



THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA BY YOUNG CONSUMERS IN PURCHASING PROCESSES



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Summary

The main purpose of the article is presenting the role of social media in the process of shaping the behaviours of young consumers in the context of utilization of chosen social media in the process of making purchasing decisions. The conducted research has shown that social media constitute an inseparable part of almost every decision-making process. The contents published in social media not only generate needs among young consumers, encouraging them to make unplanned purchases, but also constitute an important source of inspiration at the stage of looking for alternatives for satisfying their needs. Additionally, social media constitute a precious source of information about products and a place for expressing opinions and sharing purchasing experiences. The article presents a definition and classification of social media, as well as current data concerning young consumers as a market segment. In further part of the article the results of research concerning the influence of chosen social media portals on the behaviours of young consumers are presented on the basis of the example of fashion market.

Keywords: social media, consumer behaviour, young consumers, generation Z, marketing communication

Introduction

The role of new media in consumer's decision-making processes is growing. Additionally, the Internet is offering more and more possibilities and functionalities useful in companies' communication processes. Social media are characterized by a big potential for releasing users' activity, the contents published in social media are created both by professionals dealing with a particular area and by consumers. In association with this the development of the applications of social media influences changes in the methods of communication and forms of spending free time, or in the consumer's behaviours on the market. Currently the whole decision-making process covering the stages of: feeling the need, searching for information, assessment of alternatives, choice and post-purchase behaviours can be carried out exclusively on the Internet, or with the utilization of other media. Social media are becoming an inseparable part of the purchasing experience and an important source of information about products (Chamber of Digital Economy, 2016). Reports show that social media influence consumer behaviour both in the virtual environment (including: Internet shopping — e-commerce and shopping by means of mobile applications — m-commerce) as well as outside the virtual environment (traditional shopping in retail facilities). Information obtained from social media portals influence the behaviours of consumers: 44% of the users of social media portals thanks to information in social media bought a product they didn't plan to buy before, 40% of users on the basis of information in social media changed their preferences and decision concerning the purchase of a product of a particular brand (Chamber of Digital Economy, 2016). What has been observed is the constantly growing role of social media as a source of recommendations and information about products. 61% of social media users share their opinions and information about purchases in social media (Chamber of Digital Economy, 2016). Moreover, 76% of the users of social media portals declare that positive opinions of their friends have an impact on the purchasing decisions that they make and 56% of the users of social media use them as a place for seeking advice and obtaining information about a product, or brand that they could potentially buy (Chamber of Digital Economy, 2016).

For these reasons identifying the behaviours of consumers with consideration of the role played by social media at particular stages of the purchasing process seems justified. In the first part of the article a definition and various classifications of social media, together with examples, are presented on the basis of studied literature. Young consumers have been characterized as a comparably new segment of the market. In the second part of the article the results of a survey conducted by the author concerning the influence of chosen social media on the purchasing process of young consumers are presented. For the purpose of verification of the role played by social media in the decision-making processes of young people, a quantitative survey on a sample of 1000 people aged 16–26 — students of upper secondary schools and universities in Poznań — was carried out. The survey was carried out by means of the following research technique: direct individual questionnaire interview. The main goal of the survey was the identification of the scope of young consumers' activity in social media, the identification of the activities of fashion brands in social media, as well as the assessment of the profiles of fashion brands in the decision-making process among young consumers.

Social media as a modern communication tool

Under conditions of strong competitiveness companies have to communicate with their clients in an exceptional way. New technologies as well as changing needs and behaviours of consumers outline for companies the creation of new, innovative forms of promotion, which will attract the interest and attention and will raise consumers' engagement. In particular, young consumers are tired of traditional advertising messages and are distrustful towards them. This leads to the emergence of needs associated with the creation and application of new and attractive — from the point of view of the recipient — tools of promotion. The attractiveness of the message comes from innovation, which involves the utilization of non-standard carriers and new forms, or channels of communication. Creative and surprising message should reach the recipient with the utilization of methods based on his engagement. This

facilitates the growth of efficiency and the message is placed in the recipients' environment in the appropriate time, place and situation (Świątkowska, Nowak, 2011).

Social media as one of modern instruments of promotion have undoubtedly revolutionized the approach to traditional marketing communication. Social media have been created with the following issues in mind: social interactions, dissemination of contents, or developing interpersonal relationships on the Internet. At the same time the emergence of social media gave an opportunity for an innovative approach to the process of communication (Trzeciak, 2012). It is mainly the social media that contributed to the transformation of the role played by Internet users. From the originally passive users of contents they have transformed into active co-creators of contents (Barefoot, Szabo, 2011).

The concept of social media is very broad and it isn't easy to define it. These are Internet websites, portals whose contents are co-created by their users. They are a form of natural, unbridled online exchange of information between people concerning their common interests (Gogołek, 2010). Social media can serve very diverse purposes, starting from purely entertainment-related goals, through the implementation of business goals, to educational purposes. According to Kaznowski (2007) social media are technologies and functionalities used by users to share views, opinions and experiences. Moreover, the author thinks that social media are a physical symptom of the presence of interpersonal relations on the Internet. The concept of social media comprises tools and technologies supporting interpersonal relations, technologies serving the purpose of initiating communication and transfer of contents between people, their friends and social media networks that they belong to (Barciński, 2009; Barska, 2016). The features distinguishing traditional media from social media are as follows: availability to the public (universality), bilateral flow of information, durability, rapidity and lack of control. A very important goal which makes it possible to distinguish social media from traditional media is vitality and continuous possibility of undergoing changes. These contents can be edited, changed, or

commented on at any moment, by any user. In this context it has been assumed that the Internet is a service platform enabling group cooperation between its users. It is thanks to the development and popularization of the Internet that every person in the world with access to the Internet can become a member of any online community (Barefoot, Szabo, 2011).

