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IMPLICATIONS OF BEHAVIOR EVOLUTION OF UKRAINIAN INTERNET CONSUMERS FOR INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS

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Abstract. The article considers the evolution of Ukrainian Internet users behaviour. Specifically, the changes in the characteristics of the internet users and their online shopping behaviours are tracked over the past several years. The analysis provides an understanding of fast expanding consumer market and its likely future development. Companies pay more attention to online coverage of events and the sharing of publications, as they save the least on digital communications. This segment of advertising is less affected than others during the current crisis: if you count the income in hryvnia, user involvement in this segment is the cheapest. In the client environment comes an understanding of the leading role of digital-agencies at the level of technical solutions. The results have a direct impact on Internet marketing strategies as an element of integrated marketing communications (IMC) in Ukraine and other developing countries. In the context of the research, the possibilities for increasing the impact of the IMC on consumer behavior on the Internet are identified. Marketers should start to treat the Ukrainian online population as a mass market with many niche markets in which they could do business. Modelling the research of IMC influence on consumer behaviour is important for facilitating meaningful comparisons between different companies (in-depth analysis of competition), time etc. To create such a research model, had to test several variables, in terms of matching model components and its functional relationship with theoretical precepts accepted as defining IMC. Thus, some aspects of the impact of the IMC on consumer behavior materialized in the decision-making process of Internet consumers have been clarified.

Keywords: internet; Ukraine; online marketing; integrated marketing communications (IMC); consumer behaviour; consumer decision-making process.

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НАСЛІДКИ ЕВОЛЮЦІЇ ПОВЕДІНКИ УКРАЇНСЬКИХ ІНТЕРНЕТ-КОРИСТУВАЧІВ ДЛЯ ІНТЕГРОВАНІХ МАРКЕТИНГОВИХ КОМУНІКАЦІЙ

Шкурупська, І. О. Наслідки еволюції поведінки українських інтернет-користувачів для інтегрованих маркетингових комунікацій // Вісник соціально-економічних досліджень : зб. наук. праць (ISSN 2313-4569); за ред. : М. І. Зверякова (голов. ред.) та ін. Одеса : Одеський національний економічний університет. 2018. № 3 (67). С. 104–115.

Анотація. У статті розглянуто еволюцію поведінки українських користувачів Інтернет. Зокрема, за останні кілька років відслідковуються зміни в характеристиках інтернет-користувачів та їх поведінка по відношенню до покупок в Інтернеті. Аналіз дає розуміння швидко зростаючого споживчого ринку і його ймовірного майбутнього розвитку. Компанії приділяють більше уваги висвітленню подій в Інтернеті та обміну публікаціями, оскільки вони не заощаджують на цифрових комунікаціях. Цей сегмент реклами менш схильний до впливу, ніж інші, під час поточної кризи: якщо вважати дохід у гривнях, то участь користувачів в цьому сегменті найдешевша. До клієнтського середовища приходить розуміння провідної ролі digital-агентств на рівні технічних рішень. Результати мають прямий вплив на стратегії інтернет-маркетингу як елемента інтегрованих маркетингових комунікацій (ІМК) в Україні та інших країнах, що розвиваються. В контексті дослідження визначено можливість для підвищення впливу ІМК на поведінку споживачів в інтернеті. Маркетологи повинні розглядати українське онлайн-населення як масовий ринок з безліччю нішевих ринків, на яких вони могли б вести бізнес. Змодельовано вплив ІМК на поведінку споживачів з метою полегшення значущих порівнянь між різними компаніями (поглиблений аналіз конкуренції), часу тощо. Для створення такої

моделі дослідження перевірено кілька змінних в контексті відповідності компонентів моделі та її функціонального зв'язку з теоретичними приписами, прийнятими як визначальні ІМК. Таким чином, уточнено деякі аспекти впливу ІМК на поведінку споживачів, матеріалізованого в процесі прийняття рішень Інтернет-споживачами.

Ключові слова: інтернет; Україна; онлайн-маркетинг; інтегровані маркетингові комунікації (ІМК); поведінка споживачів; процес прийняття рішення споживачем.

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**ПОСЛЕДСТВИЯ ЭВОЛЮЦИИ ПОВЕДЕНИЯ УКРАИНСКИХ ИНТЕРНЕТ-
ПОЛЬЗОВАТЕЛЕЙ ДЛЯ ИНТЕГРИРОВАННЫХ МАРКЕТИНГОВЫХ
КОММУНИКАЦИЙ**

Шкурупская, И. А. Последствия эволюции поведения украинских интернет-пользователей для интегрированных маркетинговых коммуникаций // Вестник социально-экономических исследований : сб. науч. трудов (ISSN 2313-4569); под ред. : М. И. Зверякова (глав. ред.) и др. Одесса : Одесский национальный экономический университет. 2018. № 3 (67). С. 104–115.

