

E-Consumer Behaviour as a New Trend of Consumption in Poland

Felicjan Bylok, Arnold Pabian, Piotr Tomski

Czestochowa University of Technology, Faculty of Management, Poland
bylokfelicjan@gmail.com

Abstract: In the contemporary economy, one of the significant factors determining the activities of enterprises is that of change in the behaviour of consumers on the market. These changes may be the result of the impact of various circumstances. The most important of these include the impact of the environment in economic, demographic, socio-cultural, technical and technological dimensions, among others. Each of the aforesaid dimensions has an impact on the formation of new forms of consumption in both the short-term and long-term periods of time. One of the new forms is e-consumer behaviour, which involves the realization of the process of consumption on the Internet. Its development is associated with new forms of communication. Mobile equipment (cellular phones, smartphones, tablets) with connections to the Internet facilitate the acquisition and consumption of consumer goods outside of traditional shops, which in turn has an impact on the creation of new trends of consumption. The main aim of this paper is to describe the trend of e-consumer behaviour on the consumer market. The authors focus on the answer to the question of whether this trend shall dominate in the near future. With the aim of finding the answer to the aforesaid question, the authors analysed the most important economic, social and cultural factors influencing the development of e-consumer behaviour at the beginning of the 21st century. The most significant features of e-consumption have been presented. The perspectives of e-consumer behaviour in Poland has also been illustrated on the basis of quantitative and qualitative research. The practical implication of the analysis carried out is the indication of the growth in potential of consumption on the Internet. Nevertheless, the social implication of this paper is the emphasis of the significance of this new trend in consumption and its implications for producers.

Key words: e-consumer, consumer trends, consumption, consumer behaviour

Introduction

In the 21st century, the development of IT technologies is leading to numerous social and economic consequences. One of the most important of these is the development of e-commerce and new sectors of services. The sale of consumer goods by means of new forms of communication, namely, the Internet, cellular phones, interactive television is becoming more widespread. A multitude of virtual shops are emerging on the Internet that offer almost unlimited opportunities in terms of the choice of products and services, speed of purchase, as well as a multitude of aspects involving information about products. They are becoming important centres of consumption, namely places that facilitate the consumption of various goods and services (Ritzer 2001, p.21). The rapid development of e-consumer behaviour is dependent to a large extent on the technical progress associated with the new forms of communication. The appearance of smartphones and tablets with access to the Internet has expanded the possibilities of developing the new forms of communication. These include the interactive digital television, electronic advertising kiosks, electronic catalogues of mail-order houses and other firms, TV networks of home purchases, advertising broadcasts, as well as forms of online trade on the Internet.

The development of electronic forms of communication has influenced the creation of new forms of consumer behaviour. From the perspective of the sociology of consumption, we may observe the creation of the "new consumer", namely, the people who realize the process of purchasing with the aid of the Internet by means of the following: identifying the need, searching for a solution, making purchases of goods and services. The process of consumption realized by the new forms of communication has an impact on the change in the trends of consumption and lifestyles. New consumer norms are being created. As a result of availing of purchases on the Internet the expectations and customs of consumers are changing. On the one hand, the "new" consumer by way of access to numerous sources of information is becoming critical and sceptical with regard to the world of goods, while simultaneously conscious of the requirements with relation to the prices and quality of goods. On the other hand, the "new" consumer is subjected to the impact of constant advertising that appears in all forms of communication, e.g. cellular phones, the Internet, TV, radio etc., as a result of which the averaging out of tastes

and their standardization are taking place. With relation to the changes in consumption, the question arises as to whether the new form of consumer behaviour realized on the Internet is a long-term trend in Poland and in what scope. The authors formulate conclusions relating to the perspectives of the development of the trend of e-consumer behaviour in Poland on the basis of the method of critical analysis of the existing documents – books, papers, reports and other works.

