The Specific Features of Marketing Channel Design

Rasa Gudonavičienė, Sonata Alijošienė

Kauno technologijos universitetas
K. Donelaičio g. 73, LT-44029, Kaunas

Marketing channels in nowadays market might be the decision determining the failure for enterprise if it is made without evaluation of every aspect connected with the design of marketing channel. Thus enterprise in planning its marketing complex must pay considerable attention to the decisions of product distribution.

Distribution as one of four elements of marketing complex is inseparable part of marketing decisions, which involves all the decisions about distribution of products to the end user. The issues of distribution were analysed by a number of Lithuanian (Čaplikas, 1997; Balkevičius, 2000; Pajuodis, Pranulis, 2000; Gudonavičienė, Bučiūnienė, 2003; Gerikaitė, Sadauskaitė, 2005) and foreign marketing specialists (Berman, 1999; Kim, 1996; Delton, 1997; Frazier, 1999; Kotler, 2003; Rosenbloom, 1999; Stern, 2006; etc.), paying a big attention to the elaboration of the procedures of marketing channel design.

Every enterprise that acts at the conditions of market economy pays a big attention to organization and optimisation of the process of product distribution to the end user. The production performance, success of sales programme and position of the enterprise in the target market depends on product realization. Often the competitive advantage of the enterprise, which is obtained at the level of product distribution, determines the future success in the market.

This article reveals various models of marketing channel formation, analyses their advantages and proposes the new conceptual model for marketing channel design, created by the authors with reference to Stern, Coughlan, El-Ansary (2002) and Rosenbloom (1999). The proposed model is tested empirically by designing the marketing channel for product of the group of enterprises "Perfetti Van Melle" that distributes the chewing gum "Mentos Ice".

The suggested model recommends performing the design of marketing channel in the following manner:

1. *to describe the existing marketing channel, by assessing the influence of environmental and enterprise factors;*
2. *to identify the "ideal" marketing channel, by determining the needs of consumers and the goals of marketing channel;*
3. *to determine the gap between "ideal" and "restricted by factors" marketing channel, to perform the formation of alternative marketing channels, an evaluation of alternatives and to select the intermediaries of marketing channel.*

The model for marketing channel design proposed in this article suggests to begin with the analysis of influencing factors; adjust channel goals to general strategy and politics of enterprise; considering the gaps and the goals of marketing channel to foresee the alternative structures of marketing channel, making decisions about channel type and distribution strategy; to end the formation of marketing channel by selecting the most appropriate intermediaries.

Keywords: *marketing channels, distribution.*

Introduction

Relevance. Recently marketing analytics acknowledged that marketing channel selection and improvement is one of the most complicated and relevant problems for enterprise. Purchasers seek for maximum benefit in their decisions and because of that the distribution of goods and services becomes one of the most important part of business management, and the development of distribution theories and practice forces to think about the role of marketing channels in the system of marketing.

Decisions about the selection of marketing channels require high investments and efforts, but an effective distribution system always provides additional advantages in the competitive market.

Marketing channel is the chain of interrelated enterprises that take part in the process of the movement of goods from the producer to the consumer (Guibert, 2006). Marketing channels by timely providing the proper amount of goods and services in the proper place, of right quality and optimal price, not only meet the needs of consumers, but also stimulate the demand, by using different methods of promotion among all organizations in the marketing channel. That is why we need to qualify marketing channels as the managed chain, which increases the value of goods and services (Stern; Coughlan; El-Ansary: 2002).

The problem. While the commercial performance of different forms intensifies and the diversity of retail objects increases, marketing channels become more sophisticated and their management becomes more complicated. This situation determines the need for bigger attention to channel administration and the assessment of their effectiveness when analysing possible alternatives of distribution of the production to the end user. Because of that, industrial enterprises encounter the problem of formation of effective structure of marketing channel and that leads to the necessity of continuous searching for new possibilities how to modify the structure of existing channel.

Research object. The formation of the structure of marketing channel.

The aim of the paper. After theoretical analysis of marketing channel formation, to provide the conceptual approach to the formation and modification of marketing channel and to test it empirically with the group of enterprises "Perfetti Van Melle", specifically for its product – chewing gum "Mentos Ice".

Research methods. Methods of systemic and comparative analysis of theoretical literature on marketing channel formation and improvement were used; and methods of the assessment of marketing channel alternatives were employed in the empirical research.

Many authors maintain that the significance of marketing channels is increasing continuously. Rosenbloom (1999) suggest 5 reasons for this tendency:
1. continual competitive advantage, that makes it difficult to copy marketing channel easily and fast;
2. increasing power of wholesalers and retailers in marketing channel;
3. need to reduce the distribution costs;
4. new stress in the development of enterprises;
5. the growing role of technologies.

Neves, Zuurbier, Campomar (2001), Kotler (2000) and others note that marketing channel is one of the most stable elements in the marketing complex and has the character of sustained, lasting perspective. The changing of marketing channel, not as price or promotion, requires a lot of efforts, investments and time.

The selection of marketing channel is a very responsible and complicated process: decisions of distribution are directly connected with the general politics of enterprise performance, which is being formulated at the top-level management.

The comparative analysis of the models for marketing channel design

The formation of marketing channel is attributed to the decisions that encompass the creation of new (not existing before) marketing channels or the modification of existing marketing channels (Rosenbloom, 1999).

In this article we analyse the models of marketing channel formation proposed by Rosenbloom (1999); Berman (1999); Kotler (2002); Stern, Coughlan, El-Ansary (2002; 2006) and Neves, Zuurbier, Campomar (2001).

The analysis of the models of marketing channel formation is presented below.

The model for marketing channel design proposed by Kotler. Kotler (2000) suggests the method of five stages that is presented in Figure 1.

Kotler (2000) suggests the beginning the formation of marketing channel with the analysis of the needs of target consumers. At the second stage the target markets are identified and the main aims of marketing channel are determined, according to product characteristics and qualification of intermediaries. Next, different alternatives
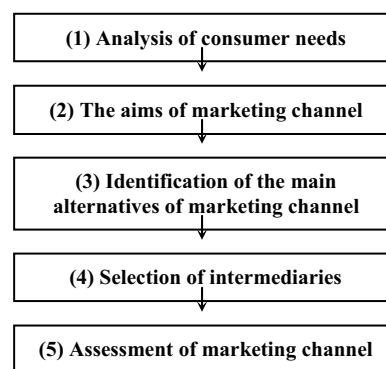

Figure 1. The model for marketing channel design (Kotler, 2002)

of marketing channel are analysed and every alternative is characterized according to the type of intermediary, number of intermediaries required, responsibility of marketing channel participants and conditions of performance. At the fourth stage the selection of intermediaries has to be made and at the fifth – assessment of marketing channel depending on the economic criteria, control level during the period of adaptation has to be performed.

