

RESEARCH ARTICLE

**THE EFFECT OF DIRECT AND INTERACTIVE MARKETING ON THE CONSUMER
TRENDS IN LIGHT OF COVID-19 CRISIS IN TELECOMMUNICATIONS COMPANIES IN
JORDAN**

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Abstract

This study aimed to determine the effect of direct and interactive marketing on consumer trends in telecommunication companies operating in Jordan. Direct marketing consists of marketing communications that use direct media technologies. Interactive marketing is an extension of direct marketing into media technologies that allow two-way communications between a buyer and a seller. Here, the term “consumer trends” is defined as habits or behaviours that are currently prevalent among consumers of services and goods. The researchers used the quantitative method and collected the data using the field survey method. Telecommunication companies operating in Jordan (Orange, Umniah, and Zain) have been selected as the study population of this study. The questionnaire was distributed to 540 respondents comprising marketing managers, sales managers, information systems and coordinators. A total of 308 questionnaires were valid for the analysis, equating to a response rate of 57%. The findings showed that there was a strong effect of direct and interactive marketing on consumer trends. This study like others had some limitations, so it is recommended that, among other things, further studies took account of the following: (1) the effect of E-marketing on consumer trends because the marketing environment has become more virtual through social networking sites and (2) the importance of marketing intelligence in achieving competitive advantage, which can be applied in telecommunication companies and other case study communities.

Keywords: Direct Marketing, Interactive Marketing, Consumer Trends, Telecommunications Companies, Jordan.

1 Introduction

Since the new millennium, the focus has been on how creativity and communication provided the desired value for a target group while seeking to achieve better profitability (Christopher, Payne, & Ballantyne, 2013). There has been considerable progress in the marketing concept from an emphasis on the product to the emphasis on customer service and, on the values represented by the client (Buttle, 2009). This development has coincided with the introduction of some marketing rules for the marketing process for products and ideas – the so-called 4Ps: product, price, promotion, and place (Lantos, 2015). Thus, marketing development has become a more important aspect and detailed interference in marketing communication, which is the transfer of an idea or information or meaning in a message from the sender to the receiver through a communication channel and varies according to a position (Helm, 2009). A modern trend in the management of marketing is the tendency to focus on a specialized organizational unit of marketing communication (Aaker & McLoughlin, 2009), tracking Marketing Manager that, regardless of the regulation authority, included special sub-units as direct and interactive marketing and other (Kotler & Keller, 2012). In the context of the globalization and liberalization of markets and increased competition, an active marketing communication system works to influence consumer trends (Bradley, 2005) as an integrated combination of several functions including the definition of products, increasing the demand for products by convincing the target consumer of the benefits of the goods (Mohr, Sengupta, & Slater, 2009), and working to change negative attitudes into positive patterns as well as to strengthen positive attitudes among consumers about products or services (Nambisan & Baron, 2007). In addition, organizations are looking for different ways to achieve product excellence and to carry out marketing communications through the Internet via the search feature in such a manner that distinguishes a product from others and reminds customers (Strauss, 2016a), and builds a positive image of the organization and its products (Hsu & Fang, 2009).

Today, the world is witnessing a more compulsory technological change that is optional in light of changing data on the ground as a result of the COVID-19, which restricted many economic activities according to the instructions of the World Health Organization (Jameaba, 2020). Doing commercial and industrial business as well as marketing it through technology, enhances social distance, and allows companies to work efficiently and effectively with the least amount of workforce and helps reduce the cost of doing business (Schwab, 2017). Technology also helps business operations by keeping them in touch with suppliers and customers and their sales force. Because of its ability to simplify operating costs, technology provides instant access to supplies and information, so companies are better able to offer reasonable prices for goods and services without sacrificing quality (Cassidy, 2016).