Social media are a broad set of platforms and tools enabling the users — Internet users — to interact and communicate with each other and with other entities e.g. companies in virtual space, create, modify and edit contents of varied character, adding comments (Gregor, Kaczorowska-Spychalska, 2016). In literature on the subject we can distinguish various approaches to the classification of social media, which take into consideration different distinguishing criteria. Different typologies of the social media, with consideration of different criteria of division are presented in table 1.

Table 1. Kinds of social media

Criterion of division	Kinds of social media
kind of satisfied needs	universal, specialized, hybrids
area of users' activity	social media services, services which enable sharing videos, blogs, microblogs, wiki, fora and discussion groups, services based on geolocation, opinion and recommendation services, citizens' journalism services, virtual worlds, thematic discussion communities
purposefulness of creation	social media serving the purpose of: publishing opinions and views, co-sharing resources, focused on co-creation and cooperation, focused on building and maintaining relations, focused on communication and discussion, focused on provision of current updates and referring to latest news, based on the acquisition of purchasing information and recommendations
functionality	social portals, content portals, networking portals, repositories

Source: Own materials.

Social media can be divided into three groups (Barska, 2016):

- 1) **universal** — social media portals which enable users to satisfy their most important needs associated with participation in groups, entertainment, or communication. Universal social media portals make it possible to get in touch with other people, publish photographs, or update your status;
- 2) **specialized** — focused on a single functionality. Their main task is supporting communication with other people in a precisely defined way;
- 3) **hybrids** — they are focused on one functionality, but additionally offer other, additional social media functions. Such services are often formed as a result of a transformation of a specialized social media service, which in order to satisfy the needs of the market and users turns into a hybrid (Treadaway, 2011).

Taking into consideration users' area of activity we can distinguish the following (Garapich, 2011):

- **social networks (networking)** — these are portals created for the purpose of maintaining friendships, renewing contacts with old friends and establishing new interpersonal relations. These portals offer to their users personal accounts (so-called profiles) and many other additional activities associated with the account. The most important functionalities of these portals are: the possibility of publishing photographs, sharing video materials, having conversations with friends from all around the world on chat boards, commenting on photographs and posts of other users, creating groups and organizing events. Currently, the most popular social media network in the world is Facebook.
- **services offering the possibility of sharing materials** — these portals make it possible to share various contents — videos, photographs, or various kinds of files with other users of a particular service, or the whole Internet. Among the most popular services allowing users to share materials there are: YouTube and Instagram.
- **blogs** — defined as Internet journals (e-journals), or virtual diaries (what distinguishes them from classic diaries is the opposite sequence

of posts, that is, from the most recent to the oldest), whose author by means of messages (posts) shares his, or her own thoughts, private opinions, experiences, or new ideas. For this purpose the author uses: written words, photographs, or videos. Blog authors (individual bloggers and editorial teams) most often write about matters related to their professional activity, or about their passions and hobbies. There are two most common types of blogs: individual, also called personal blogs and corporate — company blogs run by companies/brands, or their employees (Świerczyńska-Kaczor, Kossecki, 2008). Blogs usually offer to readers the possibility of posting comments, thus, enabling bilateral communication (Gregor, Kaczorowska-Spychalska, 2016). Blogs concern a broad range of subjects from politics, through new technologies to life-style subjects associated with fashion, beauty, or cooking.

- **microblogs** — are miniature versions of Internet blogs, created in response to the fact that people don't have enough time, for people who convey news in short text messages (usually limited to 140 characters). These are usually messages/posts concerning current issues, news from private and public life. They are most often updated by means of mobile devices — smartphones, or tablets. The most popular microblog service is Twitter.
- **wiki** — in case of these Internet websites contents in form of knowledge database are created by Internet users. The main concept behind these portals is "group creation of databases of knowledge and managing them" (Kaznowski, 2008, p.109). The most important issue, which is often highlighted and that these services often have to cope with is the problem of verification and reliability of contents published on such websites. Everybody can change, or edit the resources of such websites. The best-known wiki-type website in the world is Wikipedia.
- **fora and discussion groups** — these are Internet websites enabling users who have an account to participate in discussions, exchange views, share opinions, ask for opinions and recommendations related to any subject. They usually consist of threads from a particular subject area. One of the most popular websites with the characteristics of a discussion group is LinkedIn — an Internet community gathering professionals from various branches.

