PERCEPTION OF HEALTH PRODUCTS AND TRENDS IN ONLINE SHOPPING AND PROMOTION OF HEALTH PRODUCTS IN CROATIA

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Abstract. The research deals with the perception of health products and the trends of online shopping and promotion of health products in Croatia. Apart from the surveyed market segments, the consumer behaviour patterns and the sales and online marketing promotions, a primary survey was conducted on a sample of 155 respondents, all Croatian citizens. The data shows that the level of awareness on purchasing health products is growing exponentially. In addition, health products are also expensive products. Along with the information at the point of sale, online promotional activities are the strongest channel in communicating such products. The buyers also place significant value on user reviews, and the collection of information on health products online is also increasing.

Keywords: Online selling, online promotion, new trends, health products, consumer perception.

1. INTRODUCTION.

The focus on health products, both in Croatia and in other markets in the region and worldwide, is one of the main growing trends, with an even greater growth perspective. The production, sales and promotion of health products are increasing every day. Hence, this topic is more and more prevailing and the level of awareness on the consumption of healthy products is becoming more and more developed. According to the latest data of Euromonitor International, the sale of organic products and products without harmful ingredients in Europe is growing. In Eastern Europe, the sale of these products has grown to 10.6% in 2016, compared to 8.8% in the previous year. In Western Europe, products containing no harmful ingredients are up by 11.5%, while organic products sales have increased by 5.4%. Sales of organic products in Europe last year amounted to almost 13.8 billion euros, while products with no harmful ingredients showed total sales of slightly below 7.8 billion euros (Euromonitor International, 2017). The Masterindex research on e-commerce and new payment trends, conducted by MasterCard among respondents from more than 20 European countries, confirmed that the Europeans regularly shop online. The European e-commerce market is expected to grow by 45% from 2015 to 2018. The survey has shown that 25% of the Europeans with internet access purchased in 2016 products or services online at least once a week, i.e. 22% of the Croatian population (Netokracija, 2018).

Consumer requirements have changed dramatically over the past decade and today the consumer has great expectations towards foods in general. The purpose of food, unlike in the previous periods, is not only to satisfy hunger and provide the necessary nutrients, but also to prevent or alleviate nutrition-related illnesses and improve general health and quality of life. Food is expected to be always available, delicious, to have nutritional value and potential for health improvement and to be safe for consumption. To put it simply, the consumer wants everything right away (Krešić, 2012).

The trends related to the online promotion and sale of health products are primarily based on the fact that five years ago there were 57% of internet users in Croatia and today 71%, thus Croatia is approaching the Western Europe average (74%). As far as online shopping is concerned, from 2010 until today this figure has increased from 6% to 33%. The technologic development was also influenced by the increase in the number of smartphone users from 15% in 2012 to 59% in 2016 (GfK, Connected Consumer, 2016). According to the Consumer Barometer survey in Croatia, it becomes evident that from the aspect of the source of information online and television advertising account for 60%, half of which TV and half online advertising (The Consumer Barometer Survey, 2014/15).

With respect to the current situation in Croatia, we are increasingly witnessing the opening of health food outlets and restaurants offering healthy foods. More and more retailers have also opted to sell health products online (via dedicated web shops) while the restaurants offering healthy foods also follow the trend of delivering the food to the home or workplace. For the generations that come, online shopping is becoming an everyday activity.

On the one hand, we have the producers and retailers of health products, and on the other the methods these products can be promoted and advertised. Today, there are different ways of advertising, ranging from traditional such as advertising and promotion at the point of sale, direct promotion, advertising in different media, to TV advertising and advertising in printed media. Lately however, online promotion is taking up an ever increasing share. A growing portion

of the marketing budgets are now allocated to online marketing activities, focusing on digitization and the new generations to come. This is confirmed by numerous researches mentioned in the paper.
Also, what is important in online advertising and promotions, whether we are talking about Display or Facebook ads, or YouTube, is the common feature of measurability, enabling the marketers to measure and effectively monitor every ad and target the exact focus group. For example, in each campaign it is known exactly how many people saw the ad, how many opened the ad, who has liked a Facebook page, shared a post or started to follow a company or brand. It is this advantage that the companies and retailers in Croatia are recognizing and are now increasingly digitizing their operations, from developing web shops to online advertising, online sales and having an active presence on the social networks.
Given the objective of this paper to investigate the current situation in Croatia related to the online promotion of health products, the following hypotheses have been considered:

