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IN THE COUNTRY OR ABROAD? THE EUROPEANS DOING SHOPPING – RESEARCH RESULTS

Introduction

Consumers' purchasing behaviour is a significant research area both in the field of science and in economic practice (business). The knowledge of needs, preferences, approaches and motives of market choices made by customers constitute essential knowledge for each enterprise. Contemporary enterprises are subject to strong influence of existing megatrends surrounding them, including globalization and internationalization. Gaining competitive advantage on a global market is the objective that is difficult to achieve, particularly in case of lack of knowledge about consumers' behaviour on international markets.

The target market (market) does not have any spatial boundaries for many enterprises. For enterprises functioning in the European countries the target market is the so-called European market. The European market is combined by the community of demographic, economic and cultural trends. The effect of economic crisis is a general pessimism of consumers, careful consumption, rather limited shopping plans. The consumers in Europe are characterized by a similar type and style of consumption, targeted most of all at satisfying self-realizing and hedonistic needs. Consumers in all regions of the European Union are ethnocentric in their market behaviour and seriously take into consideration the so-called effect of the country the products originate from. There is no consensus as for the fact whether there exists the so-called euroconsumer or a typical European consumer, making his or her purchasing behaviour by the same motives, such as consumers in other countries. In Europe we may point out regional communities of culture and consumption or the countries, areas, in which people as consumers behave

similarly, they have similar values. Such communities are created by: (1) Great Britain and Ireland, (2) Germany and Austria, (3) The Netherlands, Luxembourg, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Latvia and Estonia, (4) Greece, Portugal, Spain, Italy, France, Belgium, Cyprus, Malta, and Slovenia, (5) Poland, Lithuania, The Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary.

We may indicate certain groups of consumers who behave similarly, regardless of the country's origin. Such groups consist of businessmen running their activity on international markets and young purchasers being continually influenced by trends imposed by phenomena of youth global culture¹.

Young consumers become a significant and developing market segment of a big purchasing power, which is noticeable in their market activity both on a traditional and on an electronic market. Young consumers are most frequently defined as economically independent people aged 15-24 and are parents' dependant². The segment of young consumers in Poland amounts nearly 5,2 million people (which constitutes 18% of Poles), whereby consumers aged 15-19 constitute 2,4 million people, and aged 20-24 – 2,8 million people. However, in Europe there are 59,7 million of young consumers (12% of the inhabitants of the European Union countries), including 28,2 million of people aged 15-19 and 31,5 million of people aged 20-24³. A contemporary young consumer is characterized by an enormous purchasing power, he or she often possesses own financial resources and independently does shopping for many goods and services. Young consumers are a basic entity on e-commerce market, they fulfil greater and greater role in purchasing powers of their household. They frequently fulfil the role of shopping initiators, advisers and even decision-makers, particularly in case of Internet shopping. In the segment of young Europeans the preferences concerning shopping places and social meetings concentrate on the commercial centres and galleries.

Young people constitute the biggest number of consumers using the Internet and doing shopping there, both in Poland and in the remaining countries of the European Union. The Internet users are mostly people with secondary education and incomplete secondary education (34%), mostly students and learners (28%). The most numerous age group of Polish Internet users is represented by people between 15 and 24 and 25 and 34 (respectively 24% and 25% of a total popula-

¹ J. Tkaczyk: *Eurokonsumment – mit czy rzeczywistość*. In: *Euromarketing. Przedsiębiorstwo i konsument w perspektywie integracji europejskiej*. Materiały z IV sympozjum marketingu międzynarodowego. Red. J.W. Wiktor, Akademia Ekonomiczna, Kraków 2003, pp. 69-70.

² See more: R. Wolny: *Młody konsument na rynku usług*. In: *Ekonomia. Kierunki badań*. CBIe Akademia Ekonomiczna, Katowice 2006, pp. 317-318.

³ Data for 2011. www.appssso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu (access from 28.02.2013).

tion). The profile of consumers purchasing online is very approximate to the total of the Internet users⁴.

There are many places where e-consumers may do shopping on the Internet. The places comprise Internet websites of producers (company portals, corporate portals⁵), Internet shops (including also a grouping of Internet shops in the so-called commercial passages)⁶ and Internet auctions⁷.

