

GENERATION Y: ONLINE SHOPPING BEHAVIOUR OF THE SECONDARY SCHOOL AND UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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Abstract

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This paper presents the results of primary research which was focused on specifics of online shopping in the segment of secondary school and university students. This segment is a part of one generational cohort – Generation Y which has its own specifics and characteristics. The main objective is to describe some aspects of shopping orientations of this segment, especially in the online environment. The research results show that young Generation Y individuals prefer online sources of information, mainly price comparison website Heureka.cz and online shop websites. The significant others (family, friends, etc.) are the third most used source of information and the first personal one. When they choose online retailer they mostly take notice of the quality of information about products and the reviews of former customers and online shop comments. As the best benefit online shop can offer they regard short time benefits as a free delivery and a gift to an order.

Keywords: Generation Y, shopping behaviour, university students, secondary school students, online shop attributes, information sources

INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

The main objective of this article is to describe several aspects of Generation Y shopping orientations, more specifically one younger part of this generational cohort. The research was held in the Czech Republic and covered 196 students of two secondary schools and one university. It was focused on describing students' decision making process when they purchase goods or services online.

The motivations of consumers very often interrelate with the generational cohorts they belong to. The generation is a cohort of people who were born in a certain period of time and share similar values. On the other side between two generations usually many differences can be observed, e.g. in purchase behaviour and buying involvement. One of the last generations whose decision making process differs considerably from former generations, is Generation Y (Mangold, Smith, 2012).

Generation Y, so called the Millennials or iGen (abbreviation of the term Internet Generation), is described as a cohort of people born between years 1980–1994 (Bednall, Valos, Adam, McLeod, 2012). Other references (Noble, Haytko, Phillips, 2009) shift the lower boundary to the year 1977. One part of this generation is in the process of becoming a parent from a child (they start their own family). This generation holds a great purchase power and is able to spend money in an impulsive way (Parment, 2013; Pentecost, Andrews, 2010). For example, low-involvement decisions are for Generation Y individuals not worth to spend much time and effort unlike high-involvement decisions are worth it (Parment, 2013). For the marketers, understanding of these differences is essential for creating the effective marketing strategies (Parment, 2013) and it is important to get to know the specific features of their shopping behaviour.

The penetration of the Internet and a great progress of new digital technologies influence all generations, especially Generation Y and Z as

well as the Industrial Revolution has changed the lifestyle and cultural aspects in the end of 19th century (Parment, 2013). New technologies (Internet, applications, mobile devices etc.) and a strong emergence of social networks have created a new attitude to life and change the way how people communicate, make their purchase decisions, shop, build relationships, and decide about their future career (Parment, 2013). Also internationalization plays its role. Generation Y is deeply engaged in globalization (for or against). The effects on the shopping behaviour can be also predicted.

When we compare the shopping behaviour of Generation Y and other generations (mainly Baby Boomers), Generation Y individuals:

- make their purchase in higher number of retail stores (when they shop clothes, they usually visit 5–20 shops, Baby Boomers visit only a few),
- prefer airy and spacious shops more,
- require former experience with the retailer and assistance of the salespeople less,
- perceive a social risk more,
- choose the product at first and then the best suitable shopping place (Parment, 2013) and
- together with Generation X prefer online retailers more than other generational cohorts (Broshdal, Carpenter, 2012).

A purchase decision takes more time and is more difficult, because Generation Y individuals spend much more time by requiring and analysing information about a product or a service (Rahulan, Troynikov, Watson, Janta, Senner, 2013). They usually choose a product emotionally, but the choice of retailer is more rational. This can also indicate a low loyalty level to the retailer (Parment, 2013). The most important information sources are online sources, especially reviews of former customers. These reviews are often placed on Facebook or producers' own websites. Approx. 56% of Generation Y share their own experience and reviews on social networks compared to the whole population where 35% do the same (Mangold, Smith, 2012). The most important attributes when purchasing music are influenced by the advantages of online information sources. Speed, convenience during purchase and immediate availability of a product are considered to be the most important factors for Generation Y when they purchase music (McIntyre, 2011).