- **services based on geolocation** — created to enable users to easily and rapidly share information about their current location. Even though services based on geolocation don't enjoy great popularity in Poland, in the whole world their high potential has been recognized. They are often used in point of service marketing. An application with access to location is supposed to enable reaching clients in real time, when they are present close to the headquarters, or branch of a company. Additionally, it presents a personalized promotional offer to every person who registers in a particular area (Kerpen, 2013). One of examples of geolocation services is FourSquare.
- **opinion and recommendation services** — created in order to enable users to share their opinion on a particular subject — it may be a recommendation for a product, doctor, employer, or any other issues. An example of such service is ZnanyLekarz.pl, where patients share opinions about doctors and give them notes after visits. Another example is GoldenLine, which makes it possible to assess employers, share experiences from work for these people/companies.
- **citizen journalism services** — this is a kind of information service created by Internet users, volunteers. The authors of articles and reports are mainly non-professional journalists — amateurs in the field. An example of a citizens' journalism service is Wiadomości24.pl, or Kontakt24 (a section in TVN 24).
- **virtual worlds** — these are virtual places created for the purpose of enabling interactions with other, often unknown persons from various areas of the world. Thanks to the use of information technologies it is possible to create a world on the Internet — so-called artificial reality. This world can resemble the real world, or can be a completely new, fictional and abstract world (Wikipedia). An example of a virtual world is World of Warcraft gathering WoW game enthusiasts and players.
- **thematic discussion communities** — these are websites concerning particular subject area, gathering people interested in a particular subject who eagerly participate in discussions, talk about a particular subject, share their opinions and observations. An example of such portal is Filmweb — the biggest portal about movies in Poland.

Young consumers as market participants

Young consumers are an important and significant part of every society. They are very characteristic participants of the market. We can notice many differences between the adult and young participants of the market. The latter have different needs, feel them differently and perceive the world surrounding them in a different way. They receive the messages that reach them in a different way. They also have different systems of values and rules of conduct. Young consumers encounter numerous barriers, which make it impossible for them to fully participate in the market. These are, among others: legal conditions, age, social influences, means for carrying out consumption, level of market education, understanding of market mechanisms, or access to information (Adamczyk, 2014).

Until recently young people — children and youth — didn't play a significant role on the market. This was related to the lack of autonomy and the fact that they didn't have financial resources and their ability to make purchasing decisions was limited. Currently the role and significance of young consumers as participants of the market is noticeable. They have at their disposal bigger and bigger financial resources, which they manage according to their needs and desires. Additionally, their influence on the purchasing decisions made in the family is getting stronger and stronger. Young consumers play various roles — from passive participants of the purchasing process, through initiators, advisors to decision-makers. Young consumers make more and more independent purchasing decisions. They also often play the role of experts and advisors in case of purchases made by their parents — most often in case of products consumed by the whole family e.g. food, or also in case of expensive purchases of electronics associated with improving the quality of free time — television screens, computers, tablets (Jagielska, Maksymiuk, 2012). It is the changes in economic and social situation of children and youth that have led to the formation of young consumers' market (Gutkowska, Ozimek, 2008).

One of problematic issues associated with the concept of "young consumer" is defining the age bracket of the consumer who can be

classified as a member of this market segment. Analyzing scientific work from the area of consumer behaviour, we can conclude that among authors there is a broad range of propositions concerning the identification of this age bracket. Generally, the age bracket characterizing this market segment is defined by researchers differently, depending on the goal of research. Young consumer is defined as a person under the age of 19 (Olejniczuk-Merta, 2001). Taking into consideration apart from age also the variable of economic independence, it is assumed that a young consumer may be a person up to the age of 24 who is still supported by parents (Wolny, 2006). Yet another approach can be found in case of demographics, where the term "youth" is used for people aged 16–25. At the same time here we should note the difference between a young consumer and a young client. A young person, according to the provisions of law, becomes a market entity at the age of 13¹ (Wolny, 2003).

Currently, we can see a growing supply of goods on the young consumer market and at the same time the demand is dropping due to dropping population of children and youth in the Polish society. The current group of teenagers is a major challenge for marketing specialists. The contemporary teenagers are much more aware of their own shopping preferences than their parents. They know modern technologies, they expect high quality in products and at the same time low price. They are impatient and not eager to condone flaws (Książek, 2014). Young consumers should be treated by companies with particular caution and attention. Company's dialogue with the young consumer shouldn't violate their emotionality, rationality, health, or development.

Young consumers as participants of the market are characterized by huge interest in the market, searching for and interest in product innovations, inclination to follow authorities, opinion leaders and high susceptibility to fashion and trends. At the same time young consumers have high expectations with regard to the product-market offer and in particular to its attractiveness, modernity, or diversification.

Among the most important trends in market behaviours of the representatives of the young generation we can distinguish above all the influence of factors of a technological and social character. Young consumers commonly use the Internet — for education, play, communicating with their

peers. Among young people one of the most popular forms of spending free time is using the computer (Walkowiak et al., 2006) and more and more often, smartphones. They are used both for play, education, as well as searching for information on the Internet. Access to the computer and the Internet from early years, growing up along with the development of new technologies leads to a situation in which young people are among the consumers finding their way around the net most efficiently. The efficiency of teenagers in the process of finding, comparing and buying products in Internet shops often cannot be compared to the efficiency of other age groups. Internet shopping (e-commerce) currently constitutes one of the most dynamically growing branches in Poland (Gemius 2016). A major group of consumers actively using the services of online shops are teenagers (Gemius 2018). Among the most popular product categories purchased online by young people there are: clothes, computer games, small electronic appliances and applications for smartphones. Clothes and accessories are most often purchased by people aged 15–18 (68%) and people aged 19–24 (73%) (Gemius 2014). Young people are also eager to buy products by means of auction portals (e.g. Allegro).

