

Selected Aspects of Polish Digital Purchasers' Behaviour. Results of Research

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Abstract

The progressing digitisation, technical and technological development, new functionalities of the Internet and hyper-medial environment shape stakeholders', i.e. also customers' behaviour. Entrepreneurs, while seeking to grow up to such conditions, feel obliged to undertake holistic marketing activities.

At the heart of the process, there should stay digital (i.e. mobile) purchasers, equipped with the devices such as smart phone, tablet, etc. Now the questions arise: Who are these digital purchasers? What are their needs, preferences, tastes, likes, and habits? and What direction should the effective marketing activities take to target such purchasers?

The article aims at outlining the results of the studies of digital purchasers' behaviour, and identifying the directions of the marketing activities expected by them.

The analysis evolves around the following assumption: in the age of digitisation and mobile technology, the performance of effective marketing activities is determined by knowledge of behaviour of the market game players (stakeholders), including the purchasers, and keeping up with their expectations and habits.

Starting from the definition of a digital consumer, the methodology and results of the conducted research are discussed. As it turned out, the studied Polish purchasers (equipped with digital devices) adopt different habits; not only they communicate, but in practice they continuously remain on-line. The digital devices they have are used for communication with friends, for browsing for information, for dealing with personal matters, and for entertainment. The most important features of the digital purchaser include: courage, self-awareness and the awareness of own needs, and keen interest in innovation.

The article proposes recommendations for entrepreneurs who are interested in conducting effective marketing activities targeted at digital purchasers. In the current market conditions, the attention should be primarily focussed on creation of relevant experiences, stirring emotions, involving the stakeholders, providing entertainment, facilitating life, by means of, among other, offering new services and free applications for mobile devices.

Keywords: digital consumer, conditionalities of marketing activities, research of Polish digital purchasers' behaviour.

JEL classification: M31.

1. Introduction

This article is focussed on the behaviour of Polish shoppers using mobile devices equipped with access to the Internet and its multiple resources and functionalities. The article aims at outlining the results of the studies of digital shoppers behaviours, and identifying the directions of the marketing activities expected by them.

To find the response to the question of how the Polish digital shopper behaves and what are his/her habits, secondary research has been carried out on the available reports related to this subject, as well as the primary research. The research work has also been oriented at defining the effective marketing activities targeting the Polish digital shopper, as well as their scope.

2. Polish digital purchaser – behavior and profile

The digital (mobile) purchaser/shopper has been defined as the person who uses mobile devices, such as a smartphone, tablet, smartwatch, etc. (comp.: Persaud, Azhar, 2012, p. 420). A related notion is the one of e-consumer (comp.: Dejnaka, 2013, p. 15), who uses Internet both for decision making and for the purchase, in other words he/she cannot complete the actions without Internet access, though he/she may use any device, both stationary and mobile.

The Polish digital shopper usually stays connected, partly by his/her own choice but also due to technical reasons (no possibility to remove the battery). The devices under consideration provide wide functional and not only communication opportunities (see more in: Neves-Silva, Tsihrintzis, Uskov, 2014). Thanks to them, people may efficiently communicate and perform various daily activities, including purchases. Generally, life is better, more interesting and more comfortable with such mobile products, both in real and the virtual world. It should be remembered, however, that staying online facilitates collecting,

processing and analysing a wide scope of information related to the behaviour of Polish Internet users. It is possible to observe the development of content marketing, i.e. high quality content marketing. Sadly, a negative phenomenon is observed too, and even surveillance and effective influencing the decision-making processes and behaviour of the Polish digital customer.

Consumer behaviour is defined as a consistent set of reactions (activities) related to making choices in the process of satisfying the customers' needs in a specific social, cultural, and economic circumstances of the Polish market. Thus, the Polish digital shopper behaviour can be defined as a set of activities related to procuring, using, and disposing of products, including the decisions which precede and condition these activities performed by means of mobile devices, taking into consideration the specific features of the Polish market (notwithstanding the fact that Internet does not, directly, take account of the specific features of the Polish users).

Finally, the behaviours of Polish digital shoppers are defined as observable, explainable by means of psychological parameters models of behaviour of individuals as consumers, especially in the context of decisions related to buying and using of specific products, as well as their opinions on these products. The buying behaviour of the Polish customers is influenced by many factors. Most of all these are demographic, personal, psycho-physical (perception, motivation, education), social (social and family roles, social layer and group, personal culture), and legal features, economic situation, marketing stimuli (tools, methods and procedures), but also the mobile devices which are used and the access to the Internet.

Since the consumer behaviour is preceded by the sequential process of information processing taking place in the consumer's mind, what is it which leads/contributes to the decision. In the current market conditions we can observe a multitude of marketing stimuli, but also the quest for comfort of the Polish digital customers who aim at simplifying life and all the decision-making processes, including the ones which accompany purchases.