E-consumer behaviour as a mega-trend

Consumer behaviour in the 21st century involves constant change and the impact on this process involves various factors. The most important ones include globalization, networking and informatization. They create the circumstances for the formation of new consumer behaviour, which may be termed as a trend. H. Veilgaard defines this trend as the process of change that may be perceived from a variety of perspectives (Veilgaard 2008, p. 9). Nevertheless, Ph. Kotler defines trend as a direction or series of events characterized by a certain drive and durability (Kotler 2005, p. 159). Hence, the consumer trend is termed as any change in consumer behaviour that has a defined period duration, as well as occurring in several areas and in the activities of a consumer, while also remaining compatible with the other important factors, both the existing ones, as well as those emerging at the same time (Celeste, 1991). From a time perspective, it is possible to discuss the short-term or long-term trends. Short-term trends are reactions to the current economic and social situation, e.g. the economic crisis has had an impact on the search for ways to adjust to the new economic reality. However, together with its conclusion, the associated trends disappear. Nevertheless, long-term trends are of a constant nature and are most frequently the result of profound social, cultural and economic changes.

In literature devoted to the field of marketing, it is possible to encounter various typologies of the contemporary consumer trends. For instance, American marketing analysts have worked out the 10 most important trends. According to the American firm JWT, it is possible to distinguish the following trends: *all the world's a game* which encompasses behaviour directed towards super-modern technologies, particularly computer games, which shape specific behaviour in the virtual world and the real world; *the urgency economy*, whose essence involves the subjection to uninhibited consumption in today's world without waiting for the future; *non-commitment culture* relates to consumer behaviour characterised by the transitory relations between the seller and the producer, as well as the lack of loyalty and allegiance to the brand; *eat, pray, tech* pays attention to the fact that the possession of goods of high technology has grown to the ranking of elementary needs that are essential to life; *de-teching* is associated with the bases of "digital abstinence" caused by the escape from the digitalized and completely modern technologies of the world; *retail as the third space* relates to changes in the functioning of traditional sales in the direction of transforming it into a unique consumer experience; *creative urban renewal* is associated with the situation of gradual integration of the trademark with the iconic space of a contemporary city; *worlds colliding* relates to the overlapping of the virtual world and the real world, which favours the development of modern technologies; *hyperpersonalization* is based on the search for highly individualized products and services; *outsourcing self-control* relates to the maintenance of self-discipline and moderation in terms of consumption (10 trends for 2011, pp. 1-87).

Another interesting proposition of trends in consumer behaviour was presented by B. Mróz who distinguished the following: *gender blending*, which involves the fading of differences in the division of social roles in the area of consumption between men and women; *LOHAS (Lifestyles of Health and Sustainability)* is associated with the departure from over-consumption in the direction of a lifestyle that propagates ecological consumption, sustainable development and respect for the environment; *do-it-yourself doctors* encompasses behaviour associated with care for personal health, physical and psychological condition, *trysumer* propagates behaviour associated with the search for new feelings and experiences, *sharing economy* is associated with consumer cooperation in terms of acquiring new goods; while the hyperpersonalization relates to the search for unique items that are adjusted to individual expectations and preferences (Mróz 2013, pp.134-165).

Each of the aforesaid typologies contains behaviour that is characteristic of e-consumption, which signifies the fact that the process of satisfying consumer needs is realized on the Internet where a consumer identifies the needs, searches for solutions, carries out purchases of products and services, while even consuming them in the virtual world. With relation to this, new trends of consumption are being formed (particularly with reference to the trends of acquiring consumer goods). The trend of e-consumer behaviour due to its strong ties with the IT society may be acknowledged to be the one which shall define the future consumer behaviour.

In characterising this trend, it is possible to distinguish a multitude of its features. One of these is the use of the modern methods of consumption for the realization of the process of consumption. The development of the Internet, as well as the means of communication (smartphones, tablets, mobile phones, laptops with functions of access to the Internet) has had an impact on the creation of new products and consumer services only available in the virtual world.

Another feature of e-consumer behaviour is the acquisition and accumulation of consumer information. The commercial Internet provides a consumer with the possibility of availing from a databank with reference to the process of creating a given product and other information about the product that is helpful in taking a decision to purchase. This enables the acquisition of information from other consumers that use the given products or avail of specific services. In the case of websites offering a wide range of consumer goods, there is the possibility of a relatively fast familiarisation of the offers of the particular shops, whereas in the case of the traditional way of acquiring goods the acquisition of information on the offers of particular shops requires a lot of effort and time.