The model for marketing channel design suggested by Rosenbloom. Rosenbloom (1999) suggests the model that encompasses 7 stages (Figure 2).
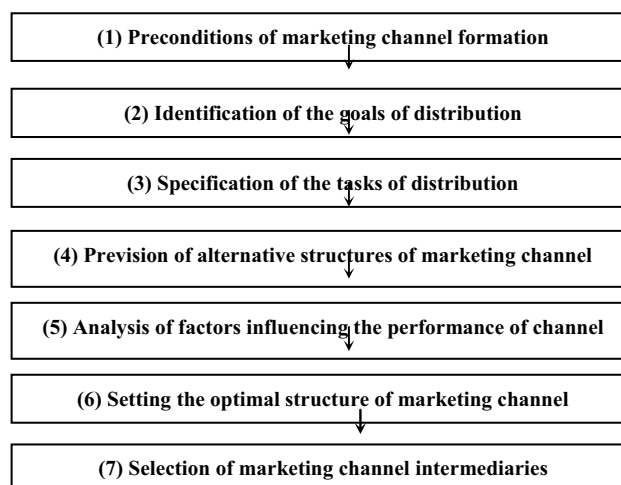

Figure 2. The model for marketing channel design (Rosenbloom, 1999)

Rosenbloom (1999) suggests to begin with the identification of preconditions for marketing channel creation or change. At the second stage the goals of marketing channel should be determined and coordinated. Next, the distribution tasks should be specified and the alternative structures of marketing channel should be foreseen (the length and width of marketing channel). At the fifth and sixth stages the factors influencing marketing channel are analysed and the optimal structure of marketing channel is defined using various existing methods for doing so. At the last stage the proper intermediaries should be selected.

Berman's model for marketing channel design. Berman's (1999) model of the selection of marketing channel structure also has 7 stages (Figure 3).

(1) The aims of marketing channel

↓

(2) Identification of marketing channel length, width and need for intermediaries

↓

(3) Identification of factors influencing market, product, enterprise and intermediaries

↓

(4) Specification of tasks for marketing channel participants

↓

(5) Search for intermediaries

↓

(6) Implementation of distribution system
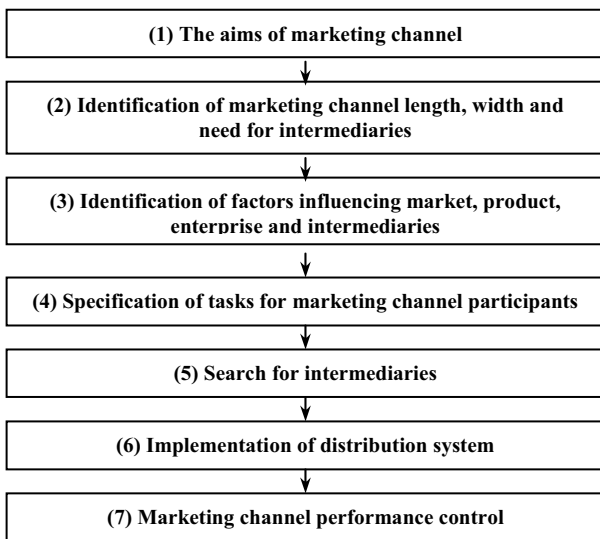
↓

(7) Marketing channel performance control

Figure 3. The model for marketing channel design (Berman, 1999)

Five stages of this model are the same as those of Rosenbloom (1999) model, but some of them are switched around and the model suggests to begin with the identification of goals, not with the preconditions of marketing channel formation.

The model for marketing channel design proposed by Stern, Coughlan, El-Ansary (2002). The oneness of this model is that it analyses the channel creation process in more details (the model has 14 stages) and it indicates the opportunity to perform some stages at the same time.

1. **3.**
2. **4.** **5.** **6.**
9. **11.** **12.** **13.**
7. **8.** **10.** **14.**
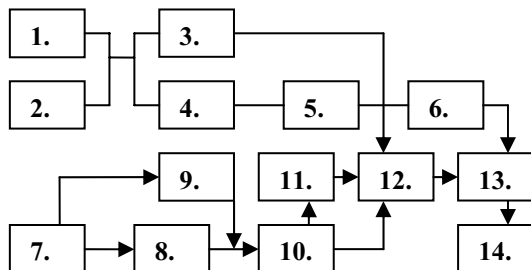
1.Environment analysis. 2.Analysis of existing marketing channels (MCh). 3.Proposals for MCh improvement. 4.Analysis of competitors' MCh. 5.Assessment of existing MCh alternatives. 6.Composing of short time plans. 7.Quantitative analysis of consumers' needs. 9.Analysis of analogues in industry. 10.Formation of ideal MCh. 11.Formation of MCh, restricted by factors. 12.Gap analysis. 13.Strategic decision-making. 14.Design of optimal MCh.

Figure 4. The model for marketing channel design
(Stern; Coughlan; El-Ansary, 2002)

In this model (Figure 4), stages 1 to 4 of marketing channel formation suppose the thorough acquaintance with present conditions and tasks. Stages 5-6 foresee the possible sharp changes in channel tactics and politics, and the stages 7 to 10 imply the formation of the new marketing channel strategy. After determining the needs of the end users, market should be segmented and accordingly

the type of intermediaries should be selected, by identifying the functions that they should be able and would be able to perform. This is the way of planning the "ideal marketing channel". The stage 11 encompasses a thorough analysis of enterprises' goals, potential, restrictions, and internal and external threats. Analysis of marketing channel alternatives is performed due to the selection of the best alternative. External as well as internal factors change the "ideal" marketing channel, by limiting possible alternatives. At the stage 12, the "ideal", the "restricted by factors" and the existing channels are compared in order to define if the existing marketing channel corresponds to the needs of customers and the enterprise. The stage 13 involves the gap analysis and analysis of possible costs, comparing the "ideal" and existing channel. After this analysis, the strategic decisions about channel design are being made. The last stage allows to implement the optimal marketing channel design.