When a mobile device is used, its functionalities, Internet access, and e.g. the downloaded mobile applications limit the rationality of behaviour to a considerable degree. To a lesser degree, an analysis of potentially accessible offers takes place; the Polish digital shopper, though seemingly advanced, in reality is subject to an impact of a set of functionalities. Now a question arises: do the benefits outweigh the lost opportunities?

Polish digital shoppers now perform a considerable part of their activities in a virtual reality, making use of the selected Internet resources, becoming members of brand societies, getting involved in the social media and Internet fora, setting up and writing blogs, and doing shopping online. Due to their skill to filter information efficiently and navigate among the channels providing it, they become more and more conscious, critical, and independent. Moreover, factors such as ever-emerging Internet functionalities and resources (e.g. development of social media, knowledge bases, services expected by the internavts), development of Internet marketing techniques, and the upgrades and mobile applications offered by the providers, visibly increase the human capacities and the functionality of the device.

Polish digital shoppers use the web daily to search for information resources useful in their education and work, as well as for the purposes of entertainment, spanning for example music, watching videos, playing computer games or getting in touch with others; they particularly appreciate low prices on the Internet and uninterrupted access to the offer (see Jaciow, Wolny, Stolecka-Makowska, 2013, p. 159). Mobile devices may have a function of a cash holder, a camera, a time- and task-organiser, and many other.

In the light of the available information, modern shopper is a person responding to sensory perceptions, creating his/her own subjective worlds of experience and observations, susceptible to various stimuli, additional attractions, including various neurotechniques. What is important, modern customer not only makes purchases, but also he/she experiences emotions and therefore the set of values is shaped by numerous factors. It is claimed that as much as 95% of human processes and behaviour take place subconsciously (Zaltman, 2003, p. 5). Whereas subconsciousness constitutes thinking processes which are inaccessible to conscious mind but they influence evaluations, feelings, and behaviours as a specific type of "shortcut" to assessment of the environment, its interpretation, and quick initiation of the given purchase.

In pursuit of the best understanding of the Polish digital shopper, it is worth trying to face the challenge of his/her description.

The assumption is that the profile of the object of observation – i.e. the Polish digital shopper – is formed by a list of his/her features. The Polish digital consumer, who not only makes decisions and buys goods and services online, strives to personalise everything (express his/her individuality by unique products) and to create something special on his/her own (comp.: Dhir, 2004, p. 87). The features attributed to the studied object include courage, self-consciousness and awareness of own needs, pursuit of novelties, but also high expectations and simplification of decisions (and Persaud, Azhar, 2012, pp. 418–443). Moreover, he/she is focussed on information, knows well how to obtain and analyse it, constantly interacts with other members of virtual social groups, and recommends and co-creates the content available online (Dejnaka, 2013, p. 17).

On the basis of the available studies, further characteristic features of the Polish mobile consumer which create his/her profile are described as the willingness to get involved in various actions and the quest for emotional experience (see more in: Sznajder, 2014, p. 13–25; Królewski, Sala, 2014, pp. 12–31), and pursuit and creation of a unique way of life related to the desire to satisfy the needs and conform to the e-customs (see more in: Fisk, 2014 and Mróz, 2013).

Summing up, the Polish digital shopper is strongly attached to his/her mobile device and finds it difficult to function without it. When any challenge emerges, first of all he/she refers him/herself to the online resources (see more in: Doligalski, 2013). He/she values highly the opinion/attitude of other internauts, and readily interacts and gets involved in the marketing activities of the providers.

Understanding the Polish digital shopper offers a basis for an attempt to indicate the directions of the efficient marketing activities which should be undertaken by the entrepreneurs.

3. Characteristics of the conducted research

Own qualitative research was aimed at verifying how the possession of mobile devices and access to the Internet influence the behaviour of Polish digital shoppers and the marketing activities required by them.

The research was exploratory in nature and was performed in March and April 2016. It covered the 2nd year undergraduate full-time and part-time programme students of the Faculty of Management of the AGH University of Science and Technology in Krakow, Poland. All the participants confirmed having a mobile device, at least a mobile phone⁷, and in case of some of them, more than one, most often a tablet.

During the research carried out⁸, the following problems were analysed:

- Does the access to mobile devices and the Internet influence the behaviour of the shoppers covered by the research, and in what way?
- What are the purposes for which the users apply their mobile devices?
- Are the participants of the research aware of the marketing influences on their behaviour?
- Which marketing activities/tools attract their attention?
- Can the participants point out to various marketing activities used by the sellers at the specific stages of the buyer's decision-making process? To what extent are these activities digitalised?
- What place do the e-marketing activities and other marketing concepts occupy in the sellers' efforts?
- Do the respondents buy online or offline and what does it depend on?
- Do they always look for information in the Internet? Where and in what resources?
- What conclusions have the students formulated, what lessons have they drawn from the analysis of the decision-making process encompassing marketing tools, methodologies, and procedures?