The objective of the article is to indicate places and countries, in which young e-consumers from selected European countries do their shopping. The article will demonstrate the results of international comparative research conducted in 2012 in 6 European countries based on a sample of 1800 consumers doing shopping online. The subjects represented young (aged 18-25) consumers, studying, both working and non-working, for whom the only financial income were incomes from their job and pocket money from parents.

1. Places for shopping online

The Internet does not spatially confine its customers. They may buy products and services both in their own country as well as abroad. In the European Union countries (in accordance with the Directive of European Parliament and the Council of Europe 2000/31/WE) we may freely do shopping in the shops and on Internet auction located in other countries. Several Internet shops do not want, however, to send their products abroad, which may result from bigger and bigger risks and higher costs of product delivery.

The studied consumers, regardless of the product category, most frequently do their shopping in our country (in Internet shops) and on Internet websites of producers (not distinguishing already here whether producers are located in our country or abroad) – Table 1.

⁴ Strategic Report IAB Poland, Internet 2011, Poland – Europe – World, pp. 16-19.

⁵ Corporate portal is an application, which enables the access to internal and external sources of information and provides a personalized, in accordance with the needs, information essential for making decisions. The task of corporate portals also comprises: presenting the products' catalogue, enabling to place orders via the Internet (Internet sale). See: K. Piądlowski: *Portale internetowe*. Cebid, Warszawa 2006, p. 16.

⁶ Internet shop is a commercial platform enabling (by means of the Internet) to present goods, placing an order and make payment.

⁷ Internet auction is a place on the Internet, where a registered user may participate in auctions as a purchaser or a seller.

Table 1

Shopping places of selected product categories on the Internet by consumers from studied countries (in %)

Item		Total responses
Food		
Web producer		31,9
e-shop	in the country	53,1
	abroad	4,7
Internet auction	in the country	8,3
	abroad	1,9
Heath and beauty		
Web producer		29,8
e-shop	in the country	27,2
	abroad	7,2
Internet auction	in the country	13,5
	abroad	2,3
Sport and tourism		
Web producer		28,1
e-shop	in the country	43,5
	abroad	10,6
Internet auction	in the country	13,8
	abroad	3,9
RTV and photo		
Web producer		27,6
e-shop	in the country	45,2
	abroad	10,5
Internet auction	in the country	13,8
	abroad	2,9
Clothing and shoes		
Web producer		23,5
e-shop	in the country	38,9
	abroad	15,2
Internet auction	in the country	17,4
	abroad	5,1
Books and multimedia		
Web producer		22,7
e-shop	in the country	50,6
	abroad	9,9
Internet auction	in the country	15,0
	abroad	1,8
Hardware and software		
Web producer		30,9
e-shop	in the country	41,1
	abroad	11,0
Internet auction	in the country	13,9
	abroad	3,1

On average every fourth studied consumer does shopping for products of selected categories on producers' Internet websites. The most indications concerning shopping on the producer's Internet website relates to food, computers and software. The most popular place for doing shopping online are e-shops in a given country. The consumers ordering food via the Internet buy it in the Internet shop in their country. Over 6% of subjects doing shopping for food online order food abroad.

The purchasers of health and beauty articles order them most frequently on the producer's website. Over 40% of consumers order cosmetics and pharmaceuticals in the Internet shops and auctions in the country, however not more than 10% of purchasers buy these products abroad.

Sport-tourist items, RTV and photography, computer and software are bought by over half of subjects in the country (in e-shop and on the Internet auction), over 14% abroad. There is a relatively big percentage of e-consumers, who buy clothing and footwear in foreign e-shops and on foreign Internet auctions (20,3%) – Table 1.

The tendency to Internet shopping abroad depends on the country of origin of the subjects. The highest percentage of e-consumers buying in foreign Internet shops and auctions is in Slovakia (55,3%). Almost half of studied e-consumers from Portugal and Romania (each 48%) also buy abroad. Every third studied young Frenchman and every fifth Pole also buy in foreign e-shops and on Internet auctions. Definitely the lowest percentage of e-consumers doing shopping abroad is in Italy. Only 16% of studied Italians declare doing shopping in foreign shops and on Internet auctions.

Foreign Internet auctions are places, in which studied e-consumers most frequently buy clothing and footwear. Other categories of products are purchased on foreign Internet auctions relatively seldom (the most rarely it concerns food as well as health and beauty articles).

