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INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS OF THE ASKANIA FROZEN FOODS COMPANY NETWORK ARE AIMED AT EXPORTING PRODUCTS

Abstract. The study substantiates the transformation of the global economic environment, which requires food enterprises to introduce innovative tools for foreign economic expansion. Entering international markets in the frozen foods segment requires a highly adaptive system based on Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC). The object of research is the export-oriented activity of the “Askania Frozen Foods” network. Systematic and comparative analysis, and matrix modeling are applied. The business model requires strict differentiation of communication flows. Forming export potential correlates with transmitting three blocks of advantages: IQF technology (FSSC 22000, ISO), cold chain logistics, and production adaptability. In the B2B market, personal and expert channels dominate. Future evolution of the IMC system must progress toward digitalization, predictive AI analytics, and ESG principles.

Keywords: integrated marketing communications, export potential, Askania Frozen Foods, frozen foods, B2B marketing; individual quick freezing, international trade fairs, expert public relations, private label, cold supply chain.

JEL code classification: M31

Statement of the problem. Expanding relations with the European Union, achieving gradual economic integration and building a common commercial policy are something that should have happened in Ukraine a long time ago, but actual opportunities are opening up only now. Liberalization of trade with the EU means that by June 5, 2023, import duties on Ukrainian goods to the European Union countries will be abolished. This decision was adopted on May 30, 2022 by the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union. The conclusion was recorded in Regulation No. 2022/870 and transmitted to the national parliaments of the member states and includes duties for industrial products, suspension of the entry price system for fruits and vegetables, suspension of all tariff quotas for agricultural products, suspension of anti-dumping duties on imports of goods originating in Ukraine, suspension of the application of global protective measures against Ukrainian goods.

Interestingly, the decision is temporary, and therefore, after a year, the domestic manufacturer had to adapt its production to the requirements of the EU. It is highly likely that after the adaptation period, the situation with the import duty will return to normal, because before that, annual taxes amounted to 25 million euros. In addition, by abolishing import duties for its countries, the European Union is somewhat harming its manufacturers. Therefore, if a product originating in Ukraine is imported under conditions that threaten to cause serious difficulties for manufacturers of similar or directly competing goods from the EU, the duties that are otherwise applied in accordance with the Association Agreement on the import of this product may be reintroduced for a while [3, p. 195].



Analysis of recent research and publications. It indicates significant interest among scientists in the specifics of integrated marketing communications (IMC) management in the context of international expansion. Theoretical and methodological principles of forming the export potential of food industry enterprises and tools for diversifying sales markets have been thoroughly studied in the works of such leading domestic economists as A. O. Starostina, O. V. Zozulyov, and S. M. Ilyashenko. Certain aspects of adapting communication strategies to the requirements of foreign consumers, in particular in the market of frozen semi-finished products and fruit and vegetable products, have been highlighted in the works of A. V. Fedorchenko and E. V. Krykavsky. Despite the availability of thorough developments, the features of the synergistic combination of digital and traditional channels for promoting brands of logistics and distribution networks remain debatable. The practical dimension of optimizing IMC for promoting frozen products to the European market in the face of fierce competition and modern geopolitical challenges requires a more detailed study. That is why there is a need for a comprehensive analysis of the communication platform of the Askania Frozen Foods network of companies, which determines the choice of the direction of this research, focused on increasing the efficiency of its export activities [5, p. 143].

Formulation of the article's objectives. The main purpose of this article is a comprehensive study and theoretical and practical justification of the mechanisms for forming integrated marketing communications (IMC) of the Askania Frozen Foods network of companies, directly aimed at stimulating and scaling the export of its frozen products. To achieve this goal, the following key tasks are envisaged: to carry out a strategic audit of the company's current communication mix in foreign markets, to identify the specifics of brand perception by foreign consumers and to determine the most effective digital and traditional promotion channels. The result of the study should be the development of applied recommendations for optimizing the Askania Frozen Foods communication platform, which will allow the company to increase competitiveness, minimize marketing risks and ensure stable growth in export volumes in the context of European integration.

Summary of the main material. Savings on customs tariffs and obtaining the right to preferential treatment will occur only if certain conditions are met.