⁷ The commonly used term "mobile phones" should be understood as mobile devices used for the purpose of communication, although at present they include smartphones, tablets, etc. with multiple use.

⁸ The research was of preliminary (pilot) nature. It aimed at specifying the problems for the intended research, as well as testing and improving the research tools. Due to the need to remain concise, this article discusses only selected problems from the rich research material collected.

—What are the trends/directions of the modern marketing activities for the Polish digital shoppers?

The following methodologies have been used in the qualitative research: group interview (three sessions), auditorium questionnaire (in two groups of full-time and part-time students), participant observation in selected shopping situations (buying a smartphone, laptop, car, shoes, cosmetics, trousers, opening a bank account, and renting a flat). A study written by the students – entitled *Analysis of one's own decision-making process including buying of a specific product, and indicating as well as evaluating the marketing activities of the sellers* – also proved to be an important source of information. The results of research may have been shaped by the higher awareness of the participants since the research were carried out after the students had attended the classes on modern shoppers behaviour and marketing methods to influence it.

In total, 163 persons participated in the research, with 131 valid questionnaires received in the auditorium questionnaire, of which 83 from students of the full-time programme and 48 from students of the part-time programme. In the descriptive method on the decision-making and buying process 97 valid studies were received.

The Polish digital customer participating in the research (an AGH Faculty of Management student) is a sensible person who carries out his/her activities in the form of a decision-making process. The decision-making processes which were described lasted from two weeks to two months. The respondent does not make any decision related to the choice and purchase unless he/she has an access to the Internet, he/she has acquainted him/herself with the opinions of other users, he/she knows and is able to identify valuable information (e.g. price comparison websites, industry portals, etc.). Almost all the participants of the research at first look for opinions online, then they consult friends, take into consideration the opinion of the industry experts, opinion leaders or bloggers, rarely their parents/next of kin. They have practical knowledge of marketing, its tools, methodologies, and procedures, which made it possible to indicate the direction of the marketing activities expected by them. The participants are reluctant to formulate conclusions for potential managers, from their point of view they prefer the client. Majority of the respondents notice benefits arising from the conducted analysis: they have realised that the sellers exert influence over the decision-making process in a multitude of ways. The respondents particularly enjoy the benefits obtained, i.e. a better price offered by a different seller, a discount voucher, a price reduction for subsequent shopping after expressing their opinion online.

Taking into consideration the indicated marketing activities of the sellers and the varied level of knowledge of modern marketing activities, the participants of the research should be divided into laymen, those who are acquainted, and the professionals. However, a doubt arises whether they do not possess a sufficient knowledge, or if they were unwilling to make an intellectual effort. Before the beginning of the task, it was pointed out that it aimed primarily at indicating efficient ways of exerting marketing influence. Finally, while describing *ex post* one's own decision-making process, it is possible to list the remembered techniques, but there were many other stimuli (conscious and subconscious ones) experienced in the specific situational context which is impossible to be fully reconstructed.

4. Effectiveness and directions of the marketing activities expected by the respondents

It is considered that the efficient marketing activities are the marketing tools, methodologies, and procedures which are adapted to the expectations of the digital shoppers, which lead to execution of the goals established by their author in the real market conditions (based on: Govindarajan, 2007; Jyoti, 2010). The effectiveness of the marketing activities is determined *inter alia* by: a strong competition between market players; specific expectations of the customers and other stakeholders; technical and technological progress; and the development of the resources and functionalities of the Internet. It is difficult to identify the effective marketing tools, methods, and procedures, since each time it is necessary to show professionalism, flexibility, and creativity in their choice.

Understanding the behaviours of the Polish digital shoppers and knowledge of the mechanism of their influencing proves to be of key importance for improving effectiveness of the sellers' marketing activities. Individual and institutional shoppers buy products for the purposes of consumption, as well as for the purposes of using, processing, and reselling them, and it is particularly important to build proper

relations with them (see more in: Kotler i Keller 2013, pp. 134–165).

General marketing activities are aimed at the target recipients to motivate them, in a skilful way, to make an optimal set of values (utility of the form, time, and place and possession). In the modern market conditions, the activities are also aimed at exerting a skilful influence over the human central nervous system (in particular the brain and its processes, both conscious and subconscious), in order to provide satisfaction, but also stimulate to choose a specific market offer.