The model for marketing channel design supposed by Neves, Zuurbier, and Campomar. This is one more detailed model for marketing channel design, which comprises 11 stages that are aggregated into four phases: understanding phase, objective phase, implementation phase, monitoring and revision phase. This model was created with reference to other models, especially to the model of Stern, Coughlan, El-Ansary (2002) incorporating additional channel design stages and introducing the new approach to the marketing channel itself (Figure 5).
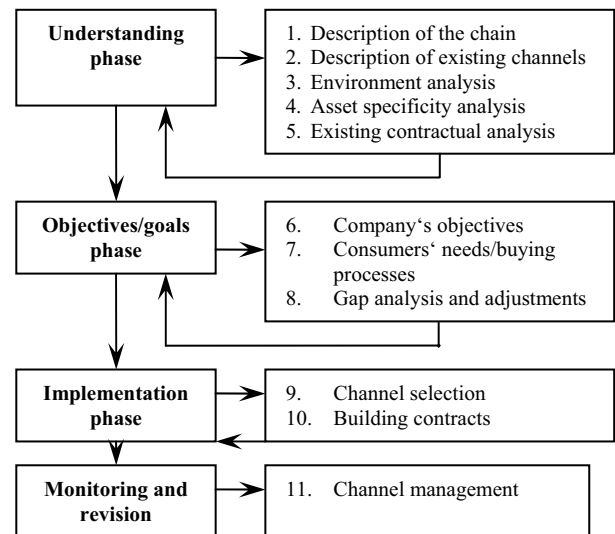
Understanding phase	1. Description of the chain 2. Description of existing channels 3. Environment analysis 4. Asset specificity analysis 5. Existing contractual analysis
Objectives/goals phase	6. Company's objectives 7. Consumers' needs/buying processes 8. Gap analysis and adjustments
Implementation phase	9. Channel selection 10. Building contracts
Monitoring and revision	11. Channel management

Figure 5. A model for the marketing channel design process
(Neves; Zuurbier; Campomar, 2001)

As we can see from Figure 5, the first five stages of this model are attributed to the phase of understanding, i.e., the thorough analysis has to be performed. The sixth to eighth stages reflect the objective/goals phase, i.e., the goals of marketing channel have to be identified according to the needs of consumers and the gap between the existing channel and the one, which is being designed. Stages 9-10 are attributed to the implementation phase: at this phase the selection and implementation of marketing channel is performed, making contracts with channel members. 11th stage involves the channel management. Neves, Zuurbier,

Campomar (2001) suggest to begin the marketing channel planning with the description of everyone in the marketing channel, where not only a producer, intermediaries and consumer, but also the suppliers participate. Hereby we need to describe the functions of all of them and to make one systematic approach to channel structure.

The model for marketing channel design suggested by Stern, Coughlan, El-Ansary (2006). The main feature of this model is the orientation to the needs of consumers. The model suggests to identify the needs of consumers and to group them into the separate segments at the very beginning of the process of channel design.
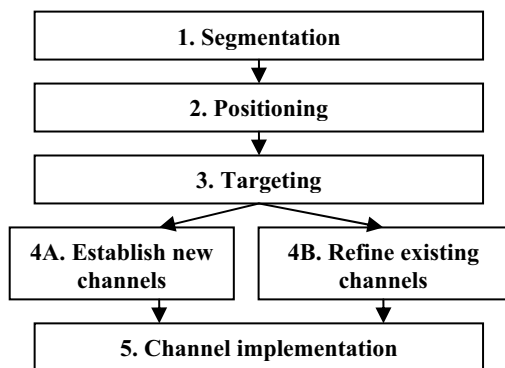

Figure 6. Channel Management Schematic
(Stern; Coughlan; El-Ansary: 2006)

Comparing the models for marketing channel design

There is no strict regulation about how to determine the structure of marketing channel. Different authors provide models with different number of process stages. Thus, for the enterprise to begin the process of marketing channel formation, we recommend to get acquainted with the peculiarities of existing models and to decide which of them would be more suitable for the specific needs of the enterprise. Comparable analysis of the existing models of marketing channel planning allows highlighting the following:

- Rosenbloom (1999) emphasizes the distribution in the general strategy of enterprise. The model shows the steps that combine distribution goals, strategies, strategic planning of the enterprise and marketing channels. This model is easy to implement.
- Berman's (1999) model, without big number of stages, still is very clear and detailed, defining the various factors that have to be analysed at each level.
- The model of Kotler (2002) suggests to begin the formation of marketing channel from the end user. This model in comparison with others is simpler. It defines the principles of marketing channel formation rather than claims to give the exhaustive projection within this process.
- The model proposed by Stern, Coughlan, El-Ansary (2002) comprises the biggest number of marketing channel design stages that are provided in detail. The model of distribution system is created according to the needs of the end user.

- Neves, Zuurbier, Campomar (2001) model was created with reference to existing theoretical models, and involves the most important stages of marketing channel formation, with some new ones added.
- The model suggested by Stern, Coughlan, El-Ansary (2006) emphasizes the needs of consumers. Identification of the consumers needs allows grouping them into separate segments. According to different needs of different targets, specific features of the product, goals and potential of the enterprise, the most acceptable marketing channel is being designed.

With reference to the models discussed above, the authors of this article propose the new conceptual model of marketing channel formation. The model is tested empirically by designing the marketing channel for the product of the group of enterprises "Perfetti Van Melle", the chewing gum "Mentos Ice".

Designing the marketing channel for the chewing gum "Mentos Ice"

The situation analysis of the group of enterprises "Perfetti Van Melle" allowed to state that the distribution system of the chewing gum "Mentos Ice" was not sufficiently effective and the thorough analysis of marketing channel structure was necessary as well as the formation of new alternative marketing channel.

In the process of "Mentos Ice" marketing channel formation we suggest to use the new conceptual model for marketing channel formation (Figure 7), which was created by the authors of this paper with reference to Stern, Coughlan, El-Ansary (2002) and Rosenbloom (1999).
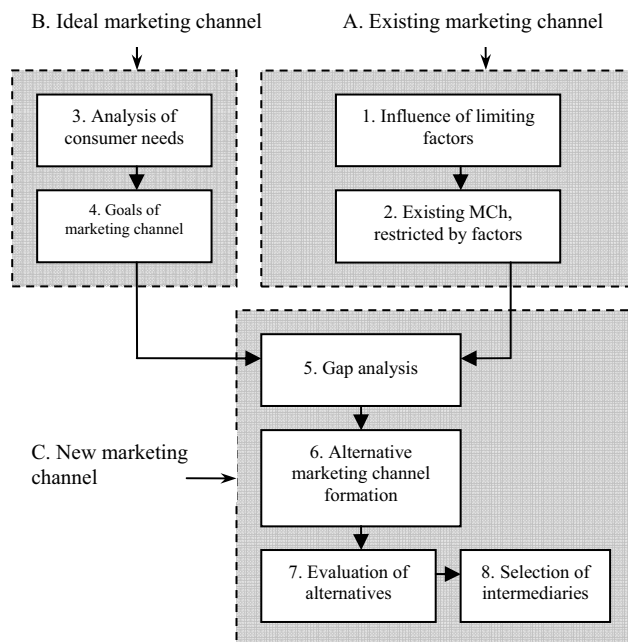

Figure 7. The model for marketing channel design
(proposed by the authors of this paper)

With this model we recommend to perform the formation of marketing channel in three stages:

I. To describe the existing marketing channel, by

assessing the influence of environment and enterprise factors (stages 1 and 2).