Аннотация. В статье рассмотрена эволюция украинских пользователей Интернет. В частности, за последние несколько лет отслеживаются изменения в характеристиках интернет-пользователей и их поведение в отношении покупок в Интернет. Анализ дает понимание быстро растущего потребительского рынка и его вероятного будущего развития. Компании уделяют больше внимания освещению событий в Интернете и обмену публикациями, поскольку они не экономят на цифровых коммуникациях. Этот сегмент рекламы менее подвержен влиянию, чем другие, во время текущего кризиса: если считать доход в гривнах, то участие пользователей в этом сегменте самое дешевое. В клиентскую среду приходит понимание ведущей роли digital-агентств на уровне технических решений. Результаты имеют прямое влияние на стратегии интернет-маркетинга как элемента интегрированных маркетинговых коммуникаций (ИМК) в Украине и других развивающихся странах. В контексте исследования определены возможности для повышения влияния ИМК на поведение потребителей в интернете. Маркетологи должны рассматривать украинское онлайн-население как массовый рынок с множеством нишевых рынков, на которых они могли бы вести бизнес. Смоделировано влияние ИМК на поведение потребителей с целью облегчения значимых сравнений между различными компаниями (углубленный анализ конкуренции), времени и т. д. Для создания такой модели исследования проверено несколько переменных в контексте соответствия компонентов модели и ее функциональной связи с теоретическими предписаниями, принятыми как определяющие ИМК. Таким образом, уточнены некоторые аспекты влияния ИМК на поведение потребителей, материализованного в процессе принятия решений Интернет-потребителями.

Ключевые слова: интернет; Украина; онлайн-маркетинг; интегрированные маркетинговые коммуникации (ИМК); поведение потребителей; процесс принятия решения потребителем.

JEL classification: M310

1. Introduction

In a competitive economy, development of the companies involve the existence of accurate information about consumers, so the concept of modern marketing highlights the need for having detailed and founded information about the consumer needs, motivation, attitude and actions. In the contemporary era is almost universally accepted idea that the main purpose of marketing is not finding and persuading people to buy what a company produces, but satisfying the consumer, which is the essence of consumer orientation. Developing effective ways by which consumers' needs could be satisfied is one of the main objectives of IMC. Identifying the communication pathways which influence consumer behaviour is an essential marketing communications activity, the ultimate goal being the creation of marketing messages to reach target audiences through the most appropriate channels.

As an internet develops rapidly throughout the world, Ukraine's internet network is also quickly expanding, as shown in Fig. 1 (iForum, 2018). According to a recent report by GFK Ukraine, there are already 19,2 million internet users in Ukraine [1].