The level of new technologies usage among different generational cohorts also differs. Generation Y considers technologies as the inevitable part of their lives and uses them on a daily basis. They usually belong among innovators or early adopters according to the Innovation Adoption Lifecycle Theory (Mangold, Smith, 2012). Text messages are supposed to be a useful, convenient and pleasant form of communication. They are perceived as a reliable tool of promotion, especially when they come from a well-known source (Bednall, Valos, Adam, McLeod, 2012). Their

attention is shifted from mass media (TV, radio) to online communication tools. A large amount of information and a great product supply is not frustrating for them (Parment, 2013).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Objective and Questions

The research was focused on the particular aspects of shopping behaviour of Generation Y, more specifically one younger part of it – university and secondary school students. The main goal was to find out the specifics of this generational cohort when they shop online. Two particular research questions, focused on the information sources and the important attributes of online shops, were set.

RQ1: What are the most preferred information sources for students when shopping online?

RQ2: What are the most important online shop attributes that can influence the buying process of the students?

Data Collection

Primary data were collected using a personal and written questioning among secondary school and university students during February and March 2014. Students studying in Moravian Silesian region have served as a population for the research. The sample was specified using two kinds of quota – gender and type of studied school. Both quotas were set according to the secondary statistical data provided by Ministry of education, youth and sports (MŠMT, 2014). The questioning was held on 3 schools. Business Academy in Ostrava-Mariánské hory and Secondary school of electrical engineering in Ostrava were chosen as the representatives of the secondary school level. Data from university students were collected on the Faculty of Economics, VSB – Technical University of Ostrava. Finally 196 students were interviewed. In the Tab. I the structure of planned and final (real) sample is shown.

Questionnaire and Methods of Analysis

The questionnaire covered all the phases of the students' decision making process. It included 5 topics: (1) the preferences when shopping online, (2) the assortment purchased online regularly/never/at least once/only online or never in brick-and-mortar stores, (3) the importance of online shop attributes, (4) students' behavior after purchase and (5) information sources used before purchase. In this article only several issues are analysed. Therefore only particular measures and scales used are introduced and described further.

The frequency of purchase was included into the questionnaire to eliminate those students who do not have any experience with shopping online. Then it was used also as the characteristic for segmenting the answers and comparing them. The respondents were divided into 3 main groups – heavy users who shop online at least once a month,

I: Respondents' structure by gender and studied school (planned and real)

Type of school	Secondary school		University		Total
Gender	Male	Female	Male	Female	
Number of students in MSK*	28848	28720	12497	14443	84 508
Number of students in MSK* (% of total)	34%	34%	15%	17%	100%
Share of students in MSK* (% of studied school)	50%	50%	46%	54%	
Real sample	66	66	30	34	196
Real sample (% of total)	34%	34%	15%	17%	100%
Real sample by studied school (% of studied school)	50%	50%	47%	53%	

* MSK – Moravian Silesian region

Source: MŠMT (2013/2014)

medium users who shop online at least once a year but less than once a month and light users who shop online less than once a year. The rest could have no experience with online shopping.

Respondents were also asked to choose which information sources they use before they shop (to choose a product or a service). The list of the information sources was compiled from Parment (2013), Mangold and Smith (2012), Mandhlazi, Dhurup and Mafini (2012). Also authors' own options were included. Students could choose from these options: (1) the price comparison website Heureka.cz, (2) family, friends etc. (significant others), (3) the price comparison website Zboží.cz, (4) knowledgeable salespeople in the brick-and-mortar store, (5) an online shop website, (6) a specialized internet forum or (7) others.

The respondents further evaluated the importance of online shop attributes on a five-point scale (1-essential, 2-important, 3-less important, 4-not important, 5-useless/needless). The list of the attributes and also the scale were adapted from APEK (2014) and Broshdal, Carpenter (2012). Also other attributes, considered as important by authors, were added. The options were as follows (1) the quality of information about products, (2) products available in stock, (3) free delivery, (4) the width of assortment, (5) the reviews of former customers and online shop comments, (6) variety of payment options, (6) the existence of brick-and-mortar store and (7) the certification of the online shop.