A further feature is that of presumption, which involves participation in the creation of an individualized product. Consumers get involved in part of the work executed by specialists in an enterprise, i.e., by means of active participation in the process of designing a given product, which in its final stage acquires individualized features adjusted to the expectations of a consumer. D. Tapsott defines this aspect of presumption as the desire to possess varied types of consumer goods in accordance with personal concepts and active participation in the creation of the given goods (Tapsott, Williams 2008, pp. 215-218). Thus, it was assumed that products are the arena for experimentation in the case of potential clients and taking account of the changes proposed by them, while simultaneously treating consumers as partners and not only clients (Tapsott, Williams 2008, pp. 215-218). Consumers are encouraged to share knowledge with producers (Ziemba, Eisenhardt 2014). Sometimes their knowledge is availed of to solve specific problems that producers are faced with. This may take on the following three forms: crowdfunding which involves the joint financing of specific projects by the Internet society, co-creation associated with the commonly executed creative work, as well as microtasting involving the execution of small tasks constituting part of the common project by the virtual society (Mróz 2013, p. 92).

The features of e-consumption are new forms of making purchases by means of the organization of consumers into virtual consumer societies in which mutual cooperation is significant which facilitates taking shrewder purchasing decisions. With this aim in mind, review platforms are created, on which consumers exchange information about products and services, or societies are also formed around brandnames. Apart from the exchange of information, virtual consumer societies undertake active operations on the market by means of various forms which include, among others, social shopping taking on the form of purchases made by groups and social offering involving purchases in which the initiating party is a group of consumers (Mazurek 2012, p. 162).

The choice of e-consumption as a type of consumer behaviour is influenced by many factors as follows: firstly, there is the possibility of making rapid purchases in virtual shops, secondly, the possibility of choice in a virtual shop depending on the needs and preferences, thirdly, a consumer may store a large amount of information about products and possibilities of purchasing that is not offered by brochures and technical descriptions, fourthly, there is the possibility of acquiring a broader range of information on a given product from a producer by means of electronic mail. Research on e-consumers indicates that the main reasons for the choice of Internet shops are as follows: the greater convenience and saving of time, ease of purchasing, saving of money, good fun, better selection of products, easier delivery and availability of information (Windham, Orton, p. 48). The benefit of Internet purchases relating to entertainment is worth mentioning. In the case of some consumers, the possibility of surfing the Internet, comparison of prices, searching for bargains and participation in auctions are elements of good fun and the feeling of pleasure.

Prerequisites for the shaping of the trend of e-consumer behaviour

The development of e-consumer behaviour is influenced by many conditions of an economic, social and technological nature. The most significant economic conditions include the differentiation of the offers of goods and services with regard to target groups, the increase in the mass spread of cheap trademark substitutes of comparable use value, the expansion of the segment of low prices of consumer goods and services, the emergence of new techniques of sales, changes in the sphere of satisfying basic needs, as well as the wide availability of consumer credit. Another equally significant factor in terms of stimulating behaviour associated with e-consumption is the possibility of availing of credit cards as a method of disbursing money. The increase in the availability of credit cards for the payment of purchases in Internet shops was enabled by the implementation of electronic methods of payment for goods and services. The infrastructure of the electronic funds transfer was created and the processes of accepting credit cards were prepared and implemented. Thanks to all this, the application of credit cards in e-commerce has become a widespread phenomenon. A further economic factor in supporting the development of e-commerce is the pursuit of acquiring products, i.e. designer goods at reduced prices. This process may be termed the "logic of cheapness" (Jäckel 2006:274), which is illustrated in the fact that consumers compare the prices of goods between themselves and search for those that are at the lowest price. Another form of the "logic of cheapness" is that of purchases made in groups. These purchases are the result of the need for simplicity, frugality, the trend towards "jumping" from one offer to another (Flatters, Wilmott 2009:106-112). Group buying or social buying involve the collection of an

appropriately large group of consumers that are interested in purchasing a specific product and its acquisition via the Internet (Bilińska-Reformat 2013:98). In the case of a consumer, this type of purchase is an opportunity to avail of the attractive offers price-wise, while in the case of firms this is a marketing tool of a broad promotional application.

