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The role of Internet in marketing activities aimed at Gen Y consumers, based on selected regions of Poland, Czech Republic and Slovakia

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Abstract: Dynamic development of the Internet and electronic devices favours also its use in the marketing activity of enterprises what manifests itself in dynamic development of e-commerce or the use of the Internet for communication. Aim of this article is to evaluate the possibility of using Internet in the marketing activities oriented towards Gen Y consumers. The authors of this article focused on using Internet as a channel of communication and distribution with Gen Y consumers. The authors characterize state and use of IT technology by the producers and consumers, present opinions of the young consumers concerning the use of Internet. Territorial scope of research concerns the regions within the border area of Poland, Czech Republic and Slovakia. We used in this research, sources of information in a form of domestic and foreign literature of the subject, available statistics illustrating analysed phenomena, as well as our own polls concerning the analysed issue. Survey was carried out in 2013 and 2014, among Generation Y consumers, coming from the border area of Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia.

Keywords: Generation Y, Internet, marketing communication, e-commerce, Poland, Czech Republic and Slovakia, Internet, social media, social networking

JEL codes: M 30, D 01, M 15.

1. Introduction

Widespread use of the Internet and electronic devices in a daily life favours also its use in the marketing activity of the enterprises, what manifests itself in the dynamic development of e-commerce, use of the Internet for communication and innovative solutions. Wider application of

information and communication technologies favours improving efficiency of the whole economy, improving competitiveness, as well as fuller fulfilment of society and economy needs. Development of Internet contributed to a breakthrough in life of humans, causing that people, who use this medium, have the access to enormous amount of information and knowledge. Using web browsers and other Internet tools enable simple and fast access to a given issue. Other aspect of information published in the Internet, is the possibility of its fast update. Internet provides many possibilities of communication between company and clients. Thanks to the Internet, clients acquire ability of easy recognition, comparison and verification of company offer. They also have the possibility of purchasing goods in this way. Organizing e-commerce favours reduction of costs of maintaining trade areas, reduction of administration, enables sale by 24 hours a day. It should be noted that Internet promotes consumption and helps companies in their development, therefore it causes domestic economic growth (Venohr and Meyer, 2007: 2).

We can observe in Poland, Czech Republic and Slovakia, the popularization of Internet and electronic devices. In these countries, the access to the Internet has had over 70% of households and this number constantly increases, this trend is particularly observed in Czech Republic. Dynamic growth in these marketing areas is also influenced by the widespread use of IT technologies by the enterprises. Leader in this aspect, in the analysed group is Slovakia (Eurostat, 8th July, 2014). As it was mentioned before, first level of Internet use in marketing is the popularization of e-commerce in the analysed countries. On the other hand, it should be noted that Internet is not only a channel of distribution but it is also the unlimited space of communication, especially among young consumers. For many of them, it is becoming a source of information about the market offer, their participation in the forums or social networks, as well as place for creating new products, the so-called prosumption.

Aim of this article is to evaluate the possibility of using Internet in the marketing activities oriented towards Gen Y consumers, based on the selected regions of Poland, Czech Republic and Slovakia. The authors characterize Internet as a channel of communication and distribution, presenting state and the use of IT technology in marketing activity of the enterprises. We used in this research, the sources of information in a form of domestic and foreign literature of the subject, available statistics illustrating analysed phenomena as well as our own survey concerning the analysed issue. The questionnaire survey was conducted in 2013 and 2014, among Generation Y consumers, coming from the border area of Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia.

2. Method of research

In the research proceedings, both secondary and primary sources of information were useful. The authors analysed the statistical data available in the Eurostat database. It enabled evaluation, within the scope of access and use of Internet, by the inhabitants from the selected countries – Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia. In addition, the search for the appropriate literature on the using the Internet in marketing adoption research began with four bibliographic databases, that is: ProQuest, EBSCO, Emerald Management Plus, and ISIWeb of Knowledge. It was achieved through developing a relevant set of keywords and phrases such as “Gen Y”, “marketing communication”, “e-commerce”, “Poland”, “Czech Republic”, “Slovakia”, in the all possible permutations and combinations (taking into consideration the logical AND, and OR as an appropriate) and conducting the corresponding search. Frequency analysis enabled to strengthen theoretical considerations and identification of the key publications for conceptualization and operationalization of the research issue. The questionnaire survey was conducted on the sample of the young consumers, living in the border regions of Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia. This research refers specifically to the Gen Y consumers (also called Millennial Generation) because they are differentiated from other generations through technological fluency (Kotler and Armstrong, 2008: 115-135). Gen Y individuals are open-minded, optimistic, goal oriented, and highly motivated toward their perceptions of success. Research predicts that Gen Y consumers are relatively early adapters of mobile technology and they are more likely to be open to mobile marketing contact and buying habits of Gen Y are more heavily influenced by the Internet sources than by any other media. They are self-absorbed and self-reliant with a strong sense of independence and autonomy. They have a greater need for peer acceptance, connecting with their peers, fitting in, and social networking (Donnelly, 2008: 19-20). Thus, it is important for marketers to capture the impact of technologically driven sources of information on the establishment of loyalty orientations among this unique cohort of the technologically savvy consumers.