H1. The level of awareness on buying health products among the Croatian consumers is showing exponential growth.
H2. Health products are also expensive products.
H3. Online promotional activities of health products are the single strongest channel in communicating such products to the consumers.
H4. Customer reviews are the single largest stimulus in buying health products for the Croatian consumer.
H5. Users increasingly search for information on health products online.

In order to verify these hypotheses, a secondary study was carried out (see below), followed by a primary study conducted in March 2017, the results of which describe the consumer today. It also projects the profile of the future consumer and identifies what aspect of promotion is essential and important in informing on and selecting a health product.

2. HEALTH PRODUCT MARKET CHALLENGES AND OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCHES CONDUCTED TO DATE

2.1. Health product market segments

According to Euromonitor International, the global sales of health products are estimated at $ 1 trillion in 2017. The 2015 Nielson Global Health & Wellness Survey, which polled more than 30,000 persons online, showed that many are willing to pay more for products that improve their health and stimulate weight loss.
Despite the best intentions to eat healthy foods, the content of our shopping carts is not always consistent with our goals. In order to better understand what drives spending trends, Nielsen has carried out an online research[1] in 60 countries worldwide, asking the respondents to evaluate the importance of different health attributes for the foods they buy. The research found that about one third of all respondents considered any health attribute to be very important and that they were willing to pay for it. Their attitude varied according to their age. The research has shown that the willingness to pay for a health product decreases with age. According to the same research, Generation Z and the millennials are ready to pay more for health products, followed by the Generation X and the baby boomers. The respondents from the Silent generation do not place great emphasis on health products as the other groups. The highest ratings for health products were obtained from the millennials, followed by the baby boomers, the Generation X and the Generation Z.

The Valicon market research agency, as the partner of the Web-retailer of the Year Project[2], carried out in early 2017 a major research involving more than 4,000 internet users about their online shopping habits. Shopping behaviour, including online shopping behaviour, is to a substantial degree also set by belonging to a certain generation, and these differences have been in the focus of the producers and marketing experts in recent years. Experts from different areas try to understand the present and anticipate future trends that will significantly affect the future of the business operations of the companies of various profiles. Because of their large number, but also their important role in using new technologies and innovations, the millennials, i.e. Generation Y, according to the Valicon study, have long been a favourite topic in business and academic circles, but also with a growing interest towards the digital natives, i.e. Generation Z. The main reason is that they are the first generation who grew up with the internet, unlike the other groups who needed to get accustomed to it, some with more and some with less success and effort, but primarily because they are the dominant influencers of tomorrow.

2.2. Behavioural patterns of the modern consumer

Over the last ten years we have witnessed drastic changes in the requirements of the consumers who today have great expectations from foods. Food is expected to be always available, delicious, to have nutritional value and potential for health improvement and to be safe for consumption. To put it simply, the consumer wants everything right away (Krešić, 2012).

[1] Nielsen's Global Health & Wellness Survey Q3 2014: the results of this research are based on respondents with online access in over 60 countries around the world.
[2] Web Retailer of the Year is a project for online shopping development in Croatia and the region. One of the main goals of the project is to foster consumer confidence that is significantly affected by the web store's distinctiveness. The 2017 competition was organized for the third year in a row, and each year the most prominent web retailers take part in it.