To ensure the complex view on the problem, the students were also asked to evaluate how they perceive the attractiveness of benefits online shops sometimes offer. They used a five-point scale (1-very attractive, 5-not attractive) to express their attitude towards (1) free delivery, (2) a gift to an order, (3) the coupons to save money on next order and (4) the loyalty programme.

Data were analysed by using SPSS 21.0 and Microsoft Excel software. Several analytic tools were also used, e.g. descriptive characteristics like mean, analysis of variance (ANOVA) and cluster analysis. To describe possible dependencies and statistical differences, various coefficients like Pearson's χ^2 , Cramer's V and Kendal's τ_b were counted and interpreted.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Frequency of Online Purchase

Students can be separated into 4 main groups according frequency of their purchase. Heavy users are students who used to purchase online once a month or more (17%). Medium users (57%) shop online several times a year (minimum is once a year). Light users (16%) shop online less than once a year and the rest of students (10%) had no experience with online shopping (see Tab. II). The last group of students with no experience with online shopping was extracted from the sample for further analysis.

According to the Czech Statistical Office (CZSO, 2013) almost 34% of Czechs made an online purchase at least once a year. At least 2.2 times more students than the average population (75%) shop online. It can be assumed that students are more frequent users of the Internet and therefore also frequency of their online purchase is higher.

The frequency of online purchase is significantly influenced by the type of studied school (sig. = 0.007). The coefficient of correlation is -0.173, i.e. negative correlation exists. The higher level of studied school, the lower frequency of online purchase can be predicted. This result is surprising, but can be caused by the total number of respondents' answers. Gender does not influence the frequency of online purchase (sig. = 0.14), so male and female shop online approximately in the same frequency. The frequency of online purchase could of course differ by gender if we concern on certain goods or services and compare them, but it is the topic for further research and we have not investigated it yet.

II: The frequency of online purchase

Type of user	N	Percent
Heavy user	34	17%
Medium user	112	57%
Light user	31	16%
No experience	19	10%
Total	196	100%

Information Sources

Younger Generation Y was also asked to select any number of sources they use when they choose a product they want to buy. Price comparison websites are according to the European survey conducted under Executive Agency for Health and Consumers (2011) heavily used online source of information for the European customers (more than 80% have used them in last 12 months) and considered to be a helpful tool to find correct information about prices and delivery fees. As shown in the Tab. III, students use the price comparison website Heureka.cz the most, almost 62% of them claimed that. The main competitor of Heureka.cz, the price comparison website Zboží.cz, got only 10% of responses (21% of respondents use it).

The other two important sources are online shop websites, i.e. if students want to find any information about a product, they use directly the website of the online shop, where they want to buy this product. The third most common and preferred information source is personal (family, friends etc.)

unlike two options mentioned above which can be included into nonpersonal sources of information.