Before commencement of proper research, pilot research was carried out, which enabled to verify a measurement tool and eliminate potential irregularities. Cronbach’s coefficient values were chosen to examine the internal consistency among items on a scale. Hinton, Brownlow, McMurvay and Cozens (2004) have suggested four different ranges of reliability, i.e. the

excellent range (0.90 and above), the high (0.70 – 0.90), the high moderate (0.50 – 0.70) and the low (0.50 and below). In our research were Cronbach's coefficient values in second interval. Thus, it can be concluded that the scale has internal consistency and reliability.

Thus, we may conclude that the scale has an internal consistency and reliability. Taking into account the problem of equivalence in the international research, in elaboration of measurement tool was applied return translation, what enables to discover most of the differences related to translation. Questionnaire was prepared in Polish, Slovakian and Czech language. Only questionnaires, which were classified as complete and suitable for further analysis, were applied in the research proceedings. Gathered data were edited what enabled its analysis and interpretation. The newest version of STATISTICA software, having many extended possibilities of processing and presentation of research results, was used for the statistical analysis.

The questionnaire survey was conducted in 2013 and 2014, among 750 consumer representing Generation Y consumers, coming from the border area of Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia. In research proceedings were applied only questionnaires which were classified as complete and suitable for further analysis. It was 731 questionnaires. Gathered data were edited what enabled its analysis and interpretation. Research constitute significant cognitive material and the knowledge that comes from it can serve as a basis to formulate marketing strategies by the entrepreneurs working in sector of Gen Y consumers in the border areas.

3. Internet in marketing activities – review of literature

Internet has become a central element of communication and trade, both for the enterprises and the non-profit organizations. Whereas, for the consumers, it is very important source of searching for information, shopping, communication and leisure (Himel and Munck, 2000: 18). Entrepreneurs make use of the Internet in marketing in many ways. Above all, it has become a significant channel of communication and distribution. From among the marketing communication tools we can also list: web pages, activities available in social media, e-mail marketing (newsletter and advertising in a form of e-mail), online advertising (graphics and video), marketing search engines (SEM), viral marketing and e-PR. Due to relatively lower costs, using Internet in the activity of enterprise gives a possibility to equalize opportunities for the new companies (Bandyopadhyay, 2001:16-24). It is worth noticing that fast development of Internet

contributed to the development of integrated marketing communication and change of marketing philosophy, from transactional marketing to relationship marketing. That's why, the authors, in their analyse of using Internet in the marketing communication, analyse only these forms of communication, which are of two-way character and give a possibility to build relations, for example, social network services. There is observable tendency in the internet for creating communities around the given issue, which can be mutual interests, needs or experiences. As Prahalad and Ramaswany (2004: 1-2) suggest: within the community, people share their ideas and feelings without paying attention to geographical or social barriers, revolutionizing in this way emerging markets and transforming already existing. Marketing communication available in social media include (Dorčák et al., 2011: 135-144):

- 1) Social networks – blogs, videos, audio, photos, chats, discussions etc.
- 2) Business networks – connecting people in business, in particular, people from higher and highest managements.
- 3) Social bookmarking systems – sharing information, articles, in particular, in a form of bookmarks.
- 4) Pages with features enabling to vote on quality of content – voting on articles gets them on top positions, the more people read them, the more people vote for them.
- 5) News – web pages with displayed news, where users can share the content and add comments.

Management of these communities is indispensable for optimal use and development of proper relations (Fill, 2001: 409-425). Therefore, internet can be perceived as a means increasing tendency of organization to exchange information and contributing to its more often providing, which are also perceived as a rate of high quality of communication. If companies want to achieve success, they must search for the new channels of communication and advertising means, which would include potential clients in a surprising and funny way (Dorčák and Pollak, 2010: 129). Undoubtedly, new technologies, especially Internet, have significant and durable influence on development of marketing. Paradigm has been changed, changing the way of thinking of the marketing managers. As Molenaar emphasizes (2012), using IT and Internet within the scope of marketing, has an impact on building new business models. We can notice that, in the Molenaar's model, application of the Internet in marketing communication constitutes a complex approach in the marketing orientation.