The restrictions and precautionary measures imposed by the governments of many countries, it prompted both small and large companies to consider the option of remote work and the use of technology to perform their daily tasks, in addition to searching for any possible alternatives to follow the work progress as usual (Arabic CNN News, 2020). There are currently many tools and software available that support companies and enable them to maintain the continuity of their business, most notably through video conferences, data-sharing technologies, electronic recruitment tools, competency management systems and virtual events. This shift has been less complex for many companies, especially those working in the technology field, such as digital media, software suppliers, and companies that work in the field of social media and others (Urbinati, Bogers, Chiesa, & Frattini, 2019). In this paper, the researchers studied the effect of direct and interactive marketing on consumer trends, and the study was conducted on a sample of telecommunication companies in Jordan. Moreover, this study attempted to highlight the nature and reality of the close relationship between the main variables of the study. In addition, it seeks to achieve consistency, intellectuality and practicality blended among these main variables.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

During the year 2020, the Jordanian economy was not isolated from the world turmoil, but it was exposed to several fluctuations that contributed directly and indirectly on its productive sectors, especially the industrial one which is considered a main pillar of the Jordanian economy because of its contributions to the employment rates, exportation activities, and the volume of investment. At the same time, the world is witnessing an unprecedented technological development, which has touched various aspects of life. Also, the opportunities have been offered by automated media technology to achieve production, direct and interactive marketing. Thus, the main interest in this research is to determine the extent of the effect of a model of communication on the consumer trends under the scenario of challenges considering COVID-19 crisis.

Therefore, through this study, the researchers intends to discover the philosophy of application by Jordanian telecommunication companies in determining their market priorities and determining the wants and needs of the customers when developing marketing plans.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the current study are as follows:

1. To determine the effect of direct and interactive marketing on consumer trends in telecommunication companies operating in Jordan.
2. To determine whether demographic variables (age, gender, qualifications, experience, and career level) play a role in the effect of direct and interactive marketing on consumer trends; and
3. To come up with a set of recommendations based on the results of the study that could help decision-makers in the telecommunication companies under study to excel through optimum utilization of marketing communications.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The current study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the effect of direct and interactive marketing on consumer trends?
2. Are there any significant statistical differences due to the effect of demographic variables (gender, age, educational level, experience, and career level) on consumer trends?

BASIC RESEARCH METHOD

To answer the above research questions and fulfil the goals that have been set, the researchers formulated some hypotheses and then performed some analyses to verify these hypotheses in order to elucidate the present situation regarding the direct and interactive marketing in telecommunication companies in Jordan. The researchers used analytical and descriptive methods to try to describe and assess the reality of the effect of direct and interactive marketing on consumer trends. In addition, the researchers used a descriptive-analytical approach in order to try to compare, interpret, and evaluate the results in the hope of reaching meaningful generalizations about the topic under the study. This research used both primary and secondary research methods to collate data.

The secondary data has been obtained via a review of previous studies related to the subject of interest. The primary data was collected via a questionnaire distributed to marketing managers, sales and information systems managers and sales coordinators.

In order to gather data to answer the questions of the research, the developed questionnaire consisted of three parts. The first part was designed to collect demographic data, specifically gender, qualifications, overall experience, age group, job title, years of experience and management level. The second part covered the independent variable and included indicators that measure interactive and direct marketing, which were adopted from Kotler and Keller (2012) and Tanner and Raymond (2012). The third part of the questionnaire covered the dependent variable and included indicators that were used to measure the consumer trends and drew on the work of Appiah-Adu et al. (2001) and Wu (2003).

LITERATURE REVIEW

BACKGROUND

Buyers are being exposed to a wider range of varieties of marketing communications from and about the company from many different sources (Keller, 2009). On the other hand, consumers do not differentiate between message sources like marketers do (Kotler & Armstrong, 2010). In the consumer minds, the advertisement of messages from various media like TV, magazines, or online sources merges into one (Dobele, Toleman, & Beverland, 2005). Messages that are delivered through various promotional methods such as; direct marketing, sales promotions, advertising, personal selling, or public relations, all become part of one message about the company (Miles & Mangold, 2004). Thus, conflicting messages from those various sources could yield in confused company images and brand positions (Fill, 2005). Interactive and direct marketing is one of the elements of integrated marketing communication and this approach has been defined as the process through which the development and implementation of a different variety of persuasive communication programmes with customers (current and potential) take place over time. There are also channels of personal communication, via which two or more individuals can directly communicate with one another (Coiera, 2006). They can take the form of face to face, telephone, mail or email communication (Kozinets, De Valck, Wojnicki, & Wilner, 2010). Channels of personal communication are effective because they permit personal interactions including feedback (Keller E. , 2007), and they may exist between neighbours, friends, relatives, or involve sales associates talking to potential consumers (Sernovitz & Kawasaki, 2009). The personal communication channel that are referred to is- word-of-mouth effect, which has a considerable impact in many areas of products (King, Racherla, & Bush, 2014). Therefore, the current study also took this element of IMC into account. According to Tanner and Raymond (2012), an organization uses different types of marketing communications to create its promotion or communication mix, and these can include publicity and public relations, advertising, sales promotion, direct marketing, social media and interactive marketing, professional selling, and sponsorships (events and experiences).

