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The selected types of activities and motivators of multichannel purchase among the generation Y consumers

Wybrane typy działań i motywów zakupów wielokanałowych wśród konsumentów pokolenia Y

The purpose of this paper is to investigate whether and how the generation Y changes shopping channels in their consumption decision path. Linking the online and offline channels in consumer journey has been evaluated. The first part of the work presents literature review - shopping behaviour patterns among generation Y, online and offline channels in the purchasing process, multichannel and omnichannel perspectives. The second part of the work presents the results of authors' original empirical pilot research on the the young consumers' selected multichannel purchase activities and motivations to combine and exchang shopping channels. In this study, the selective quota sampling procedure was used. The study covers 235 students of the Faculty of Management at the University of Gdansk in 2017. The results suggest that multichannel purchase activities undertaken by the Y generation concerned a product contact, seeing it as well as buying and collecting it. What's more both saving time and money are the prerequisites for online shopping. Online and offline retails have to adapt to new forms of shopping that have become more popular among younger consumers. It is reasonable to conclude that multichannel and omnichannel are a challenge for enterprises targeting their offer to consumers belonging to the Y generation.

Keywords
consumer behaviour, purchase process, multichannel purchase, online purchase, offline purchase

Celem artykułu jest prezentacja wyników badań dotyczących zmiany kanałów zakupowych podczas procesu podejmowania decyzji zakupowych przez przedstawicieli pokolenia Y. Dokonano analizy przemieszczania się konsumentów pomiędzy kanałami online i offline w trakcie ścieżki zakupowej. W pierwszej części pracy przedstawiono przegląd literatury — wzorce zachowań zakupowych wśród generacji Y, kanały podejmowania decyzji zakupowej online i offline oraz perspektywę multichannel i omnichannel. Druga część pracy przedstawia autorskie wyniki badań pilotażowych, które dotyczą wybranych działań z zakupów wielokanałowych przez młodych konsumentów oraz ich motywów do łączenia kanałów zakupowych. Zastosowano celowo-kwotowy dobór próby. Badanie zrealizowano wśród 235 studentów Wydziału Zarządzania Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego w 2017 r. Wyniki sugerują, że wielokanałowe zakupy realizowane przez pokolenie Y dotyczą kontaktu z produktem, jego obejrzenia, nabycia oraz odbioru. Co więcej, zarówno oszczędność czasu, jak i pieniędzy są czynnikami motywującymi do zakupów internetowych. Zarówno sprzedawcy online, jak i offline muszą dostosować się do nowych form zakupów, które stały się popularne wśród młodszych konsumentów. Można stwierdzić, iż multichannel i omnichannel stanowią wyzwanie dla przedsiębiorstw kierujących swoją ofertę do konsumentów z pokolenia Y.

Słowa kluczowe
zachowanie konsumenta, proces zakupu, multichannel, zakup online, zakup offline

JEL: M31, O33, L63

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Introduction

During analysing of modern consumers' behaviour, nowadays it is difficult to separate online and offline shopping patterns. The traditional division into retailing (i.e. brick-and-mortar shops, B&M stores) and internet stores (i.e. e-commerce) is blurring. The modern consumers want to have an unlimited access to go through the shopping process. Thus, the trends indicate a combination of electronic and physical consumer paths. Nowadays, the phenomena of: ROPO (Research Online, Purchase Offline), SOPO (See Offline, Purchase Online), ROTOPO (Research Online, Test Offline, Purchase Online) and showrooming are inseparable item of decision making process, especially for young people.

It is worth getting to know the scale of those phenomenon observed among representatives of the Y generation and recognizing motivations leading to exchanging the shopping channels.

From an offline to online purchase — literature review

Shopping behaviour patterns among the generation Y

Literature presents that representatives of the Y generation are classified with, among others, the following nomenclature: Millenium generation, tech generation, next generation, com generation (Howe & Strauss, 2000), digital natives, net generation, digital generation (Prensky, 2001), Millenials. echo boomers (Solomon, 2016; Kavounis, 2008), network generation (Tapscott, 2010).

There is no consensus as to the precise division of society into generations. A membership of the Y generation determines the boundary dates of birth, which according to different researchers fall on a different years. Mostly these are people who were born in the 1980s and 1990s (Kavounis, 2008; Van den Bergh & Behrer, 2012).

