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EXPLORING MULTI-CHANNEL SHOPPING BEHAVIOR TOWARDS IT & C PRODUCTS, BASED ON BUSINESS STUDENTS OPINIONS

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Abstract

Young people have rapidly adopted the practice of using a variety of channels through which to shop, especially for products that require thorough information on features and price. IT & C products fall into this category, and buyers using multiple channels benefit from the advantages of information from online stores and reduced risks associated with the acquisition from traditional stores.

The aim of this article is to identify young people preference for buying IT & C products from companies that distribute them across multiple channels. In this regard, an exploratory research was conducted on a sample of 340 students. The main results showed the high frequency use of Internet as a means of searching the information needed for purchasing IT & C products, the low share of exclusively online purchase, the fact that they are being perceived by students as both a need and a desire, and the weak expression of views about products purchased in the virtual environment. Price and quality are the main criteria in choosing them.

Originality of this article is determined by identifying students' preference for firms practicing multi-channel distribution strategy for IT & C products. Basically, people that we investigated gather online information about these products, from companies' sites, but they mainly buy them in traditional stores.

Key words: strategies based on multiple channels (multi-channel strategies), retail, IT&C products, shopping behavior, electronic commerce

JEL classification: L81, M30

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Introduction

Retail environment is transformed along with the introduction of multi-channel operations, designed to provide a variety of buying experiences for consumers (Mathwick, Malhotra and Rigdon, 2001). Although multi-channel system is not new, it has become attractive with the development of new technologies and the growing importance of electronic commerce. Traditional traders, especially the big chains, diversify their distribution strategy through online channel, and some online IT & C retailers open stores where customers can test and buy the products. Multi-channel strategy allows companies to build stable relationships with their customers, while providing information, products, services and support (or any combination thereof) through two or more synchronized channels (Rangaswamy and Van Bruggen, 2005). Such an approach offers advantages for both retailers and consumers: more distribution channels can increase sales and reduce costs for penetrating new markets (Neslin et al, 2006; Cheng et al 2007), and consumers can take advantage of the characteristics of each channel separately (Verhoef, Neslin and Vroomen, 2007). However, the integration of electronic channels in traditional enterprise involves substantial costs and increased risks, as well as potential conflicts with traditional channels, which could lead to cannibalization of sales (Kollmann, Kuckertz and Kayser, 2012). These multi-channel systems offer a wide range of buying experiences and the result is an increased number of customers and their increasing loyalty.

Previous studies (Xinyu, 2010) concluded that online stores can replace physical stores or can lead to their visit. Thus Internet and traditional shops become two important areas for consumers, both during information search and evaluation of alternatives stages, as well as during the stage of the actual purchase. Another study (Heitz-Spahn, 2013) shows that the buyers' change of option for a particular retail channel (free-riding) is a growing phenomenon. The author of the study shows that two thirds of consumers tend to adopt a free-riding behavior for the purchase of a durable good, which results in a reduction of customer loyalty.

This paper examines how young people use the channels made available by multi-channel retailers during the buying process. Therefore, the aim of this study is to discover the behavior of young people using multiple channels of retail for IT & C products acquisition. The rest of the paper is organized as follows. The following section provides an analysis of the literature on multi-channel strategies of retailers. In Section 2 the research methodology is presented, followed, in Section 3, by detailed analysis of research results. The final section summarizes the main findings and discusses the limitations of the study and future research directions.