Studies existing in literature mostly focus on behaviours of consumers towards communication via Internet in the regional extent. On the other hand, in case of available results of research in the international-scale, there is a lack of deeper reference to this age group. Some of the aspects of research raised by the authors of this study were also raised by other investigators. Authors used some of the results of research in this study. The sere research were done by Bartosik - Prugart (2011) concerning cultural conditions of behaviours of young Europeans and research within the scope of social media, including American research: Baym, Zhang, Kunkel, Ledbetter, Mei-Chen, (2007: 299-316), Baym, Zhang, Lin, M. (2004: 231-247), Lenhart, Purcell, Smith, Zickuhr, (2010), Pempek, Yermolayeva, Calvert (2009: 227-238), Quan-Haase, Young (2010: 350:361), Sheldon (2008: 38-53) and research of BIGresearch [33] concerning inhabitants of European Union as well as research of (2008) concerning Japan society. Marketing managers must understand how behavior of Gen Y mobile app users so that they can effectively segment their target market and develop the most user-friendly and credible mobile source for their product or service information (Keith, 2011: 27-28).

4. Internet in Poland, Czech Republic and Slovakia

Possibility of using Internet as a channel of distribution and communication is significantly determined by the access to this medium in the particular countries. Analysis of available statistical data indicates that the share of households having access to the Internet, also broadband, in the European Union systematically increases. In 2006, only 30% of the households had the access to the broadband Internet. Whereas, in 2013, this number was 76%. Whereas, at that time access to the Internet was increased from 49% to 79%. Broadband access to the Internet is particularly increasing (Table 1).

THE ROLE OF INTERNET IN MARKETING ACTIVITIES AIMED AT GEN Y CONSUMERS,
BASED ON SELECTED REGIONS OF POLAND, CZECH REPUBLIC AND SLOVAKIA

Table 1. Households having access to the Internet at home and with broadband access in EU-27, 2006-2013 (% of all households)

	2006	2007	Dynamics 2007/2006	2008	Dynamics 2008/2007	2009	Dynamics 2009/2008	2010	Dynamics 2010/2009	2011	Dynamics 2011/2010	2012	Dynamics 2012/2011	2013	Dynamics 2013/2012
Internet access	49	55	112	60	109	66	110	70	106	73	104	76	104	79	104
Broadband connections	30	42	140	49	117	57	116	61	107	67	110	73	109	76	104

Source: own calculations based on Eurostat.

In surveyed group of countries, the largest access to the Internet have had inhabitants of Slovakia. However dynamics of this phenomenon is the largest in Czech Republic. In 2013, 78% of Slovakian citizens had an access to the Internet, this rate was less favourable in Czech - 73% and in Poland – 72%. It should be noted that in the surveyed countries, dynamics of growth of the access to the Internet is regular or above average in EU-27, what indicates that these countries clearly eliminate barriers dividing them in this area (Table 2). Increasing access to the Internet supports the idea of its common use in marketing activities.

Table 2. Internet access in the households, 2009 - 2013 (% of all the households)

Territory	2009	2010	Dynamics 2010/2009	2011	Dynamics 2011/2009	2012	Dynamics 2012/2009	2013	Dynamics 2013/2009
EU-27	65	70	108%	73	112%	76	117%	79	122%
Slovakia	62	67	108%	71	115%	75	121%	78	126%
Czech Republic	54	61	113%	67	124%	65	120%	73	135%
Poland	59	63	107%	67	114%	70	119%	72	122%

Source: own calculations based on Eurostat.

It is worth noticing that, in Slovakia and Czech Republic, the access to the Internet is not only increasing, but also the number of computer and Internet users is increasing. Gap in the area of education is clearly being eliminated. The largest group of computer and Internet users is in Slovakia and, in 2013 respectively - 82% and 81% and were higher by 4 percentage points than the average in EU-27. Least favourable rates were noticed in Poland – computer users were 66%,

and Internet – 65%. Explicit increase of percentage of users that use Internet as a source of information about products and services is also noticed. Leader in this area is Czech Republic, where 56% of Internet users use it to find information on goods or services (Table 3). Considering frequency of Internet use, it is worth noticing that leader in this category is Slovakia, where 61% of the people use Internet. Whereas, in Czech Republic – 54% and in Poland – 47% with average EU level – 62% (Eurostat, 8th July, 2014.). Internet is most often used by the young people, up to 29 years old. This phenomenon favours the use of Internet as a communication channel, particularly in the case of products addressed to this group of recipients.

Table 3. Use of ICTs and use of online services, 2010-2013 (within last 12 months, % of individuals aged 16 to 74)

Territory	Computer use				Internet use				Using internet in order to find information about goods or services	
	2010	2011	2012	2013	2010	2011	2012	2013	2010	2011
EU-27	71	73	76	78	69	71	75	77	56	57
Czech Republic	69	72	76	78	66	70	75	76	53	56
Poland	62	64	67	66	59	62	65	65	39	44
Slovakia	78	76	81	82	76	74	80	81	52	54

Source: own calculations based on Eurostat.