However, without a doubt, it can be seen that representatives of the Y generation grew up in a technology environment being familiar with technological novelties and digital reality from the very early age. Probably they do not remember the time before digital evolution. Most of them cannot imagine everyday life without the smartphone associated with the use of online resources (Refuel Agency, 2015).

The Y generation is called the digital one, due to the fact that they coexist between the online and offline worlds in various activities of their lives. In today's era of rapid technological development, the young consumers purchase paths have become increasingly fragmented, blurring the lines between online and offline retailing. Nowadays, a customer journey is a sequence of online and offline touchpoints which a customer takes during a buying process or/and broader customer experience (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2016).

The e-shopper barometer study conducted by Kantar TNS in July 2017 among 24,871 participants across 21 countries in EU and Russia indicated that 61% of Millenials have already bought goods from a website located abroad. The generation Y representatives use the following devices for online shopping: 67% use laptops 55% use smartphones and 27% use tablets. Among Millenials, 53% of them choose trusted website brands, however, 42% choose to shop on a website based on recommendations from family and friends on social media. Moreover, Millennials would be more likely to purshase if a site offers same day delivery (82%) or evening delivery (79%). Furthermore, 81% of them, claim knowing the exact 1-hour timeslot will influence the purchase (Kantar TNS, 2017).

Some previous results indicated that 72% of younger Millenials (aged 18-24) and 76% of older Millenials (aged 25-34) think that there will be fewer traditional stores in 2030 than today (Comarch & Kantar TNS, 2017). Furthermore, 88% of younger Millenials and 86% of older Millenials believe that in 2030 most traditional stores will provide digital services to customers (Comarch & Kantar TNS, 2017).

Online and offline channels in the purchasing process

The balance between e-commerce and brick and mortar shops is one of the main topic dominating the debate in retailing. E-shopping has become a well-established practice in Europe and is growing in most countries. In Europe, in the last ten years, the number of online buyers has almost doubled, from 30% in 2007 up to 57% in 2017 (Eurostat, 2017). Moreover, 40% of Europeans who are buying products online are people aged 18-34 (Kantar TNS, 2017).

In 2017, 54% of the Polish Internet users made online purchases (GUS, 2017). The percentage of people aged 16-74 who ordered or purchased goods or services for private needs via the Internet (in the over the past 12 months) reached the level of 45% (this method of shopping involved over 13 million people). The factor that strongly encourages shopping on the Internet is 24-hour availability (as indicated by 82% of respondents). Such purchases are also seen as uncomplicated (by 41% of respondents), comfortable (by 44%), cheaper (by 33%) and taking less time (by 39%) than purchases in traditional stores (Gemius/Izba Gospodarki Elektronicznej, 2017). The value of online sales in Poland is constantly growing and in 2018 was estimated at 40 billion PLN (Interaktywnie.com, 2018).

Digitalization is one of the major megatrends observed in socio-economic life, gradually becoming an inherent item of the purchasing processes. Therefore, it is hard to isolate physical and digital shopping path; online and offline worlds are cooperating and uniting. Consumers migrate between different sales channels. Currently, both consumer behaviour and marketing activities are carried out on a multichannel basis.

Numerous studies point out various relationships between the use of online and offline channels in the purchasing process. Some results concentrate on cannibalization and synergy effects.

Gupta et al. (2004) indicates that tendency to change from the offline to online channels is determined by different factors. Consumers who are encouraged to purchase online perceive: a lower channel risk, search effort, evaluation effort, and waiting time online than offline. They also express stronger price search intentions online than offline. Thus, consumers who are attracted to offline channels perceive lower search cost and higher price search intentions online than offline.

Badrinarayanan et al. (2012) analyze the effects of offline-online compatibility on online store attitude and online trust. They point out, that trust in the physical stores of a multichannel retailer transfer to trust in its online store. Another study shows that offline service quality perceptions influence online service quality perceptions (Yang et al., 2013). Multichannel retailing is also found to be an effective mean for creating loyalty. Wallace et al. (2004) show that multiple channel points of contact are able to fulfil the consumer's complex needs which intensifies satisfaction and thus, retailer loyalty. Comparing multichannel to single channel, customers satisfaction is a better predictor of loyalty.