The French most frequently do shopping online in Internet shops in their country. Over 70% of studied French people buy clothing as well as books and multimedia in domestic Internet shops, and on average 2/3 of products from different categories (Figure 1).

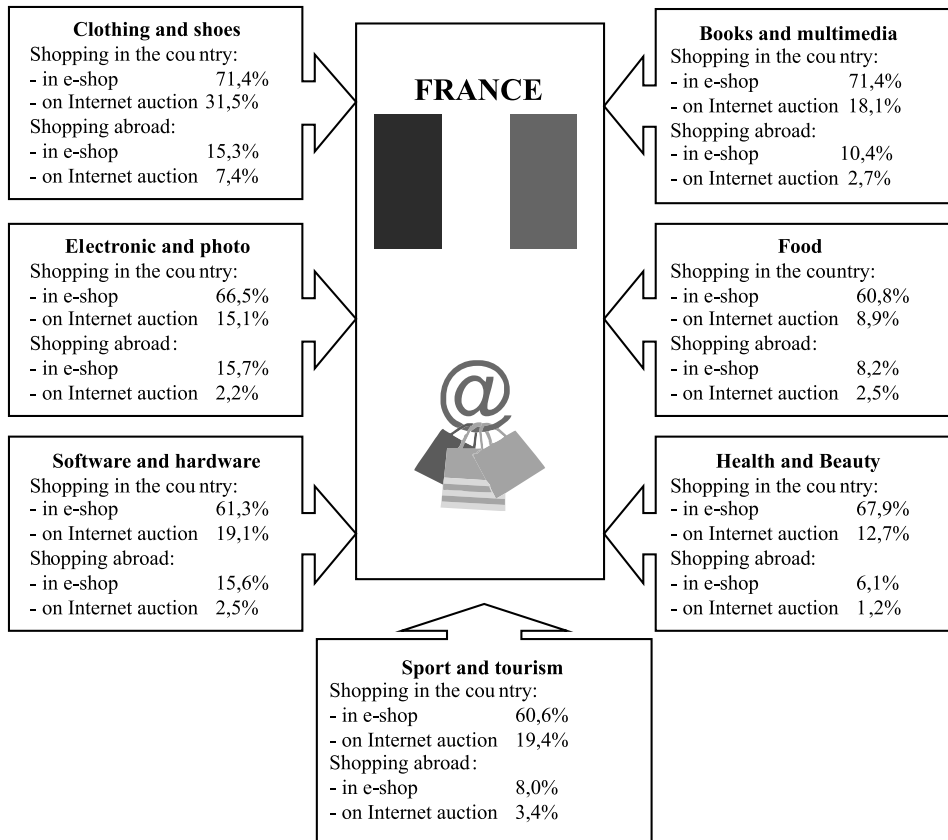


Figure 1. Shopping places of selected categories of products on the Internet by consumers from France (in % of indications)

The Poles are a group of e-consumers who are the most active on domestic Internet auctions. These are the respondents from Poland who definitely the most frequently (in comparison with the subjects from other countries) declare doing shopping on Internet auctions in the country regardless of the category of a purchased product (Figure 2). In case of clothing and footwear a domestic Internet auction is a shopping place more frequently indicated by Polish e-consumers than an Internet shop (this is an exceptional situation, which does not occur in any other case analysed both in subject-entity section and in a spatial one).

The most frequently indicated category of products bought by Polish e-consumers abroad is clothing and footwear (bought both in e-shops, and on foreign Internet auctions by almost 10% of the subjects) – Figure 2.