It is worth noticing that the analysis shows that most people use Internet at home. In 2013, Internet was used by 71% of Czechs, 61% of Poles and 74% of Slovaks. Every fifth Pole use Internet at work, it is often used at work by Slovaks and Czechs (respectively in 2013 – 37% and 26%). Considering the places where Internet is used, permanent tendency of more and more widespread use of Internet at home was noticed. In 2009 nearly half of Polish users used Internet in this place (54%), similar number refers to Czech net surfers (53%) (Table 4). It is a consequence of increasing access of individual consumers to the Internet, being result of development of IT technology and relatively lower prices for access to the Internet.

THE ROLE OF INTERNET IN MARKETING ACTIVITIES AIMED AT GEN Y CONSUMERS,
BASED ON SELECTED REGIONS OF POLAND, CZECH REPUBLIC AND SLOVAKIA

Table 4: Place of internet access, 2009 and 2013 (% of individuals aged 16 to 74 who used the internet in the three months prior to the survey)

Territory	Home			Place of work (other than home)			Place of education			At other people's house			Other place		
	2009	2013	Dynamics 2013/2009	2009	2013	Dynamics 2013/2009	2009	2013	Dynamics 2013/2009	2009	2013	Dynamics 2013/2009	2009	2013	Dynamics 2013/2009
EU-27	59	72	122%	27	32	119%	9	10	111%	16	22	138%	10	19	190%
Czech Republic	53	71	134%	23	26	113%	10	9	90%	8	11	138%	5	7	140%
Poland	54	61	113%	18	21	117%	9	8	89%	10	11	110%	5	7	140%
Slovakia	56	74	132%	34	37	109%	12	12	100%	18	16	89%	10	16	160%

Source: own calculations based on Eurostat.

Internet is currently becoming a significant channel of distribution, of which development depends largely on tendency of the clients to purchase in this way. Analysis of available statistical data enables to notice that nearly half of Europeans purchased in this way in 2013 at least once, what means an increase by 10% in comparison to 2009. In the surveyed group of the countries, most often Slovaks did the purchase in this way – 44%, this group increased by almost one third in comparison to 2009. In 2013, in Poland and Czech Republic, every third inhabitant at the age of 16-74 years old did the purchase in this way. Clear increase of interest in purchasing with the use of Internet is a positive signal for development of this channel of distribution and communication (Table 5).

Table 5: Individuals who ordered goods or services via the internet for private use in the 12 months prior to the survey, 2009-2013 (% of individuals aged 16 to 74)

Territory	2009	2010	Dynamics 2010/2009	2011	Dynamics 2011/2009	2012	Dynamics 2012/2009	2013	Dynamics 2013/2009
EU-27	37	40	108%	43	116%	45	122%	47	127%
Slovakia	28	33	118%	37	132%	45	161%	44	157%
Poland	23	29	126%	30	130%	30	130%	32	139%
Czech Republic	24	27	113%	30	125%	32	133%	36	150%

Source: own calculations based on Eurostat.

Not only clients take part in transaction organized via Internet, but also enterprises that acquire goods and services in this way. In 2013, access to the Internet had 98% Slovakian, 96% Czech and 94% Polish enterprises. Although, it should be noted that this rate varied, depending on the size of the enterprise. Degree of Internet penetration, among enterprises in Poland, is lower than average in UE-27, about 2 percentage point, while in Czech Republic is equal and Slovakia is higher by 2% (Table 6).

Table 6: Use of information technology by the enterprises, January 2010-2013 (% of enterprises)

Territory	Internet access			Fixed broadband connection			Mobile broadband connection			Website or homepage		
	2010	2013	Dynamics 2013/2010	2010	2013	Dynamics 2013/2010	2010	2013	Dynamics 2013/2010	2010	2013	Dynamics 2013/2010
EU-27	94	96	102%	84	90	107%	27	56	207%	67	73	109%
Czech Republic	95	96	101%	85	95	112%	18	29	161%	74	80	108%
Slovakia	98	98	100%	71	87	123%	36	43	119%	74	80	108%
Poland	96	94	98%	66	77	117%	21	44	210%	65	66	102%

Source: own calculations based on Eurostat.