II. To identify the "ideal" marketing channel, by determining the needs of consumers and the goals of marketing channel (stages 3 and 4).

III. To determine the gap between "ideal" and "restricted by factors" marketing channels, to perform the formation of alternative marketing channels, to evaluate alternatives and select the intermediaries of marketing channel (stages 5 to 8).

Assessment of factors, influencing marketing channel

The formation of marketing channel begins with the assessment of limiting factors that influence marketing channel. The main groups of factors are distinguished – factors of market, product, enterprise, intermediaries, environment and competitors, which might influence the channel structure for chewing gum as well as the distribution strategy (Rosenbloom, 1999; Stern, Coughlan, El-Ansary, 2002, Svensson, 2002).

Market factors:

1. Geographical market location. It is important to evaluate the distance between producer and production sales market. After the assessment of the outlet in geographic aspect and the distance to it, we can maintain that producer, in the formation of marketing channel, should think about the wholesaler as the intermediary, because other kind of marketing channel might be too expensive.

2. Market size – the target market of the chewing gum can be defined as the people of the age 15 - 40 years, that accounts for approximately 1,25 million people – 36.4 percent of population of Lithuania. It is a big segment and we need to use the intense distribution strategy and large number of financial and human resources for reaching it.

3. Market capacity – according to the Department of Statistics of Lithuania, in 2006 there were 2.27 million people living in the cities of Lithuania, and that is 66 percent of all population; people living in the countryside counts up to 1.13 million, and that is 34 percent of all population. The number of people in five biggest cities (Vilnius, Kaunas, Klaipėda, Siauliai and Panevezys) was about 1.33 million, i.e., about 39 percent of all population. The population density is small, as even 61 percent of population live in countryside or small towns of Lithuania. Within such density of population, the producer should form a long marketing channel with the intermediaries in order to avoid big costs of distribution.

Product factors. Product factors are very important as the length and width of marketing channel depends on them. According to relationship between the length and width of marketing channel and the product characteristics, we can state that the specifics of chewing gum shows that such product requires long, indirect marketing channel, and the number of intermediaries at every level of the channel has to be as big as possible.

Factors of enterprise:

1. Size of enterprise – the group of enterprises "Perfetti Van Melle" is one of three biggest producers in the world in the market of sugar confectionery and chewing gum. So it has a big authority in marketing channel and internal capabilities for discount making, promotion and motivation of intermediaries. This provides additional possibilities in designing an appropriate marketing channel.

2. Financial potential – considering the size of the company and its position in the market, it is understandable that it disposes the sufficient financial resources that allow choosing the appropriate marketing channel. Financial potential allows expecting lower dependence on intermediaries.

3. Organizational structure of enterprise – the representative of "Perfetti Van Melle" does not administer the commercial performance in Lithuania, and because of that it has to transfer its main functions to wholesale intermediaries.

4. Strategy, goals and politics of enterprise – the main goal of enterprise is to cover as bigger part of the market as possible by using the strategy of intensive distribution. Considering this, the enterprise is going to develop the assortment of chewing gum and to pursue various actions of sales promotion.

5. Management experience and priorities of managers – group of enterprises "Perfetti Van Melle" performs in Lithuanian market since 1995 and has a big experience in it. During all the period of performance the group has been using the services of one wholesaler, which carries part of functions in the marketing channel. So, the specifics in product distribution is well known.

Factors of intermediaries. The producer "Perfetti Van Melle" needs such wholesale intermediaries for its marketing channel that would perform the following functions: to distribute the production, affiliate and maintain the contacts with clients; store the product reserves; take orders from clients; collect and analyze the data about market; provide the clients with promotion materials from the producer, etc. Before the introduction of chewing gum to the market, the existing intermediary JSC "Gelsva" performed well all the functions listed above, but it can not perform them now, because it distributes the chewing gum of other producer and has to carry out its responsibilities. It is apparent that the new marketing channel has to be designed with the new intermediary or an existing channel should be refined substantially.

Environmental factors:

1. Economic environment – analysis of macro economic indicators shows that economic environment is favourable for the development of the market of chewing gum.

2. Competitive environment – analysis of competitive environment shows that there are two main competitors in the market of chewing gum: "Wrigley" (54.2 percent of market share) and "Cadbury-Dirol" (26.9 percent of market share). Producers "Wrigley" and "Cadbury-Dirol" use very similar marketing strategies and marketing channels. "Cadbury-Dirol" uses indirect distribution of product, and the "Wrigley" uses multi-channel marketing system, by distributing its goods for retailers directly and through the wholesaler. Besides, the producer "Cadbury-Dirol" uses the same marketing channel as the group of enterprises "Perfetti Van Melle", i.e., the same wholesaler is distributing production of both companies. Producer

"Wrigley" by providing the goods directly for retail intermediaries, obtains some advantages against competitors by avoiding the additional link in the marketing channel and has bigger profit.

Factors of behaviour (Sahadev, Jayachandran, 2004)**.** Analysis of behaviour of the producer "Perfetti Van Melle" and wholesaler JSC "Gelsva" shows that there is a conflict within the marketing channel, which does not allow the wholesaler to perform the distribution functions important to the producer (because of its obligation to other producer). This conflict makes the premises for the designing of new marketing channel.

After the analysis of the factors that restrict the marketing channel, we can continue with the description of marketing channel.

Marketing channel for chewing gum "Mentos Ice", restricted by factors

Group of enterprises "Perfetti Van Melle" for distribution of chewing gum uses indirect second level channel (producer – wholesaler – retailer – consumer). Producer provides goods for one wholesaler (accredited representative of producer), which distributes the goods for retailers. Considering the chewing gum is the commodity of impulsive buying, the company "Perfetti Van Melle" seeks to cover as bigger market share of chewing gum as possible and has to use the *strategy of intensive distribution*, i.e., to use as many intermediaries as possible. This strategy of product distribution fits to characteristics of product and relationship between type of store and behaviour of purchaser. The conflict in the marketing channel between "Perffetti Van Melle" and the wholesaler restricts the potentiality. JSC "Gelsva" is not able to perform many of the functions in the marketing channel, and the producer is not able to perform easily the sales with its own employees. Using the logistics services of the wholesaler and the employees of the representative, the producer employs the *selective strategy of distribution*, by choosing several chains of retailers and the main independent retailers (Rimi, Aibė, AVS prekyba, Lietuvos Spauda, Kauno Spauda, Express Market) in the biggest cities of Lithuania.

The existing distribution system is not effective and does not allow reaching the goals of marketing channel. The clear situation of existing marketing channel for chewing gum "Mentos Ice", with the view of the channel structure of the main competitors and knowing the role of intermediaries in the marketing channel and the influence of various factors, we can proceed with the next stage of marketing channel design – identification of an "ideal" channel, which encompasses the analysis of consumers' needs and identification of the channel goals and tasks.