Young consumers as users of social media

For the purpose of identification of the role and significance of contents published in social media networks which influence the decisions made by young consumers, a research process was carried out. The survey on young consumers was focused on identifying the role played by activities from the area of social media marketing at particular stages of the purchasing process, on the basis of the example of the fashion market.

The object scope of the research covered young consumers representing the Z generation. They were people aged 16–26 studying at secondary high schools and universities on the territory of the city of Poznań. The spatial scope of the research covered the city of Poznań. The subject scope of the conducted research was focused on subsequent stages of young consumers' decision-making process concerning purchases on the fashion market in the context of communication activities of fashion brands in social media. The temporal scope of the research covers the

period from January 2017 to January 2018. The detailed structure of the research sample is presented in the following table.

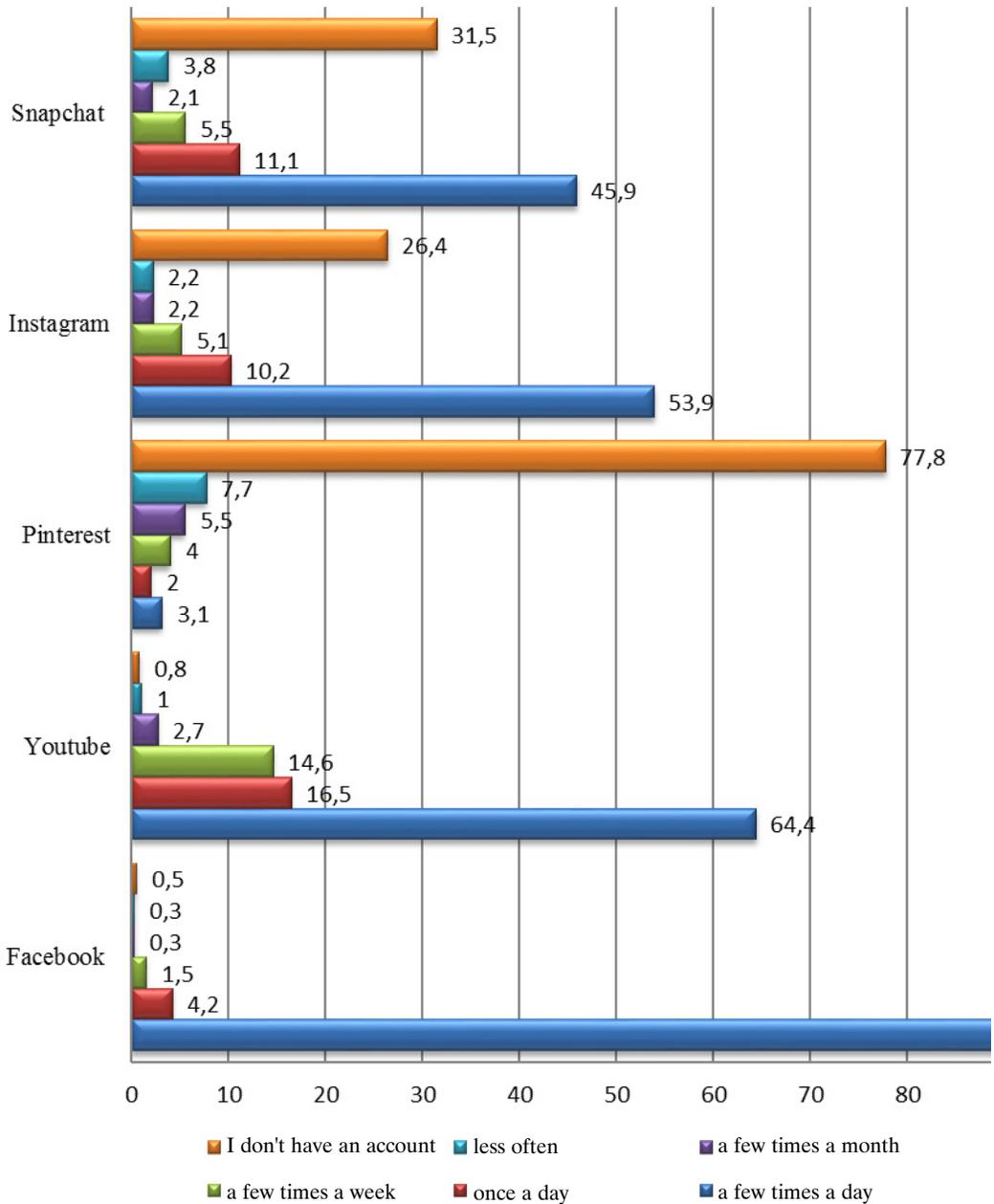
In general, the whole surveyed population, with insignificant exceptions, uses social media services very often — a few times a day (see Picture 1).