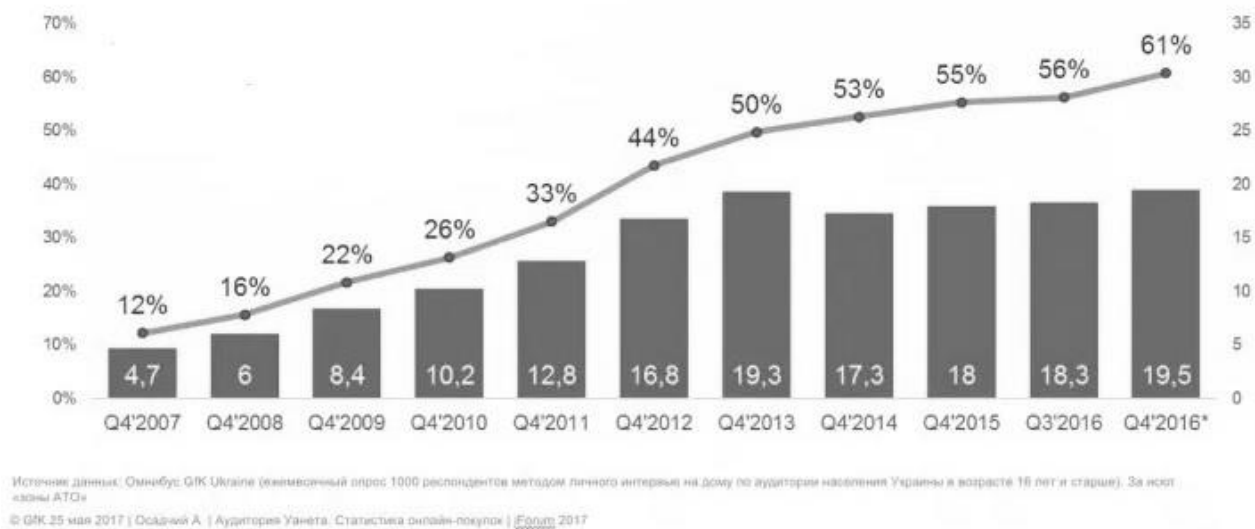


Fig. 1. Online population in Ukraine 2007–2016, mln. people

Source: Omnibus GFK Ukraine

The sustained growth of the internet in Ukraine obviously will create an enormous online market. In fact, the same GFK Ukraine shows that 25% of the Ukrainian internet users have already become online shoppers, which translates into almost 4.8 million consumers. Another report from iForum [1] estimates that online retail sales increases each year. For firms that hope to grow their business in the growing Ukrainian market, it is, therefore, important to understand the characteristics of the Ukrainian consumers on the internet.

This article proposes an analytical framework that incorporates internet diffusion, online consumers and IMC' strategy. Specifically, diffusion of the internet implies that there is a market potential that results from the expansion of the online population in a country, whose members will have certain unique characteristics regarding their demographics, socioeconomic standing and internet behaviours. These characteristics will to a large extent determine the appropriate marketing strategies for online businesses. This theoretical framework for internet marketing is then applied to the Ukrainian market in an exploratory analysis of the nature of this market and its implications for marketing strategies.

2. Literature Review

Synthesizing the existing literature concerns may be outlined several main areas divided in two phases: 1990–2000 and 2001 – to present (2018). First stage is characterized by research and analysis on:

- Clarification of some aspects of definition, theoretical development and understanding of IMC concept [2–5].
- Identification of strategic issues and treatment of IMC concept more of a business process perspective rather than that of a simple coordination of marketing communication tools [6].
- Analyze the interdependence of relational marketing concept and IMC, through the social nature of business in general and marketing in particular and highlight the key role of marketing communication in maintaining profitable relationships with customers and other stakeholders [7–8].
- Measure and evaluate the effects of IMC [5–6].

In the second stage, the research is focused on:

- a. Conceptual aspect of IMC, as theoretical foundation, status and goals [9], include opposite views or barriers for its implementation [8].
- b. Measurement and effectiveness of IMC programmes [10].
- c. Managerial and organisational issues [11; 12];
- d. Relationship of IMC to internal marketing issues, relationship marketing, corporate communication, brand equity and brand identity [13].

An IMC program must be structured in multiple strands, influencing all the processes of consumer behaviour (perception, learning, attitude, motivation), not only the actual behaviour. The literature review reveals some well structured models of consumer behaviour, the most important of them having as main axis the buying decision process, outlined for the first time by Engel, Blackwell and Kolat [14]. This process includes basically five main stages: need (problem) recognition, information search and evaluation of alternatives, product choice and outcomes. The next improvements and changes of model [15] refine the initial structure, including some possible options in the fourth stage, not only purchase option and a reshaping of fifth stage, as post-purchase evaluation [16].

3. Selection of previously unsettled parts of the general problem

There are a growing number of studies about internet consumers in recent years. These include consumer perception of web advertisements [17], pricing and customer satisfaction [18] and browsing and purchase intention [19], among others. However, these studies have not attempted to analyse the characteristics and behaviours of internet users over time, nor have they considered all the four aspects of online part of IMC strategy in a single framework based on an analysis of the nature of the market and consumer behaviour. Sultan [20] provided a tracking study of home users' internet service adoption behaviour, but did not examine their behaviours on the internet per se. Therefore, the current study presents a unique perspective. By looking into the changes in the characteristics and behaviours of internet users over time, it is possible to gain insight into how the market has evolved and likely future trends. This insight, in turn, would help businesses make better strategic decisions. As such, this is one of the papers that provide an initial comprehensive view of the online market in Ukraine and its marketing applications.

4. Setting objectives

Adopting the approach according with IMC is not part of the marketing mix, but a holistic concept using marketing mix elements to create and strengthen relationships with consumers and to send a unified message, this paper aims to clarify some aspects of the mechanism of IMC influence on consumer behaviour, reflected also in the buying decision process. Moreover, having an understanding about the evolution of these consumers, rather than just a snapshot of the current situation, would help marketers get a sense of how the online market in Ukraine has shaped up and what this market will look like in the future. Managers could rely on such information to devise appropriate marketing strategies in IMC context. To this end, this paper also presents an analysis of the basic characteristics and behaviours of Ukrainian online consumers over time.

