

## **Abstract**

**Title:** The effect of the use of sports celebrities as the reference group on the buying preferences of the young generation in the Prague region

**Objectives:** The main objective of the thesis is to determine through marketing research whether and what effect has the use of sports celebrities in marketing communication of companies as a reference group on the buying preferences of the young generation, so-called Generation Y, in the Prague region.

**Methods:** The thesis used a questionnaire survey and subsequent focus groups. For the creation of the questionnaire is used as a basis the US version of the original questionnaire of the authors BUSH, MARTIN, BUSH (2004). Firstly the questionnaire undergoes a process of transcultural transfer, in which is utilized a modified direct translation and confirmatory factor analysis. This survey includes a sample of 416 respondents who are students of Prague secondary schools and universities. Focus groups are conducted with four groups which counts a total of 41 respondents.

**Results:** The research results show that the use of sports celebrities in marketing communication has no demonstrable effect on the word-of-mouth communication and the switching and complaining behaviour for Generation Y. This communication tool can have an indirect positive effect on brand loyalty by raising the awareness of a brand/product, attractiveness of the communication message and thus to increase the possibility of a tendency to try the product and the first purchase, despite the higher price than the competition.

**Keywords:** Sports celebrity, Generation Y, buying preferences, marketing communication, brand