Table 2. Structure of the surveyed sample

Variables		Number	Percentage
Sex	Woman	584	58.4%
	Man	416	41.6%
Age	16–17	26	2.6%
	18–20	53	53.1%
	21–23	39	38.5%
	24–26	6	5.8%
Upper secondary school	Secondary School of General Education	82	8.2%
	Technical College	49	4.9%
	Postsecondary School	8	0.8%
	Basic Vocational School	13	1.3%
State universities	Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań	269	26.9%
	Poznań University of Technology	138	13.8%
	University of Life Sciences in Poznań	68	6.8%
	Poznań University of Economics and Business	70	7.0%
	Poznań University of Medical Sciences	45	4.5%
	E. Piasecki Academy of Physical Education in Poznań	26	2.6%
	Academy of Music I.J.Paderewski	5	0.5%
	University of Fine Arts in Poznań	9	0.9%
	Wyższa Szkoła Zarządzania i Bankowości	4	0.4%
	WSB University in Poznań	97	9.7%
	Higher School of Trade and Services	3	0.3%
	School of Communication and Management	2	0.2%
	College of Hotel and Catering Industry	6	0.6%
	School of Social Skills	9	0.9%
	School of Health Beauty and Education	9	0.9%
	Samuel Bogumił Linde College of Modern Languages	7	0.7%
	Poznan School of Logistics	17	1.7%
	European University of Business	3	0.3%
	Wyższa Szkoła Uni-Terra	1	0.1%
	Mieszko I School of Education and Administration	26	2.6%
College of Education and Therapy in Poznań	8	0.8%	
University of Security in Poznań	24	2.4%	
Wyższa Szkoła Techniczno-Humanistyczna Kadry dla Europy	2	0.2%	

Source: Own materials.

Picture 1. Frequency of using social media — Facebook, Youtube, Pinterest, Instagram and Snapchat
(in percentage of responses)



Source: Own materials

The most popular and the most often used social media network is Facebook. Almost 99% of the respondents use this service regularly (at least a few times a week and more often) and over 90% use it a few times a day. This is possible above all thanks to mobile devices (smartphones and tablets) with installed Facebook application. This leads to a situation in which young people at any free moment e.g.: at school, in public transport, or while waiting in line use this social media service. Respondents who have no account in the network, so they don't use it, play a marginal role in the research. This is related to the fact that most social media networks require having an account to gain access to the network. They constituted 0.5% of the whole surveyed population. What's interesting is that the youngest respondents use Facebook the least often among all analyzed age groups. Also in this group the percentage of people without an account in the network is the highest (3.8%).

Among young people Youtube is the second social media network in terms of popularity and frequency of use. Similarly as in case of Facebook 90% of respondents use it regularly, which means using it at least a few times a week, or more often. Every second respondent uses it at least a few times a day. Also here the percentage of people without an account is marginal — 0,8%. According to declarations, men use the service more often than women. 87% of respondents watch videos on Youtube every day. Every third surveyed woman declared she uses Youtube every day. The frequency of using Youtube drops along with older age. Younger people use the social medium most often, a few times a day. The older the respondent, the less often he, or she uses Youtube.

The third most frequently visited social media portal is Instagram. 70% of respondents use it regularly. Out of them a half (50% of all) use Instagram a few times a day, sharing photographs, or viewing materials published by other users. Every fourth respondent doesn't use the portal and doesn't have an Instagram account/profile at all. Instagram is also a portal more dominated by women. 75% of the surveyed women use the portal regularly, at least a few times a week. Every fifth woman declared that she doesn't have an account in the network. In case of men 60% of respondents declared they use the service regularly and every third man doesn't use the portal at all. What's interesting is that almost a half of people aged 16–17 don't use this social media network and the remaining

respondents from this age group use Instagram least often among all age groups participating in the survey.

In case of Snapchat 60% of respondents declared that they use the service regularly. Out of them most use the service a few times a day. Every third respondent doesn't use this medium. It is worth pointing out here that among all the portals mentioned in the research this is the only one that can be used only by means of mobile devices equipped with a camera. This application doesn't have a computer version. Women use Snapchat more often and more regularly than men. Snapchat is most popular among the students of upper secondary schools, that is, respondents from two youngest age groups, that is, 16–17 and 18–20. The older the respondents, the lower their activity on the portal. In the oldest age group (24–26) a half of respondents don't use the service at all (50.9%).

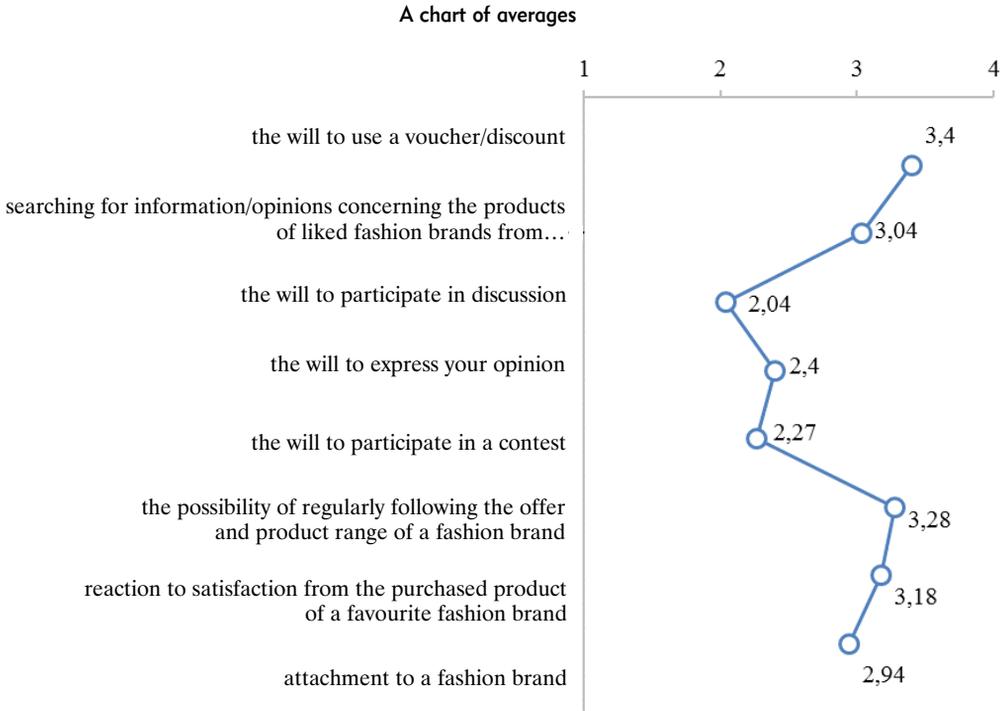
Significant differences can be observed only in case of Pinterest, which is used more, or less regularly by merely 10% of respondents. What's interesting is that these are above all women aged 18–26. Up to 80% of respondents don't use Pinterest at all and don't have an account on the portal.