Analysis of consumers' needs

The research of consumers' needs was performed with reference to analysis of sources of secondary information.

Distinguishing four main services for consumer (time of delivering, convenience of location, purchase size and diversity of goods), allows to determine the needs of consumers and to foresee the most effective ways of reaching the target market.

Time of delivering – chewing gum is the commodity of impulsive buying. The longer time of delivering of chewing gum, the bigger possibility that the reserves in the sale places would be insufficient and the consumer would buy analogue of competitors. The repetitive situation would negatively impact the level of consumer attachment to the brand.

Convenience of location – the specifics of chewing gum determines that consumer can and want to buy the commodity of impulsive buying in the place, where he does his shopping mostly. According to the place of acquiring the chewing gum, the retail market can be segmented geographically (countryside, city) and according to the types of retailers (self-service, kiosk, market-place, petrol station, drugstore and the institutions of public nutrition). See data in Figures 8 and 9.
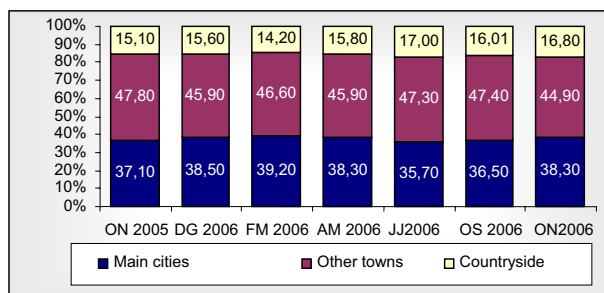

Figure 8. Segmentation of chewing gum market according to locality (data of AC Nielsen)

Figure 8 shows that in October-November 2006 the sales of chewing gum in the countryside accounted for 16.8 percent, at towns – 44.9 percent and in the biggest cities for about 38.6 percent of all sales. Selection of retailers requires taking into consideration the fact, that their distribution should cover all the territory.
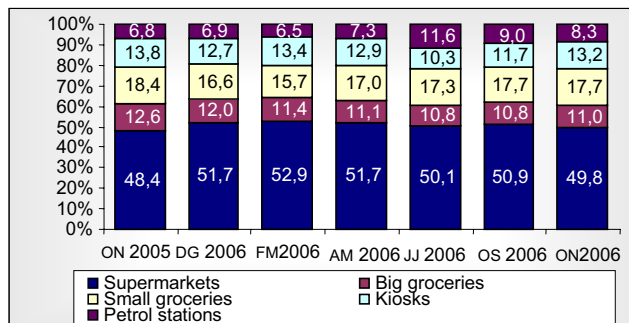

Figure 9. Segmentation of chewing gum market according to the types of retailers (data of AC Nielsen)

Figure 9 shows that in October-November 2006 the biggest sales of chewing gum were at the self-service stores – 49.9 percent, 17.7 percent at small groceries, 13.2 percent at kiosks, 11 percent at big groceries and 8.3 percent at petrol stations.

Purchase size – a consumer buys the chewing gum often, but in small amount.

Diversity of goods – the difference in taste preferences requires the diversity of chewing gum assortment. The bigger is the supply for various tastes and tares, the more opportunities for making consumer to buy the "Mentos Ice" chewing gum.

The goals and tasks of marketing channel

The fourth stage of marketing channel formation continues the design of an "ideal" marketing channel and requires to identify the main goals of marketing channel.

The goals of marketing channel of the group of enterprises "Perfetti Van Melle" are being formulated according to marketing strategy and the elements of marketing complex. The main advantages of the company that allow to create an effective marketing channel for chewing gum are: small costs of production and small cost price; big productive capacity; assured timeliness of order realization; high quality of production; large assortment, adjusted to large target market; well known brand name; assurance of promotion; capabilities for motivation of intermediaries.

The main goals of "Perfetti Van Melle" marketing channel:

- Effective execution of physical distribution of goods.
- Appropriate distribution of goods that would increase the chewing gum market share to 10 percent and would help to successfully maintain the competitive position.
- More effective attainment of the target market.

The formation of alternative structure of marketing channel

After the description of existing marketing channel for chewing gum and identification of an "ideal" marketing channel, we can proceed with the last stage of marketing channel formation – the formation of the new marketing channel. The stage 5 (see Figure 7) refers to the gap analysis between existing and new marketing channels.

The following gaps have been identified:

1. Wrong politics of chewing gum "Mentos Ice" distribution do not allow ensuring the optimal distribution in various segments of the retail.
2. Existing distribution system allows to reach only small number of potential end users.
3. Existing wholesale intermediary cannot perform some functions that producer requires, and that does not allow to reach the desired goals of marketing channel.

After the analysis of the gaps between existing and desired marketing channel, we can begin the process of alternative marketing channel formation, the stage 6 (see Figure 7). Formation of potential alternatives of marketing channel should begin from the identification of retail intermediaries:

1. Small wholesalers (Sanitex Cash&Carry, Maxima Bazė, etc.).
2. Large retailers (Maxima, Norfa, IKI, Rimi, etc.).
3. Small retailers.
4. Petrol stations and their chains.
5. Kiosks or their chains (Lietuvos spauda, etc.).

The reaching of these retailers requires from the producer to select the proper structure of wholesale. It is purposeful to create such a marketing channel that would ensure the distribution of goods to every retail intermediary.

The alternative of existing intermediary is eliminated, because the existing wholesaler JSC "Gelsva" cannot perform the functions of distribution properly due to its commitments to another producer.

Two possible alternatives of marketing channel are listed below:

1. To distribute goods using the services of new wholesale intermediary, which would cooperate with existing and new potential retailers (*the alternative of new intermediaries*).
2. To distribute goods using the multi-channel marketing system, i.e., to distribute the goods directly to the large retail chains, and for distribution to other retailers use the services of new wholesale intermediary (*the alternative of multi-channel marketing system*).

Evaluation of alternative marketing channel

The assessment of alternative marketing channel was done according to the method for identification of an optimal marketing channel – the method of factors significance (Rosenbloom, 1999; Stern, Coughlan, El-Ansary, 2002; Kelly, 2004).

The alternative with the biggest coefficient of efficiency was selected. The evaluation of alternatives is presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Adjustment of the method of factors significance to alternatives of marketing channel

Fac-tors	Factor signify-cance	Factor evaluation										Final evalu-ationn of factors (2x3)
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
1	2	3										4
1.	0,22											1,54 / 1,98
2.	0,24											1,20 / 2,16
3.	0,20											1,40 / 1,00
4.	0,16											0,96 / 0,64
5.	0,08											0,56 / 0,72
6.	0,10											0,60 / 0,50
Iš viso:	1,0											6,26 / 7,00

* ▬ * - Alternative of new intermediaries;   + _ _ + - Alternative of multi-channel marketing system

The final evaluation of factors shows that in formation of new marketing channel, the second alternative is better (alternative of multi-channel marketing system), because the final evaluation of it is 7.00 points. The alternative of new intermediaries (6.26 points) has to be rejected because of the low level of control of distribution in the marketing channel.