A significant influence on the development of e-consumer behaviour is created by circumstances of a social nature, of which one is mass communication. The rapid development of television has evoked a multitude of consequences in society. One of these relates to the changes in the manner of spending leisure time. According to R.D. Putman, television has “privatized” or “individualized” the way in which leisure time is spent, by occupying an increasingly important position among the ways of spending free time (Putman 1995: 65-75). The unidirectional form of communication that is characteristic of television has created the feeling of anonymity and feeling of emotion in solitude. It has made viewers dependent on a unidirectional form of managing communication as a way of spending leisure time, self-education and finding activities. The creation of such attitudes among people has become the basis for the development of new forms of communication. The Internet by utilizing the customs of people in terms of spending leisure time at home offer the possibility of two-way communication. It has provided the tools, thanks to which it is possible to satisfy consumer needs without leaving the home. Over the course of a short period of time, the Internet has facilitated purchases of required products in any place where there is a possibility of connecting to the Internet.

Another circumstance is the growth in the activity of women and the associated chronic lack of time with reference to running the household. The professional activity of women has had an impact on changing the lifestyles of women, which is illustrated by the fact that the modern-day woman has less time to run the household, which in turn means that they have less time to do shopping. The Internet enables a significant saving of time and also increases the convenience of doing shopping.

A further social circumstance is the individualistic orientation associated with post-material values (Bylok 2013, p.158). In the sphere of consumption, this is witnessed by the pursuit of creating an individual style of consumption. The application of new communication techniques has had an impact on expanding the area of individualism in consumption and the possibilities of choice of individual styles of life as forms of building self-identity. Technical artefacts support this process. Thanks to the use of the “communicative” means of consumption, it is possible to create an individual style of consumption. A consumer has the possibility to choose various options. M. Prisching defines optionality as each possibility that may and should become a reality, without effort and with the feeling of great pleasure (Prisching 2006, p. 67). Optionality in consumption involves carrying out purchases and availing of the products according to one’s own idea. The Internet has significantly facilitated the choice of a specific option of consumption with regard to individual preferences.

The individualistic orientation is associated with the pursuit of feeling new experiences that enable the satisfaction of the need for the feeling of pleasure. Consumers search for unknown and unique experiences not only in real life, but also in the virtual world. Electronic equipment of the latest generation that has access to the Internet facilitates the feeling of new and exciting experiences, e.g. in the form of computer games. There is an additional dependency between the value of pleasure and the attitudes towards e-purchasing, namely the feeling of pleasure on the internet has a positive impact on making purchases on the internet (Jayawardhena 2004).

A significant condition in the development of the trend of e-consumer behaviour is the ideology of technological progress associated with the propagation of technocentric attitudes among consumers, which involve the positive evaluation of everything that is modern and the result of the latest technologies (Wiswede 2000: 45-50). This is carried out by spreading the concept of the almighty power of the techniques, as well as the fact that human labour shall become restricted to servicing technical equipment. The realization of this ideology is the technologizing of everyday life associated with the widespread use of goods equipped with new IT technologies. The possession of goods created by the sector of high technologies has become not only an important need for many consumers, but also a determinant of social status, or lifetime success. Contemporary man is increasingly dependent on goods equipped with modern technologies. The possession of modern mobile products (cellular phones, smartphones, tablets), which fulfil the function of handy “digital assistants”, guides and helpers in everyday life is becoming essential. This equipment is equipped with special programs and applications facilitating the realization of the process of consumption in any place and at any time.

Behaviour of e-consumers in Poland

The desk research method was applied for the analysis of the existing data on the behaviour of e-consumers in Poland, which was executed on the basis of the data published in the following: reports, papers, articles in magazines. As a result of the research carried out, the findings relating to the perspectives of the development of e-consumption in Poland were formulated.