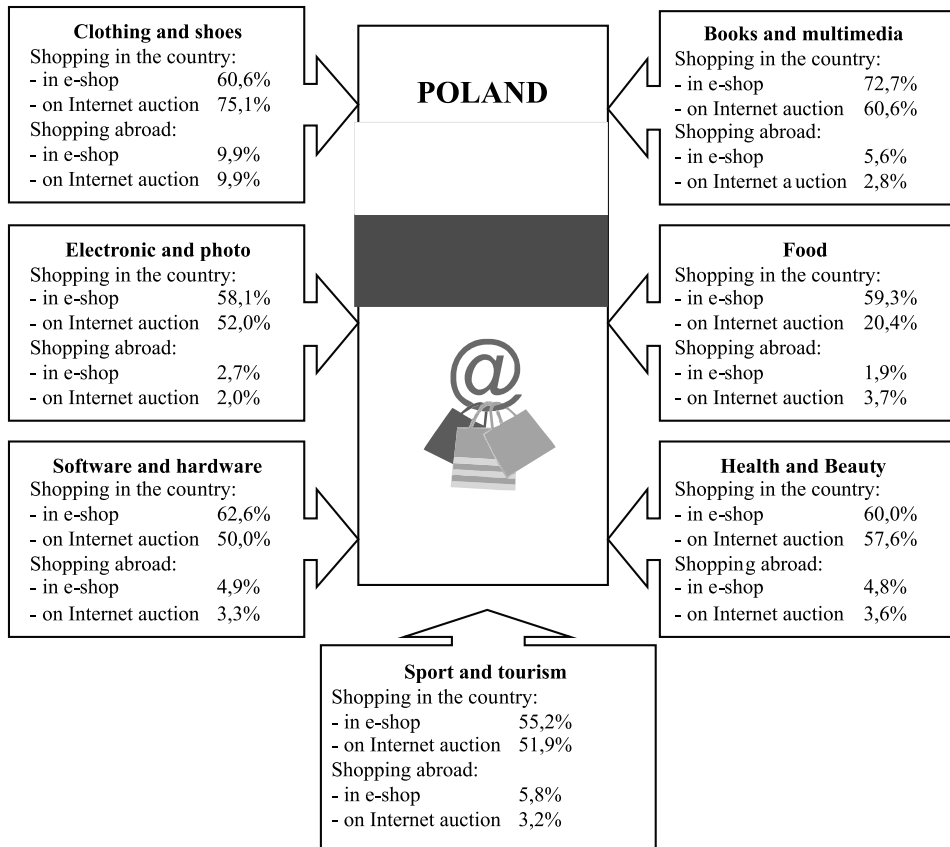


Figure 2. Shopping places of selected categories of products on the Internet by consumers from Poland (in % of indications)

Young Portuguese are e-consumers, who like doing Internet shopping abroad. Foreign Internet shops constitute a shopping place for almost 40% of Internet purchasers of clothing and footwear, 30% of purchasers of books and multimedia. Every fourth purchaser of products from a category of RTV and photo as well as computers and software, sport-tourist items, buys these products in foreign e-shops – Figure 3.