1. Literature reviews on the multi-channel retailing strategies

Nowadays, retailers offer products through both electronic and traditional channels through the adoption of multichannel strategies. *Multi-channel retailing* is the set of activities involved in selling merchandise or services to consumers through more than one channel (Levy and Weitz 2009). Multi-channel retailing is not a new phenomenon, but to a large extent, the emergence of integrated multi-channel retailing was driven by the rapid expansion of the Internet as a new selling channel (Zhang et al., 2010). In today's retail environment, consumers may browse catalogues for products, search for information online, make purchases in traditional stores (brick-and-mortar stores), and get their post-purchase services through call centers. In fact, most consumers are cross-shoppers, using online and offline channels in the same shopping process. For example, to purchase a

product, a customer would prefer browsing and searching through the online store but would rather drive to a brick-and-mortar store to avoid paying shipping and delivery. Conversely, consumers could visit the physical store to inspect products and decide offline, in the bricks-and-mortar store, and then they could conduct their purchases online through a web site that offers their desired product at the lowest price (Lazaris and Vrechopoulos, 2014). Among economic factors relevant to a consumer's channel choice are search cost, evaluation cost, delivery time, and price (Gupta, Su and Walter, 2004). The retailer may influence a consumer's channel choice by changing some or all of economic factors mentioned above. For example, the retailer may consider raising price but at the same time reducing search cost through advertising and/or reducing evaluation cost by providing more product information and demonstration (Gupta, Su and Walter, 2004). But we have to bear in mind that consumer choice it is not just a rational assessment of information on quality and price, because other issues can count, such as brand beliefs, personal interest, habits, culture, social class, motivation, religion, and attitude.

The increasingly multichannel nature of consumer shopping and purchase behavior calls for a better understanding of their decision processes and new approaches to monitoring and measuring their experience, satisfaction, and loyalty with a retailer (Rangaswamy and van Bruggen, 2005). Retail operators applying a multichannel strategy need to understand the distinct characteristics of the Internet shoppers and non-Internet shoppers. For instance, Donthu and Garcia (1999) found that Internet shoppers were more likely to be convenience seeking, innovative, less risk averse and impulsive than the non-Internet shoppers. The distinction between the Internet shoppers and non-Internet shoppers is needed to tailor marketing and sales strategies to the different segmentations of the shoppers.

As pointed out by Brashear et al. (2009), customized strategies are required to reach the target customers effectively. Also, the findings of a recent study (Lim and Cham, 2015) suggest that online businesses should focus on convenience, price, branding, degree of risk aversion, and product varieties in order to attract and retain online shoppers and they should emphasize on these factors to motivate non-Internet shoppers to purchase online.

However, the retailer's concern today is not only about managing different channels made available by a company, such as bricks-and-mortar stores, catalogues, website, mobile application, TV commercials, call centres etc., but is also about considering the consistency between different channels that facilitates and streamlines customer interactions. On this line, Chatterjee (2010) notes that retailers using multiple channels have two strategic options, namely: to operate multiple channels as independent entities; in this case the channels are segregated, operated separately and are different profit and loss units with no alignment of goals (Steinfeld, Bouwman and Adelaar, 2002) (is a *multi-channel strategy*, such as the alternative of ordering and picking up in-store managed differently from the variant of order online and get product delivered home) or to integrate multiple channels allowing cross-channel movements of products, money and information and the company aims for maximization of profitability in total (is a *cross-channel strategy*, such as the possibility to order online and pick up in store or to order in store and get product delivered home). While the decision to sell through additional channels prompts concerns about cannibalization (Deleersnyder et al. 2002; Falk et al. 2007), recent researches (Geyskens, Gielens and Dekimpe 2002; Zhang et al., 2010) indicates some sources of the improved financial performance for multi-channel retailers, such as low-cost access to new markets, increased customer satisfaction and loyalty, and creation of a strategic advantage.

Consumers acquire information necessary to purchase decisions by looking for information of products in an attempt to decide what, when, and from whom to purchase. Consumers frequently engage in online pre-purchase search to extract up-to-date information for their purchase decisions. In this context, Internet has risen to become one of the most interactive tools that influence the decision of consumers in the context of shopping. Online search is an essential part of online comparison-shopping and decision-making process as it reduces purchase related uncertainty and increases the likelihood of purchase satisfaction (Lauraéus-Niinivaara, Saarinen and Öörni, 2015).