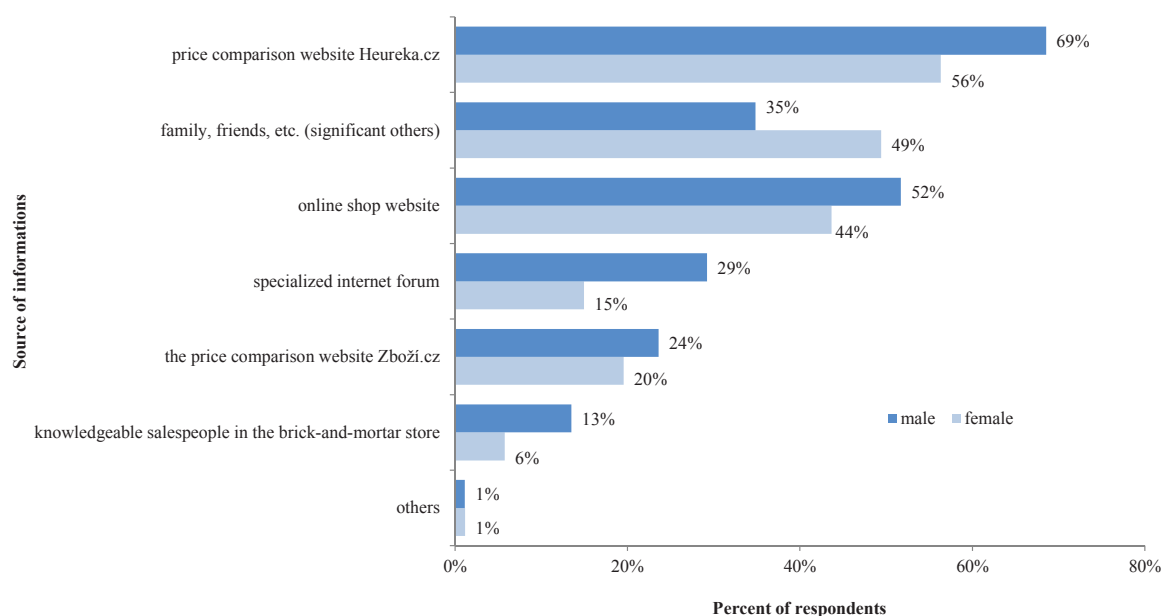
According to Executive Agency for Health and Consumers (2011) in the European Union customers shopping online use both online and offline sources when choosing a product or a service. Our results indicate similar findings for the younger Generation Y. Together with online sources, they often use also offline and personal sources of information like significant others.

There exists a statistically significant difference only in the preference of the price comparison website Heureka.cz among 3 types of users (divided according to the frequency of online purchase, sig. = 0.035, Cramer's V = 0.195), but the strength of dependence is low.

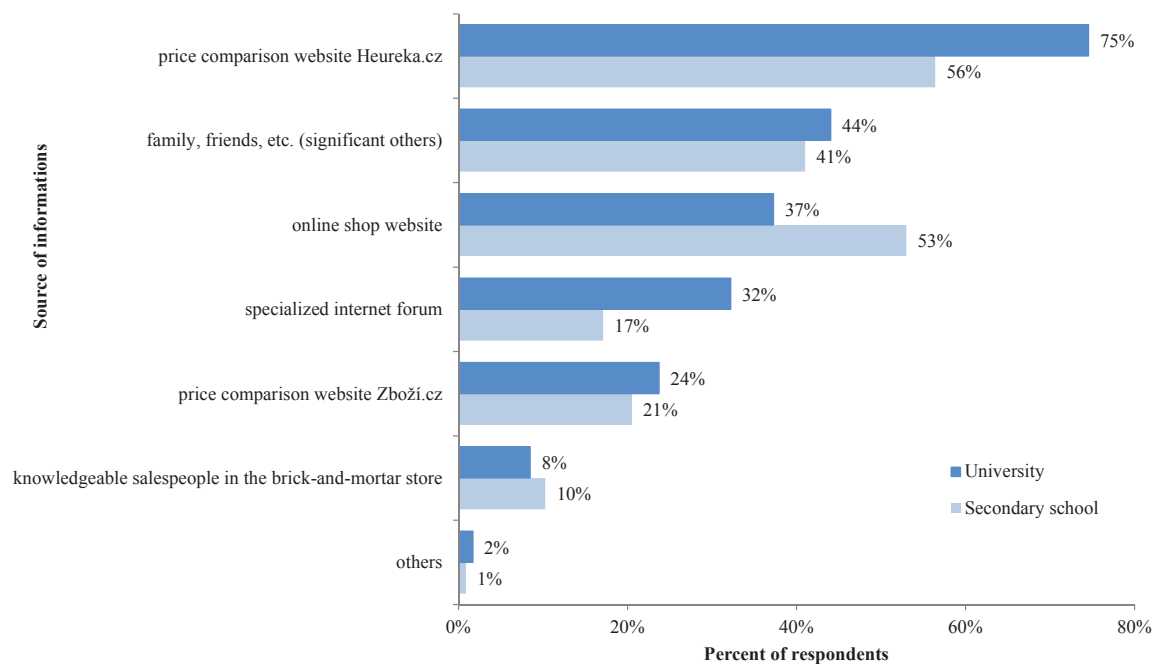
Statistically significant relation between gender and the source of information was proven only in one criterion a specialized internet forum (Sig. = 0.02, Cramer's V = 0.174). Male students look for information on specialized forum more. For the results see Fig. 1. In contrast, when we compare this result with perceived importance of the reviews of former customers and online shop