Other authors (Yang et al., 2013) emphasize the effects of cross-channel synergies and dissynergies on channel evaluation. The study shows, that the positive offline channel performance perceptions negatively influence perceptions of relative online channel benefits. However, the offline channel service quality and the confirmation of the offline channel service performance affect online channel extension decisions.

Herhausen et al. (2015) analyze online and offline integration effect on consumer behaviour. The study shows that channels integration increases perceived service quality of the online store and that increases overall as well as online outcomes. Furthermore, it was not found that integration had a negative influence on the physical store.

Heitz-Spahn (2013) explores the potential relation between channel and retailer switching behaviour during the decision making process. The study indicates that consumers adopt a more complex multichannel behaviour and visit several channels in order to find information on products and to rate those.

Pauwels et al. (2011) analyze the effects of introduction of a new website on offline sales. They indicated that it affects offline revenue in the short term, but the revenue impact in the long run depends on customer segment. Moreover, online price promotions affect offline revenue in the short time, while non-price communications affect it in the long term.

Several years later, Pauwels and Neslin (2015) examine whether the physical store cannibalizes online. They find that introduction of an offline store influences the revenue of online channels and catalog channels. Studies indicate that store introductions decreased purchase frequency in the catalogue channel, but increased purchase frequency overall.

Cao and Li (2015) confirms that cross-channel integration contributes to firm sales growth. Higher levels of channel integration are therefore expected to lead to higher sales growth. Hence, the authors finded that firms which have a stronger focus on a specific channel benefit less from cross-channel integration.

Multichannel and omnichannel perspective

Multichannel retailing also called multichannel commerce implies a division between the physical (brick and mortar shops) and online store (website). These approach is defined as the "set of activities involved in selling merchandise or services to consumers through more than one channel" (Zhang et al., 2010). Multichannel relies on the customer's ability to use different sales channels that are not integrated with each other. Consumers who are using different channels for different purchases are called multichannel shoppers (Trenz, 2015). Should be shown, that 43% of surveyed internet users, indicated that they buy products of a specific brand in more than one sales channel (Izba Gospodarki Elektronicznej, 2018).

The omnichannel concept is perceived as an evolution of multichannel retailing. "Omnis" (from Latin) means "*all*", "*universal*", or "*everything*", so omnichannel means "*all channels together*" (Lazaris and Vrechopoulos, 2014). In comparison, "*multichannel*" comes from the word "*Multus*", meaning "*much*", "*multiple*" or "*many*". In the omnichannel environment, customers move freely among different channels (physical store, mobile devices, online etc.), all within a single transaction process (Melero et al., 2016). Omnichannel retailing

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is defined as an extension of multichannel retailing, where the different channels are completely integrated to give a seamless shopping experience (Ishfaq et al., 2016). In an omnichannel environment it is difficult, if not even impossible for retailers to control this use (Verhoef et al., 2015). Omnichannel assumes a full integration of sales channels, altogether each of the channels creates an ecosystem that is fully consistent.

Many determinants of customer's purchase channel choice exist. Among some factors can be distinguished the following ones: price, service quality, ease of use, purchase effort, convenience, product diagnosticity, assortment, enjoyment, risk/privacy/security, payment options, speed of transaction, negotiation, social experience and post-purchase services (Trenz, 2015).

Therefore, undoubtedly, it should be emphasized that widely-observed digital transformation affects the change of traditional retail role. Thus, in the light of the above described trends, it is worth finding the answer to the following questions: when the Polish young people are changing their shopping paths and migrate between different channels, and finally, what are key motivators of those activities?

From an offline to online purchase — empirical research

Research method

Generation Y is considered a generation that grew up in the face of technological development. They are familiar with the digital reality. Therefore, according to the authors, it seems necessary to investigate whether young consumers also use the digital sphere in purchasing decisions.

The aim of this pilot study is to elaborate multichannel purchase activities undertaken by the Y generation. The specific scope of the study includsd the following:

- defining the selected multichannel purchase activities,
- recognizing consumer motivations of an online purchase.

To obtain the results a survey technique was employed using a paper questionnaire (PAPI). To identify the occurrence of the phenomenon positive-sense statements were employed. They were verified by using the 5-point Likert scale, in which 1 means definitely yes, and 5 definitely no.