Information, accessibility, and speed as well as inexpensive and easy purchases have often been mentioned as the main benefits of online shopping and main reasons for choosing Internet for shopping (Shim, Shin and Nottingham, 2002; Khalifa and Limayem, 2003; Järveläinen, 2007). However, many online information seekers decide to abort the shopping process just before the transaction in such an online shopping environment and finish it in a traditional channel. According to Järveläinen (2007), customers who have no experience in online shopping and do not perceive the online channel as very useful prefer conversation and choose a traditional channel after online information seeking. Although comparison shopping is also difficult in traditional media, the enormous size of the Internet makes it very hard to quickly find a cheap product especially when the consumer has little experience with online searching and with the products (Grover and Ramanlal, 1999; Ankar and Walden, 2001; O'Connor, 2001). Thus, online search and comparison for the products and prices may become a demanding task for an inexperienced user (Järveläinen, 2007). Security and privacy issues, the design of the website and ease of use are also important (Järveläinen, 2007) given the fact that the ease of the online purchasing process is a combination of perceived ease of use of a website and the ability to find the desired product at the desired price and purchase it from the website.

2. Research methodology

To illustrate the practical aspects of IT & C products marketing an *exploratory research* was carried out on a sample of 340 students of the Faculty of Business and Tourism, third year of study at undergraduate and master. The students voluntarily participated in this research, which was conducted in early January 2015, as they were invited to fill the questionnaire posted on the website isondaje.ro. Although the sample is not representative, it may be considered relevant, because the selected students were taught disciplines related to information systems applications, e-commerce, sales, and also consumer protection. In addition, they represent a customer segment that is very active on IT & C market, as they use the products both for personal and professional purposes.

The aim of the research was to identify the preferences of students for the place to purchase IT & C products, as a form of trade organization regarding such products.

The research *objectives* were related to the identification of views on these issues:

1. To determine the frequency of Internet use for searching information required for the purchase of IT & C products;
2. Knowing the propensity of persons investigated for buying products online.
3. Highlighting the relationship between the frequency of using the Internet to search for information and expressing opinions about products purchased in the virtual environment.

4. Highlighting the link between the frequency of Internet usage and orientation towards certain selling methods of IT & C products.

5. Shaping the connection between expressing opinions online and the place of purchase of these products.

Based on these objectives *five research hypotheses* were formulated, namely:

1. The people investigated frequently use the Internet to search for information about IT & C products.

2. Respondents prefer to purchase IT & C products in the online environment.

3. People who use the Internet to search for information needed for acquisition of IT & C products do not express their opinions in the online environment after they have purchased.

4. Even if they use the Internet to search for information, there are differences between the interviewees regarding the place of purchase of IT & C products.

5. There are differences between respondents in terms of exposure of views in the online environment according to the place of purchase of IT & C products.

The research was based on a questionnaire which included 8 content questions, 4 matrix questions and 4 close ended questions with one choice, as well as 3 identification questions. The questionnaire was self-administered by the respondents, after being posted on the website isondaje.ro. Analysis and data processing was performed with SPSS version 21. Scientific instrumentation used is diverse and includes analysis of frequencies, averages, graphs, correlations, Cronbach α coefficient, the F-test, the t test, the analysis of variance (ANOVA).

3. Results and discussions

Exploratory research was conducted on a sample of 340 students of the Faculty of Business and Tourism, in the third year Bachelor and Master. The structure of the respondents is shown in Table 1. This group of people was used based on the high degree of use of IT & C products, and the knowledge gained in studying their characteristics, the consumer protection, as well as computing in general and electronic commerce in particular.

The questionnaire contains 4 matrix questions with answers ranked on a scale with six levels from "very important" to "not at all important". Scaling statistical reliability was checked with Cronbach α coefficient, whose values are presented in Table. 2.

Table no. 1. The structure of the respondents

Characteristics of the respondents		N	%
Studies	batchelor	238	70
	master	102	30
Incomes	under 1000 lei	68	20
	between 1000-1499 lei	109	32,1
	between 1500-1999 lei	77	22,6
	over 2000 lei	86	25,3
Gender	male	101	29,7
	female	239	70,3

Apart from the question 4, wherein the amount of α Cronbach is 0.643, quite close to the threshold value of 0.7, for the other questions the coefficient indicates a high statistical reliability.