III: The sources of information when choosing a product

N = 177	Responses	Percent	Percent of Cases
Price comparison website Heureka.cz	110	30%	62%
Online shop website	84	23%	47%
Family, friends, etc. (significant others)	74	20%	42%
Specialized internet forum	39	11%	22%
Price comparison website Zboží.cz	38	10%	21%
Knowledgeable salespeople in the brick-and-mortar store	17	5%	10%
Others	2	1%	1%
Total	364	100%	



1: The sources of information when choosing a product (by gender)



2: The sources of information when choosing a product (by type of school)

comments (which usually take place on the internet forum), both female and male emphasized it as very important (36% as essential). Complete results are presented in the next part of this paper.

Significant others as an information source are more preferred by female students (49% female to 35% male). Male students more often use knowledgeable salesperson directly in the store (brick-and-mortar) than female (13% to 6%). But these differences are not statistically significant.

Some differences were found also when comparing the group of university students and students of secondary school. Statistically significant differences were suggested in criterion a specialized internet forum (Sig. = 0.021, Cramer's $V = 0.173$). University students more often use it to search information than secondary school students (32% to 17%). Those on the other side prefer particular online shop website more than university students (53% to 37%). See Fig. 2 for the results. The usage of price comparison website Heureka.cz also depends on the studied school (Sig. = 0.016, Cramer's $V = 0.181$). It is used more by university students. These results can follow from a higher level of interest of university students, more previous experience with shopping online or university students just want to feel more confident before they spend their money. The dependence is low in both cases, so the level of studied school influences the perceived importance of criteria mentioned above only lightly.

Important Attributes of Online Shops

The most important online shop attribute is the quality of information about products (63% of students marked it as essential) and the reviews of

former customers and online shop comments (36% selected it as essential). For the results see Tab. IV.

Comparing our results to the research results of APEK (2014), the most important attribute is the same – the quality of information about products (APEK = 66% selected as essential). On the other hand the reviews of former customers and online shop comments are second most important for students when they decide where to make purchase, but the APEK research (APEK, 2014) found the availability of products in stock as second most important (58%) and reviews or online shop comments are essential for 34% of Czech customers. It is curious that this share is very similar to the share of students (36%), but the ranking in the list of all attributes is completely different. This attribute is the second most essential for students, but the ninth most essential for Czech population. More than 50% of Czechs regard also free delivery as essential compared to our research, where only 6% of students marked it as essential.

Neither between male and female, nor between secondary school and university students, there are no significant differences in the importance of online shop attributes. Only one significant difference exists (sig. = 0.004, Kendal's $\tau_b = 0.195$), male rate the width of assortment more important (mean 2.26) than female (mean 2.56). All results are available in Tab. V.

When we analysed answers also by type of user, two statistically significant differences occurred. It is in criteria products available in stock (sig. = 0.041, Kendal's $\tau_b = 0.132$) and the existence of brick-and-mortar store (sig. = 0.048, Kendal's $\tau_b = -0.136$). The importance of product availability rises with the increasing frequency of online purchase and

IV: The importance of online shop attributes (1 = essential, 5 = useless/needless)