5. Findings and analysis

In this article, the framework is applied to the rapidly developing online market in Ukraine. Hopefully, the findings and analyses are helpful to those that are doing business on the internet in this market or are contemplating such a move. It is also expected that these findings and analyses are useful to marketers serving other developing markets. Furthermore, the current study provides an illustrative example (Fig. 2) of how the framework proposed here can be used for at least an initial exploratory analysis of the new target market and the fit between the firm and its products and this market [35].

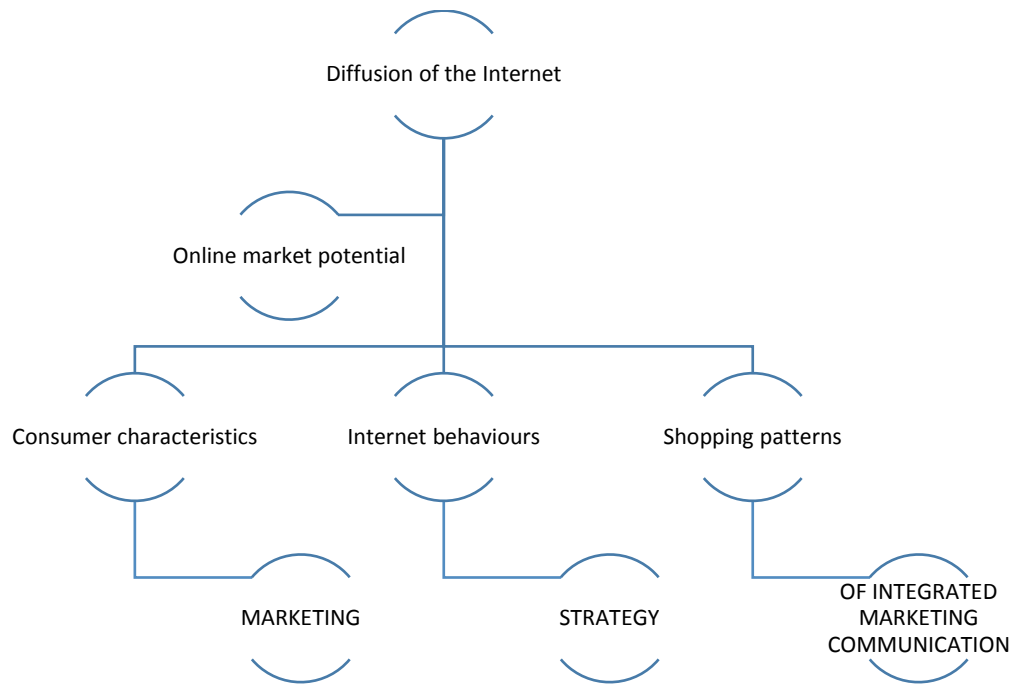


Fig. 2. Analytical framework of application IMC for internet consumers

Source: founded on [35]

As pointed out before, the analysis of the data focuses on three main aspects about the Ukrainian online market:

- demographics and socioeconomics;
- basic internet behaviours;
- online shopping behaviours.

The demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the Ukrainian internet users discussed here include gender, age, education and income.

Among online shoppers, there are significantly more wealthy people who have children under the age of 14, but the data on higher education and work are almost the same.

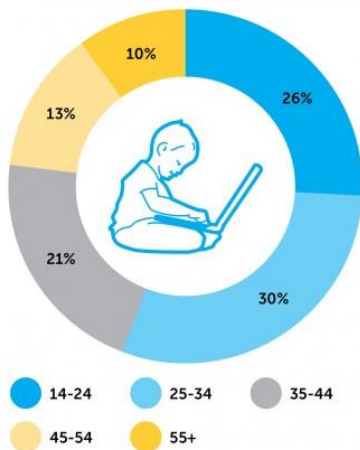


Fig. 3. Age structure of Ukrainian internet-users, 2017

Source: Ukrainian Association of Direct Marketing (UADM)

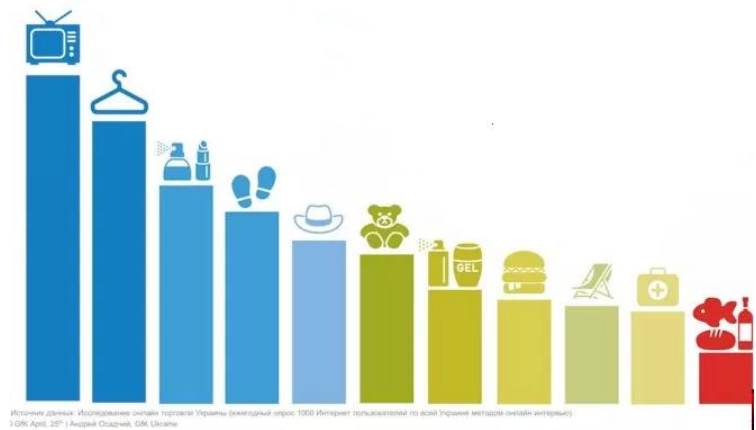


Fig. 4. Commodity structure of online sales in Ukraine, 2017

Source: Omnibus GFK Ukraine

Among those who shop online, most people are 26–35 years old – every third of them shop on the Internet. They are followed by young people – every fourth Ukrainian has been buying goods online

for 16–25 years. And the same activity of Internet buyers aged 36–45 and 46 and older. In these age groups, every fifth person is not afraid of online purchases [21].