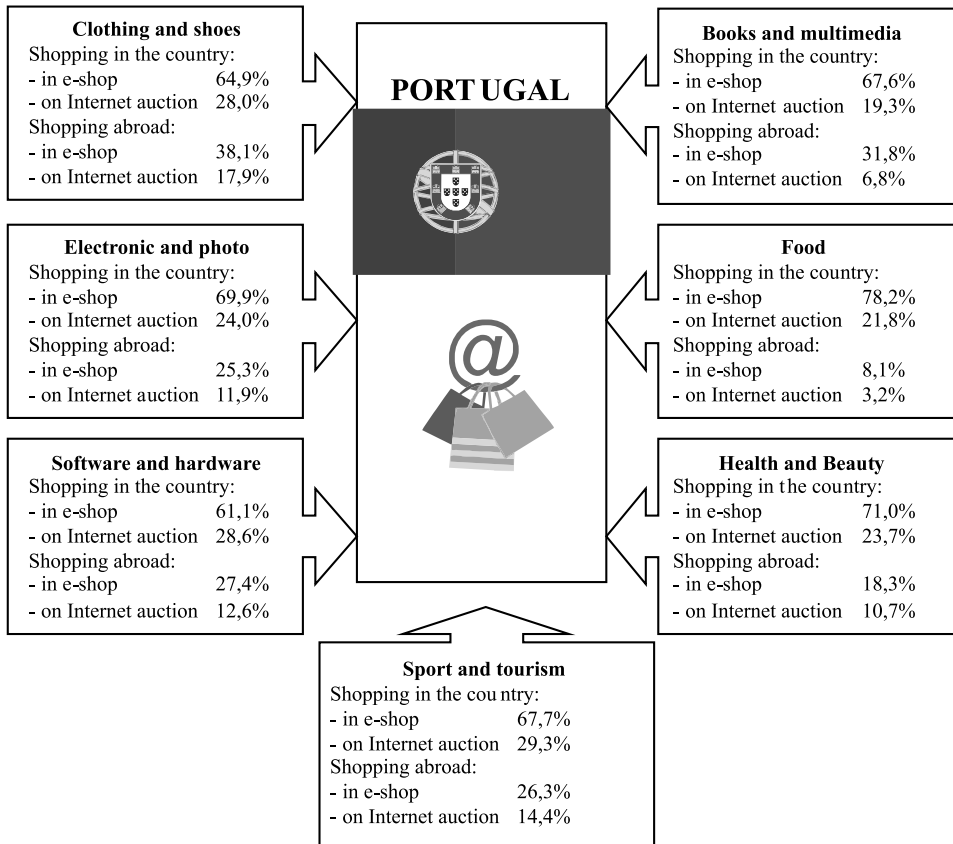


Figure 3. Shopping places of selected category of products on the Internet by consumers from Portugal (in % of indications)

The preferred Internet shopping place (regardless of the category of purchased products) for young Romanians is a domestic Internet shop. The percentage of purchasers buying on domestic Internet auctions is small, and on foreign ones even smaller. The Internet basket of shopping done abroad by a young Romanian comprises most of all clothing and footwear, more rarely computer and electronic equipment (Figure 4).

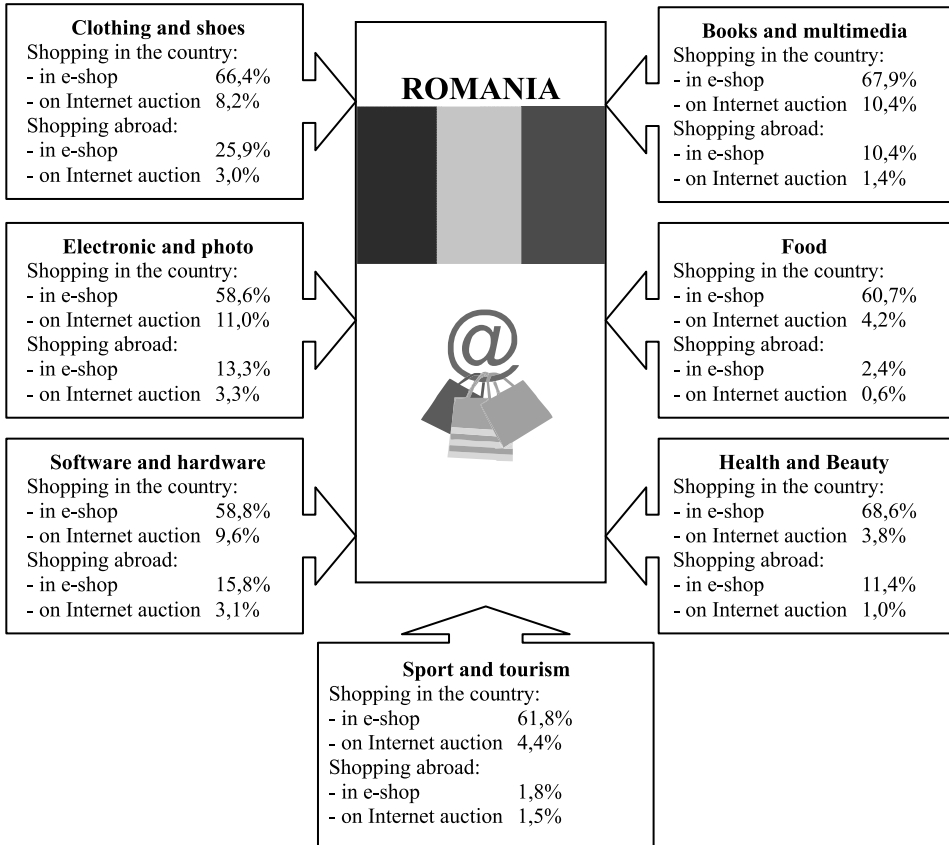


Figure 4. Shopping places of selected category of products on the Internet by consumers from Romania (in % of indications)

Regardless of the category of purchased products, domestic Internet shops constitute a basic place for Internet shopping for young Slovaks as well. There is a small percentage of Slovaks, who do shopping on Internet auctions. In the assortment structure of Internet basket of shopping done abroad the highest share is represented by clothing and footwear, the smaller one is represented by sport and tourist products, the lowest by food (Figure 5).