Table no. 2. Statistical reliability

Question	the amount of α Cronbach	No. of elements
2	.706	8
4	.643	7
6	.745	7
7	.769	8

Question 2 refers to the degree of importance given to sources of information used to purchase IT & C products, presenting eight variables. The most popular sources of information were considered the experiences of buying similar products and recommendations on specialized sites.

Although most assessments have turned to the sources mentioned above, there is a direct correlation between them, but of low intensity ($r = 0.108$, at a significance level of 5%) (table no 3). As can be seen from the table of correlations, most variables are directly correlated, with average intensities links at a significance level of 1%. It is noted the correlation between the recommendation of friends and that of sale advisers ($r = 0.306$, at a significance level of 1%), and between the sale counsellors recommendation and the point-of-sale advertising ($r = 0.303$, at a significance level of 1% significance). They illustrate that there is a logical connection between the promotion of IT & C products based on their actual features and advantages, which ensures functionality in line with the expectations of buyers. The strongest correlations appear between radio – TV advertising, and the point-of-sale advertising ($r = 0.732$, at a significance level of 1%), between radio – TV advertising and Internet advertising ($r = 0.728$, at a significance level of 1%) and between Internet advertising and point-of-sale advertising ($r = 0.682$, at a significance level of 1%). These high values show the consistency of messages transmitted through different communication media about IT & C products. They also illustrate the need for firms to choose different channels of commercial communication, through which to simultaneously send messages with identical content, in order to create and strengthen the image of IT & C brands among consumers.

Table no. 3. Correlation of variables regarding the information sources used in buying IT&C products

Variables	Values of the correlation coefficient							
Similar products	1							
Recommendation of friends	.202*	1						
Recommendation of sale advisers	-.049	.306**	1					
Recommendation of websites	.108*	.160**	.258**	1				
Opinions of buyers	.089	.134*	.050	.190**	1			
Internet advertising	.018	.183**	.235**	.164**	.264*	1		
Radio – TV advertising	-.009	.242**	.291**	.122*	.182*	.728**	1	
Point-of-sale advertising	-.029	.200**	.303**	.105	.106	.682**	.732**	1

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Question 4 includes seven criteria used in choosing IT & C products. Of these, the quality of products and their price were considered of the highest degree of importance by respondents.

However, as can be seen in the table no. 4, the two variables are not correlated. The highest value of the correlation coefficient was recorded between the price and the availability of products in sale ($r = 0.405$, at a significance level of 1%). This indicates the willingness of respondents to find special offers products in the assortment of companies that sell IT & C. A direct correlation, of medium intensity is recorded between the easy installation of products and the post-purchase services ($r = 0.386$ at a significance level of 1%). This indicates both the need for technical information, and the need for a suitable service network.

Table no. 4. Correlation of variables regarding criteria used in choosing IT & C products choice

Variables	Values of the correlation coefficient						
Short distance to the shops	1						
Brand awareness	.304**	1					
Price	.185**	.272**	1				
Product availability	.368**	.197**	.405**	1			
The quality of products	-.004	.169**	.080	.091	1		
Easy installation of products	.169**	.121*	.235**	.312**	.167**	1	
Post-purchase services	.070	.229**	.165**	.250**	.220**	.386**	1

**, Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*, Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Question 6 contains 7 features of IT & C selling stores. The quality of the products and the availability of the assortments in promotional campaigns were considered the most important features.

There is a direct correlation between the two variables, but the intensity is rather low ($r = 0.230$, at a significance level of 1%), as can be seen in the table no. 5. The highest value of the correlation coefficient is recorded between the atmosphere in the store and the assortment sold ($r = 0.503$, at a significance level of 1%). This value shows the interviewees' wish to find in the IT & C selling shops an organization based on the logical relationship between structural elements, design, product display and product assortment. A high value of the correlation coefficient occurs between store accessibility and its operating hours, the two variables being logically related ($r = 0.492$, at a significance level of 1%).