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(2015), which aimed at identifying consumers' attitudes toward some consumption matters like advertising, product information and safety, procedures of governmental consumer protection, practices of a competition authority, and activities of consumer movement, consumers have a more positive attitude towards product information, product safety, procedures implemented by government for protecting consumers, and consumer movement actions and practices for protecting customers. In addition, customers have a more positive attitude towards advertising and the practices of the competition authority that are situated in the Ministry of Industry and Commerce. The current study looked at interactive and direct marketing and its effect on consumer trends in order to fill some of the gaps in the literature.

INDEPENDENT VARIABLE

Direct and interactive marketing: Interactive marketing depends on consumers that express what they prefer, in order to make marketers capable of producing marketing messages of more relevance. Unlike the outbound marketing of the past (Sheehan, 2010), direct marketing is comprised of marketing communications using technologies of direct media like printed catalogues and direct mail. Interactive marketing is a part of direct marketing into technologies of media allowing two-way communications between buyers and sellers (Mulhern, 2009). Interactive marketing is a one-to-one marketing procedure reacting and changing based on the actions of certain consumers and potential customers. This capability of reacting to the actions of customers and potential customers refer to the fact that trigger-based marketing is of a higher effectiveness than traditional direct marketing (Blattberg & Deighton, 1991). According to Sawhney, Verona, and Prandelli (2005), interactive marketing produced a two-way communication between a business and its consumers. Thus, advertisement becomes a dynamic procedure following customers instead of leading them. Any time a consumer is asked to give a feedback, exhibit what they personally prefer, or provide demographic information, they provide information which marketers can utilize for guiding their advertising work.

There are two key advantages to interactive marketing. First, the buyer takes part in a brand's advertising campaign, rather than passively listening to a broadcast on the radio or watching a TV commercial (Strauss, 2016). Secondly, the consumer plays a role in promoting the product of the company, and that can diminish the costs that company pays on advertisements and give it extra credibility with the consumer's friends, colleagues, and relatives (Berger & Nasr, 1998). Table 1 showed the benefits and drawbacks of interactive marketing (Taherdoost & Jalaliyoon, 2014).

Table 1:
Benefits and Drawbacks of Interactive Marketing

Benefits	Drawbacks
- Can be utilized for different IMC functions	- The Internet is yet to be considered as a mass medium because a considerable number of consumers lack access
- Messages can be adjusted to the certain needs and interests of consumers	- Attention to Internet advertisements is rather low
- The interactive nature of the Internet yields to more involvement	- Considerable amount of clutter on the Internet
- Can offer large amounts of information to the consumers	- Audience measurement is an issue on the Internet

Source: Taherdoost & Jalaliyoon, 2014

DEPENDENT VARIABLE

CONSUMER TRENDS People may differ in terms of their lifestyle and habits despite belonging to the same culture, social class or profession (Havighurst & Feigenbaum, 1959). Lifestyle is defined as the way in which an individual expresses his/her activities, interests, and opinions (Reynolds & Darden, 2011). The measurement of this concept involves three main dimensions: activities, interests, and opinions, sometimes known as 'A I O' (Plummer, 1974):

- Activities: These include the individual's work, hobbies, shopping activities, sports, and social events.
- Interests: These include the individual's interests in specific things like food, fashion, family, and areas of creativity.
- Opinions: These include the opinions of the person about the other individuals around him/her, the social issues raised around him/her, the actions he/she can do, and the products in the market that he/she can market and buy.