In this study the selective quota sampling procedure was employed. The study covered the students of the Faculty of Management at the University of Gdansk in May–June 2017. Paper questionnaires were distributed and a total of 235 questionnaires were collected. Then six questionnaires were rejected due to the significant lack of data. Among the 229 respondents: 99.56% use the smartphone, 83.84% use the notebook / laptop, and 22.27% use the tablet. The characteristics of the respondents are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. The demography data of the respondents by gender and age (n = 229)

Gender				
	Female	Male	Lack of data	Total
n	158	71	0	229
%	69	31	0	100

Age in years							
	20	21	22	23	24	Lack of data	Total
n	6	142	40	17	8	16	229
%	2.62	62.01	17.47	7.42	3.49	6.99	100

S o u r c e: authors' research.

Data analysis

The questions included in the questionnaire concerned the occurrence of the selected types of behaviour. This does not mean that consumers always behave in this way but they tend to act like that.

Table 2. The respondents' declaration belonging to the digital generation

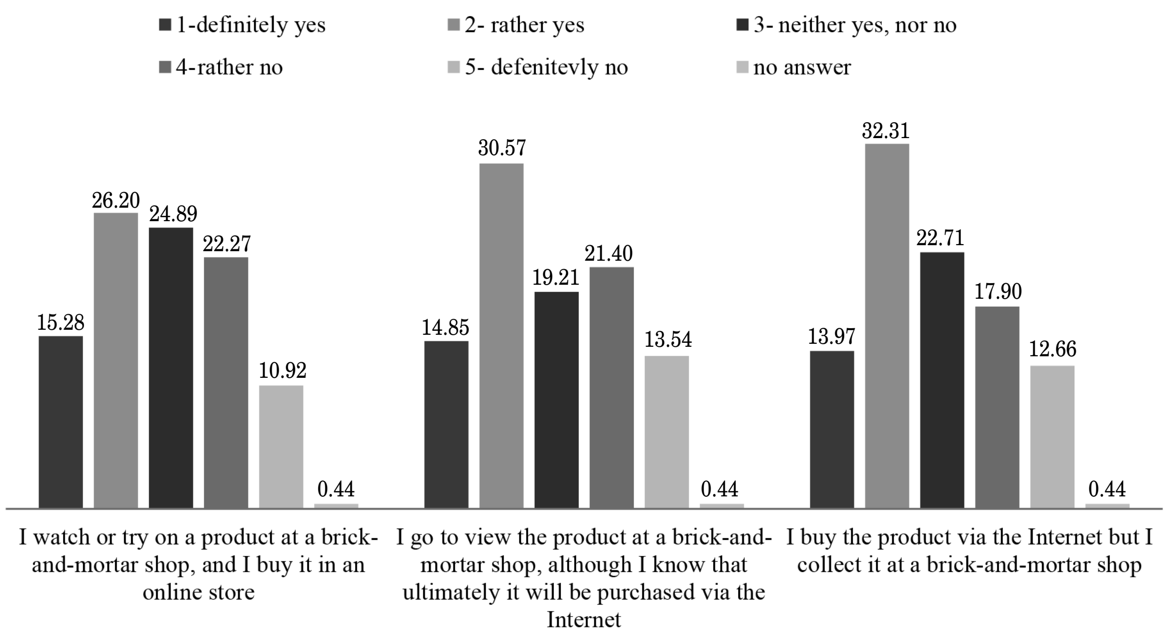
Items	Yes	No	I don't know	Lack of data	Total
n	195	14	19	1	229
%	85.15	6.11	8.30	0.44	100

S o u r c e: authors' research.

At the beginning in the context of the research the respondents were asked about their declaration of belonging to the digital generation. According to their responses 85.15% indicated that they belong to the digital generation, the next 6.11% of the respondents gave the negative answers. The remaining 8.30% didn't know their answers and one of the surveyed young people did not answer this question (0.44%). Thus, concluding, the majority of the surveyed people declared that they belong to the digital generation and only 6.11% didn't.