Summing up, using social media is in a way, a "daily ritual" for young people who like and want to be up to date with information concerning their friends and the environment in which they find themselves. At the same time media and social media deliver many other news items e.g. current events from the country and abroad. Thanks to mobile devices, which accompany young people at every step, the frequency of using the most popular social media portals is extremely high. Thus, we can conclude that young people spend a lot of time on the Internet, including browsing social media portals.

Among the most important reasons for which the respondents click "like" on company profiles of fashion brands, follow Instagram profiles, or subscribe to Youtube channels we can name the following: the will to use a voucher ($\bar{x} = 3.4$), which is usually available to the fans, or friends of a given brand, the possibility of being up to date, following the offer of a particular fashion brand ($\bar{x} = 3.28$) and what's important is that becoming a fan of a fashion brand is the respondents' reaction to satisfaction from the purchased product of a particular fashion brand ($\bar{x} = 3.18$). Among the least important factors there are the will to participate in discussion

($\bar{x} = 2.04$) and to express opinion on a fashion brand, or its products ($\bar{x} = 2.4$). This means that young people more eagerly use the opinions of other people, read recommendations concerning particular products and at the same time are not eager to express their own observations in public and to share their experiences with others.

Picture 2. Motivation for becoming a fan of fashion brand profiles in social media.



Source: Own materials.

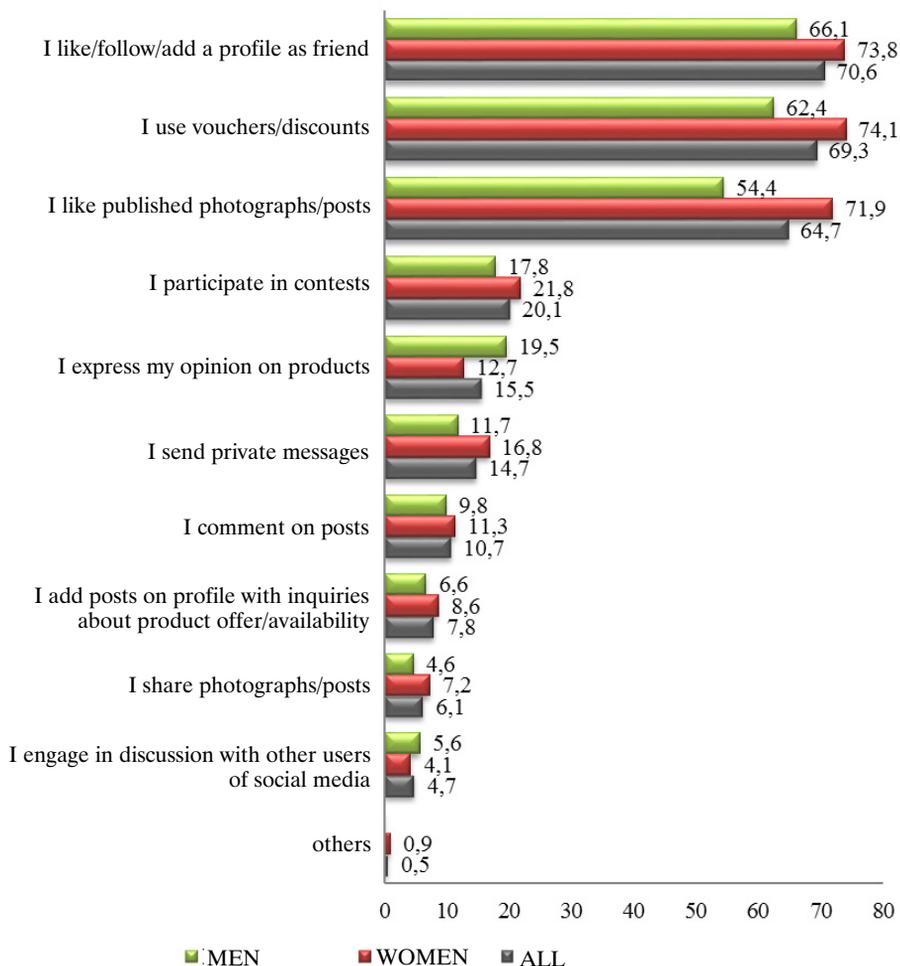
Analyzing the respondents' activity on the profiles of fashion brands in social media we can conclude that most of the respondents are passive users of content. A vast majority of them limit their activity to liking a particular profile (70.6%) or liking the contents published on the profile (64.7%). 70% of respondents use discount vouchers offered to the fans of a particular fashion brand. Every fifth respondent participates in contests organized on the profiles of fashion brands. Merely 15% of respondents express their opinions on the purchased product and describe experiences

associated with them in public, on the profiles of fashion brands. Less than 10% of respondents by means of social media portals ask questions concerning e.g. the availability of a given product in a particular physical store. 6% of respondents post on their boards, or their profile contents published by a fashion brand — photographs, posts, or other types of content. A marginal percentage of respondents through profiles in social media display other activities such as: browsing the product offer and looking for information about new collections, looking for inspiration and new, unique fashion products.