In the first decade of the 21st century, there was rapid growth in the development of e-consumer behaviour in Poland. This is first and foremost conditioned by the range of access of consumers to the Internet. As indicated by research carried out by Głównego Urzędu Statystycznego (Central Statistical Office) in 2013, access to the Internet was registered in the case of 71% of households, including 68.8% with broadband access. If Polish people have access to the Internet, they most frequently avail of it in their homes (60.6%), while subsequently in the workplace (20.8%) and in the homes of other people (10.5%) (GUS 2013, p.9). An analysis of the socio-demographic features of the people using the Internet is interesting. The findings of research carried out by CBOS (Public Opinion Research Centre) indicates that in 2013 there was almost widespread use of the Internet by the youngest Poles of ages less than 25 years of age (93%), while the vast majority of people aged between 25 and 45 (88%). The number of users of the Internet decreases with age and the lowest percentage of internauts is aged 65 or over (11%). Polish people who usually avail of the Internet are in the majority of cases people who are relatively well-educated (higher education is held by 92% of users, while medium level education in the case of 73% of internauts). The variable differentiating users of the Internet is that of professional status. The largest group of users of the Internet consists of people employed in managerial positions (97%), while also administrative and office workers (88%). However, the smallest group of people using the Internet consists of unqualified workers (40%) (CBOS 2013). Hence, the typical user of the Internet in Poland is a young individual that is relatively well-educated and occupies a relatively high position in the workplace. The findings of research on the consumer behaviour of Polish people indicate that this group of consumers is featured by spontaneity in terms of purchases and behaviour aimed at attaining pleasure in consumption (Bylok 2005, pp. 335-360).

Availing of the Internet with the aim of realizing the process of consumption depends on the level of Internet skills, namely the use of Internet browsers, participation in chats and discussion forums, utilizing programs for exchanging film files and music files, as well as buying and selling on the Internet. Research on the IT competences reflects that 35% of Polish people possess high level and medium level Internet skills. However, 29% of Poles possess low levels, while 35% do not possess any skills (Szymanek 2013, p. 27).

The scope of e-consumption is dependent on the equipment which users are in possession of. Research by CBOS indicates that there is a systematic rise in the number of people in possession of mobile equipment such as laptops, cellular phones, notebooks, tablets and smartphones in Poland, which has a positive impact on the increase in the interest of consumption on the Internet. In comparison with 2010, when the users of this equipment amounted to 45%, in 2013 73% of Poles declared their access to wireless connections with the Internet by means of such equipment (CBOS 2013). Polish people are increasingly availing of mobile equipment to make purchases online. Currently, every sixth person buys online by means of mobile equipment. The increasingly technologically advanced equipment is becoming an alternative for desktop and laptop computers. This trend is tied with the growth in the quantity of mobile equipment in Poland as the number of mobile viewings for websites in the category of e-commerce tripled in 2012 (Gemius Report 2012: 54).

The scope of availing of e-commerce tools has had an impact on the development of e-consumption in Poland. The most significant of these includes price comparison websites, namely service websites in which consumers may compare the prices of products in various Internet shops (59%) and service websites with reviews and opinions on products on the Internet (57%). Consumers also avail of advertising portals, in which internauts may inform about products which they would like to sell/buy (40%), group buying, or in other words, service websites in which internauts who are interested in the same product may negotiate the price with the supplier or buy more cheaply (19%), as well as shopping malls, namely service websites concentrating shops of a similar assortment (16%) (Gemius Report 2012:100). Each of these tools favours the taking of consumer decisions.

Together with the increase in the access to the Internet among Polish people, there is also a rise in consumption with this method. In 2012 by comparison with 2008, the percentage of people making purchases grew from 66% to 72%. The largest group of consumers constitutes people both on auctions, as well as on online shops (58%). These are usually people aged less than 35, having a higher level education and holding a higher social position, while also living in large cities. Another group of consumers consists of people buying exclusively on online shops (24%). These are most frequently women and people aged over 35. This is the result of the growing popularity of clothing shops on the Internet which offer innovative solutions, e.g. virtual changing rooms or 360 degree photos. The final group consists of people buying exclusively on online auctions (19%) who are most often people of a lower level of education and living in the country or in small towns (Gemius Report 2012:28). Hence, the socio-demographic features have an impact on the choice of place for making purchases on the Internet.