According to the GfK research, today's consumer demands everything immediately, and as a value-added he or she wants to save money and time. Not less than 86% of the consumers in Croatia like to buy products that adapt to their needs, 62% will buy a product of a lower quality if available when needed, while for 78% of them it is very important that the stores and services are available at all times. Services and products are sought after that will change and simplify life for the consumer and help him or her to survive in the growing stress of modern life. (GfK, Connected Consumer, 2016). Health is currently the biggest trend for every consumer. Health concerns and the awareness of the relationship between diet and health today is the subject of numerous seminars, blogs, books, conferences and round-tables. Dietary trends, same as all other trends, change over time and depend on the wishes, interests and needs of the consumers, the scientific knowledge and the media attention to a certain topic. In the process of creating trends the media and the internet play an important role, not only because of placing specific information, but also because of the powerful effect of the phenomenon of repetition. Namely, the key moment in accepting information is the fact that the same information has been received multiple times, that is, that it has been distributed from a variety of sources. (Food and Health Survey, 2016). Today's customer has indeed become addicted to reviews and studying the comments on products that give them answers to their most difficult questions. In 2017, the companies will evaluate the comments for themselves and for the competition and give appropriate weight to the comments by using strategies and responding to them. (The Center for Customer Retention, 2017 Retail Trends, http://tcfcr.com/2017-retail-trends/, 2016) The number of online users who read and believe in online reviews is growing; according to a survey conducted by Bright Local, 88% of the consumers give credit to online reviews as much as they believe in a personal recommendation from a close person, which is astonishing, given that online reviews are posted in most cases by persons totally unknown to them. The same survey showed that only 12% of the population does not read regularly consumer product reviews online. (Bright Local, Local Consumer Review Survey, 2014, accessed on February 11, 2018)

The following source shows that search engines are still ranked on top (91%), followed by business web sites (35%), social networks (34%), recommendations and reviews published online (34%), navigational maps (33%) and local trade websites (33%). (The Consumer Barometer Survey 2014/15, accessed on February 15, 2018). According to the latest data from Euromonitor International the sale of organic products and products without harmful ingredients in Europe is growing. Food habits determine what will be consumed, when and why, and the factors that influence their acquisition can be biologically, economically, sociologically, demographically and psychologically-driven. Dietary habits are also influenced by knowledge, attitudes and beliefs about food and nutrition. (Food and Health Survey, 2016)

The price of food is an important factor of choice and is consequently a factor that determines the quality of the diet. The research in Europe has shown that people with a lower socio-economic status are at greater risk of inadequate (unhealthy) diet. By contrast, groups of people with a better socioeconomic status generally consume more varied foods, although this does not necessarily mean that they also have a more adequate (healthier) diet. A higher income alone is no guarantee for better diet, but is associated with greater choice of food and diversity. (De Irala-Estevez et al., 2000)

2.3. Millennials

When talking about intergenerational categories, special attention is put on the millennials, who are not using the Internet occasionally, but “live online”. 90% of them are online every day. They constantly have their “finger on the pulse” with the events on the social networks; they search and buy online; they are watching video presentations; they live their daily lives in which offline and online worlds intertwine. The millennials represent 27% of the Croatian population. The analysis of the habits carried out by Consumer Barometer provides answers to key questions about the millennials:

The mobile phone is the device they rely on. 75% of the millennials access the internet via the smartphone almost as often as via their personal computer. The millennials are not just digital - they are also mobile. Smartphones are becoming ever more important: 3 in every 4 Millennials already go online with their mobile devices at least as often as they do with a computer. 1 in 3 go online more often via smartphone. This younger audience demands access to information where and when they want it - 1 in 4 claim to be constantly moving back and forth between their devices. This younger audience demands access to information where and when they want it. They visit social networks (67%), search information on search engines (62%), watch online video presentations (56%), prompt travel directions (51%) and search for possible purchases (43%). (Consumer Barometer, 2017)

In 2015, $ 69 billion has been spent globally in advertising through smart phones. (Connected Consumer, 2016). Google is their friend, and the friends are their advisors. Regardless of the topic, the millennials seek the answer online. Search engines such as Google are the first place they look. When it comes to buying, the internet researchers mostly use the search engines (55%), followed by the brand’s website (27%). For this young population, when searching and making decisions about purchases, the mobile phone is essential. In other words, 40% of the millennials are making twice as much searches on the internet by using their smartphones compared to the persons in the 35+ category. One of five millennials is also addressing others for advice. YouTube is a place for having fun. Millennials love YouTube. Every fourth out of ten millennials visits YouTube at least once a day, as they find the content to be more relevant and entertaining than the television program (considered by 20% of the respondents) while 61% are completely focused on the content. Social networks are their “stage”. At least once a day, approximately half of them will comment or like the posts of their friends. They are also prone, more often than any other generation, to share news about themselves - they have a need to communicate and for their peers to be aware of/notice them.