Table no. 5. Correlation of variables regarding features of IT & C selling stores

Variables	Values of the correlation coefficient						
Accessible location	1						
Operating hours	.492**	1					
Atmosphere in the store	.331**	.338**	1				
Assortment sold	.357**	.288**	.503**	1			
Quality of the products	.141**	.139*	.035	.121*	1		
Product display attractiveness	.324**	.182**	.390**	.371**	.182**	1	
Availability of products	.272**	.375**	.270**	.340**	.230**	.325**	1

**, Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*, Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Question 7 envisages eight features of the websites of the online stores selling IT & C products. The speed of accessing the site and the content received the highest praise from those investigated. It is the question with the highest overall average - 1.82 (table no. 7), which corresponds with "Important". Greater overall appreciation enjoyed by the sites' features compared to stores' characteristics could induce the idea of preference for online IT & C products trade among young people at the expense of the traditional one.

It is the question with all variables correlated to 1% significance level. In addition, the 2 variables that have received the highest recognition also have the highest correlation coefficient ($r = 0.569$, at a significance level of 1%) (Table no. 6). These values of correlation coefficients indicate the consistency of interviewees' responses, but also the appreciation enjoyed by the online environment. The respondents' knowledge and also the less time available favor visiting the sites of the IT & C vendors. In addition to the features and the advantages of the products sold, they offer the opportunity to rapidly find out prices and make comparisons with similar articles. From the statistical point of view, the link appears between variables correlation coefficients and the Cronbach α coefficient, which in this case has the highest value. Under these circumstances, the presence of IT & C products selling companies in the online environment is compulsory for success in the market, especially when targeting consumers that are dynamic people, with high levels of education, technical skills and appetite for such product. The design, the functionality and the content of the site matter, but also the information conveyed and the arguments used to illustrate the advantages of the products.

Table no. 6. Correlation of variables regarding the characteristics of online websites selling IT&C products

Variables	Values of the correlation coefficient							
Ease of use	1							
Content of data	.425**	1						
Speed of access	.420**	.569**	1					
Website design	.269**	.233**	.251**	1				
Comparison of products and prices	.216**	.262**	.276**	.285**	1			
Online support	.219**	.277**	.305**	.254**	.445**	1		
Functionality	.224**	.249**	.301**	.280**	.324**	.431**	1	
Easy control	.316**	.251**	.337**	.208**	.305**	.358**	.371**	1

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The use of Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) (Table no. 7) allowed the identification of significant differences between or within groups. The values obtained indicate that there are significant differences between the components of each of the four questions, i.e. within the groups (according to Fisher test values, with thresholds of significance .000 at all 4 questions).

Table no. 7. Values of the analysis of variance

ANOVA question 2	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Between People	812.722	339	2.397	176.689	.000
Between Items	870.787	7	124.398		
Within People Residual	1670.713	2373	.704		
Total	2541.500	2380	1.068		
Total	3354.222	2719	1.234		
Grand Mean = 2.7669					
ANOVA întrebarea 4	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Between People	715.722	339	2.111	177.581	.000
Between Items	804.012	6	134.002		
Within People Residual	1534.845	2034	.755		
Total	2338.857	2040	1.146		
Total	3054.579	2379	1.284		
Grand Mean = 2.0971					
ANOVA întrebarea 6	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Between People	759.349	339	2.240	201.984	.000
Between Items	691.257	6	115.210		
Within People Residual	1160.171	2034	.570		
Total	1851.429	2040	.908		
Total	2610.778	2379	1.097		
Grand Mean = 2.1903					
ANOVA întrebarea 7	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Between People	699.963	339	2.065	115.937	.000
Between Items	386.626	7	55.232		
Within People Residual	1130.499	2373	.476		
Total	1517.125	2380	.637		
Total	2217.088	2719	.815		
Grand Mean = 1.8202					

Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they use the Internet to find information about IT & C products. The responses clearly indicate the frequent use of the Internet for this purpose (Chart no. 1). The average of scores obtained in this case is 1.9, which corresponds to a frequent use of the Internet. Therefore, the first research hypothesis *"The people investigated frequently use the Internet to search for information about IT & C products"* was confirmed. Consequently, companies that sell such products should be particularly attentive to both the choice of products, as well as disclosures about them. Also, correlation with promotional campaigns for such products is a method of quickly capturing young people's interest and easily reaching them. High frequency of using the Internet to search for information about IT & C products should guide companies' concern to the use of multi-channel strategies for the distribution of products.

Another question was designed to identify the orientation of IT & C products' procurement, outlining certain habits. In this case, the distribution of responses indicates a preference to companies with both traditional and on-line sales, followed by those who sell only in stores.

Companies that sell IT & C online only are preferred by the fewest respondents, approx. 12% (Chart no. 1).

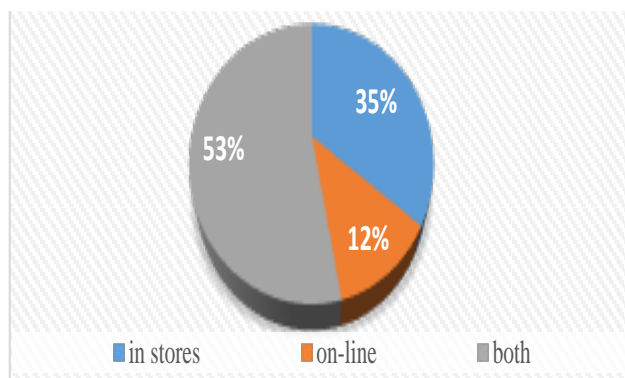


Chart no. 1: The orientation of IT&C products' procurement

This distribution may seem surprising, especially if we are making a connection with using the Internet to search for information related to these products. In addition, individuals investigated have knowledge of information technology. The explanation could lie in the lack of confidence for information conveyed in the virtual environment, the difference between images on websites and the actual product, the lack of harmonization between products on various websites and the promotional campaigns running on different media, as well as the malfunction of e-commerce - only companies. Also, the high price can justify the need for additional tests and demonstrations of the product functionality, which the traditional trade can satisfy. Therefore, the research hypothesis *"Respondents prefer to purchase IT & C products in the online environment"* has been invalidated.

The use of testing pairs of samples method was intended to highlight the relationship between people who use the Internet as a means of finding information about IT & C products and expressing opinions about purchasing these products in the virtual environment. The test results indicate that there are differences between people seeking information and the ones expressing opinions online (Table no. 8). The difference between the averages of the two variables is 2.81, with a direct correlation, but with rather low bond strength, respectively $r = 0.178$, at a significance level of 1%. T-test value of -33 793, for 339 degrees of freedom is significant, leading to the acceptance of the hypothesis of the existence of differences between information seekers and those expressing opinions online, meaning that the latter are far fewer. As such, the research hypothesis *"People who use the Internet to search for information needed for acquisition of IT & C products do not express their opinions in the online environment after they have purchased"* was confirmed.

Table no. 8. Statistics of the paired samples

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Paired	Internet use	1.9000	340	1.06514	.05777
	Expressing opinions	4.7118	340	1.30999	.07104

Paired Samples Correlations

		N	Correlation	Sig.
Paired	Internet use & expressing opinions	340	.178	.001

Paired Samples Test

Paired Samples Test								
Paired	Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Internet use - expressing opinions	-2.81176	1.53422	.08320	-2.97543	-2.64810	-33.793	339	.000

The same method was followed to verify the hypothesis about the relationship between Internet use and place of purchase of IT & C products. The two variables are inversely correlated with a reduced intensity of the relationship ($r = 0.152$, at a significance level of 1%) (Table no. 9). This means that although most respondents use the Internet to search for information about the IT & C products, they don't mainly buy them in online shops. Also, the value of the t - test = - 3,444, for 339 degrees of freedom is significant, indicating that there are differences between people seeking information about IT & C products on the Internet and people buying online, the latter being less. Therefore, the research hypothesis *"Even if they use the Internet to search for information, there are differences between the interviewees regarding the place of purchase of IT & C products"* was confirmed.