The first research issue was to identify the selected multichannel purchase activities

Figure 1. The multichannel purchase activities undertaken by the respondents (n = 229, %)



S o u r c e: authors' research.

undertaken by the representatives of the Y generation. The first item of this construct concerned the young consumers' contacts with the product at a brick-and-mortar shop and then buying it online (via the Internet). All the responses given to the presented statement have been included in Figure 1.

As it was indicated by the respondents, 15.28% of them definitely watch or try on a product at a brick-and-mortar shop, and buy the item at an online store. Another 26.20% of the respondents stressed that they rather act like that. Among the respondents, 24.89% declare that they do not do that or act like that. Following the outcomes, 22.27% of the respondents declare that they would rather watch or try on a product at a brick-and-mortar shop, then buy this product at an online store. The next 10.92% of the surveyed consumers indicate that they definitely do not agree with the presented statement. One of the surveyed young people did not answer this question (0.44%).

Recapitulating the obtained results, 41.48% of the respondents declare that they watch or try on a product at a brick-and-mortar shop but then they make purchase online, however 33.19% of the respondents disagree with such an opinion.

The second item of the explored construct concerned going to see a product, although the purchase is going to be made online (via the Internet). All the responses given to the presented statement have been included in Figure 1.

According to the obtained data, 14.85% of the young consumers' indicate that they go to view the product at a brick-and-mortar shop, although they know that ultimately it will be purchased via the Internet. Another 30.57% of the studied group rather prefer this type of behaviour. Among the respondents, 19.21% suggest that they neither act like that, nor do it. The next 21.40% of the respondents rather disagree with the presented opinion, and successively 13.54% of the young consumers strongly disagree with the statement. One of the surveyed young people did not answer this question (0.44%).

Summing up the results, 45.41% of the respondents pointed out that they go to see a product at a brick-and-mortar shop, although they know that eventually they are going to buy it online (via the Internet), however 34.93% of the young consumers disagree with such a type of behaviour.

The third item of the studied construct concerned buying a product online (via the Internet), but collecting it at a brick-and-mortar shop. All the responses given to the presented statement have been included in Figure 1.

Following the obtained data, 13.97% of the respondents indicated that they buy the product online (via the Internet), but they collect it at a brick-and-mortar shop. The next, 32.31% of the respondents quite accept such a description of their behaviour. Another 22.71% of the studied people pointed out that they do not agree or disagee with such an opinion. Among the respondents, 17.90% of them do not buy the product via the Internet and collect it at a brick-and-mortar shop, while 12.66% definitely disagree with such an opinion. One of the studied young people did not answer this question (0.44%).

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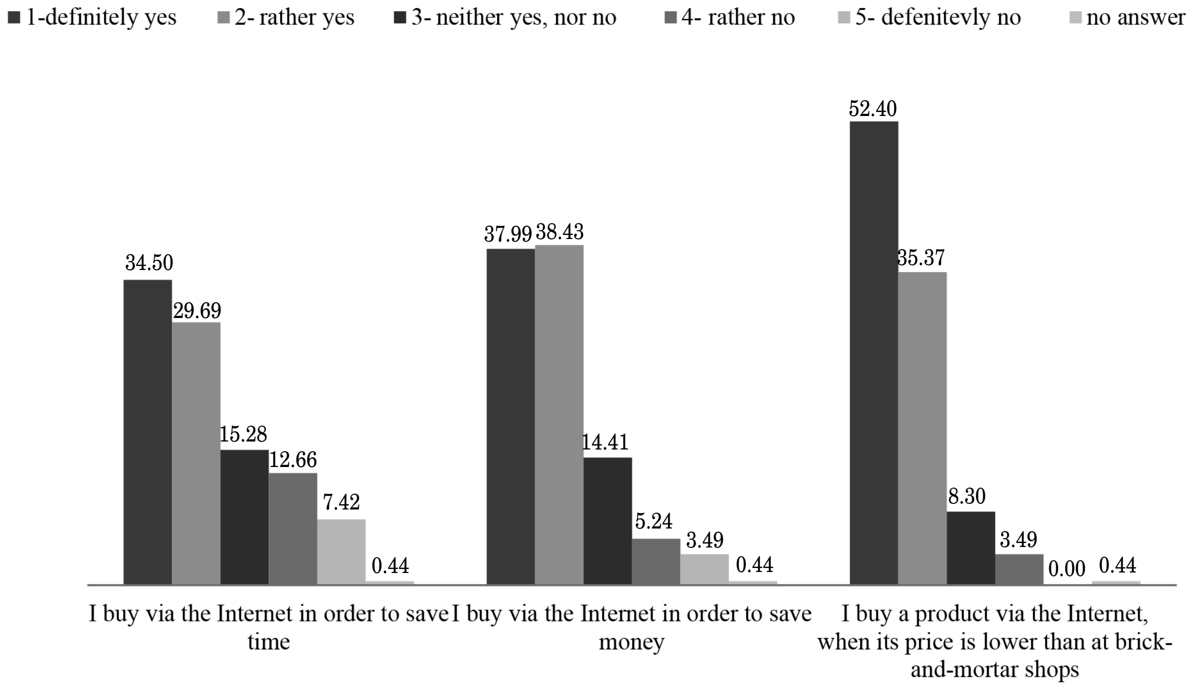
To sum up the results, 46.29% of the respondents purchase a product online, but collect it at a brick-and-mortar shop, while 30.57% of the respondents do not share such an opinion.