In 2014, Ukrainians began to increasingly switch to electronic payments to pay for goods on the Internet. Systems of multi-level verification of electronic payments that have not previously worked in Ukraine are being introduced. When making a purchase on the Internet, payment for a product or service is frozen in the bank account until the buyer confirms receipt of the goods. This allows you to make online payments more secure by increasing your interest in online purchases.

Increasing the speed of the mobile Internet can lead to an increase in online purchases from phones and tablets. In February 2015, the three largest mobile operators in Ukraine acquired licenses for third generation (3G) communications. Since 2016, work has begun on the transition to 4G, which should be completed by 2020 [22].

According to UADM, the main trends of the current year will be the creation of websites for making purchases from a mobile phone and the development of mobile payment services. The site interface will be simpler, while the consumer will be able to customize the site for themselves. Online stores will begin to use multi-channel marketing to attract customers, automate marketing processes and develop a logistics system. An increased interest in text-based advertising on blogs and video reviews on online shopping sites is also expected. Show-rooms and marketplaces will be developed.

The main demand online for equipment and clothing (Fig. 4). And they practically do not make purchases of food on the Internet. However, it cannot be said that the reason is the desire to go to the store without fail and choose the fresher product. Yet it is also affected by the fact that the proposals are not as many as we would like [23].

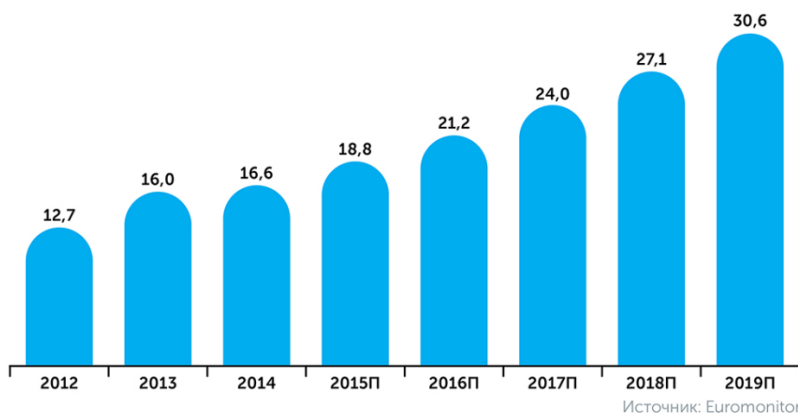


Fig. 5. Dynamics of the online retail market, UAH billion

Source: Euromonitor

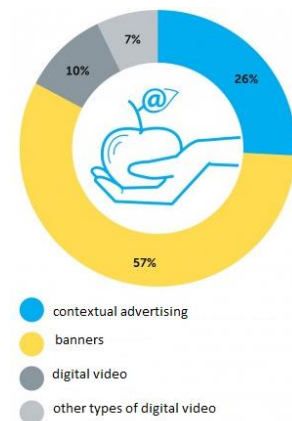


Fig. 6. Structure of Internet-advertisement by the types

Source: Ukrainian Advertising Coalition

The turnover of online retail in Ukraine in 2014 grew by 4% and amounted to 16.6 billion UAH, according to Euromonitor. The most popular are electronics and home appliances. Last year, the share of online purchases for the first time exceeded offline purchases in this segment. According to a Taylor Nelson Sofres (TNS) survey conducted during a global survey of the Ukrainian e-commerce market, 64% of respondents buy electronics online. The number of online shoppers is approaching 4 million people. Clothing remains the second most popular product: 35% of respondents regularly buy it online. 26% of purchases of tickets for transport is made online [22].