The term "Trend" refers to a set of positive or negative feelings and tendencies held by an individual towards a specific thing or issue (Thornton & Young-DeMarco, 2001). Every trend has three elements represented in what is known as the ABC model of attitudes, where A stands for affective, B for behavioural, and C for cognitive (Martin & Briggs, 1986). Although every trend has these three components, any specific trend can be based more on one component than on another. In other words, each component can also be the answer to the question: where does a trend come from? There are affectively based trends, behaviourally-based trends, and cognitively-based trends (Giner-Sorolla,

2001). According to BusinessDictionary (2017), consumer trends may be characterized as the habits or behaviours that are currently prevalent amongst customers of services or products. More simply, consumer trends are indicative of the things people buy and the amount of money they spend. Data which has been assembled on trends could as well include information concerning, for example, the way customers utilize a product and the way they communicate about a brand on the social media.

In order to study consumer trends and their relationship with consumer behaviour, companies should consider the following (Wu S. I., 2003):

Consumer lifestyle: This is a valuable social factor in the decision-making process of consumers, and their choice of one good over another. When marketing a product, it is necessary to consider dividing the target group into categories and highlighting the name of the product to suit each category. Consumers can be categorized according to their lifestyle, for example into athletes, businessmen, housewives, and so on (Pickett-Baker & Ozaki, 2008).

Consumer Benefit Perception: The benefit perception equates to the level of conviction of real consumers about the benefits that a product or service provides to them, thus creating the actual desire to buy (Ambler, 1997).

Consumer Purchase Preference: Consumer preferences are defined as individual tastes about various goods or services as measured by utility. In other words, consumers rank services or goods according to the level of utility they give to them (Thang & Tan, 2003).

Consumer Demographics: The statistical characteristics of human populations, such as; age, gender, geographic location, marital status, ethnicity, and income, are used by businesses to identify markets for their goods and services. Demographics are used to identify who customers are now and in future, where they live, and the possibility of them purchasing the product or service the company is selling (Carpenter & Moore, 2006).

FINDING AND ANALYSIS

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RESPONDENTS

GENDER

Table 2 proves that the percentage of male respondents in the current study was 63% and the percentage of female respondents was 37%. These percentages indicate that male participation in the study was higher and this could be because of the nature of the work in the Jordanian telecommunications sector which can involve travelling long distances and working for long periods, characteristics that do not fit with the majority of working women's domestic responsibilities.

Table 2:
Gender of the Respondents.

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Male	194	63.0
	Female	114	37.0
	Total	308	100.0

EDUCATION LEVEL

As for the distribution of the respondents of the research based on educational level, Table 3 shows that 46% of the study population held a bachelor's degree, 25% had a diploma and 21% had a secondary school certificate or lower. Also, the percentage of respondents who had a M.Sc. degree is 7% and the ones who were with a PhD degree 1%, indicating that the majority of the respondents had tertiary-level qualifications.

Table 3:
Education Level of the Respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percentage
Valid	Secondary and below	65	21.1	21.1
	Diploma	77	25.0	46.1
	Bachelor's	141	45.8	91.9
	Master's	22	7.1	99.0
	PhD	3	1.0	100.0
	Total	308	100.0	

WORKING EXPERIENCE

Table 4 exhibits the distribution of the respondents of the study according to working experience in their current jobs. It shows that 0.3% of the respondents had working experience equal to or longer than 20 years and 3.9% had experience ranging from 15 to less than 20 years. Those with experience ranging from 10 to less than 15 years accounted for 28.6% of the study sample. However, the highest percentage of respondents (35.4%) had experience ranging from 5 to less than 10 years. In addition, 31.8% had less than 5 years of experience in their current position. Overall, the respondents had a relatively good length of working experience in their current roles.

Table 4:
Working Experience of the Respondents in their Current Job.

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Less than 5 years	98	31.8	31.8
	From 5 years to less than 10 years	109	35.4	67.2
	From 10 years to less than 15 years	88	28.6	95.8
	From 15 years to less than 20 years	12	3.9	99.7
	20 years and over	1	.3	100.0
	Total	308	100.0	

MANAGEMENT LEVEL

As for the distribution of the respondents of the research on the basis of their management level, Table 5 indicates that 2.6% of them were in the top management level in positions such as general manager or administrative and financial manager and other similar roles. A substantial proportion of the respondents (36.7%) were in the middle management level with jobs such as marketing manager, sales manager, operations manager, branch manager and so on. However, the largest proportion of respondents (60.7%) were in the low management level, working as supervisors in sales, promotions, marketing, quality, and follow-up, and as sales and marketing representatives among others.