Using Internet by the enterprises to realize purchase-sale transactions varies in the examined countries. Undoubtedly, leader in this group is Czech Republic, with 46%, while in Poland only 16%. Slightly advantageous rate is in Slovakia, where every fifth enterprises did the e-purchase. In Czech Republic, 80% of the enterprises have had their own websites, little less – 80% of

THE ROLE OF INTERNET IN MARKETING ACTIVITIES AIMED AT GEN Y CONSUMERS,
BASED ON SELECTED REGIONS OF POLAND, CZECH REPUBLIC AND SLOVAKIA

Slovakian enterprises, it is, respectively, by 6 percentage points more than in 2011. Less advantageous is the situation in Poland, where 66% of the enterprises have had their own website (Table 7). Within the scope of application of e-sales, to the group of leaders and not only in researched group, but in the scale of the whole EU-27, should be included Czech enterprises, as in the case of every fourth enterprise. Little above average in EU which was 18%, were placed Slovakian enterprises, while Polish enterprises were significantly below the average - in Poland, in 2013, were nearly 9% of enterprises (Table 7).

Table 7: Enterprises carrying out sale and e-purchase (at least 1% of revenues) r having website, UE-27, data from 2011 and 2013.

Year	Electronic sale (in %)			E-purchasing (in %)			Website (in %)		
	Czech Republic	Poland	Slovakia	Czech Republic	Poland	Slovakia	Czech Republic	Poland	Slovakia
2013	26	9	18	46	16	20	80	66	80
2011	20	8	7	33	12	14	74	65	74

Source: own calculations based on Eurostat.

Popularization of Internet as a channel of distribution and communication translates to a percentage share of sale by Internet in the whole sale. Analysing percentage share of enterprise turnovers, coming from e-commerce in the whole of turnovers. It should be noted that percentage share in UE-27 in 2013 was on the level of 14%, although its share depended on the country. In 2013, the biggest share across the whole UE-27 was noted in Czech Republic where it was - 26%, what meant to be more than 37%, in comparison to 2009. In 2013, it was 18% in Slovakia, what constitutes the increase by 7 percentage points, in comparison to 2009, while in Poland it was 11%, what constitutes the increase by 3 percentage points in comparison to 2009.

Table 8: Enterprise turnover from e-commerce, 2009, 2013 (% of total turnover)

Territory	2009 (%)	2013 (%)	Dynamics 2013/2009
UE - 27	14	14	100%
Czech Republic	19	26	137%
Slovakia	11	18	164%
Poland	8	11	138%

Source: own calculations based on Eurostat.

5. Internet as a channel of communication with Y Gen consumers – results of the research

Author's research shows that main motive that stands behind using Internet is searching for current information about economic, political and cultural events (almost 60%), and, in particular, it refers to Slovakian consumers. Internet is also an unlimited source of knowledge from different fields, it is indicated by over half of the surveyed people. Furthermore, surveyed people appreciate Internet for its entertainment advantages, what was particularly significant for Polish consumers - 58 %. Three out of ten people emphasize that they use Internet in order to gain information about the products and services that they want to acquire. Analysis of data indicates that men much more appreciate the possibility of downloading files than women (V Cramer rate is 0.457) and entertainment (V Cramer rate is 0.487). Women more often use Internet in order to maintain contact¹ (Table 9). This fact indicates that there are huge possibilities for application of Internet in communication with the young consumers. Network has become a „place of meetings” for the users, in order to form their opinions about given subjects, minimize uncertainty and costs about the decisions what they want to buy. In the examined community, there are no significant differences in the declared motives for visiting various websites, with respect to the nationality. Only Czech people expressed different motive „I visit internet websites, looking for entertainment” (Table 9).

¹ It also reaffirm research conducted among American students - Baym, Zhang, Kunkel, Ledbetter, Mei-Chen, (2007: 299-316) - shows that women are also more likely than men to use the internet for relational communication, such as contacts with friends, family, and romantic partners. Moreover, Sheldon (2008: 38-53) has found that overall women are more likely to use the social media to maintain relationships with family and friends, passing time, and entertainment, but men are more likely to use social media to meet new people.

Table 9: Motives that stand behind visiting websites by respondents

Motives for visiting websites	Indication in %		
	Czech Republic	Poland	Slovakia
to extend knowledge in a given field (NS)	50	51	52
to get current information about economic, political and cultural events (NS)	60	55	61
in search for an entertainment (IS)	26	58	50
to maintain contact (IS)	51	52	54
to gain information needed in work /studies (NS)	40	42	41
to gain information related to interests(NS)	37	43	39
to gain information about products/services, which I want to buy (NS)	29	27	28
participation in discussions and exchange of ideas (NS)	15	22	14
to educate (NS)	25	27	26
possibility of downloading available files and software(IS)	14	18	19

Explanations:

(IS) – statistical dependence significant between variable and sex at $p < 0,05$

(NS) – no statistical dependence significant between variable and sex at $p < 0,05$

Source: own analysis on the basis of questionnaire surveys

Building effective channels of communication requires good knowledge about addressee of announcement. Therefore, one of the issue raised in research was to determine favourite form of spending free time by the young consumers. In the whole collective, the most preferred are get-togethers (45% of indications in the examined group). Although, it should be noted that Polish consumers mostly prefer surfing the Internet (40% of indications in the group of Polish respondents). Different forms of spending free time with the use of Internet was the second indicated favourite form of relaxation in the whole researched collective. This form of spending free time was most often indicated by Slovakian consumers – 55% of surveyed people, then Polish – 40% and then Czech – 34% (Table 10). Significant participation of Internet in the life of consumers argues for purposefulness of its application as a communication and distribution channel. Lack of significant indications between respondents from different nationalities supports the ideas of applying standardization strategy in communication via Internet, with this group of consumers.