The rules of origin of products and related procedures provided for in the main Association Agreement between the European Community, on the one hand, and Ukraine, on the other, must be observed. In particular, the goods must meet the quality standards that apply in the EU. After all, for the safe consumption or use of products, another agreement is in force – on the assessment of conformity and acceptability of industrial products. No one has canceled its operation. Another key requirement is transparency and compliance. The regulation states this as "respect for Ukraine's democratic principles, respect for the principle of the rule of law, as well as constant and ongoing efforts to combat corruption and illegal activities." This means that compliance must run like a red thread through all the processes and actions of the manufacturer. For failure to comply with the requirements, as practice shows, you can not only be left without assets, but also go to jail. More globally, if there are systemic cases of violation of the specified conditions, the European Commission, using an implementing act, may fully or partially suspend the preferential agreements [10, p. 185].

The European Union is Ukraine's largest trading partner in recent years, but other opportunities are also open. These are the USA and the UK.

According to the Ministry of Economy, trade turnover between Ukraine and the UK amounted to 2.3 billion dollars last year. This is a strong partner for Ukraine not only at the political level. Currently, there is a legal consolidation of the abolition of import duties and tariff quotas in bilateral trade. A corresponding agreement has been signed. The term of the agreement is 36 months, as in the case of the EU. Traditional and usual exports to the UK include flour, grain, frozen fruits and vegetables, dairy products, poultry meat and semi-finished products, tomato paste, honey, corn, wheat, juices, mushrooms, sugar, etc. Also for 36 months, but the US has already introduced zero discounts on duties on metallurgical products, which previously amounted to 25%. This means that the US is ready to accept Ukrainian metallurgical products into its production processes and, accordingly, provide the domestic manufacturer with orders. This is stated in the White House Proclamation No. 9705 of May

27, 2023. Digital platforms for exports Ukraine is not in vain considered one of the leading countries in terms of innovative products and digitalization [4, p. 110].

IT services quickly adapted to the new conditions and offered platforms aimed at supporting exports.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine has introduced a resource with which small, medium and large businesses can create an application to search for new contacts to expand exports. The international platform is designed to provide diplomatic assistance to Ukrainian exporters in foreign markets.

The Ministry of Digital Transformation of Ukraine is also actively developing the direction responsible for exports. It is planned to pass a test on the company's readiness to enter foreign markets, familiarize itself with the requests of foreign companies, search for offers and the opportunity to offer cooperation to foreign partners.

The company "Ascania Frozen Foods" has a fairly high level of readiness for export, well-established internal business processes, understands its competitive advantages and its value proposition. In addition, the company is taking a balanced approach to reducing the risks associated with the war. The company carried out a superficial analysis and selected potential target markets, but it is also recommended to carry out a comparative analysis of all EU markets and determine the most appropriate ones for systematic focused export expansion. In order to form the correct positioning and marketing strategies, it is desirable to carry out an in-depth analysis of competitors and behavioral characteristics of the end consumer in the selected market. There is also a need to attract additional funds for export [9, p. 210].

The level of readiness for export is 80%, 20% of various aspects need to be refined.

In particular, first of all, this is the area of "Understanding Foreign Economic Activity", which involves choosing a focus market and its research, previous export experience and the availability of necessary marketing materials. Also, the areas of "Market Research", "Financing" and "Product Readiness" need to be refined.

Based on the available information, key recommendations for analyzing the "Ascania Frozen Foods" market begin with selecting the top three target EU countries using well-defined research criteria rather than personal intuition or basic import data alone, placing particular emphasis on local consumption cultures and volume trends. Once these target markets are chosen, the company should conduct an in-depth analysis of competitors and local consumer behaviors – evaluating competitive positioning, marketing strategies, and sales channels to build a tailored export model. For its export focus, the company should prioritize its "Ridna" whole frozen cherries, reserving ground berries and mixes for domestic sales. Additionally, current momentum should be leveraged by systematically analyzing markets like Poland, where preliminary client outreach and product samples have already been initiated upon request. Finally, familiarizing the team with the essential components of formal market research will ensure that future market evaluations effectively integrate existing experience, prior findings, and established international contacts.

As the main elements to study we can propose the consumer market as a whole, general trends, production volumes, a tool for researching demand, market trends and tendencies for the selected product, consumer preferences, what are the competitors, their strengths and weaknesses, pricing policy and marketing behavior in this market and a portrait of the client and his path (it is different for each country) [1, p. 320].

By analyzing the export strategy of the enterprise "Ascania Frozen Foods", you can determine the main directions and features of the company's activities.