Table 5:
Management Level of the Respondents

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Valid	Top management	8	2.6	2.6	2.6
	Middle management	113	36.7	36.7	39.3
	Low management	187	60.7	60.7	100.0
	Total	308	100.0	100.0	

JOB TITLE

As for the distribution of the respondents of the research based on the job title, Table 6 shows that 26.3% of the study population were marketing managers, 24.7% were sales managers and 12% were operations managers. On the other hand, 23.4% were quality managers and 13.6% were in the others category which included job titles such as sales coordinator.

Table 6:
Job Title of the Respondents.

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Marketing manager	81	26.3	26.3
	Sales manager	76	24.7	51.0
	Operation manager	37	12.0	63.0
	Quality manager	72	23.4	86.4
	Others	42	13.6	100.0
	Total	308	100.0	

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

DIRECT AND INTERACTIVE MARKETING

Table 7 includes the means, medians, and standard deviations of the statements regarding direct and interactive marketing, which is another IMC dimension.

Table 7:
The Mean, Median, and Standard Deviation of Direct and Interactive Marketing

	Statement	Mean	Median	Std. Deviation
1	The consumer always gets mailings or handbills about services and products.	2.76	2.00	1.464
2	The consumer always pays attention when the product brand is presented via telemarketing.	3.31	4.00	1.239
3	your company's site includes the latest information provided to the consumer.	3.52	4.00	1.233
4	SMS messages contribute to the delivery of clear information to the consumer.	2.91	3.00	1.346
	Direct and interactive marketing	3.12	3.00	.964

Table 7 shows that direct and interactive marketing received a medium degree of approval at a mean of 3.12 with a standard deviation of 0.964. According to Strauss (2016), direct marketing is an

advertising type which comprises numerous types of interactive marketing tactics. Moreover, customers keep experiencing marketing in a multi-channel way (Dholakia, et al., 2010). Today, direct digital marketing benefits from the data investment which numerous marketers have already made (Drury, 2008). Therefore, they can greatly increase the relevance of their marketing communications via integrating data from numerous channels to one marketing data mart as a foundation component of direct digital marketing (Lund & Marinova, 2014). In addition, direct and interactive marketing give instant feedback on services and goods and give sellers the ability of identifying target markets, customers' needs and properly provide or adjust products (Varadarajan, et al., 2010). Statements (3) and (2) received the highest average mean scores of 3.52 and 3.31 with standard deviations of 1.233 and 1.239, respectively, which indicates that company websites provide the latest information to consumers and that consumers pay attention when the product brand is presented via telemarketing.

CONSUMER TRENDS

The third part of the study tool has been designed for measuring consumer trends. Table 8 includes the means, medians, and standard deviation values for statements associated with this dependent variable.

Table 8:
The Mean, Median, and Standard Deviation of Consumer Trends.

Statement	Mean	Median	Std. Deviation
5 Marketing staff focus on enriching the cognitive element of consumers about the company's services.	3.80	4.00	.955
6 The sales staff work to deliver a clear message about services offered to the consumer.	3.73	4.00	.917
7 The consumer is influenced by advertising campaigns if they carry a meaningful message, and then they engage in the service.	3.84	4.00	1.028
8 The consumer's sentiment is positive if he/she realizes that his/her conduct compatibility property holds service.	3.67	4.00	1.071
9 The consumer tends to have positive feelings about the company if it provides distinctive products and services.	4.10	4.00	.767
10 The consumer believes in strong competition among telecommunications companies.	4.19	4.00	.807