Selection of intermediaries

The search for potential intermediaries in marketing channel was performed according to information cumulated by "Perfetti Van Melle" and its knowledge and experience in the market of chewing gum. The potential wholesale intermediaries might be JSC "Eugesta" (that sales the hygiene products of Colgate-Palmolive, yoghurts of Danone, confections of Ferrero, bouillons, soups and sauces of Unilever), JSC "Daisena" (sales confections of Leaf, Mouxion, Jake, Taffel potato chips) and JSC "Vilandra" (sales Bambolina diapers, Shick shaving kits, Johnson & Johnson cosmetics, confections of Lindt & Sprungly and Haribo). Listed wholesalers represent separate producers and different brand names. The product assortment is very large: from the hygiene products to food. All intermediaries distribute the brands known not only in Lithuania, but also in all around the world. Table 2 represents the evaluation of intermediaries, according to the selected criteria.

Table 2

Evaluation of the wholesale intermediary (JSC "Eugesta") according to selected criteria

Criterion	Signifi-cance of criterion	JSC „Eugesta"	
		Evaluation	Points
1. Financial condition	5	5	25
2. Product groups	4	5	20
3. Sales potential	5	4	20
4. Market coverage	5	4	20
5. Competence of managers	4	4	16
6. Reputation	4	4	16
7. Position and attitude	3	4	12
8. Size of enterprise	3	5	15
Final score			144

The same method was used to evaluate other two intermediaries (JSC "Daisena" – 138 points and JSC "Vilandra" – 140 points). Evaluation of intermediaries shows that JSC "Eugesta" (the final score – 144) meets the requirements best. Considering the big experience of this wholesaler in the chewing gum market (with the product of "Wrigley") we may conclude that it is the most proper intermediary for distribution "Mentos Ice" and the process of designing the new marketing channel for chewing gum is finished.

Conclusions

Product distribution is one of the most stable elements of marketing complex that has the character of lasting perspective. Decisions about the selection of marketing channel require large investments and efforts, but the effective distribution system always brings some additional advantages for company in the competition.

In this article we analysed the models for marketing channel formation of the following authors: Berman (1999); Rosenbloom (1999); Kotler (2000); Stern, Coughlan, El-Ansary (2002) and Neves, Zuurbier,

Campomar (2001), etc. Different models for marketing channel designing provide different number and sequence of process stages, but most of them imply the general principles of marketing channel formation: analysis of consumers' needs; identification of marketing channel goals and tasks; analysis of influencing factors; identification of distribution strategy; design of alternative marketing channel and its evaluation; selection of intermediaries.

Different authors perceive the process and the structure of marketing channel design in different ways. Only few of them emphasize the importance of the analysis of consumers' needs. Considering that the main aim for modifying the channel structure is the striving for better meeting consumers' needs and to increase the turnover of the company, we can suggest that the analysis of consumer needs is one of the most important decisions in marketing channel formation process.

With reference to the views of different authors, analysed in this article, on the process of marketing channel formation, the authors of this paper suggested the new conceptual model for marketing channel formation, which encompasses the following stages: analysis of consumer needs, evaluation of factors of influence, identification of distribution goals and tasks, evaluation of alternatives and selection of intermediaries. This conceptual model has been tested empirically by practical adjustment to the formation of marketing channel for chewing gum "Mentos Ice" of the group of enterprises "Perfetti Van Melle".

References

1. Balkevičius, V. Komercijos vadyba. Veiksmų ir organizacinės prielaidos bei sąsajos. Vilnius, 2000.

2. Berman, B. Marketing channels: /John Wiley & Sons Inc., New York, 1999, ISBN-13: 978-0471362616.

3. Bonet, D. A new approach for understanding hindrances to collaborative practices in the logistics channel / D.Bonet, G.Pache // International Journal of Retail & distribution Management, 2005, Vol. 33, No 8, p. 583-596.

4. Čaplikas, V. Prekybos logistika. Vilnius: VU leidykla, 1997.

5. Delton, L.E., Strutton, D. Marketing Channels: A Relationship management Approach. New York: Prentice Hall, 1997.

6. Frazier, G.L. Organizing and managing channels of distribution // Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, Vol. 27, No 2, Spring 1999, p. 226-241.

7. Geyskens, I. A meta-analysis of satisfaction in marketing channel relationships / I.Geyskens, J-B.E.M.Steenkamp, N.Kumar // Journal of Marketing Research, Vol. 36, May 1999, p. 223-38.

8. Gerikaitė, J. Gamybinių įmonių produkcijos paskirstymo kanalų pasirinkimas. Tinkamiausi marketingo sprendimai / J.Gerikaitė, S.Sadauskaitė // Socialiniai mokslai-2005. Mokslinė konf., 2005.

9. Gudonavičienė, R. Mažmeninė prekyba kaip paskirstymo kanalų elementas. Kaunas: Verslas, vadyba ir studijos, 1996.

10. Gudonavičienė, R. Prekių paskirstymas / R.Gudonavičienė, I.Bučiūnienė // Kaunas: Technologija, 2003.

11. Guibert, N. Network governance in marketing channels // British Food Journal, 2006, Vol. 108, No 4, p. 256-272.

12. Kelly, S.J. Measuring attitudinal commitment in business-to-business channels // Journal of Marketing Intelligence & Planning, 2004, Vol. 22, No 6, p. 636-651.

13. Kim, K. A typology of distribution channel systems: a contextual approach / K.Kim, G.L. Frazier // Journal of International Marketing Review, 1996, Vol. 13, No 1. p. 19-32.

14. Koster, R. Distribution structures for food home shopping //

International Journal of Physical Distribution & Logistic Management, 2002, Vol. 32, No 5, p. 326-380.

15. Kotler, Ph. Rinkodaros principai / Ph.Kotler, G.Armstrong, J.Saunders, V.Wong. Kaunas, 2003.

16. Lietuvos statistikos departamentas. [žiūrėta 2007-09-02]. Prieiga per internetą: <http://www.stat.gov.lt/lt/pages/view/?id=1115>.

17. Narus, J.A. Rethinking distribution: adaptive channels / J.A. Narus, J.C. Anderson // Harvard Business Review, Vol. 74, p. 112-119.

18. Neves, M.F. A Model for the Distribution Channels Planning Process / M.F.Neves, P.Zuurbier, M.C. Campomar // Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing, Vol. 16, No 6 and 7, 2001, p. 518-539.