Among the marketing activities which are expected and appreciated by the Polish digital shoppers participating in the research, we can identify:

- all the resources in the format compatible with mobile devices
- professional positioning of the company/brand resources adapted to the browsers
- careful communication of the high-value content
- social media profiles, especially the FB
- placement in social media, industrial fora and blogs, as well as other web locations (videos, photos, content, advertisement, sponsored texts, etc.)
- involving the internauts, and especially the customers in various initiatives
- enabling and stimulating the interaction (commenting, making available, liking, participating in competitions, etc.)
- advertisements in browsers, e.g. Google
- providing satisfaction by means of various discounts, vouchers, awards, accessories, etc.
- word of mouth marketing in thematic Internet fora and by means of social media, involving active internauts (including the customers) and their friends and the friends of their friends, etc.
- creating social groups for the brand of a market object (a person, producer, seller, product, initiative, etc.)
- providing entertainment
- creating experience related to a brand which enhance the link with it
- matching the demand for the offers responding to the important problems of life
- possibility to pay by phone
- facilitating various life activities (learning, work, contacts with other people, taking care of one's health and physical fitness, entertainment, journeys, time management, shopping, meeting social needs, etc.)
- and many other activities, depending on the means and creativity.

Table 1 shows directions of modern marketing activities expected by the digital shoppers covered by the research.

Conclusions and recommendations based on respondents' opinions	Marketing tendencies/concepts
The aim: widespread marketing activities carried out online to support the market offer/brand. The participants of the research expect to find the product they look for in the online information services and to be able to view the profiles in the social media. It is important that the content related to the product should be valuable, proper positioning counts. The stress is put on involvement of the internauts, skilful fitting of the brand into daily life, building links due to creating opportunities for personal meetings, expanding the brand social group, and many other (competitions, fora, campaigns, charity and social actions, etc.). Material related to the product, e.g. videos, photos, notes are available online. An active cooperation with those who are interested should be maintained. Value/specific benefit for the stakeholders is important. Special benefits, additions, offers or individual approach are particularly appreciated.	online partner relation, value marketing
It is necessary to use sensory stimuli for the benefit of modern products. Sensory marketing consists in exerting impact on human senses controlled by the brain right hemisphere. Sensory marketing strategy aims at using: sensors (image, sound, touch, etc.) and experience (audio, visual, tactile, etc.). Generally, it is aimed at exerting influence on the shopper's emotional state, i.e. pleasure (=well-being) and activation – identified with the feeling of interest and excitement. Under the influence of neuromarketing stimuli (for example: images, shapes, colours, light, furnishings, music, accessories, scents, temperature, etc.) it is possible to direct the influence over the human	sensory marketing, neuromarketing

consciousness and subconsciousness, which shapes the individual's decision making processes and behaviour.	
An important area of modern marketing efforts to support the market object (a product, brand, organisation, etc.) is the creation of personal experience and not the indirect communication forms. Most often, implemented measures should appeal to the addressee by attracting his/her attention, interest, desire for use and active participation. Gained experience or perceptions should influence emotions, move, raise feelings, but also provide rational arguments, and in consequence generate, in a sense, a quantifiable response to the efforts related with the brand/product (e.g. by means of well-designed actions, events, etc.).	experiential marketing
Modern market players get socially involved in order to achieve their goals and do some good in the process. The respondents are more inclined to choose products which are socially responsible as this is trendy and generates quantifiable benefits, such as a higher level of acceptance. Contributing to the social good without realising own benefits and just aiming at changing the societal behaviour is even more appreciated. The respondents take notice of the social campaigns and assess them positively.	socially responsible marketing and social marketing
In keeping with the holistic approach, activities aimed at supporting the market object (a product, brand, organisation, etc.) should be integrated and carried out both in the real and the virtual world (see more in: Tarczydło, 2014, p. 247–257). Generally, the set of activities targeting the stakeholder should be taken into consideration, which is related to the fact that he/she reacts on the psychological, physical, and spiritual level at the same time.	holistic marketing

Table 1. Effective marketing activities in the opinion of Polish digital shoppers

Source: Own work on the basis of the conducted research.

Conclusion

Considering the advancing digitalisation, even the best marketing activities may turn out to be ineffective, if the stakeholder is not subject to their influence in a correct way. In the light of the results obtained, a customer who uses mobile devices expects: a proper communication by means of social media, promotional actions, internet competitions, discount vouchers, integrated loyalty programmes (e.g. when buying fuel it is possible to get a discount in a clothing store), involvement in the sellers' marketing activities, facilitating life (adapting the offer to important problems, such as ready gifts for various occasions), facilitating the choice (opinions on the fora, bloggers' comments, various price ranges and the offer which creates a choice), provision of entertainment, availability of mobile applications which are useful in daily and business activities, advancement in the marketing communication, i.e. attractive and integrated activities leading to the 360 degrees strategy.

The conducted primary and secondary research lead to the conclusion that the following activities play a particular role in influencing the behaviour of digital shoppers: Internet marketing, experiential marketing, neuromarketing, socially involved and social marketing, and holistic marketing.

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