The second research issue was to recognize the selected consumers' motivations of online purchase (via the Internet). The first item of this construct concerned buying online (via the Internet) to save time. All the responses given to the presented statement have been included in Figure 2.

Figure 2. The consumers' motivations of an online purchase (n = 229, %)



S o u r c e: authors' research.

According to the results of the survey, 34.50% of the respondents strongly declare that they buy via the Internet in order to save time. The next, 29.69% of the young people tend to share such an opinion. Among the respondents, 15.28% of them neither agree nor disagree with the presented statement. Another 12.66% of the respondents suggest that they quite disagree with the opinion, and the remaining 7.42% of the studied people were definitely against such a declaration. One of the respondent did not answer this question (0.44%).

To sum up the collected data, 64.19% of the surveyed people declare to purchase online to save time, and 20.09% do not share such an opinion.

The second item of the explored construct concerned buying online (via Internet) to save money. All the responses given to the presented statement have been included in Figure 2.

As the obtained data present, 37.99% of the respondents indicate that they definitely buy via the Internet in order to save money. Another 38.43% of the respondents rather support this statement. Subsequently, 14.41% of the respondents neither agree nor disagree with the opinion. The remaining 5.24% of the surveyed people declared that they dio not buy via the Internet to save money, and lastly 3.49% definitely disagree with the statement. One of the respondent did not answer this question (0.44%).

Summing up the obtained results, 76.42% of the respondents declared that they purchase via the Internet for financial savings, while 8.73% do not share this type of motivation.

The third item of the explored construct concerned buying a product online (via the Internet), when its price is lower than at brick-and-mortar shops. All the responses given to the presented statement have been included in Figure 2.

Following the research results, 52.40% of the respondents strongly agreed with an opinion that they buy a product via the Internet, when its price is lower than at brick-and-mortar shops. Moreover, the next 35.37% of the respondents rather support such a statement. Another 8.30% of the young consumers neither agree nor disagree. Subsequently, 3.49% of the respondents declare that they do not act like that. None of the respondents strongly denied this motivation. One of the respondent did not answer this question (0.44%).

Summing up the respondents' declarations, 87.77% of the studied consumers buy a product online (via the Internet), when its price is lower than at brick-and-mortar shops, and 3.49% reject this type of behaviour.

Discussion and conclusions

Over the last decade, digitalization has become a significant factor moderating consumer behaviour, gradually becoming an inherent item of the purchasing processes. This is particularly strongly observed among young consumers who in the field of literature are referred to as digital generation. Such a perception is also shared by the vast majority of the respondents declaring themselves as members of the digital generation (85.15%). In the contradiction to the previous older generations, a tendency to change the current purchasing processes, in which e-commerce market successively is becoming the dominant one, and the purchasing process itself is a subject of constant dynamics is highly commonly noticed. Young consumers being proficient in digital solutions, operate and flow between the traditional market (offline) and e-commerce (online), and efficiently use the advantages of both types.