Table 10: Favourite forms of spending free time by the respondents

Form of spending free time	Percentage of indications			
	Czech consumer	Polish consumer	Slovakian consumer	The whole community
Social meetings, have very much acquaintances	49	35	56	45
Surfing the Internet, visiting social networks,	34	40	55	41
Sport, tourism	63	30	39	38
Watching TV	24	36	37	36
Reading books, guidebooks and press	34	32	25	32
Listening to radio, music	12	27	31	26
Cinema, theatre, philharmonic, concerts	32	13	18	18
Voluntary work	7	2	6	11
Other	10	2	5	11

Source: own analysis on the basis of questionnaire surveys

Analysis of obtained empirical material proves that over 80 % of surveyed people visit social networks, much smaller group has its own profile. The research proves that 45% of users at the young age, use social network websites at least once a day. It is worth noticing that similar high percentage of the users of social network websites was noted in American studies by Lenhart, Purcell, Smith and Zickuhr (2011), who have stated that 72% of all the users at the age of 18 to 29 have their profiles in social media. We come to the conclusion that social network websites, in the researched countries are very popular among young people, as well as the American societies.

Table 11: Reasons why surveyed people visit social networks

Reasons why you visit social networks	Indication in %		
	Czech Republic	Poland	Slovakia
Keeping contacts with acquaintances	70	76	54
Maintaining relations with acquaintances from present work/school	59	61	55
Watching and commenting contents published by others	38	47	32
Getting current information from different sources	35	33	30
Meeting new friends	30	33	24
Spending time playing cards, solving quiz etc.	24	30	27
Notifying acquaintances about current events form my life	27	28	25
Publishing different contents available for others, for example about products	20	27	23
Building image in the internet	7	12	8
Looking for job offers	13	12	8
It's hard to say	2	3	3
Other goals	3	3	2

Source: own analysis on the basis of questionnaire surveys

Analysis of data included in Table 11 enables to notice that, apart from keeping contacts with the family, net surfers also look for information about the job, studies, products or services, as well as they comment situations, phenomena, products and services, providing in this way important information for the producers about their purchase preferences. The highest tendency to share various contents in the Internet was expressed by the examined Poles, 47% of them „watch and comment contents placed by others” and 27% „post various contents available for others, for example, about products”. Such exchange of information, on the one hand, enables to obtain opinion from potential user/customer about an offer, on the other hand, can be conscious or unconscious form of commercial for a given producer. However, in both cases constitute the form of creating attitudes and behaviors of media community participants. Reasons that stand behind visiting, by the young consumers, social networks in the examined community do not vary significantly, with respect to nationality and education. Whereas, in some areas they varied, with respect to sex. Women more often use Internet in social context than men. Women also willingly posted current information about themselves.

We can conclude, without hesitation, that Internet together with its derivative tools has become a basic tool of communication among the young consumers. Social networks facilitate, above all, contacts with acquaintances, as well as maintaining, the so-called weak relations, that is, acquaintances that without these networks would be very hard to maintain (Table 11).

Similar conclusions indicate Pempek, Yermolayeva and Calvert (2009: 227-238), Quan-Haase and Young (2010: 350-361). As Urista, Dong and Day show that the social networking websites help to fulfill communication needs and desires. It is a convenient method of communication and provides the ability to stay connected with the friends and family, but with different rate and time. Communication with family and friends was the most popular reason why students use social media, with 91.7% of answers. Also, 59.4% of respondents answered that they use these websites for entertainment and 57.3% because of boredom. Additional reasons reported include planning activities (33.3%), companionship (11.5%), and other reasons such as communicating with people that are far away from them (10.4%) (Urista et al. 2009: 215-225).

The most popular Czech social networks are: blog.cz, libe.cz., spoluzaci.cz, rajce.net; libimseti.cz. Popular is also Facebook, which systematically takes away users from local networks. The most popular in Slovakia are: pokec.sk, blog.sme.sk, birdz.sk; zoznamka.sk;

blog.pravda.sk. However, the most popular in Poland are: Nasza Klasa, Facebook. Among the analysed group in particular countries, net surfers use following portals (Table12). High popularity of social networks supports the idea of its exploitation by the producers operating in this segment of advertising, or in a word-of-mouth marketing.