On the other hand, in the assortment structure of Internet basket of shopping done abroad by Italians computers and software have the biggest share. The Italians buy electronic and sport-tourist items abroad as well (Figure 6).

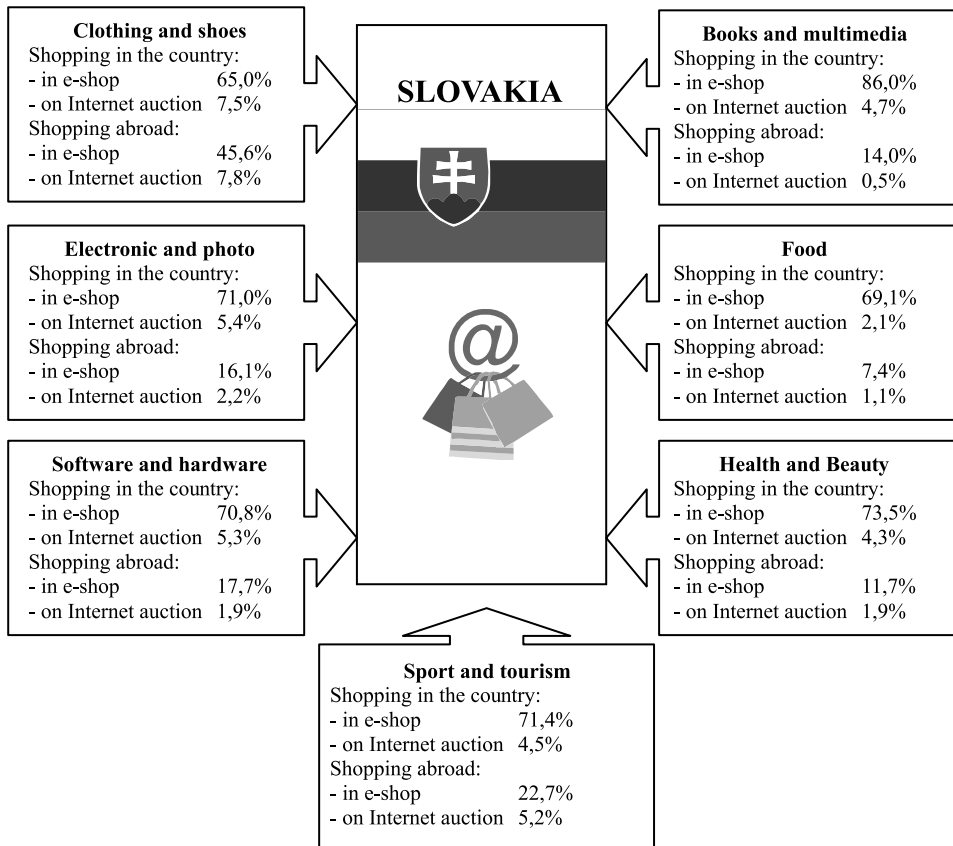


Figure 5. Shopping places of selected categories of products on the Internet by consumers from Slovakia (in % of indications)

2. The most popular foreign markets for online shopping

E-consumers from selected countries do shopping in 33 countries. The most popular foreign market for studied e-consumers buying abroad is the USA market. Almost all Portuguese buying abroad order goods in the USA, over 80% of the French and over half of e-consumers from remaining countries being analyzed in this research.