As the results from the obtained data show, the representatives of the Y generation have already anchored in multichannel purchase activities. Over 40% of the surveyed declare that they have a direct contact with a product at a brick-and-mortar shop, however they make its purchase at an online store. Moreover, 45% of them go to see a product at a brick-and-mortar shop, although they know that ultimately the purchase is going to be made online. It is worth pointing out that even a larger number of the respondents declare purchasing a product online, but collect it at a brick-and-mortar shop. Therefore, in the purchasing process such a type of behaviour leads to changing the functions and forms of consumption and distribution.

Initially, it should be noted that among the surveyed young consumers two distinct consumer segments namely: the first one (quantitatively larger) already preferring e-commerce and the second one (quantitative smaller) which appears to be still traditional might have been somehow observed. Therefore, despite the fact that more than 85% of the respondents declare themselves as members of the digital generation, calling them fully such a generation in purchasing processes seems to be an abuse. In this case, the declarations do not translate into real actions, although the tendency to create such a consumer generation is noticeable. It appears that the generation Y is suspended between both types of markets (offline and online) integrating two approaches and standing in a gap between what is real and virtual. It is possible that the upcoming next generation (the so-called Z) already have brought up in the Internet of things environment will become entirely the representatives of the digital generation, including fully digital consumers. It is worth noting that the above suggestions might be taken under a discussion. It should be verified further if the observed outcomes have features of a certain tendency or they are just specific only for this selected pilot respondents.

Additionally, the results suggest that the purchase process is being separated due to the purchasing stage and the distributors' roles. In the case of the former, the surveyed young consumers clearly separate the stage of a contact with the product from the transaction one. The results imply that they still consciously desire to experience tangible contacts with the product they buy. Many reasons can stand behind that, e.g. to verify feelings, sensations or preferences for the product. What is more, the operation is reserved not only for activities preceding the acquisition of a product, but also after its purchase (46.29% of the respondents purchase a product online, but collect it at a brick-and-mortar shop). And what appears to be most important, they prefer to make the final transaction online. Such an approach may be related to the privileges of the e-commerce market, i.e. a 14 or 30-day (or in some specific cases even one year) product return, testing the product at its place of a pre-selection, or a verification of the ultimate goods bidders, or checking the product on-site for delivery and immediate return, or other factors that would also be worth checking in the future. The above sorts of the respondents' behaviour may imply a change of distribution roles. Shifting brick-and-mortar shops from the transactional locations towards exhibition spaces to ensure consumers a direct contact with the product, referring more to showroom experience than commercial actions can be successively observed.

It is also worth noting that among the young people, consumers' behaviour motives support the dynamics of multichannel processes. Almost two-thirds of the respondents purchase online to save time, and over three-fourths of the young consumers just do it for financial reasons. Almost 90% of the young people choose online shopping when the product price is lower than that offered in traditional distribution. Such young consumers' rational decisions will be conducive to the further development of e-commerce. This will lead soon to a stronger change in the role of traditional distribution from the transactional function to the exhibition one.

It may also mean further implications for companies. In the near future, the Y generation will constitute one of the main market segments. Favouring online purchases will result in the fact that the majority of real transactions will be in fact 30 days after the purchase, as the consumer can return the goods by that time. Thus, the purchasing process will permanently become longer than in the case of these processes observed in previous generations on the market. The final transaction will take place later on, and therefore the final sales and financial results for enterprises will also be constantly determined with a monthly delay, which may affect their financial standing.

Recapitulating, the research goal of this paper was to investigate multichannel purchase activities undertaken by the Y generation. These types of activities concerned a product contact, seeing it as well as buying and collecting it. Based on this study, the tendency to develop multichannel purchase activities among the respondents is observed. The crucial consumer motivations to favour online purchase by the representatives of the Y generation belong to time and financial savings reasons. Such types of consumer behaviour will affect companies' marketing strategies to adapt to new directions of retailing.

Concluding the deliberations, it should be emphasized that with regard to the sampling method applied for the study and the size of the examined group, the received applications should not be referred to the entire Y generation segment in Poland. The pilot results suggest the characteristics of the group being verified and stress the observed direction of their types of behaviour. This study has definitely confirmed the validity of the research aim and method employed, however, the generalization of the obtained data requires conducting wider and in-depth studies among different consumers groups (e.g. the young one — the Z and Millennials generations, the elderly one) using representative methods, what will constitute the future authors' work.

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