In terms of the Internet, marketers must know exactly how Gen Y individuals use media, which media they use, and when they use it For example, they expect an Internet experience to be interactive. This generation is impatient as they were raised in a world of technology and instant gratification. They value fitting in and connecting with their peers. Hence, social networking sites are important in that they allow them to connect with their peers regarding important issues (Luck, Mathews, 2010: 134). They prefer instant messaging, texting, and interacting with friends on social networking sites like Facebook or Twitter. As a point of interest, about one-quarter of today's teens check Facebook more than 10 times per day. Owning a landline phone is unlikely, although, a company could reach them through their college newspapers. Reach them digitally with websites and microsites/ campaign sites, web marketing (e-cards, banner adverts, pop-ups, sponsorship, content partnering, screensavers, desktop toys), e-mail, online chat, webcasting, interactive television (sites and adverts), short service (SMS), WAP/wireless Internet, CD-ROMs/enhanced CDs/CD cards, computer games (console), and digital radio. Content is king for this generation, moving content from platform to platform with no restrictions is a must. Most of them are creators, distributors, and users of content (Business Editors, 2002:1).

The authors of this paper, on the basis of field research, have drawn a conclusion that examined representatives from Czech, Slovakia and Poland of generation Y have convergent features. This fact supports the idea of applying standardization strategy in marketing communication, within this area.

Table 12: Popular social networks in the analyzed countries

Name of social network	Czech Republic	Poland	Slovakia
Blolg.cz	X		
Libe.cz	X		
Spoluzaci.cz	X		
Rajce.net	X		
Libimseti.cz	X		
Pokec.sk			X
Blog.sme.sk			X
Bircz.sk			X
Zoznamka.sk			X
Blog.pravda.sk			X
Facebook	X	X	X
Nk.pl		X	
Goldenline.net		X	
Fotka.pl		X	
Grono.pl		X	

Source: own analysis based on Gemius S.A.

Research of BIGresearch, carried out on the sample of over 15 thousand respondents, living in European Union, shows that as much as 47% consumers try to find information about the product in the Internet, before they buy them in the traditional shops. They are usually better educated, with higher incomes than the market average and price is not the key purchase factor. Products and services that are mostly checked are: food services (49%), RTV and household appliances (42.6%) and cosmetics 38% (Available at: <http://www.bloomberg.com>, accessed 18 July 2014).

Significant popularity of Internet as a source of information is an important argument in its use in communication with the young consumers. Innovative methods of communication with the young consumers via Internet are, for example, blogs. They are of personal character, include personal thoughts, remarks, comments, pictures, recordings (audio and video) – presenting in this way a world-view of the author (Olszański, 2006: 6-8). Nowadays, their thematic scope is so broad, that we can gain precious information, on the basis of which, we can decide what to buy. Network diaries can also have many other applications: they can be used as vortals <http://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wortal> devoted to specific subject matter, tools of marketing or communication (e.g. political). As far as personal blogs have usually one author, in other case,

blogs have often many authors (collective blogs). Producers can communicate with consumers via internet, also by bloggers, so persons that edit blog impersonating ordinary net surfer, whereas, in reality they are paid by the company that sponsor them. Research by Won-Seok et al. shows that the manager of the community has to emphasize the sense of a community, membership in particular, in order to increase the number of participants in a given community (Won-Seok et al., 2002: 55-71).

It should be noted that researches prove that attitudes and the behaviour of young consumers towards Internet are quite similar. It confirms the Parmar's opinion (2002: 1-49), that contemporary market of the young consumers has convergent features in a global scale, Choi, Ferler share this view (2004: 479-506). Virtualization of consumption significantly affect their purchasing behaviours. Attracting attention in an effective way requires, among others, modification of communication channels with this group of recipients. Producers and distributors should take active part in the building of online platforms of communication with Generation Y consumers. They should be present in the Internet. Particularly useful can be social media. In terms of the Internet, marketers must know exactly how Gen Y individuals use media, which media they use, and when they use it For example, they expect an Internet experience to be interactive. This generation is impatient as they were raised in a world of technology and instant gratification. They value fitting in and connecting with their peers. Hence, social networking sites are important in that they allow them to connect with their peers regarding important issues (Luck and Mathews, 2010: 134). They prefer instant messaging, texting, and interacting with friends on social networking sites like Facebook. As a point of interest, about one-quarter of today's teens check Facebook more than 10 times per day. Owning a landline phone is unlikely, although, a company could reach them through their college newspapers. Reach them digitally with websites and microsites/ campaign sites, web marketing (e-cards, banner adverts, pop-ups, sponsorship, content partnering, screensavers, desktop toys), e-mail, online chat, webcasting, interactive television (sites and adverts), short service (SMS), WAP/wireless Internet, CD-ROMs/enhanced CDs/CD cards, computer games (console), and digital radio. Content is king for this generation, moving content from platform to platform with no restrictions is a must. Most of them are creators, distributors, and users of content (Business Editors, 2002:1).