The structure of products purchased on the Internet makes for interesting reading. The consumer goods which are most frequently purchased are clothing and footwear – bought by 32% of internauts. Furthermore, consumers willingly buy articles associated with motoring (12%), electronic equipment (10%), cosmetics,

children's toys and goods (9% each). Nevertheless, food products are relatively seldom purchased (2%) (CBOS 2013).

Apart from behaviour associated with the purchase of consumer goods on the Internet, e-services are of significant importance. M. Dąbrowska defines them as the new way of providing services with the use of the Internet from the moment of the firm contacting the client with the aim of presenting their offer by means of ordering services to their provision and contact following the execution of services (Dąbrowska 2008, p.44). The feature of e-services is their interactivity, situational personalization and possibility of regulation in real time (Rust and Lemon 2001). Depending on the type of e-services, they may be rendered on the Internet and their consumption may take place while availing of the Internet or in the real world following their purchase online. Of all the e-services, Polish people relatively often avail of banking services via the Internet (83.4%). Availing of electronic banking is favoured by people with higher education, namely the higher the level of education, the more often Polish people avail of e-banking. Further types of services which consumers search for on the Internet are e-culture (56.9%), e-learning (55.9%), e-administration (34.5%), e-insurance (28.1%) and e-health (16.7%). Research indicates that women avail of services in the sphere of e-culture, e-learning and e-health more frequently than men. In turn, men avail more of the services of e-administration and e-insurance. The most active group of consumers availing of e-services are people aged between 25 and 34, as well as between 35 and 44 (Wolny 2013, pp.256-257).

In the analysis of consumer behaviour on the Internet, a significant role is played by the motives of e-purchasing (Bourlakis et al. 2008). The most important motives that stimulate Polish people in choosing e-consumption include saving money associated with the low prices offered by Internet shops (80%), the lack of time and convenience (71%), while also free delivery (34%). The possibility of spending a pleasant time doing shopping online is also important (15%) (Gemius Report, pp.15 and 33). An equally significant motive behind consumer behaviour online is the need to feel experiences. Internauts choose playing computer games most frequently as a source of entertainment, while also downloading files with games, music, films and graphics (28%), listening to the radio, watching TV online (29%) and playing network games (8%) (Szymanek 2013, p. 43). In sum, it is possible to state that in the case of consumers, making a decision to purchase a given product is associated with financial benefits, saving time and the feeling of pleasure.

In the process of the behaviour of an e-consumer, utilizing the Internet for searching information about products is significant. In Poland, knowledge about new products is searched for by 49% of internauts, whereas in turn, reading, downloading files of newspapers and magazines which contain information about new products is important for 30% of the people availing of the Internet (Szymanek 2013, p. 42). Most frequently, e-consumers search for information on the Internet by means of search engines (Google, Bing, Yahoo) - 29%, while also on online auctions -26%. Consumers avail of online shops familiar to them to a lesser extent - 14%, while price comparison websites -13% with the aim of acquiring information about new products (Gemius Report 2012: 32).

The development of e-consumer behaviour as a trend is certified by the frequency of making purchases by mean of electronic forms of consumption. As indicated by the Gemius report, of all the internauts who declare their tendency to make purchases online, almost half of them admit that they do shopping there at least several times a year (44 proc.), whereas the virtual basket is filled by 20% of Polish people more or less once a month. However, purchases on the Internet are made several times a month by 16% of respondents. A mere 4% of Polish people buy systematically on the Internet (Gemius Report 2012). This data reflects the fact that Polish consumers do not make purchases in Internet shops very systematically.

The defined trends of consumer behaviour become a long-term trend when consumers perceive them to be important for the future. In analysing the expectations of Polish consumers with relation to e-consumption, it is worth indicating the factors which are important determinants of potential behaviour. Research shows that Polish people would more frequently make purchases on the Internet in a situation of improving their financial situation (23%), lower prices (20%), lower costs of delivery (19%) and broader assortment of available products (5%) (Gemius Report 2012, p. 42). These factors are of first and foremost an economic dimension, thus the development of e-consumption in Poland is decided by economic conditions in terms of its functioning.