Table no. 9. Statistics of the paired samples

Pair	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Internet use	1.9000	340	1.06514	.05777
Product purchase	2.1824	340	.92282	.05005

Paired Samples Correlations

	N	Correlation	Sig.
Internet use & product purchase	340	-.152	.005

Paired Samples Test

Pair	Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Internet use - product purchase	-.28235	1.51189	.08199	-.44363	-.12107	-3.444	339	.001

Also, the relationship between the place of IT & C products' purchase and online exposure of opinions about these products was monitored as a specific direction in the research investigation. Data (Table no. 10) indicate a negative correlation, of rather low intensity, between the two variables ($r = - 0.186$, at a significance level of 1%). This means that opinions' exposure in the online environment is made more likely by people who do not purchase through e-commerce. In this case, also, the t-test is significant, its' value being -

26.852, for 339 degrees of freedom. As such, it can be said that there are differences between individuals investigated in regard of their expression of views in the online environment, depending on where they purchase these products. The minus sign of the t - test indicates that people who buy products through e-commerce don't express opinions in the virtual environment to the same extent. Consequently, the research hypothesis "*There are differences between respondents in terms of exposure of views in the online environment according to the place of purchase of IT & C products*" was confirmed.

Table no. 10. Statistics of the paired samples

Pair	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
product purchase -	2.1824	340	.92282	.05005
expressing opinions	4.7118	340	1.30999	.07104

Paired Samples Correlations

Pair	N	Correlation	Sig.
product purchase & expressing opinions	340	-.186	.001

Paired Samples Test

Pair	Paired Differences Test					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
product purchase – expressing opinions	-2.52941	1.73690	.09420	-2.71470	-2.34413	-26.852	339	.000

In conclusion, the research hypotheses 1, 3, 4 and 5 were confirmed, while the 2nd hypothesis was disproved. This can lead to a new direction of investigation, through another research, in order to identify obstacles to young people using IT & C products' e-commerce. This research is needed, given that the information technologies are known and used, while accessing sites of companies that sell these products is made with high frequency.

Conclusions

This paper tries to deepen understanding of the ways consumers use multiple channels of modern retailing. The study results indicate that using more channels is leading to visit of traditional stores in order to actual buying and reduces consumers' loyalty to a particular retailer.

The research undertaken allowed the identification of some useful issues in the activity of companies that sell IT & C, in terms of an important segment of their market, respectively youth with higher education.

The preference of young people for companies that use multi-channel strategy in the distribution of their products appears somewhat surprising. Hence the idea that firms should diversify distribution channels, pay attention to virtual environment and to the consistency of their messages.

Price and quality of IT & C products remain basic criteria in their selection. As such, careful choice of the product assortments they are selling and improving negotiating capacity with suppliers can be the source of competitiveness. Exclusive orientation to selling the products in the online environment is not favored by practicing the same level of price as in traditional stores, knowing that in the latter case the running costs are much higher than for e-commerce.

A concern of companies should be targeted at finding practical solutions to provide confidence in online transactions. They can refer both to the information provided on the websites, but also to the choice of payment methods, the delivery's conditions and terms, the selection of courier companies, the guarantees and the service offered.

The limitations of this research relate to its type, exploratory research, and the sampling method, which does not allow the representativeness of the results. However, we can say that students are an important customer segment for companies selling IT & C products. As such, they represent a relevant source of information for the activity of the companies in this field.

Other lines of investigation, in future research, may be set to identify the factors that favor or discourage e-commerce of IT & C products, to highlight the features of the buying of these products behavior, as well as grasping of the best practices that companies in this field apply in order to create a positive purchasing experience for consumers.

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