19. Rosenbloom B. Marketing Channels: A Management View. 4th ed. Orlando, FL: The Dryden Press, 1999.

20. Sahadev, S. Managing the distribution channels for high-technology products/ S. Sahadev, S. Jayachandran// European Journal of Marketing, 2004, Vol. 38, No. ½, p. 121-149.

21. Svensson, G. Vulnerability scenarios in marketing channels // Supply Chain Management: an International Journal, 2002, Vol. 7, No 5, p. 322-333.

22. Svensson, G. *The spherical marketing concept: A revitalization of the marketing concept* // European Journal of Marketing, 2005, No 39.

23. Дойль П. Маркетинг-менеджмент и стратегии, 3-е международное издание. Москва, 2003.

24. Котлер Ф. *Основы маркетинга*. Москва, 2002.

25. Штерн Л.В. Эль-Ансари А.И. Кофлан Э.Т. *Маркетинговые каналы*. Москва, 2002.

Rasa Gudonavičienė, Sonata Alijošienė

Marketingo kanalų formavimo ypatumai

Santrauka

Pataruoju metu marketingo analitikai pripažįsta, kad marketingo kanalų parinkimas ir tobulinimas yra viena sudėtingiausių ir aktualiausių problemų, su kuria tenka susidurti įmonei. Pirkėjai siekia didžiausios naudos iš savo sprendimų, todėl prekių arba paslaugų paskirstymas darosi vienu svarbiausių verslo valdymo sričių, o prekių paskirstymo teorijos ir praktikos plėtra verčia susimąstyti apie marketingo kanalų vaidmenį marketingo sistemoje.

Marketingo kanalai, intensyvėjant įvairių formų komercinei veiklai ir didėjant mažmeninės prekybos objektų įvairovei, tampa vis sudėtingesni, o jų valdymas – komplikuotesnis. Tai sąlygoja poreikį vis daugiau dėmesio skirti kanalų administravimui ir jų efektyvumo vertinimui, tiriant galimas produkcijos paskirstymo galutiniam vartotojui alternatyvas. Todėl vis dažniau gamybinės įmonės susiduria su efektyvios marketingo kanalų struktūros formavimo problema, o tai lemia būtinybę nuolat ieškoti galimybių modifikuoti naudojamą kanalų struktūrą.

Darbo objektas – marketingo kanalo struktūros formavimas.

Darbo tikslas. Atlikus teorinę marketingo kanalų formavimo studiją, pasiūlyti marketingo kanalų formavimo modelį ir patikrinti jį praktiškai, atliekant įmonių grupės „Perfetti Van Melle“ kramtomosios gumos „Mentos Ice“ marketingo kanalo formavimą.

Tyrimo metodika. Atliekant teorines marketingo kanalų formavimo ir tobulinimo studijas, buvo naudoti lyginamosios analizės bei sisteminimo metodai, taip pat taikyti marketingo kanalo alternatyvų vertinimo metodai.

Daugelis autorių tvirtina, kad marketingo kanalų reikšmė pastaraisiais metais nuolat didėja. Rosenbloom (1999) įvardija penkias šios tendencijos priežastis:

1. Nuolatinis konkurencinis pranašumas, nes sunku greitai ir lengvai kopijuoti marketingo kanalą;
2. Didėjanti didmenininkų ir mažmenininkų galia marketingo kanaluose;
3. Poreikis mažinti paskirstymo kaštus;
4. Naujas akcentas įmonių vystymosi procese;
5. Didėjantis technologijų vaidmuo.

Neves, Zuurbier, Campomar (2001), Kotler (2002) ir kiti autoriai pažymi, kad marketingo kanalai yra vieni iš stabiliausių elementų marketingo komplekse ir turi ilgalaikės perspektyvos pobūdį. Marketingo

kanalo keitimas, kitaip nei kainodara ar rėmimas, reikalauja didelių pastangų, investicijų bei laiko.

Marketingo kanalo formavimas priskiriamas prie tų sprendimų, kurie įtraukia naujų, prieš tai neegzistavusių, marketingo kanalų kūrimą arba esančių marketingo kanalų modifikavimą (Rosenbloom, 1999).

Šiame straipsnyje plačiau aptariami Rosenbloom (1999); Berman (1999); Kotler (2002); Stern, Coughlan, El-Ansary (2002 ir 2006) ir Neves, Zuurbier, Campomar (2001) marketingo kanalų formavimo modeliai.

Nėra griežtai reglamentuotų taisyklių, kaip tiksliai nustatyti marketingo kanalo struktūrą. Skirtingi autoriai savo modeliuose rekomenduoja skirtingą etapų skaičių. Todėl prieš pradedant įmonėms marketingo kanalo struktūros formavimą, reikėtų nuodugniai susipažinti su esamų modelių ypatumais ir nuspręsti, kuris jų geriausiai galėtų atitikti konkrečios įmonės poreikius.

Rosenbloom (1999) modelis akcentuoja prekių paskirstymą bendroje įmonės strategijoje. Modelis nuosekliai rodo žingsnius, kurie sujungtų paskirstymo tikslus, strategijas, įmonės strateginį planavimą ir marketingo kanalus. Modelis paprasti taikomas.

Berman (1999) modelis, neturėdamas daug kanalo struktūros formavimo etapų, yra pakankamai išsamiai ir aiškiai detalizuotas, nurodo įvairius veiksnius, kurie turėtų būti analizuojami kiekviename etape.

Kotler (2002) modelis taip pat marketingo kanalo struktūros formavimą pradeda nuo galutinio vartotojo, bet šis modelis žymiai paprastesnis, palyginti su kitais. Ir tai neatsitiktinai, nes šis modelis labiau nusako marketingo kanalo struktūros formavimo principus nei pretenduoja duoti išsamų ir nuoseklų kelią šiame procese.

Stern, Coughlan, El-Ansary (2002) modelį sudaro daugiausia nuosekliai išdėstytų marketingo kanalo struktūros formavimo etapų, kurių kiekvienas smulkiai detalizuojamas. Šio modelio centre – galutinis vartotojas, kuris yra pagrindinis veiksnys, lemiantys marketingo kanalo struktūros formavimą. Paskirstymo sistemos modelis kuriamas atsižvelgiant į galutinio vartotojo poreikius.

Neves, Zuurbier, Campomar (2001) modelis yra kurtas ankstesnių modelių bazėje, todėl įtraukia svarbiausius marketingo kanalo struktūros formavimo etapus, papildydamas keliais naujais. Tai išteklių analizės etapas, kuriame, be kitų kaštų, analizuojami sandorių kaštai ir visų marketingo kanalų aprašymo etapas, kuriame nagrinėjami ne tik paskirstymo, bet ir tiekimo kanalai.