One out of ten millennials gets information about new products through ads. They usually make purchase decisions with the help of their peers. Thus, the companies should establish a dialogue with young people (influencers) who are able to reach a broad audience. They also need to constantly listen to their needs and desires and thus reach them online. Of the total number, 10% of the millennials learn about new products through advertising and online media as an important aspect of their lives. Internet advertising is an increasingly powerful medium for the millennials to gain knowledge of the brand and become loyal to them.

2.4. Online marketing of health products

Marketing online activities are determined by a large volume of information on the consumer and their behaviour, the interactivity of the marketing activities and the high degree of measurability of their performance as a result of direct response by the consumer. Internet marketing activities are mainly carried out in combination with traditional marketing activities, allowing improvements through the benefits provided by the technology. (Škare, 2011) Online marketing involves all forms of advertising over the internet as a new communication media with the users. (Gay, 2007) The term internet marketing encompasses all the activities aimed at advertising products and services through digital media. Chaffey et al. (2009) point to the growing acceptance of the concept of digital marketing that represents the use of various digital technologies (web, e-mail, databases, mobile phones, digital TV) to support marketing activities that attract new enthusiasts and retains existing consumers, through simultaneous interaction through various channels and the application of many new marketing tactics.

Social networks like Facebook are among the most popular digital media for young people and provide a unique opportunity for online marketing experts to interact and influence their future customers. Through a host of new techniques and tools and with more than 1.5 billion users, Facebook is the largest social network in the world, meaning that there is a great opportunity to bring a message on a particular brand or product to the targeted audience via Facebook ads. In Croatia today, approx. 1.5 million people are using Facebook. One very important information provided by Consumer Barometer (2018) is that one out of five millennials routinely turn to each other for advice, meaning that reviews placed on your Facebook profile can be an incentive to create new customers or losing a potential customer from the competition.

3. PRIMARY SURVEY: ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS

3.1. Objectives and method of research

The purpose of this particular research is to obtain information on the perception of health products of the Croatian consumers and on the new trends in online purchases and promotion of health products in Croatia. The primary research examines the plausibility of the five hypotheses set. In the primary research a questionnaire was used created and distributed via Google Forms. Thirty-three closed questions were posed to the respondents, some of which were multiple-choice questions, and some had a Likert scale with claims about the respondents' views on consuming healthy products and new trends in the online promotion of such products. The survey was conducted online in 2017 on a sample of 155 respondents; all Croatian citizens aged 18 to 51 and older.

3.2. Sample features

Out of the total number of respondents, 76% were women. This was to be expected, as they are more health-aware and in most of the cases do the shopping for the whole family; 24% were male participants. More than half of the respondents are highly educated (57%), with a master's degree or a PhD (22%), and only 14% with a secondary-level education; 6% of the respondents had a bachelor's degree and only 1% had a primary-level education. Of the total number of respondents, 88% are employed, with the following monthly income breakdown: 29% of respondents have a salary between 4,501 - 6,500 kuna, 20% receive 2,621 - 4,500 kuna, and 18% of respondents have a monthly income ranging from 6,501 to 8,500 kuna. A minimum income of 2,620 kuna is received by 15% of the respondents, while 11% have a monthly income of 10,001 kuna and more.

3.3. Buying habits regarding health products

When asked whether they have bought in the last 12 months health products, 97% of the respondents responded positively. Their views, needs, motives and habits are provided below.