The importance of online shop attributes	Mean	Mean by gender		Mean by studied school		Mean by type of user		
		male	female	secondary school	university	heavy user	medium user	light user
Quality of information about products	1.4	1.4	1.41	1.36	1.49	1.3	1.45	1.35
Reviews of former customers and online shop comments	1.95	1.97	1.93	2.02	1.81	1.61	2.06	1.9
Products available in stock	2.14	2.13	2.14	2.19	2.03	1.76	2.25	2.13
Certification of the online shop	2.4	2.34	2.47	2.35	2.51	2.42	2.43	2.26
Width of assortment	2.41	2.26	2.56	2.33	2.56	2.24	2.45	2.42
Variety of payment options	2.57	2.62	2.52	2.61	2.49	2.39	2.63	2.55
Free delivery	2.69	2.74	2.65	2.76	2.56	2.61	2.8	2.42
Existence of brick-and-mortar store	2.73	2.84	2.63	2.77	2.66	3.06	2.7	2.52

vice versa the existence of brick-and-mortar store is less important the more frequently respondent shops online.

Cluster analysis was used for further analysis of the importance of the attributes, especially to reduce the number of attributes (see Tab. VI). The first cluster (new comprehensive factor) can be named as the quality and reliability of information, the second cluster contains only one variable – free delivery and the third one can be named as extra services.

Further cluster analysis of students has divided them into 3 different segments according to the importance of 3 new comprehensive factors. For the description of the segments, we have used results of all questions included in the questionnaire regardless all results are not presented in this paper.

The first segment (47% of younger Generation Y) forms the largest group, where more male are included, two thirds of members visit the secondary school and more than one half is under age of 18. These customers prefer delivery by a provider of parcel services more. They consider the quality of information about product and surprisingly the certification of the online shop as the most important attributes of online shops. This group has the highest share in both medium and light online shoppers.

The second segment comprises 30% of respondents with the highest share of university students among all 3 clusters. They are both more female and above age of 19–20 (almost 60%). These students prefer payment with cash and picking up in the brick-and-mortar store after online purchase more than 2 other clusters. This cluster contains the highest share of heavy users among all 3 clusters. They consider the quality of information about product, the reviews of former customers and online shop comments and free delivery as the most important factors when choosing a particular online shop.

The third segment is the smallest one (23% of respondents). It has higher share of male and students visiting secondary school, almost 60% of them under age of 18. In this segment the highest share of those occur who do not share their experience with online shopping with their family, friends or colleagues. They prefer more than other 2 segments to pay cash on delivery (as a payment option) and also delivery provided by Czech Post. They deem the quality of information about products and its availability in stock as the most important attributes of online shops. They have approximately the same share of all 3 types of users according to the frequency of online purchase.

Attractiveness of Benefits

The attractiveness of several benefits evaluated by the respondents was quite high and it depends for some attributes on type of studied school, gender or type of user, but the strength of dependence is low in all cases (see Tab. VII).

V: *Online shop attributes by school, gender and type of user*

Attribute	Kendal's tau-b	Studied school	Gender	Type of user
Quality of information about products	Value	0.121	0.036	0.043
	Significance	0.109	0.63	0.532
Products available in stock	Value	-0.083	0.002	0.132
	Significance	0.221	0.972	0.041
Free delivery	Value	-0.12	-0.054	-0.049
	Significance	0.076	0.443	0.49
Width of assortment	Value	0.127	0.195	0.042
	Significance	0.065	0.004	0.536
Reviews of former customers and online shop comments	Value	-0.086	0.011	0.108
	Significance	0.204	0.872	0.107
Variety of payment options	Value	-0.048	-0.04	0.55
	Significance	0.476	0.566	0.396
Existence of brick-and-mortar store	Value	-0.045	-0.121	-0.136
	Significance	0.517	0.077	0.048
Certification of the online shop	Value	0.063	0.085	-0.065
	Significance	0.37	0.219	0.324

VI: *The results of cluster analysis*

Importance of online shop attributes	Cluster number
Quality of information about products	1
Products available in stock	1
Reviews of former customers and online shop comments	1
Free delivery	2
Existence of brick-and-mortar store	3
Width of assortment	3
Variety of payment options	3
Certification of the online shop	3

The most attractive benefit was free delivery (average 1.62). This benefit is highly related to the cost side of the purchase. Suprisingly, although students have evaluated free delivery as the most important benefit among all 4 suggested, only 42% of them have evaluated this attribute as essential or important when deciding where to buy. There are no significant differences according to gender and type of school in the evaluation of the attractiveness of this benefit, but the type of user (heavy, medium, light) can influence perceived attractiveness

of this benefit (sig. = 0.035, Kendal's τ_b = 0.139). The dependence is low and positive, which means that the more frequent online shopper student is, the more he perceives the attractiveness of free delivery.