6. Conclusion

Following socio-economic changes in Poland, Slovakia and Czech Republic, cause that these countries gradually eliminate barriers that divide them from the highly-developed countries. Conducted research prove that, in these countries, Internet is dynamically popularized and is becoming an effective channel of communication and distribution, especially with Gen Y consumers. It is worth noticing that attitudes of the young consumers usually varies due to the place of residence, sex or education.

The study shows that:

- 1) In the analysed countries, access to the Internet has had in Slovakia – 78%, Czech Republic 73% and in Poland 72% of the households and this rate constantly increases. This tendency is particularly observed in Czech Republic, where growth rate of the access to the Internet, in 2013, increased by 26% in relation to 2009. Dynamics of changes within this scope is on the average level in UE-27;
- 2) In the analysed countries, more and more enterprises have their own website (Slovakia and Czech Republic- 80% and Poland -66%), what suggests the growing role of this channel of communication;
- 3) Analyse of percentage share of the enterprise turnover, coming from e-commerce in the whole turnover, shows that the biggest percentage share in the whole UE-27 was noted in Czech Republic-26%, what meant to be an increase by 37% in relation to 2009. The percentage share in Slovakia was 18% (dynamics of 64% in relation to 2009), Poland- 11% (dynamics of 38% in relation to 2009. Data mentioned above show that the countries of transformation period eliminate this barriers that divide them from European leaders in this area (Table 8);
- 4) Research carried out with the use of survey questionnaire let us notice that the young consumers appreciate saving money and time when they purchase via Internet, almost half of the respondents declared that (53,7% of the respondents) (Barska 2013: 353);
- 5) Four out of ten, as a favourite form of spending time, mentioned: Surfing the Internet, visiting social networks”, what indicate that, in this way, it is possible to get through to a large group of consumers. Research has proven that surveyed people, visit different kinds of social networks;
- 6) Research shows that main motive that stands behind using Internet by the surveyed is searching for current information about economic, political and cultural events (61% of Slovaks,

60% of Czechs and 55% of Poles). Every fourth person visit websites in order to gain information about services and goods that he/she wants to buy (29% of Czechs, 27% of Poles and 28% of Slovaks). Increasingly, consumers, on their own initiative, provide feedback to companies and each other concerning services and products, the highest tendency is among Poles. A significant share of the Internet in life of the consumers (Table 9), justified its use as a communication channel and distribution, especially, in the segment of young consumers.

This study makes an important contribution to understand the use of Internet in marketing addressed to young consumers. Conclusions resulting from these researches have application values and can be used to build marketing strategies addressed to Generation Y consumers in the examined areas. Preferences of the recipients and their trust to particular sources of information, must be taken into consideration when strategies of communication are being designed. Researches indicate that attitudes of consumers, within the scope of using Internet, do not vary significantly in the examined area, with respect to nationality and they undergo the process of homogenization. There is every indication to apply standardization strategies in the communication strategies realized via the Internet.

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THE ROLE OF INTERNET IN MARKETING ACTIVITIES AIMED AT GEN Y CONSUMERS,
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***Rola Internetu w działalności marketingowej adresowanej do konsumentów generacji Y,
na przykładzie wybranych regionów Polski, Czech i Słowacji***

Streszczenie

Dynamiczny rozwój Internetu i urządzeń elektronicznych sprzyja coraz powszechniejszemu ich wykorzystaniu w działalności marketingowej przedsiębiorstw, co przejawia się w dynamicznym rozwoju handlu elektronicznego oraz użyciem Internetu, jako medium komunikacji.

Celem artykułu prezentacja stanu wykorzystania Internetu, jako kanału dystrybucji i komunikacji z konsumentami generacji Y. W swoim opracowaniu Autorzy charakteryzują stan i wykorzystanie technologii IT przez producentów i konsumentów, prezentują opinie młodych konsumentów na temat wykorzystania Internetu, jako źródła informacji. Zakres terytorialny badań dotyczy regionów przygranicznych Polski, Czech i Słowacji. W postępowaniu badawczym zostały wykorzystane źródła wtóre informacji w postaci krajowej i zagranicznej literatury przedmiotu, dostępnych statystyk obrazujących analizowane zjawiska, jak również własne badania ankietowe dotyczące analizowanej problematyki. Badania zostały przeprowadzone w roku 2013 i 2014 wśród konsumentów generacji Y pochodzących z Czech, Polski i Słowacji.

Słowa kluczowe: Internet, generacja Y, komunikacja marketingowa, e-handel, Polska, Czechy, Słowacja, social media