In connection with the fighting in the east of Ukraine, the demand for military products increased. According to the data of Allbiz, the number of people willing to purchase products from the “Weapons and Equipment” category increased 2.5 times in 2014, and the product category was in the 20 most popular on the site. In Allbiz also note that during the crisis, the Internet began to look

for suppliers of almost all goods and services. In June-October, 182 requests for airplanes and helicopters were received through the system (in the b2b segment). And in b2c, the traffic of the markets “Sport and Rest” (the increase by 76% compared with 2013) and “Water, gas, heat” (73% growth) increased the fastest. Up to 30% of purchases are generated by smartphone users in F.ua. And at the beginning of the year only 10% of purchases were made from the mobile on the site, the growth occurred after the mobile version of the site was updated. The company notes that the rate continues to grow. In Citrus, the share of mobile visitors has already exceeded 50%, but less than 10% of them make purchases [22].

Visitors from mobile devices for the year form 37.2% of Mebelok traffic, another 7.2% from tablets. However, their conversion is significantly lower than with desktop devices.

For price comparisons in 2017, Ukrainians preferred the three main price aggregators: price.ua, hotline.ua and market.yandex.ua, according to GFK.

Hotline.ua was recognized as the best price-aggregator in the framework of the Ukrainian E-commerce Awards 2017, then it was visited 21.8 million times.

In 2017, marketplaces mainly grew in e-commerce, due to their expansion of the range. For example, Rozetka already has 1.2 million goods in the assortment, the buyer is gradually getting used to shopping in online stores and begins to buy not only electronics, but also clothes, services and other categories [21].

The leader among the marketplaces (marketplaces) is olx.ua, which shifted to second place aukro.ua. OLX is an international network of sites offering free online bulletin board services. The network operates in 114 countries and is owned by the international media and digital company Naspers. In Ukrainian OLX, the most popular section is “Real Estate”. In 2014, over 1.3 million transactions were concluded on residential real estate (26.5% of all closed transactions). Electronics (18.7%), fashion (14.9%) and products for children (12.1%) are also popular. Last year, the demand for schoolchildren increased the most (three times) and children’s goods (twice).

In 2017, 39% of online shoppers were shopping through social networks. Most often they buy clothes, accessories, gifts, shoes, cosmetics, perfumes and products for children [21].

According to Prom.ua, 52.4% of Internet buyers are women, 51.5% are people aged 25 to 34, 83.7% visit the site from personal computers and only 16.3% from mobile devices. Consumer goods are the most popular at Prom.ua (65%). The goods for business account for 28% and 7% – for services. The most popular payment methods are cashless payments and cash on delivery. Almost a quarter of purchases paid in cash. The size of the average check varies in different regions of Ukraine and ranges from 607 to 1157 UAH.

PrivatBank also entered the price aggregators market. The network has already appeared version of “PrivatMarket.” According to the catalog on the main page of the site, the price aggregator will analyze prices in all major product categories: from building materials and electrical engineering to household goods and sports [22].

In 2017, the online advertising market volume amounted to UAH 2.1 billion, or 23.3% of the Ukrainian advertising market, according to the Ukrainian Advertising Coalition (UAC).

The main directions of online advertising: banner (including the affiliate network of Google, Yandex, ads in social networks, mobile and multimedia advertising, sponsorship) and paid issuance in search engines (Fig. 6) [22].

The difficult political and economic situation had a negative impact on the marketing services market. In 2014, the segment of digital support for marketing services fell from 42 to 34 million UAH.

Digital marketing in 2018 grow by 5–6%, according to analysts of the Ukrainian Advertising Coalition [1].

Companies pay more attention to online coverage of events and the sharing of publications, as they save the least on digital communications. This segment of advertising is less affected than others during the current crisis: if you count the income in hryvnia, user involvement in this segment is the cheapest.

In the client environment comes an understanding of the leading role of digital-agencies at the level of technical solutions.

The model of research the influence of IMC on consumer decision-making process

Also, modelling the research of IMC influence on consumer behaviour is important for facilitating meaningful comparisons between different companies (in-depth analysis of competition), time etc. To create such a research model (Fig. 7), had to test several variables, in terms of matching model components and its functional relationship with theoretical precepts accepted as defining IMC [24].

Block A – Integrated marketing communication – refers to the ways in which communication is found in all four components of marketing mix namely the product, price, distribution and marketing communications. Such influence must be founded on market research that supports appropriate market segmentation. For example, a product is designed to meet needs of clearly defined consumers’ segment, it is brought to market at a certain price through the appropriate distribution channels and the marketing communications are structured in a particular way, tailored to the characteristics of the target segment. The instruments which support and organize the integrated marketing communication activities are integrated communication strategy and integrated communication plan. The integrated communication strategy is reflected in market positioning based on the objectives aimed by the company and on communication axis. The integrated communication plan is focused on choosing the specific components, taking into account their effective correlation in terms of optimizing costs.