A gift to an order was also found as an attractive benefit (average 2.71) and achieved value can be influenced by studied school (sig. = 0.028, Kendal's τ_b = 0.149) and gender of the respondent (sig. = 0.002, Kendal's τ_b = -0.201). The strength of dependence is also low.

Other two benefits got lower marks (the coupons to save money on next order with average 3.13 and loyalty programme with average 3.53). Students probably do not want to wait for the benefit for a longer time and prefer getting it in the same moment they make their order. These benefits usually require long term relationship with the online shop and young Generation Y does not want to spend time and effort to deserve any advantage or benefit in a long term. This can indicate that younger Generation Y has a low loyalty level as Parment (2013) suggested. Male and female students perceive the attractiveness of coupons differently (sig. = 0.02, Kendal's τ_b = -0.152).

VII: *Attractiveness of benefits by gender, school and type of user (Kendal's τ_b)*

Benefit	Kendal's tau-b	Studied school	Gender	Type of user
Free delivery	Value	-0.1	-0.122	0.139
	Significance	0.152	0.085	0.035
Gift to an order	Value	0.149	-0.201	-0.010
	Significance	0.028	0.002	0.868
Coupons to save money on next order	Value	0.075	-0.152	-0.007
	Significance	0.263	0.02	0.910
Loyalty programme	Value	0.076	-0.03	-0.002
	Significance	0.241	0.646	0.978

CONCLUSION

Generation Y, as a generational cohort holding a great purchase power, is a generation naturally coexisting with the Internet and social networks. This applies especially to the younger Generation Y individuals. Their decision making process and mostly its pre-final phase – purchase – is very often made online. The main objective of this paper was to describe the information sources young Generation Y individuals use, where do they look for the details about products and services and what are the main characteristics online shops should have to be attractive for them.

Our results are in some aspects similar to the research findings of Rahulan, Troynikov, Watson, Janta and Senner (2013) and APEK (2014). Generation Y individuals consider the quality of information as the most important when choosing an online shop. So we can suppose that they spend much more time by searching and analyzing information before they decide to shop than other generational cohorts.

According to Mangold and Smith (2012) the most important information sources are online sources, especially reviews of former customers. Our results support these outcomes, i.e. students use the price comparison website Heureka.cz the most. These specialized websites are according to the European survey conducted under Executive Agency for Health and Consumers (2011) heavily used online source of information for the European customers. So there exists a similarity between average European customer and our respondent. Also other online sources were evaluated as important information sources in our research, e.g. online shop website and specialized internet forum (second and fourth position in ranking). Students choose a particular online shop also according to the reviews of former customers and online shop comments.

Parment (2013) suggested that Generation Y can be less loyal to the retailer and choose it more rationally than the product. We can presume the same outcome from the preference of benefits online shops offer. Long term benefits as the coupons to save money on next order or loyalty programme were less preferred by our respondents. On the other hand short term benefits as free delivery or a gift to an order were evaluated as very attractive.

Shopping behaviour is a wide topic. In this article only several issues of decision making process when buying online were presented. Further research should focus on comparing the differences between the phases of decision making process when shopping online and in brick-and-mortar stores. Perceived importance of the attributes of the shop can for sure differ and also the information sources people use before their purchase can be more offline when shopping in brick-and-mortar stores.

Other interesting way of further research can be related to generational cohorts. The shopping behaviour of Generation Y comparing to other generations, mainly Baby Boomers and Generation X, can have its specifics.

The results of our research are based on research held only in Moravian Silesian region, so other possible direction is to expand a population also to other regions in Czech Republic. This step will probably require the change of research method from written to online questioning.

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