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Assessing the Prospects for the E-Commerce Development in Poland on the Basis of a Behavior Analysis of Young Adults Segment

Określenie perspektyw rozwoju handlu elektronicznego w Polsce na podstawie analizy zachowań segmentu „młodzi dorośli"

Keywords: e-commerce, communication on the Internet, young adults behaviors.

Słowa kluczowe: handel internetowy, komunikacja w Internecie, zachowania młodych dorosłych.

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Introduction

The article analyzes the behavior of the young adults (18–29 years) on the Internet. It is an important group of buyers because it constitutes almost 18% of Polish society. In addition, people from this segment are among the most active groups of Internet users and, therefore, constitute an important target group for online traders. The purpose of this article is to analyze the perceptions of young customers with innovation in the field of distribution of products and communication via the Internet in order to assess prospects for the development of e-commerce. To this end, the results of the tests carried out used secondary in recent years, as well as illustrates the original test results. The author's own study was carried out between 15th November and 15th December 2012. It has a nationwide coverage and was carried out on a group of 770 young adults (18–29 years). The research implementation used CAWI (Computer Assisted Web Interviewing). CAWI method involves testing via

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the Internet. A questionnaire was posted on the portal Ankietka.pl and information about it was propagated on the Internet (social networking) and Polish universities. Respondents were asked to fill in a questionnaire online. The sample of young adults was determined based on data obtained from Central Statistical Office in Poland about the current size and characteristics of the population in Poland. The sampling quota was used in the research. The minimum number was calculated from the formula for the volume of the sample with finite population of the assumed 95% confidence level and error of 4%, which amounted to 600 people. In fact, 770 young adults were researched, among them 91% were actual e-consumers (only 9% has never made any purchase online), thus the statistical significance of the research was achieved.

In 2012, the number of people using computers amounted to 19.4 million; 18.3 million were regular users who used it at least once a week. Most of the public has access to the Internet because they use it at work and in the place of residence. In 2012, 70.5% of households had access to the Internet at home. It should also be noted that the percentage of households in Poland with home Internet access is steadily increasing (for comparison, in 2008 it was only 47.6%) (GUS, 2012b). The observed trends are important for business. The rapid growth of computerization of Polish households presents an opportunity to reach out to the customer and offer products on the Internet. It also enables direct communication with clients by decreasing operating costs.

It can be observed that thanks to the Internet, the company becoming part of their functions imposes on customers by creating self-service systems (banks, insurers, phone companies, energy distributors). It is estimated that in Poland, the Internet as a distribution channel is responsible for only 3% of the retail value, while in Western Europe it is more than 10%, which allows you to expect a further increase in the popularity of this form of sales (Szymański 2013). Further development of the information society in Poland will allow us to move more and more transactions to the Internet and a growing number of entities will treat the Internet as an important channel of communication with clients and distribution. For this reason, it is crucial to understand customer feedback, especially from netizens, on their experience with shopping on the Internet and possible barriers.

1. The importance of the segment young adults for e-commerce

Age is one of the basic criteria for market segmentation. With age, the needs of customers, the modalities, as well as the perception of marketing companies are changing. For this reason, choice made by a specific segment makes it necessary to use different ways of communication with the client and often requires adjustment of the product and ways of distribution. Segment young adults are people aged 18–29, and therefore born between 1986 and 1997. According to statistical data, the number

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of Polish inhabitants in the age group is 7 078 200 which represents 18.38% of the country's population (GUS 2012a).

In response to the needs of busy customers, companies are selling via the Internet. It allows for describing and presenting a wide variety of product functions and, above all, delivering product straight to the customer's home. As shown by the study of GUS in 2012, more than 12 million Poles aged 16–74 years had shopped online, which accounted for 30.3% of the total population. The percentage of Poles or contracting network buyers increased by about 12.3% in comparison with 2008. The largest increase in the participation of online purchasing has been observed in the age group 25–34 (21.1%) (GUS 2012b).