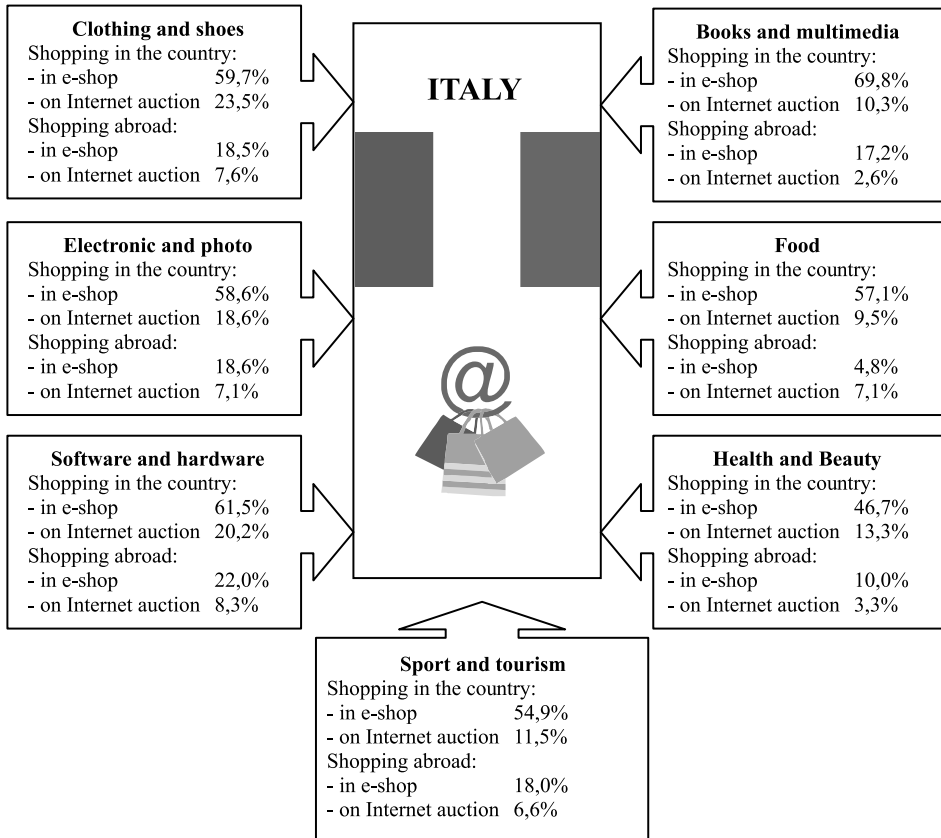


Figure 6. Shopping places of selected category of products on the Internet by consumers from Italy (in % of indications)

E-consumers buying abroad willingly select the Great Britain market. Among people doing shopping abroad almost 3/4 of studied Poles and the Portuguese, almost 2/3 of Slovaks and only every fourth Frenchman buy in Great Britain. Germany is the country in which e-consumers willingly do shopping abroad, almost 80% of Romanians, almost every third Italian and the Poles and only about 7% of the French doing shopping abroad buy products there. China is also a popular country in which e-consumers do shopping, almost every third Frenchman and almost every fourth Pole and the Portuguese doing shopping abroad buys there. Fewer consumers do shopping in other countries, although the exception is constituted in some cases by neighbouring countries (e.g. for Slovaks – Austria and the Czech Republic; for Italians – the Switzerland) – Table 2.

Table 2

Countries in which e-consumers from selected European countries buy on the Internet
(in%)

Item	France N = 91	Poland N = 67	Portugal N = 145	Romania N = 145	Slovakia N = 166	Italy N = 50
USA	82,4	58,2	97,6	57,2	53,6	58,0
Great Britain	28,6	76,1	82,8	42,1	68,7	58,0
Germany	6,6	35,8	13,8	79,3	17,5	30,0
China	34,1	19,4	18,6	10,3	9,6	8,0
Spain	12,1	-	27,6	17,2	-	14,0
Czech Republic	2,2	1,5	1,4	1,4	54,8	-
Austria	5,5	1,5	0,7	16,6	32,5	2,0
France	-	1,5	7,6	22,1	10,2	8,0
Japan	25,3	4,5	4,1	8,3	0,6	2,0
Italy	8,8	4,5	0,7	22,1	2,4	2,0
Belgium	3,3	14,9	0,7	2,8	1,8	2,0
Finland	2,2	1,5	0,0	0,7	1,8	14,0
Switzerland	11,0	4,5	-	1,4	3,0	4,0
Denmark	3,3	1,5	1,4	2,8	1,2	-
Poland	-	-	1,4	0,7	3,0	-
Portugal	2,2	1,5	-	-	-	-
Romania	-	1,5	1,4	-	-	-
Slovakia	5,5	1,5	-	1,4	-	-

Other: Bulgaria, Cyprus, Estonia, Greece, Ireland, Iceland, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Latvia, Malta, Norway, Russia, Sweden, Hungary, Turkey.

Source: Own research.

In the USA young consumers buy products from all categories. Almost half of the e-consumers buying abroad (the French, Italians, Poles and the Portuguese) in the USA buy computer and software. Books and multimedia are bought in the USA by over 40% of the French and the Portuguese buying abroad, by almost every fourth Pole and Romanian and less than 10% of Italians. On the other hand, every second, Italian and Portuguese buying abroad, orders clothing and footwear in the USA. The Portuguese buy the most in the USA among the remaining categories of products (Table 3).