Discussion

The presented findings of the research reflect the fact that there is great potential for the development of consumption in terms of the Internet in Poland. Hence, it is essential to consider the perspectives of developing the trend of e-consumer behaviour. In Poland, the development of this trend is influenced by many factors. Firstly, a consumer finds the website of the Internet shop quickly, orders the sought after item of trade and leaves it quickly. Secondly, shopping becomes convenient, a consumer may make purchases at home, in the office, in an airplane, or indeed anywhere where access to the Internet may be had without the necessity to visit crowded

retail shops. Purchases may be made at any time of the day and on any day of the week. Thirdly, it saves time that is necessary to search for products on Internet shops, in which only several minutes are necessary in order to see the offer of a shop, whereas searching for goods in traditional shops requires a lot of time. Fourthly, a consumer may store a large quantity of information about products and the possibilities of a purchase which is not facilitated by brochures and technical descriptions. Fifthly, there is the possibility of acquiring a wider scope of information about a given product from a producer by means of electronic mail. Sixthly, a consumer has the possibility of acquiring a product manufactured in another country, but which is made available on the Internet. Seventhly, an important circumstance in the choice of e-consumption is that of attaining pleasure while making purchases on the Internet. In the case of some consumers, the possibility of surfing the Net, comparing prices, finding bargains and participating in auctions are elements of good fun and the feeling of pleasure.

Apart from the factors that have a positive impact on the development of e-consumer behaviour, there are also barriers that hinder its development. These are first and foremost, the slow technical processes and difficulty with ensuring the safety of credit cards. Another barrier is the organization of Internet shops. The reality of virtual shops is divergent from theory, in that many barriers exist which hinder the development of this area of trade. There are no broad ranges of products, while there are also problems with timely deliveries to the homes of clients who have bought products, errors in communication on the Internet take place, while the sellers do not always respond to questions regarding specific features of the products sold in their shops by electronic mail (Windham and Orton 2001: 158-159). Another barrier to the development of consumption is the lack of trust with relation to Internet shops which is connected with uncertainty in terms of the quality of the goods and the execution of the transaction itself. Another barrier is the non-adherence to ethical norms on the part of e-sellers, namely the lack of a guarantee of privacy and safety of e-consumers, the lack of responsibility of e-sellers, the lack of a precise description of the products that is in accordance with the reality (Avshalom et al. 2007). In Poland, the most significant barriers to purchasing on the Internet is the fear of being cheated by the seller (66%). Another important barrier is the limited safety of the transaction (27% of those analysed refrained from a purchase as they did not want to reveal details concerning their credit cards) (CENEO 2013).

Conclusions

Deliberations on the perspectives of the development of e-consumption as a new trend of consumption in Poland lead to the formulation of several conclusions. Firstly, as a result of the constant process of change in the technological means of communication, growth exists in the potential possibilities of satisfying consumer needs by way of new forms of consumption. Secondly, new forms of consumer behaviour are emerging as a result of the development of new forms of sales in terms of goods and services on the Internet. Thirdly, individualistic attitudes are being created in consumption. This is favoured by the differentiation of the offers of consumer goods in Internet shops that facilitate the individualization of the styles of consumption. The styles of consumption are to an increasingly lesser extent dependent on the influences of social classes and levels or groups. Fourthly, the acquisition of goods with the aid of electronic means of communication enables the satisfying of the need to feel pleasure and experience adventures characteristic of consumption that is directed towards the feeling of pleasure that is the feature of a consumer society. Fifthly, there are technical and psychosocial barriers hindering the development of consumption via the electronic means of communication. This refers to on the one hand, the limitation of the safety of electronic transactions, while on the other hand, the habits, customs, patterns and trends of consumption that are characteristic of traditional consumption. Likewise, the lack of skills in the use of a personal computer and the skills to avail of the Internet are barriers to gaining access to the Internet market of consumer goods. This is particularly visible among elderly people who in the majority of cases do not possess a personal computer.

Analysis of the circumstances of the formation of the trend of e-consumption and its state of development in Poland render it possible to state that consumption by means of the electronic means of communication is becoming increasingly mass in terms of scale and shall gradually displace traditional consumption. With relation to this fact, producers and those offering consumer goods should focus greater attention on activities connected with offering goods and services in the virtual world.

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