Stern, Coughlan, El-Ansary (2006) siūlomas marketingo kanalo formavimo modelis pasižymi išskirtiniu dėmesiu vartotojų poreikiams, nes išsiaiškinus, ko nori vartotojai, jie skirstomi į atskirus segmentus. Atsižvelgus į skirtingų segmentų poreikius, prekės ypatumus, įmonės tikslus bei galimybes, formuojamas priimtinausias marketingo kanalas.

Šiame straipsnyje, remiantis aptartaisiais modeliais, pateikiamas autorių siūlomas marketingo kanalų formavimo modelis. Jo veikimas patikrinamas formuojant marketingo kanalą įmonių grupės „Perfetti Van Melle“ platinamai kramtomajai gumai „Mentos Ice“.

Atlikus įmonių grupės „Perfetti Van Melle“ situacijos analizę, buvo nustatyta, kad kramtomosios gumos „Mentos Ice“ paskirstymo sistema yra neefektyvi, todėl būtina atlikti išsamesnę marketingo kanalo struktūros analizę ir suformuoti alternatyvius marketingo kanalus.

Formuojant kramtomosios gumos „Mentos Ice“ marketingo kanalą, siūloma naudoti naują marketingo kanalo formavimo modelį, sudarytą Stern, Coughlan, El-Ansary (2002) ir Rosenbloom (1999) marketingo kanalų formavimo modelių pagrindu.

Naujas modelis rekomenduoja marketingo kanalo formavimą vykdyti trimis etapais:
1. Aprašyti esamą marketingo kanalą, įvertinus aplinkos ir įmonės veiksnių įtaką (1, 2 žingsniai);
2. Identifikuoti „idealų“ marketingo kanalą, nustatant vartotojų poreikius ir marketingo kanalo tikslus (3, 4 žingsniai);
3. Išsiaiškinus „idealaus“ ir veiksnių apriboto marketingo kanalų neatitikimus, vykdyti alternatyvių marketingo kanalų formavimą, atlikti jų įvertinimą ir atrinkti marketingo kanalų tarpininkus (5 – 8 žingsniai).

Marketingo kanalo formavimas pradedamas nuo ribojančių veiksnių įtakos marketingo kanalui įvertinimo. Išskiriamos pagrindinės veiksnių grupės – rinkos, prekės, įmonės, tarpininkų, aplinkos ir konkurentų veiksniai, kurie gali veikti kramtomosios gumos kanalo struktūrą.

Įmonių grupė „Perfetti Van Melle“ kramtomajai gumai paskirstyti naudoja netiesioginį antro lygio marketingo kanalą (gamintojas – didmenininkas – mažmenininkas – vartotojas). Gamintojas prekes tiekia vienam didmeniniam tarpininkui (įgaliotam gamintojo atstovui), kuris prekes paskirsto mažmeniniams tarpininkams. Atsižvelgiant į tai, kad kramtomoji guma yra impulsyvaus pirkimo prekė, įmonių grupė „Perfetti

Van Melle" siekia užimti kuo didesnę rinkos dalį kramtomosios gumos segmente, ji turėtų pasirinkti *intensyvaus paskirstymo strategiją*, kai prekės pirkėjui būtų pateikiamos per kuo gausesnį tarpininkų būrį. Ši prekių paskirstymo strategija atitiktų prekės charakteristiką, parduotuvės tipo ir pirkėjo elgsenos priklausomybę. Bet tokias galimybes apriboja konfliktas marketingo kanale tarp gamintojo „Perffetti Van Melle" ir didmeninio tarpininko: UAB „Gelsva" negali vykdyti daugelio funkcijų marketingo kanale, o gamintojui, pasitelkus vien tik savo atstovybės darbuotojus, vykdyti pardavimų funkciją yra sudėtinga. Naudojama paskirstymo sistema yra labai neefektyvi ir neleidžia siekti užsibrėžtų marketingo kanalo tikslų. Turint aiškų esamo kramtomosios gumos „Mentos Ice" kanalo vaizdą, matant pagrindinių konkurentų marketingo kanalo struktūrą, žinant tarpininkų vaidmenį ir veiksnių įtaką marketingo kanalui, pereinama prie kito marketingo kanalo formavimo etapo – „idealaus" kanalo nustatymo, apimančio vartotojų poreikių analizę ir kanalo tikslus bei uždavinius.

Vartotojų poreikių analizė rodo, kad vartotojui reikalinga greita kramtomosios gumos pristatymo sistema; patogi vieta, t.y. tokia prekybos vieta, kurioje esamas ar potencialus vartotojas linkęs įsigyti tokio tipo produktus; platus kramtomosios gumos asortimentas, galimybė įsigyti kramtomąją gumą įvairiose vietovėse ir skirtingo tipo mažmeninės prekybos objektuose.Įmonių grupės „Perfetti Van Melle" marketingo kanalo tikslai formuluojami, atsižvelgiant į marketingo strategiją ir marketingo komplekso elementus.

Straipsnyje pateikiamos dvi galimos „Mentos Ice" marketingo kanalų alternatyvos:

1. Paskirstyti prekes naudojantis paslaugomis naujo didmeninio tarpininko, kuris bendradarbiautų su esamais ir potencialiais mažmenininkais (*naujų tarpininkų alternatyva*).

2. Paskirstyti prekes per daugiakanalę marketingo sistemą, t.y. didiesiems mažmeninės prekybos tinklams prekes paskirstyti tiesiogiai, o kitiems mažmenininkams prekes paskirstyti naudojantis naujo didmeninio tarpininko paslaugomis (*daugiakanalės marketingo sistemos alternatyva*).

Alternatyvių marketingo kanalų įvertinimas atliekamas vienu iš optimalaus marketingo kanalo nustatymo metodų – veiksnių reikšmingumo metodu (Rosenbloom, 1999; Stern, Coughlan, El-Ansary, 2002; Kelly, 2004).

Potencialių tarpininkų paieška marketingo kanale vykdoma, remiantis įmonių grupės „Perfetti Van Melle" sukaupta informacija ir patirtimi apie kramtomosios gumos rinką ir jos dalyvius.

Šiuo etapu ir baigiamas naujo marketingo kanalo formavimas kramtomajai gumai „Mentos Ice".

Apibendrinant įvairių autorių požiūrį į marketingo kanalų formavimo procesą, šiame straipsnyje pasiūlytas konceptualus marketingo kanalų formavimo modelis, apimantis vartotojų poreikių analizės, įtaką darančių veiksnių įvertinimo, paskirstymo tikslų bei uždavinių iškėlimo, alternatyvų įvertinimo ir tarpininkų parinkimo etapus. Sudarytas modelis buvo patikrintas empirinio tyrimo būdu praktiškai jį pritaikant įmonių grupės „Perfetti Van Melle" kramtomosios gumos „Mentos Ice" marketingo kanalo formavimui.