It should be noted that people of the age group 18–29 now have the ability to use information technologies, regardless of the income performance or level of education. Hence, the presence of young people is almost universal. At the same time, it is noted that the older the subjects are, the less of them can be found among netizens (CBOS 2012). In the age group 16–24, 95% of the people regularly use a computer (in comparison with the average for the general population at the level of 58%), while 93% of people regularly use the Internet for the general public (average 55%) (Eurostat 2009). A segment of young adults is the fundamental group creating Internet community, as GUS data shows that over 50% of Internet users are aged 18–24, and another 24% are in the age group 25–32 (Jaciow, Wolny 2011). For this reason, it is a key market segment for companies selling on the Internet. Knowing the buying behavior of young adult segment is fraught with the possibility of using this knowledge to shape more effective marketing tools and gaining competitive advantage in the market.

2. Objectives of the use of the Internet by the young adults

Study of behaviors of young adults show the detailed results of the survey, along with a comment that young adults are willing to use the Internet (98% daily) for a variety of purposes which are presented in Figure 1 (Gracz and Ostrowska, 2014). For people in this age group the most important uses of the Internet are: a source of information (93%), a source of entertainment (86%), a learning place (79%), a way of payment (71%), a way to communicate with people and companies (70%), a shopping place (69%), a way to maintain ties with friends (66%), and a work place for 39% of the respondents.

Young people use the Internet every day and treat it primarily as a source of information (93%). The Internet, especially through various search engines and price comparison allows us to find information on interesting customer topics. Therefore, it is the first source of information about companies or commercial offer available. Research firm IAB Europe has carried out a study which shows that more than half of Poles look for information on specific products online before purchasing them in the traditional points of sale (Piotrowski 2013).

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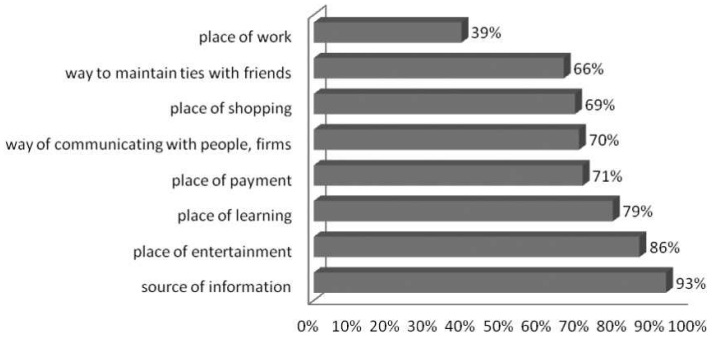

Figure 1. The perception of the Internet by young adults (18–29 years old)

Source: own research results, CAWI, n=770

For 86% of the people questioned, the Internet is a place of entertainment, and a pleasant way to relieve stress. For this reason, the easiest way to spread information is by means of humor and surprise in order to attract attention. Therefore, a company creating messages addressed to young people should adapt its communication to the nature of this medium.

For 70%, the Internet is an important way to communicate with friends, but also companies. Increasingly, young buyers communicate via various Instant Messaging clients (e.g. Skype, Gadu-Gadu or Facebook) that allow a free exchange of short text messages in real time. More and more businesses add Instant Messenger information and links to the company's Facebook page or form on-line chats with employees on their contact sites apart from providing a traditional address or phone number. This requires incurring additional expenditure on the launch and operation of these channels of communication with customer. However, they can be an asset in communication with just the segment of young buyers.

It is worth noting that for 71% of young adults, the Internet is a place of payment. For a similar group of people (69%), it is also a place for making purchases. For actors in the field of trade it is valuable to provide information about the fact that young Internet users believe the Internet to be a modern place of purchase.

3. Analysis of Internet shopping by young adults

The largest percentage of respondents that buy on the internet several times a year are young adults (59%). There is another group that can be described as heavy users. They constitute 21% of the tested market segment and are the most engaged clients because they make purchases at least a few times a month. There is a small group of people who made only one purchase online (6% of respondents) in the year under review. The least respondents (5%) chose the answer that "this year they would not be buying online", but that also means that they have made such purchases before.

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Only 9% of respondents declared that they do not buy on the Internet. We conclude that in the reporting year of 2012, 86% of respondents from the segment of young adults made at least one purchase online. For comparison, it is estimated that 30% of the total population of Poles buys online (Rzeczpospolita 2013), and there are even more young adults buying online. This is due to their greater openness to new ideas and greater ease of use of modern technology.

Figure 2 shows the responses to the question about the reasons for making purchases on the Internet by young adults.