Block B – Consumer behaviour – is composed of five dimensions through which specialists define this process, on the conceptual. These basic processes of consumer behaviour are also used by the real marketing, through the definition of operational endogenous or exogenous variables, as appropriate. The five basic processes of this block, that perception, information / learning, attitude, motivation and actual behaviour of the highly multidimensional, which is taken into account in the design and implementation of many forms of behavioural studies.

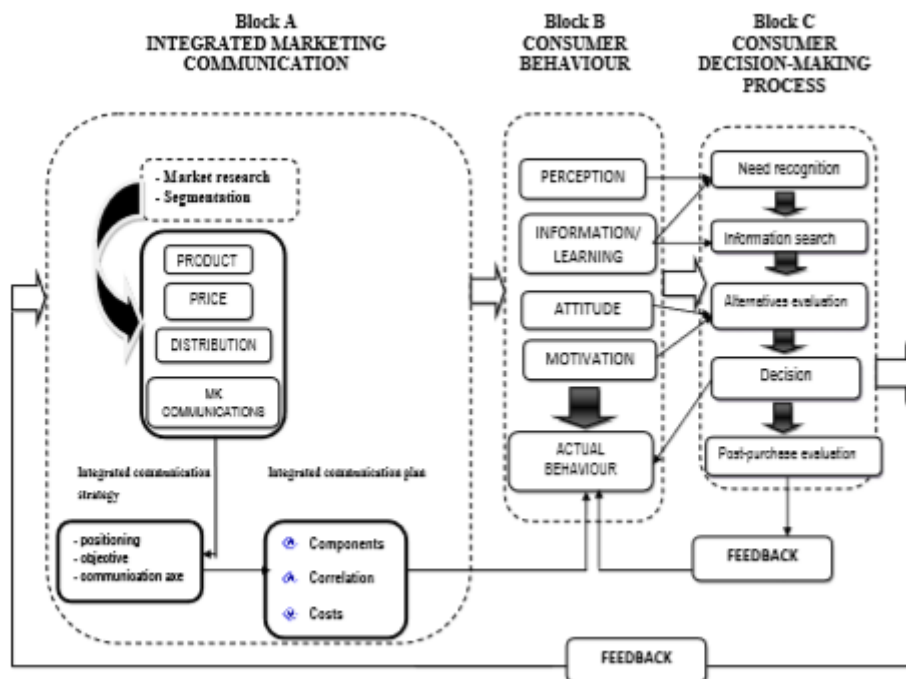


Fig. 7. Model of research the IMC influence on the consumer decision-making process
Source: [24]

Block C – Consumer decision-making process – consists of stages through which the consumers when deciding to purchase goods and services generally accepted by experts in the field of marketing: need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives (evoked set), evaluation result and when buying, post-purchase evaluation. Obviously, the stages of a buying decision are determined by product specific, consumer target segment and the particularities of the five elementary processes which composed the consumer behaviour. The functional relations of the model are divided in three categories, as follows: main functional relations, illustrated in the model by the horizontal block arrows, which describe graphically the essential relations between blocks; secondary relations illustrated by lines, which describe structural links between components of the same block or of different blocks; feedback lines (one shows the influence of post-purchase evaluation on the actual behaviour regarding another similar purchase and the other links the Block C with Block A, as a result of the systemic perspective adopted for this model. The multidimensional relationship between all the blocks' components, illustrated by the model, is described further.

Block A Block B

IMC (Block A) influence on consumer behaviour processes, based on results of market research and market segmentation, is propagated by each component of marketing mix (product, price, distribution and marketing communications), exploring its communicational potential and is reflected in integrated communication strategy and in integrated communication plan. There are many ways in which product characteristics and attributes affect the consumers' perception about it. The findings indicate that consumer's perception of products is influenced by its physical characteristics alone and in some cases, by the product attributes which are marketing communications based, derived from brand images and brand differentiation [25]. Price, as another component of integrated marketing communication has direct implications on the perception. There is considerable evidence that for many products consumer judges the quality by price, even consumers' subjective of price are not fully explained [26–27]. Consumer perception is also related to the distribution, including type of distribution (direct or indirect; intensive, selective or exclusive) and store characteristics [28], namely location, design, product assortment, services and personnel. Method of distribution must be consistent with brand image and price [29]. All IMC components transmit to consumers various information, so they support the learning process by which they acquire the purchase and consumption knowledge. Learning process permanently evolves and changes as an effect of newly acquired knowledge gained from reading, observation, discussions and actual experience. Forming or changing attitude is one of the most important goals of IMC, being influenced by product, price, distribution and marketing communications, but also resulting from direct or vicarious experience that an individual has with the attitude object [30]. The complex process of motivation has the force to activate behaviour, providing in the same time purpose and direction to that behaviour [31]. IMC could globally influence motivation, especially through marketing communications component. Discovering the motives that a product can satisfy, determines the product, price and distribution key features.