Features of the company that you should pay attention to when creating a strategy:

1. Choosing a target country. When forming an export strategy, it is important to consider that the client is currently working on Japan, Nigeria, and has sent samples to Poland, Turkey, and the USA. Accordingly, it is important to prioritize the market, taking into account the workload on current projects and financial opportunities for exit.

2. Regarding the export model, the company currently operates primarily in Ukraine and Japan through distributors supplying convenience stores with narrow frozen product ranges, though sales peak at points where tastings are possible due to the non-standard nature of the products requiring consumer familiarization. To expand successfully, potential export models should be evaluated, including working through agents to reach large chains, using an agent-and-distributor partnership for specialized retail, partnering directly with distributors for both specialized and large retail networks, or pursuing direct B2B sales to chains and specialty stores.

3. It is important to immediately plan marketing expenses in the export budget in working with specialized stores or large retail, which will allow informing end consumers about the benefits and taste qualities of the product (tastings, information stands). It is also necessary to lay down the costs of participation in exhibitions.

4. Consider the product positioning and pricing map

Before starting the search for a client, it is necessary to calculate the price of the product according to the selected model (cost and selling price taking into account the selected market entry model). At the stage of competitor analysis, a positioning map is developed, on which the most favorable niches for positioning one's own products are selected. Pricing is done according to market needs, that is, "off the shelf". First, the price required by the selected market is determined from the positioning map, and taking into account markups, duties and taxes, a selling price is formed for this market.

5. Client portrait.

The client believes that the best partner for them will be a company that has experience in selling frozen products, that is, it has an already formed customer base that is interested in such products. Or it is a young innovative company that believes in the product and understands how to sell it. In both cases, these are professional sellers with experience in sales [8, p. 312].

That is, the client is fully focused on the distributor, but did not consider the client portrait of managers or owners of specialized stores.

6. When planning a client attraction strategy, test different channels. B2B client search can be carried out through various effective channels, such as analyzing competitor websites, leveraging LinkedIn, and searching for target-country leads on local Google domains in their native language using translation tools. Additionally, participating in trade exhibitions – either as an independent visitor or as part of a national collective stand – offers direct access to prospective partners, with official Ukrainian national stands being regularly organized by the Office for Development of Entrepreneurship and Export alongside the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Ukraine.

7. In a project format, we outline the implementation of the strategy, in particular, planning all elements within a time frame from the development of a package for negotiations to the production and delivery of the batch, with further development on the market [6, p. 96].

The company understands its product well, including its advantages and features, and manages risks effectively. While the level of readiness and experience is high, entry into new markets can be simplified by focusing on key areas for improvement. Regarding production, ensuring uninterrupted operations requires working out alternative options for potential shortages of raw materials or containers, as well as building a strong business network by joining relevant associations (such as Ukrsadvinprom or the Association of Craft Distillers of Ukraine) or business clubs like Young Business Club or Board. In terms of financial stability, establishing systematic exports involves operational, exhibition, marketing, and travel expenses, making it essential to calculate full costs after selecting target countries and factor in ongoing projects, while planning for additional funding if needed. Finally, for risk management, while a business continuity plan helps mitigate wartime risks, the power supply issue requires extra attention, specifically by exploring generator cost reimbursement programs and applying for relevant grants.

Check EU requirements for mandatory and voluntary certification in target markets, alongside continuously monitoring financing opportunities on the Diya.Business portal. You can also consider cooperation with the German-Ukrainian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and post a company profile on the Enterprise Europe Network. Additionally, leverage the Export Web Portal to access

regularly updated information on various export aspects, analytical reports, and market research, while registering on the Nazovne platform and participating in international online trade exhibitions where professional buyers, supermarket chains, large enterprises, and distributors search for suppliers.

Conclusions. Based on a comprehensive and systematic analysis of the financial, operational, and market capacities of "Askania Frozen Foods", the study demonstrates that the company possesses a remarkably high export potential. In the context of dynamic global trade shifts, the strategic imperative for the company is to transition from an exclusive focus on the domestic market toward active and structured international expansion. To realize this potential effectively, "Askania Frozen Foods" must prioritize the deep adaptation and modernization of its internal business processes to meet international trade requirements. Standardizing operational workflows is essential for fulfilling the rigorous regulatory, safety, and quality benchmarks demanded by foreign consumers, including compliance with IFS Food and BRCGS standards. Furthermore, optimizing cold-chain logistics, upgrading packaging technologies, and digitizing supply chain tracking are fundamental prerequisites for ensuring product integrity across cross-border distribution networks. Aligning internal capabilities with international market expectations will establish the foundation for sustainable competitive advantages abroad.