Interesting differences can be observed in comparison between sexes. Generally, women are more active on the profiles of fashion brands than men. Women definitely more often and more eagerly get in touch with fashion brands through private messages in which they possibly look for support in the area of client service, for information concerning products, their composition, or e.g. availability. Perhaps, by choosing this form of contact women don't want to share their activities, opinions, or purchasing decisions with the public and don't want people from the group of their friends to notice their activity. At the same time, as the results of the conducted surveys show, men are more inclined to publish their opinions about fashion products and to interact with other users of social media networks. Women's activity is less "public" and visible.

The contents published on social media portals by fashion brands have a significant influence on the respondents' activity. They have a much bigger impact on women than on men. Above all, these contents generate new needs among the respondents and lead to purchasing the products of the brand, as a half of the surveyed men and 62% of the surveyed women admitted. The contents published in social media make the respondents, the users of these services, ponder on purchasing the products of a particular brand, as about 70% of respondents have declared. The materials published in social media also encourage people to visit a particular brand's shop, both an online and a brick-and-mortar shop. Up to 85% of women under influence of the contents published in social media visit the virtual shop of a brand, browse the offer, or make a purchase. This shows that women are more susceptible to influence. They are often convinced by special offers, discounts, price cuts. They more

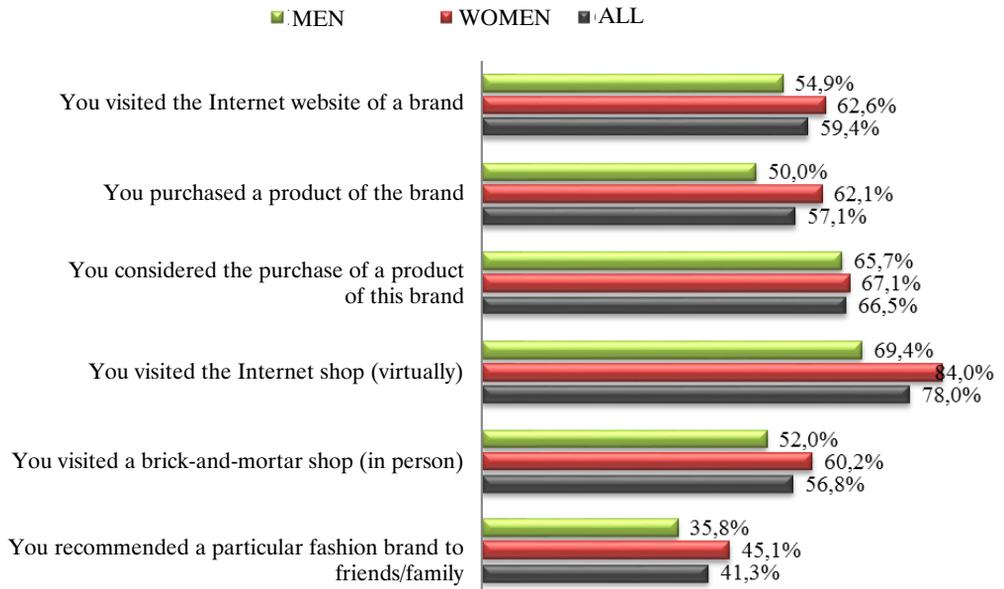
Picture 3. Respondents' activity on the profiles of fashion brands in social media with the consideration of sex (percentages of answers)



Source: Own materials.

often shop on the spur of the moment, on impulse. What may be such an impulse is, for example, a social media profile informing about a product price cut, or a sale. The weakest influence is observed in the area of recommendations. Less than a half of respondents recommended a given fashion brand to family members, or friends under the influence of contents published on fashion brand profiles.

Picture 4. The influence of contents published in social media on the activity and actions of the respondents



Source: Own materials.