11	The consumer is responsible for the trade-off between the services provided by companies.	3.75	4.00	1.011
12	Your company provides privacy for the consumer when he/she engages in the service.	3.98	4.00	.913
13	There is a communication between the company and consumer when he/she asks about any new service.	3.95	4.00	.936
14	The consumer has confidence in the quality of the provided services.	3.80	4.00	.958
15	The company works to develop effective plans that are compatible with the client's philosophy in consumer style.	3.94	4.00	.915
16	The company is interested in the views and suggestions of the consumer before and after service engaged.	3.90	4.00	.966
17	The strategy of the company is geared towards consumers in order to continue providing services to them.	3.89	4.00	.879
18	Providing marketing information and employ the effective marketing in influencing consumer behaviour.	3.75	4.00	.912
19	Your company has the elements to be an integrated marketing communication organization.	3.85	4.00	.967
20	Your company tries to deliver a consistent message to the consumer through its marketing communications.	3.93	4.00	.905
	Consumer trends	3.88	3.91	.584

Table 8 shows that consumer trends received a high degree of approval at a mean of 3.88 with a standard deviation of 0.584. The companies under study focus on how to keep up with consumer trends. For these telecommunications companies staying ahead of the competition is not just about winning new clients; it is about survival. They understand that predicting the future will help their clients to stay ahead of the curve. This finding agrees with Heinonen (2011). Marketing and sales staff focus on enriching the cognitive element among consumers about the services their company provides, which is in line with Tsai 2005. They also work to deliver a clear message about the services they offer to the consumer. This finding supports Korczynski, Shire, Frenkel, and Tam

(2000). Moreover, the responses to the statements about consumer trends indicate that the consumer is influenced by advertising campaigns if they carry a meaningful message, and then they engage in the service. In addition, Table 8 shows that the consumer sentiment is positive if he/she realized that his/her conduct compatibility property holds service. Moreover, the telecommunications companies under study provide privacy for the consumer when he/she is using the service. As statements (10), (9), (12), and (13) received the highest average mean scores of 4.19, 4.10, 3.98, and 3.95 with standard deviations of 0.807, 0.767, 0.913, and 0.936, respectively, this shows that the telecommunications companies in Jordan realize that the consumer believes in strong competition among the companies that provide telecommunication services. They also know that consumers have positive feelings about a company if it provides them with distinctive products and services. The results also indicated that the companies must provide privacy for the consumer when he/she subscribes to the service. In addition, the results in Table 8 show that there is communication between the company and consumer when he/she asks about any new service. The results in Table 8 are compatible with Bauer, Reichardt, Barnes, and Neumann (2005).

RELIABILITY TESTS

Table 1 presents the reliability and validity values for every variable.

Table 9:

Summary of Reliability Test (n = 308).

Variable Name	Cronbach's Alpha	Internal Consistency
Direct and interactive marketing	0.704	Acceptable
Consumer trends	0.90	Excellent
Overall Reliability	0.97	Excellent

To ensure the stability of the study tool, the internal consistency coefficient was calculated using Cronbach's alpha, which specifies the way the questionnaire items are correlated with one another. As listed in Table 9, the alpha for the items as a whole is 0.97, which is measured acceptable for the aims of this study because it is higher than the statistically acceptable rate of 60% (Sekaran, 1984)

REGRESSION ANALYSIS

Table 10 represents the regression model summary, Table 11 shows the ANOVA test, and Table 12 shows all dependent variables were statistically significant ($\alpha = 0.01$). In the current study, multiple regression analyses have been conducted for examining the mediating effect of IMC on the relationship between marketing effectiveness and consumer trends.

Table 10:
Regression Model Summary.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.932 ^a	.868	.863	.217	.868	161.482	12	295	.000

a Predictors: (Constant), direct and interactive marketing

Table 11:
ANOVA^b.

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	90.868	12	7.572	161.482	.000 ^a
	Residual	13.833	295	.047		
	Total	104.701	307			

a Predictors: (Constant), direct and interactive marketing

b Dependent variable: Consumer trends

Table 12:
Coefficients^a.

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error				Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	.477	.086		5.520	.000		
	Direct and interactive marketing	-.016	.017	-.026	-.901	.368	.541	1.849

a Dependent variable: Consumer trends

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

RQ1: What is the effect of direct and interactive marketing on consumer trends?