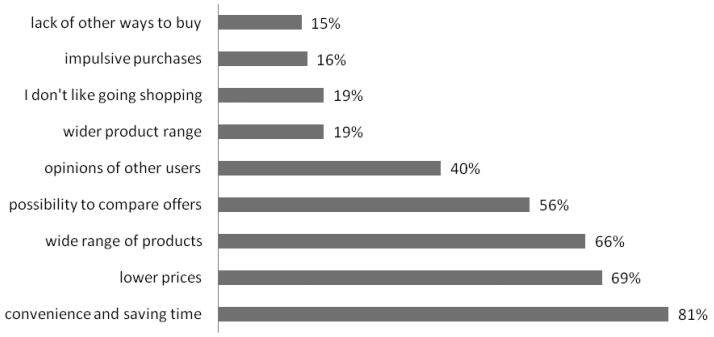

Figure 2. Reasons for shopping online for young adults (18–29 years old)

Source: own research results, CAWI, n=770

For 81% of those polled, the most important factor in favor of the Internet as a place of purchase is convenience and saving time. Young people aged 18–29 years are people you would think with a lot of free time. Even though many of them are studying, they do not have their own families and responsibilities associated with a job. Meanwhile, this age group begins to feel the lack of time and looks for opportunities to save it by avoiding time-consuming activities such as shopping. In second place (underlined by 69% of those polled) is the ability to purchase for a lower price than in traditional stores. Another important reason for online purchases is a wide range of products (66%). Young people also appreciate the possibility to compare offers and opinions of other users. Other reasons are not of high significance.

It may be noticed that the frequency of online shopping is much smaller than the frequency of purchases at all. When purchasing on the Internet, one of the primary barriers to all Poles are security issues connected to the transaction. However, most of the young adults surveyed (67%), perceive Internet purchases as rather safe; only 1% of those polled perceive Internet purchases as definitely dangerous. It should be noted that the problem of the safety of purchases is not a significant barrier for young adults. When analyzing barriers connected to Internet shopping for young adults, it can be noted that 44% of them never notice any obstacles to online purchases or buy rarely because they simply do not need to do it more often. Other key barriers of online purchasing include: a concern about the quality of products sold online

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(32% of the people polled), habit (liking) of shopping in traditional stores (28%), the need to incur additional costs (27% of respondents), and long delivery time (18%).

The problem of customer discontent with online purchases can also be examined. Figure 3 shows the number of failed purchases made on the Internet by people within the segment of young adults.

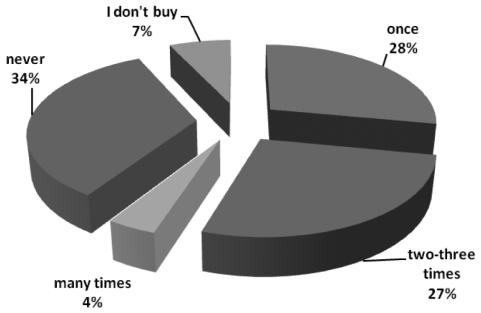

Figure 3. Number of failed purchases made on the Internet by the young adults

Source: own research results, CAWI, n=770

In the entire study population, only 34% of respondents have never made an unsuccessful online purchase. Others who buy there, were not satisfied with their purchases. This means that almost 60% of respondents have at least one negative experience with online shopping. It is worth noting that 7% of the respondents declared that they never bought via Internet. In one of the previous questions, the respondents had to declare whether they are buying online now. The statement "I do not buy over the Internet" was chosen by 9% of respondents. This may mean that about 2% of the respondents have given up online shopping because of their negative experiences.

It is important to analyze the main reasons for dissatisfaction of young adults with online shopping. The results are shown in Figure 4.