Block B Block C

The processes that describe the Consumer Behaviour (Block B) are influenced, each one, in various proportions and combinations by the components of mix marketing belonging to Block A and by the operational tools (integrated communication strategy and plan). Block B has a main resultant which reflects the differentiated and particular influence of the behavioural processes on the stages of consumer decision-making process. The first stage of consumer decision-making process is described in the literature as problem or need recognition. It is a result of a difference perceived by an individual between a desired state and an actual state [32]. Perception has an important role in evaluating the actual state, because it drives problem recognition, not some objective reality. All the components of IMC have to be tailored for solving consumer recognized problem. This could involve developing of a new product or altering characteristics of an existing one, changing pricing policy, modifying channels of distribution and adapting marketing communications structure. IMC

strategy must take into account the type of consumer identified problem. If there is an active problem (consumer is aware of it) has to focus on convincing consumer that a specific product is the best solution. In case of an inactive problem, the strategy aims to determine consumer to recognize a problem then offer a possibility to solve it. The second stage of consumer decision-making, the information search is based on learning process due to which consumer has usually previous knowledge and experience related to a product (internal search). Information gathered from external sources (external search) are based mostly on product characteristics (including packaging and label) and marketing communications. Consumer's information search depends on the importance of purchase and the easiness to obtain information [33]. The evaluation of alternatives stages is conditioned by the type of consumer's choice [31]. The evaluation process is closely linked to learning, motivation and attitudes. In case of affective choice, the evaluation of a product is generally focused on the way it will make the user feel as it is used. The motivation framework in this situation is based on consumers' motives and promotion-based regulatory focus. IMC could affect this stage by coordinating the appropriate marketing communications tools to highlight positive feelings resulted from product using. A similar approach is reflected in attitude-based choice. This type of choice involves use of general attitudes and impressions or heuristics and all the components of IMC could have a contribution to attitude forming. The third type of choice is made on a different base, requiring the comparison of each specific attribute across all the brands considered [31]. As a result, the choice is influenced mostly by practical aspects as product characteristics and price and is based especially on learning and motivation. Decision stage is a resultant of the previous four stages and it is materialized in consumer's actual behaviour. Consumer decision-making process is completed with post-purchase evaluation, in which consumer compares the product real performance with his expectations. As source [15] explains, an important component of post-purchase evaluation is the reduction of any uncertainty that consumer might have about his choice. This evaluation generates feedback which increases the experience level and is included further in learning process, influencing future related decisions.

Block C Block A

The relationship between consumer-making decision and IMC is materialized in feedback. Based on consumer research, all the IMC components could be revised and improved, taking into account the main aspects resulted from consumers feedback [34].

6. Conclusions, implications and further research

The research of integrated marketing communication influence on consumer decision-making process in virtual environment is a complex activity involving in-depth analysis of the relationship and instruments through which this influence is exercised. To study the interaction between IMC components and processes that form the consumer behaviour in Internet is necessary to validate the model created for this purpose, which can be achieved using the findings of a qualitative research (i.e. focus-group) combined with quantitative research (i.e. survey). This model of study the IMC impact on need recognition, information search, and evaluation of alternatives, decision and post-purchase evaluation offers the possibility to adopt strategic marketing decisions, based on correct understanding of consumer's judgments and actions.

Several key findings are derived from this research:

- the internet has become more accessible to Ukrainian people of different backgrounds, including female consumers, young and old people, and those with high school or below high school education;
- the access to the internet has become more convenient for the Ukrainians, as more people are getting online by mobile devices and they spend a substantial amount of time visiting native-language websites;
- more Ukrainians are picking up online shopping, although mostly for standardised products;
- an increasing proportion of online shoppers opt to pay online with payment cards and use the delivery services provided by the private logistic firms.

However, consumers are still concerned about the quality of products purchased on the internet and the security of online transactions. In addition, comparing our findings with those of the past studies indicates that the overall characteristics of the Ukrainian internet users are becoming similar to those of the more internet-mature markets such as the USA and European countries. All of these developments have important implications for firms that wish to take advantage of this rapidly expanding consumer market. The most important insight is that marketers hoping to do business in Ukraine should realise that the internet holds great potential for their business. The internet is becoming a commodity in people's daily lives as more people are getting access to it by mobile devices. Marketers could potentially use the internet to promote their products to a large audience composed of both male and female consumers, both the highly educated and those with only a high school education, and both the old and the young. In short, marketers should start to treat the Ukrainian online population as a mass market with many niche markets in which they could do business.

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