According to the results of our analysis of the data in order to test hypothesis 1, there is a relationship with a direct effect of a statistically significant relationship between consumer trends and direct and interactive marketing. This shows the consistent message that Jordanian telecommunications companies are delivering via their effective marketing to the consumer.

According to the study tool, the companies use marketing tools such as advertising, sales promotion, public relations, interactive marketing and others, which positively affect the consumer trends in the Jordanian marketing environment. According to Bitner (1995), interactive marketing involves the ability to deliver a quality service to customers. The services are delivered as promised and the workforce interacts directly with consumers. Interactive marketing plays a pivotal role in the success or failure of any entity, especially in the service sector (La & Choi, 2012). Interactive marketing is a combination of relationship marketing and service marketing that builds associations among workforces and consumers (Vivek, Beatty, & Morgan, 2012). On the other hand, direct marketing consists of marketing communications that use direct media technologies such as direct mail and print catalogues (Danaher & Rossiter, 2011). Interactive marketing is an extension of direct marketing into media technologies that allow two-way communications between a buyer and a seller. Interactive marketing might provide the basis for building accommodating relationships with both internal and external customers which may result in better interpersonal conversations (Chaffey & Smith, 2013). According to Aslam, Hamid, and Arshad (2015), interactive marketing has a positive significant influence on customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. Moreover, it has been found that customer satisfaction fully mediates the relationship between interactive marketing and customer loyalty. Direct and interactive marketing techniques typically include a response mechanism that allows consumers to respond directly to a communication and potentially make a purchase (Andrews & Shimp, Advertising, promotion, and other aspects of integrated marketing communications, 2017).

The current study found that Jordanian telecommunications companies use these techniques to follow up marketing plans that take under consideration customers' needs and wants. Through conducting a field study, undertaking data analysis and interviewing a sample of consumers, the researchers discovered that consumers often get mailshots or handbills about services and products. Also, the consumers pay attention when the product brand is presented to them via telemarketing. In addition, all of the telecommunications companies in Jordan have websites that can be accessed via the Internet that provide consumers with the latest information about services and special offers. Moreover, their marketing messages contribute to delivering clear information to the consumer. These results are due to the effect of interactive and direct marketing on consumer trends. Jordanian telecom companies, by their nature, depend on electronic messages addressed to customers. It targets a large segment of consumers, and in light of the COVID-19 crisis, the companies concerned continued to provide many

benefits to the consumer, for example, free internet packages in order to continue the educational process for school and university students, and this increased loyalty and satisfaction with customers. And the effect of direct and interactive marketing has found acceptance among Jordanian society. This is an indication of the persistence of this form of marketing communication, and therefore a positive impact on consumer trends.

RO2: Are there any significant statistical differences due to the effect of demographic variables (gender, age, educational level, experience, and post) on consumer trends?

Demographics are used to describe a population in terms of its size, distribution, and structure (Palumbi, 2003). Size means the number of individuals in a population while structure describes the population in terms of age, income, education, and occupation (Lutz, Goujon, KC, & Sanderson, 2007). Demography is defined as the study of population characteristics (Bouhassira, Lanteri-Minet, Attal, Laurent, & Touboul, 2008). An understanding of demography is important for marketers as it helps them to predict not only the size of the target market, but also any changes that might occur in it (Labrecque & Milne, 2012). Demographic factors have a bearing on the types of product that individuals want, where they shop and how they evaluate possible purchases (Kumar S. P., 2014). Demographic information helps companies to locate a target market whose motives and behaviour can then be explained and predicted using psychological or social cultural investigation (Verma & Chandra, 2016). Demographic information can be used to identify potential for the sale and consumption of a product, although it does not identify why or by whom a specific brand is used. It is also relatively accessible and cost-effective to gather (Aaker J. L., 1997). Furthermore, demographic variables reveal trends that are particularly relevant to marketers, such as shifts in age and income distributions, etc.

An analysis of the demographics of the employees in the companies surveyed, namely education, experience, career level, age, gender, showed that the practical experience and academic qualifications of the sales staff had effect on marketing effectiveness. Nowadays, professionalism is required in the field of marketing in order to keep up with the developments in the marketing environment and search for effective marketing strategies that are in line with the company's message of satisfying the needs and desires of the consumer and that have a positive effect on the consumer, encouraging them to engage with products and services. In general, the results of the study showed that there are statistically significant differences due to some demographic factors influencing the relationship between direct and interactive marketing and consumer trends through the staff's ability to follow up marketing plans and adopting strategies that attract customers. This is due to the experience and education level of the marketing staff in the surveyed companies.

DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

The research showed a positive relationship between direct and interactive marketing and consumer trends. In addition, this model an important part of the IMC system of Jordanian telecommunications companies, and they have created teams capable of analysing the market, implementing plans and controlling them. These marketing teams are capable of using their expertise to convince the consumer to interact with their brand and thus pay attention to the services provided by these companies. This finding agrees with Tate, Ellram, Bals, Hartmann, and Van der Valk (2010) and Mangold and Faulds (2009). There is also a significant positive relationship between direct and interactive marketing and optimum marketing information in Jordanian telecommunications companies, as illustrated by the statistical tests. From the previous, it can be said that the researchers had achieved the first goals (RO1) set by this research, which was to determine the effect of interactive and direct marketing on consumer trends in telecommunication companies in Jordan; that included (1) determine the extent of the application of interactive and direct marketing in telecommunications companies operating in Jordan and (2) determine the most substantial means used for marketing communications in telecommunications companies operating in Jordan. Finally, the companies under study provide a consistent message to consumers about their services. This message contains elements that convince the potential consumer of the benefits of the provided services. Moreover, through knowledge of purchasing behaviour and purchasing power of the challenges facing consumers in the Jordanian marketing environment, companies have been able to target specific consumer segments based on their respective purchasing power. This result agrees with Kliatchko and Schultz (2014), Reid, Luxton, and Mavondo (2005), Richards (2011) and Veloutsou and Moutinho (2009), and others. As mentioned earlier, there is a role for demographic variables in the effect on consumer trends.

CONCLUSIONS

It is apparent from the findings of this study that the companies under study are aware of the importance of interactive and direct marketing in light of COVID-19 crisis, even in other circumstances that affect the marketing environment, and strive to influence consumer behaviour through all the tools and means that constitute marketing effectiveness.

The results of the survey also indicated that the companies involved in the research focus on the importance of direct and interactive marketing in influencing consumer trends because it can help in attracting and retaining customers according to their needs and wants in the light of the intense competition that now exists among companies that provide the same services to consumers in Jordan.

Lastly, the marketing teams of the companies under study have the necessary skills as well as effectiveness and efficiency in performing their marketing work because, according to the statistical analysis, their level of experience and their qualifications provide them with good knowledge of the marketing environment. Through the collection of data and its tabulation and analysis to test the

developed hypotheses, the researchers could answer the questions posed in this study. Moreover, the aims of the study have been accomplished by dealing accurately with the collected data. Overall, from the analysis results, it can be understood that direct and interactive marketing effect on consumer trends in telecommunications companies operating in Jordan.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results, the researchers make four recommendations for the telecommunication companies in Jordan to consider:

- There is a need to follow up changes in the marketing environment during the targeted marketing process in order to ensure that they increase or at least maintain their market share. To this end, the companies could adopt Porter strategies by focusing on achieving the highest quality at the lowest cost.
- In the face of a number of economic challenges there is a need to adopt interactive marketing strategies that are relevant to the Jordanian consumer.
- There is a need to train marketing employees so that they can gain the required competencies to enable them to become a strategic partner by following up and controlling marketing plans and subsequently identifying gaps and filling them through appropriate interventions.
- Lastly, there is a need to recognize the contribution of the various facets of marketing as vital elements of success in the face of increasing competition, and to act accordingly.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

Through the knowledge the researchers have gained from the large number of works on and around the topics of interactive and direct marketing and consumer trends, and due to the constant modernization of the marketing environment, it is clear that interactive marketing is a broad topic that is developing day by day. Moreover, this study, like any other, has some limitations which must be addressed. Therefore, the researchers suggest that researchers wishing to undertake further researches in this field consider the following issues:

- The effect of E-marketing on consumer trends because the marketing environment has become more virtual through social networking sites and
- The importance of marketing intelligence in achieving competitive advantage, which can be applied in telecommunication companies and other case study communities.

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