Table 3

Products bought on the Internet in the USA by e-consumers from selected European countries (in%)

Item	France	Poland	Portugal	Romania	Slovakia	Italy
Computers and software	53,7	50,0	50,0	23,9	21,6	48,1
Books nad multimedia	47,4	29,4	40,3	26,8	19,0	8,3
Clothing and shoes	28,3	20,0	52,3	24,2	31,0	52,6
Electronic and photo	34,9	15,4	44,8	15,5	20,4	10,0
Sport and tourism	17,6	29,4	38,9	5,6	21,2	26,7
Health and Beauty	26,7	22,2	48,6	16,1	25,7	-
Food	-	14,3	50,0	15,0	-	-

Regardless of the category of products, Poles, Italians and the Portuguese constitute the highest percentage of shoppers doing shopping abroad who select Great Britain for this purpose. The Portuguese buy computers and software more frequently in Great Britain than other studied countries. Books and multimedia are bought by Italians and Poles, clothing and footwear by Poles and Slovaks, RTV and electronic equipment as well as products related to health and beauty by Poles, sport and tourist products by Slovaks, and food by Italians (Table 4).

Table 4

Products bought on the Internet in Great Britain by e-consumers from selected European countries (in%)

Item	France	Poland	Portugal	Romania	Slovakia	Italy
Computers and Software	3,7	21,4	33,3	13,0	15,7	37,0
Books nad multimedia	21,1	52,9	47,2	26,8	38,1	58,3
Clothing and shoes	20,8	45,0	29,1	16,2	44,4	26,3
Electronic and photo	11,6	46,2	27,6	12,7	14,8	20,0
Sport and tourism	17,6	29,4	20,4	7,4	34,6	20,0
Health and Beauty	6,7	33,3	17,1	14,3	20,0	16,7
Food	-	14,3	12,5	5,0	4,8	20,0

The most of Poles and Romanians buying abroad and the least of French people do shopping on the Internet in Germany. Computers and software in Germany are bought by almost 40% of Romanians doing shopping abroad as well as by every fourth Italian and Pole. RTV and photographic equipment in Germany are bought by almost 40% of Romanians and almost every third Italian. Almost half of Romanians doing shopping abroad buy food in Germany (Table 5).

Table 5

Products bought on the Internet in Germany by e-consumers from selected European countries (in%)

Item	France	Poland	Portugal	Romania	Slovakia	Italy
Computers and Software	3,7	25,0	6,4	38,0	13,7	29,6
Books nad multimedia	-	5,9	2,8	12,2	2,4	16,7
Clothing and shoes	3,8	17,5	4,7	24,2	4,8	5,3
Electronic and photo	4,7	7,7	3,4	38,0	11,1	30,0
Sport and tourism	-	17,6	9,3	13,0	7,7	-
Health and Beauty	-	22,2	5,7	14,3	8,6	16,7
Food	-	14,3	-	45,0	9,5	-

Conclusion

The access to international markets, which is given by the Internet and openness of young people to new technologies, innovations and marketing activities taken up by many companies functioning in the field of e-commerce causes that they are active e-consumers both at home and abroad. Young Europeans (which was also confirmed by demonstrated research results) willingly buy in foreign shops. The products most frequently bought abroad are: clothing and footwear, as well as computer elements and software. Young consumers are not afraid of the risk of Internet shopping abroad. Having positive experience in shopping in foreign shops and on Internet auctions, they willingly repeat their shopping. Young Europeans are a very attractive market segment for European business⁸.

⁸ Complete research results of purchasing behaviour of e-consumers from selected European countries (containing the characteristics of e-consumers and their purchasing process, as well as practical implications) are presented in the book "E-consumer in Europe – a comparative analysis of behaviour". Onepress, Gliwice 2013.

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Summary

For many companies market is no more geographically limited. The European market is united by a common demographic, economic and cultural trends. Consumers in Europe are generally characterized by a similar type and style of consumption. A group of consumers who behave the most similarly, regardless of their country of origin, are young buyers. The purpose of this article is to identify the places and countries where young e-consumers, from selected European countries, do their online shopping (based on the results of international comparative research carried out in 2012 in six European countries on a sample of 1800 people).

Keywords: e-commerce, consumer behaviour, international research