Purchasing process and social media

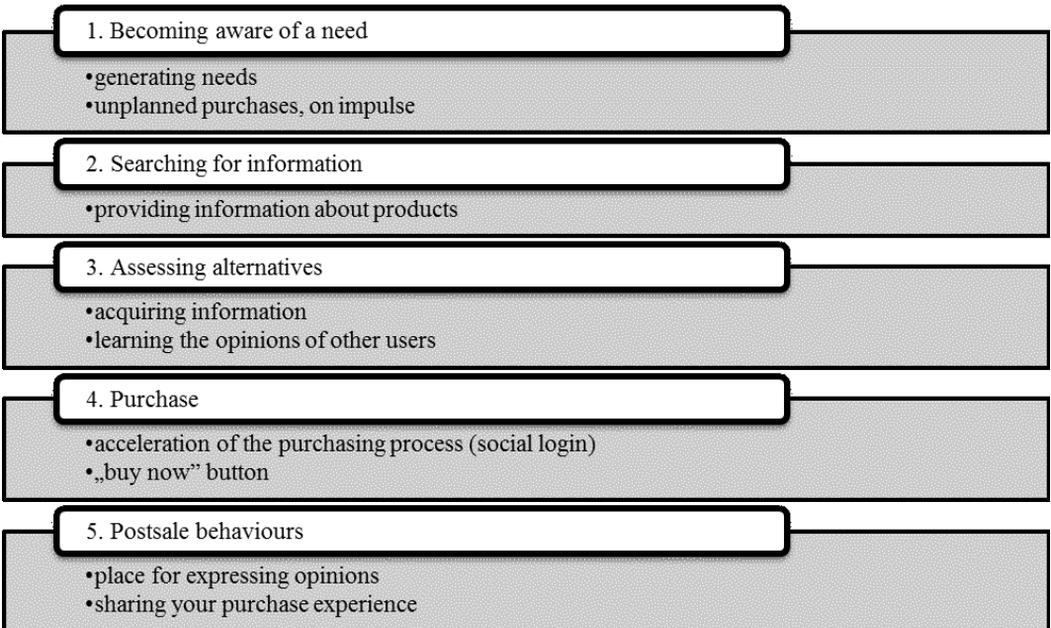
The purchasing process is shaped under the influence of many factors (personal-demographic, social-cultural, economic and psychological). The development of social media resulting from the growing number of users, engagement of growing amount of users' free time and using it for various purposes means that the influence of virtual communities on the purchasing process carried out by the user of social media is growing (Dejnaka, 2013). Social media constitute not just an important source of information about products, but also shape the purchasing process at all of its stages. Social media influence the purchasing process of consumers who are active users of social media. Already from the first stage of the decision-making process, that is, from the moment of becoming aware of a need, the influence of social media and the contents contained in them is significant. The conducted surveys showed that social media and the

contents presented in them (in form of posts) initiate the process of purchasing products that the buyer didn't plan to buy and generate new needs. This may result from the fact that social media (mainly social media portals, Internet fora and blogs) are often a very valuable and frequently used source of information about products that consumers plan to buy. Opinions and comments posted by Internet users play a significant role in the decision-making process. More and more often consumers use informal sources of information about products. As research suggests, a major percentage of Internet users read opinions formulated by other Internet users, believing that they present reliable information about the advantages and disadvantages of products. At the next stage, the stage of assessing alternatives the opinions of other people and at the same time users of social media play a particularly helpful role. These opinions to some extent make it possible to reduce uncertainty and minimize the risk accompanying a purchase. Young people assess such opinions as reliable and credible. The role of social media and Facebook in particular in the penultimate stage of the purchasing process is growing. This results above all from various functionalities of this service which facilitate and accelerate the purchase itself. The "buy" button facilitates the process and makes it possible to buy a product in an online shop with just one mouse click. At this stage also shops' mobile applications play a major role, as they make it possible to buy products in any location at any time, by means of mobile devices. M-commerce is a rapidly developing segment of electronic trade (Łopaciński, Łysik, 2016). What is also an attractive functionality for the buyers is Facebook Connect service, which was created in 2008. The concept is about making it possible to log into other portals (including online shops) by means of data needed for logging into Facebook. This makes it possible to save time, avoid the duty of creating a new account, coming up with a new password and remembering it. Social media may not have an impact on the last stage of the purchasing process, that is, post-purchase feelings, but it is feelings and satisfaction, or lack thereof that influence young consumers and their subsequent behavior. Research shows that consumers unsatisfied with their purchase more often share their feelings leaving unfavourable opinions in virtual space (mainly on company profiles and in social media networks). Unsatisfied young consumers

often stop liking and following company profiles in social media (as an expression of dissatisfaction with a product).

The following picture (see Picture 5) presents in a synthetic way analyses concerning the influence of various social media and contents published in them on the subsequent stages of the purchasing process among young consumers.

Picture 5. Social media in consumer's decision-making process



Own materials

Summary

The directions of changes taking place in young consumers' behaviours discussed in this article are undoubtedly a great challenge for companies. Young consumers constitute a very attractive segment of the market and not just the fashion market. However, what is very important is properly designing activities and promotion tools which a company will use to communicate with them. The obtained results show how important it is to understand the expectations of young consumers, which can constitute

a starting point in the process of designing marketing strategies taking into consideration the determinants influencing the behaviours and purchasing processes of young consumers. The conducted surveys have shown that young consumers regularly use the most popular social media portals. What's more, they don't use them only for entertainment-related purposes, but also in course of making purchases. Young consumers are passive users of contents. They more often use the opinions and recommendations of other users than share their own opinions and recommendations. By becoming fans of fashion brand profiles they most often expect tangible benefits from this in form of discount vouchers, or information about price cuts. These profiles also constitute a precious source of information about products and product range. At the same time young consumers declare that contents published on social media portals play an important role in the purchasing process, they lead to not just taking into consideration, but also to purchasing products that you didn't plan to buy, to visiting an online, or a brick-and-mortar shop. Due to this, what seems exceptionally important from the point of view of the company is appropriate targeting of communication activities in social media.

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¹ According to the act from 23.04.1964 Civil code with latter changes, article 15 — underage people below the age of 13 have a limited legal capacity.

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