sale prior without knowing there will be a problem. Our campaign was going to be a competition. People did not enter in numbers because they feared for their life. We changed from rainbow chicken 2kg to Sasko bottle, container and 2 breads for the winner.(GRS 6, Store Manager)</p> <p>#7. None (GRS 7, Marketing Manager)</p> <p>#8. Billboards we tried advertising using billboards in and around town and that did not go well until we chose to use social media platforms. What I learned from that was that it's important to do proper research before you do something because if we did our research we were going to come right. (GRS 8, Store Manager)</p> <p>#9. The did a live competition on Facebook and our official page was new, with technical problems we ended up not been able to read all comments for answers. We then did a survey on the best method to use for promoting our no name brands. Now we create an online competition, and the system picks the winner for us it (Food Lovers Market, Store Manager)</p> <p>#10. Luckily enough all the marketing campaigns that I have conducted were successful. (GRS 10, Marketing Manager)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Customer engagement ▪ Prioritise health and safety. ▪ The use of customer referrals to reach target markets. ▪ The need to adapt to changing consumer preference. ▪ Importance of research ▪ Ensure teamwork. ▪ Organizing ▪ Proper planning ▪ Campaign testing ▪ Long-term planning ▪ The importance of internet usage ▪ Utilise technology effectively. ▪ The use of AI systems in the retail industry 	Transcript 9: 4-5