The current macroeconomic and geopolitical environment presents a unique strategic window for this expansion. Today, Ukrainian food manufacturers operate under unprecedentedly favorable trade conditions. Key international partners—including the European Union, the United States, and individual European countries—have implemented targeted economic support measures, including trade preferences, tariff reductions, simplified customs procedures, and direct integration initiatives aimed at supporting Ukrainian businesses during these challenging times for the country. To capitalize on these favorable market conditions, the company must execute a well-structured market-entry methodology, transitioning away from intuitive decision-making toward precise, data-driven analytical frameworks. Selecting target EU markets requires thorough evaluation of local consumption habits, purchasing power, competitor positioning, and existing distribution infrastructure, ensuring that high-value flagship products – such as the "Ridna" line of whole frozen cherries – are positioned effectively to capture growing demand in frozen food segments.

Establishing robust B2B lead-generation mechanisms forms another pillar of long-term export resilience. By combining digital tools such as LinkedIn and foreign-language search engines with active physical presence at major trade exhibitions, the business can construct direct pathways to international buyers, retail chains, and specialized distributors. Utilizing support frameworks provided by national institutions like the Office for Entrepreneurship and Export Development, alongside international business associations, offers additional leverage in opening complex foreign markets. Consequently, entering international markets will allow "Askania Frozen Foods" to diversify its sales channels, mitigate domestic operational and geopolitical risks, and achieve higher profit margins. Beyond corporate benefits, capitalizing on foreign market opportunities will enhance export revenues and demonstrate the resilience and quality of Ukrainian agricultural and food processing sectors globally. A phased, data-driven export strategy should therefore be adopted as a top priority in the company's strategic plan.

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ІНТЕГРОВАНІ МАРКЕТИНГОВІ КОМУНІКАЦІЇ МЕРЕЖІ КОМПАНІЙ ASKANIA FROZEN FOODS НАПРАВЛЕНІ НА ЕКСПОРТ ПРОДУКЦІЇ

Анотація. Трансформація глобального економічного середовища вимагає від вітчизняних підприємств харчової промисловості диверсифікації ринків збуту та впровадження інноваційних інструментів для зовнішньоекономічної експансії. В умовах волатильності ринку та посилення нетарифних бар'єрів у Європейському Союзі та США класичні експортні операції втрачають ефективність. Вихід на міжнародні ринки в сегменті заморожених

продуктів вимагає високоадаптивної системи взаємодії з іноземними контрагентами, заснованої на концепції інтегрованих маркетингових комунікацій (ІМК). Об'єктом цього дослідження є експортно-орієнтована діяльність мережі. Методологія дослідження використовує систематичний аналіз для декомпозиції елементів ІМК по сегментах B2B/B2C, порівняльний аналіз для оцінки європейського ринку заморожених продуктів та матричне моделювання для побудови комунікаційних карт для подолання транскордонних торговельних бар'єрів. Специфіка бізнес-моделі компанії вимагає суворої диференціації комунікаційних потоків. Формування експортного потенціалу безпосередньо корелює з безперервною передачею трьох фундаментальних блоків раціональних конкурентних переваг іноземним партнерам: передова технологія індивідуального швидкого заморожування (IQF), підтверджена міжнародними сертифікатами (FSSC 22000, ISO); Управління логістичними ризиками шляхом підтримки суворого холодового ланцюга та адаптивності виробництва (сортування та пакування на замовлення). Інтегровані маркетингові комунікації в мережі «Askania Frozen Foods» слугують стратегічною підсистемою управління зовнішньоекономічною діяльністю. На ринку заморожених продуктів B2B (бізнес для бізнесу) домінуючу роль відіграють персональні та експертні канали комунікації, засновані на передачі раціональних параметрів якості. Майбутня еволюція системи ІМК для вітчизняних експортерів повинна рухатися в напрямку глибшої цифровізації, прогностичної аналітики на основі штучного інтелекту для прогнозування поведінки покупців та структурної інтеграції принципів екологічного, соціального та управлінського (ESG) управління в загальну платформу корпоративного бренду.

Ключові слова: інтегровані маркетингові комунікації, експортний потенціал, Askania Frozen Foods, заморожені продукти, B2B-маркетинг; індивідуальне швидке заморожування, міжнародні виставки, експертні зв'язки з громадськістю, власна торгова марка, ланцюги поставок.

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