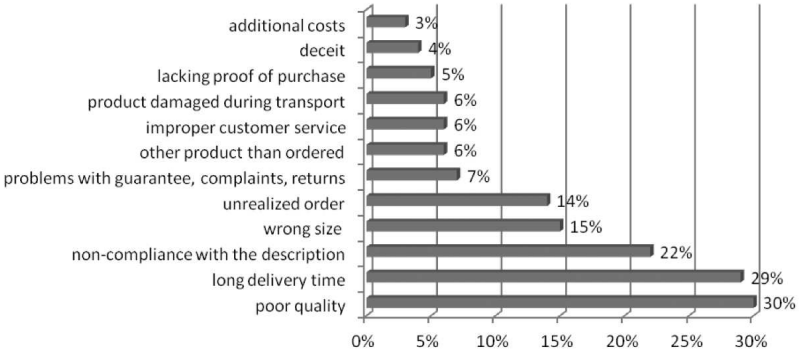

Figure 4. The reasons for dissatisfaction young adults with purchases made on the Internet

Source: own research results, CAWI, n=770

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In line with previous answers, the most important reason for dissatisfaction is the poor quality of the product obtained and the long delivery time (nearly 30% of responses), and non-compliance with the description of the product (22%). Some people did not receive the product or the product was the wrong size or different than ordered. Young adults also note deficiencies in customer service (how to handle problems with returns, lack of proof of purchase). A small percentage of respondents received a product damaged during transport. Only 4% of the respondents had been deceived by the contractor and 3% had to pay more than the result of the order.

The study also analyzed what could therefore lead young adults to step up purchases on the Internet. The responses received are shown in Figure 5.

Figure 5. Factors which could induce the young adult frequent online shopping

Source: own research results, CAWI, n=770

As the most significant factors that could encourage young adults to start online shopping and/or do it more frequently, the following were repeatedly mentioned: a lower price or no fee for shipping (62% of those polled), lower product prices (61% of respondents), shorter delivery time and a money back guarantee by trusted institutions (54% of those polled). Noteworthy is the fact that only 2% of those polled say that they do not intend to make purchases on the Internet. The situation is confirming the high potential development for e-commerce in Poland.

Conclusion

As shown by the results of the research on young adults which constitutes most of the Internet community in Poland, people are open to online communication with and to online shopping. On this basis, one can predict that the next generation of young customers will be as eager to benefit from this type of purchase because it is a convenient solution and a comfortable way to find a suitable offer. However, young buyers are demanding clients since their expectations are shaped to the market and they are aware of its value for companies. Online trading companies should strive to

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meet these requirements because this is the condition for acquiring and, above all, the return of the happy buyer to the seller during subsequent purchases.

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Assessing the Prospects for the E-Commerce Development in Poland on the Basis of a Behavior Analysis of Young Adults Segment

Abstract. The purpose of this article is to analyze how young customers (aged 18–29) perceive using the Internet as a means to purchase products. The nationwide research (N=770) was carried out by an innovative CAWI method at the end of 2012. The group of young adults uses the online eagerly; 98% of them do it every day. In the year 2012, as much as 86% of those surveyed, purchased goods via Internet at least once. Furthermore, a significant number of them (70%) perceive the Internet as an essential channel for communication with firms. The group of young adults constitutes the core of the internet community and therefore should be considered a target group for firms selling products and services online. It is expected that the dynamic development of the information technologies in our society will lead to an increase in the number of internet trade transactions, provided that there is further customers' approval and satisfaction in this area.

Określenie perspektyw rozwoju handlu elektronicznego w Polsce na podstawie analizy zachowań segmentu „młodzi dorośli"

Abstrakt. Celem artykułu jest dokonanie analizy postrzegania i korzystania przez młodych klientów (18–29 lat) w zakresie dystrybucji produktów przez Internet w celu oceny perspektyw rozwoju handlu internetowego. Badanie własne (metoda CAWI) zostało przeprowadzone pod koniec 2012 roku. Miało ono zasięg ogólnopolski (N=770). Młodzi dorośli to segment rynku, który chętnie korzysta z Internetu – 98% codziennie. W analizowanym roku aż 86% badanych osób z segmentu „młodzi dorośli" dokonało przynajmniej jednego zakupu w Internecie. Również znaczący odsetek badanych (70%) postrzega Internet jako ważny kanał komunikacji z firmami. Segment młodych dorosłych to podstawowa grupa tworzącą społeczność internetową. Z tego powodu jest to kluczowy segment rynku dla firm sprzedających w Internecie. Dalszy rozwój społeczeństwa informacyjnego w Polsce będzie umożliwiał przenoszenie coraz większej liczby transakcji do Internetu pod warunkiem akceptacji przez klientów tego rodzaju rozwiązań.