The first reason for purchasing health products, where respondents could choose several answers, is a healthy lifestyle (58%), while 57% chose health in general as one of the reasons for purchasing such a product. More than half of the respondents (54%) replied that the reason for purchasing health products was the habit of consuming health products. 33% of them said that they care about their body, followed by the following reasons: obesity (28%), education and giving an example to the children (26%) and illness (19%). The numbers of those who provided another reason, such as general trends or recommendations of a friend or acquaintance, are negligible. When asked where they usually purchased healthy foods and cosmetic products, 55% answered at the retailer, whether in a small local shop or super or hypermarket. Given the advent of newly opened and growing specialized outlets selling organic and bio products in Croatia, 33% of the respondents purchase healthy foods and cosmetic products through this channel, while 11% of them shop online. What is really surprising is that very few people buy such products at the market, butcher shop or fishmonger. The largest number of respondents (36%), when asked about the frequency of purchasing healthy foods and cosmetics in the value in excess of HRK 200,00, replied once a month, 28% replied 2-3 times a month and 21% replied once a week. When asked how often they are buying one or just a few several healthy food or cosmetic products, 25% replied once a week, 21% said 2-3 times a month, 19% of them are making such purchases once a month and 18% four times a week. 86% of the respondents agreed that health products are generally speaking expensive products; 14% did not agree with such a claim. 69% of the respondents are carefully reading the product label, while 31% of the respondents pay no attention to such information. When making the last purchase of health products, 36% spent 100,00 kuna or less, 32% spent between 101,00-200,00 kuna, while 24% spent between 201,00-400,00 kuna. What matters to almost half of the respondents when buying health products is that they are organic (49%), without artificial colours (37%) or flavour enhancers (36%), with reduced fat (19%), while gluten-free products and soy are less important. Nearly all of the respondents (94%) agree that health products are available for purchase to them. Available health products means for the respondents products available to them online (21%), in the market (50%), local store (49%), or in their own garden (30%), while for only 7% that means that the seller comes to their doorstep.

When purchasing health products, 80% of the respondents said that they find it to be very important when the seller is highly informed and educated, while 20% did not agree with such a statement. 65% of the respondents find online sales of health products to be a good sales channels, while 30% of them do not agree with such a claim; the others did not know.

3.4. Promoting health products

The respondents were then asked to respond generally on the topic of advertising health products and promotional messages related to such products. 88% of them replied positively that last year they have encountered promotional messages about healthy food and cosmetic products on television, radio, billboards, the internet, or in magazines, while the others did not encounter such messages. 65% of the consumers agreed that advertising health products has an effect on the people who start thinking of these products and encourage them to consume then, while 35% of them disagreed with such a claim.

The promotion of health products was witnessed by most respondents on the internet (72%), while almost half of them encountered promotions of health products on TV as well (45%). Other channels for promoting health products are printed media (13%), billboards and outdoor advertising with 12%, radio with 4% and other channels.

39% of the respondents encountered several times a day promotional messages on social networks (Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram), e-mail (newsletter), mobile phone (Viber, WhatsApp) and You Tube; 17% of them replied that they received promotional messages on health products 2-3 times a week, 16% once a week, 13% once a day, and the others once a month or once every 6 months.

Respondents are most commonly informed on the producer’s website (39%), web portals in general (39%), specialized portals for health products (38%) and specialized websites (32%).

91% of the respondents consider online promotion of health products useful for education and information on such products. When asked where they get information on health products, 83% replied on the internet, 47% listen to the advice of a friend, 33% of the respondents are informed at the point of sale, and 16% in expert literature and books.

Product quality is crucial for 64% of the respondents when selecting the point of sale for their monthly shopping of healthy foods and cosmetic products, regardless of whether it was an outlet or a web shop, followed by variety of offer (54%), product pricing (52%), special offers (41%), past experience (41%), labelling of the product origin (19%) and advertising/promotion (18%).

On the internet, the respondents observe simple banners in the form of photos (50%), pop-ups (41%), followed by gif animations (20%) and flash videos (18%).

Social networks and liking websites promoting health products are methods used by 72% of the respondents, while 28% make no use of such tools. Facebook certainly holds first place when it comes to social networks; 80% of the respondents use this social network to get information and news related to health-related products. Facebook is followed by YouTube (25%) and Instagram (25%), while Skype and Twitter as social networks are negligible.

By using the Likert scale we have examined to what degree the respondents agree with the claims about a particular segment of advertising healthy foods and cosmetics.

A promotional message or any form of advertising generally helps the respondents to make a better shopping, and if the message is creative, most agree that in that form the message draws even more attention. The respondents want to see in the promotional messages the product price and availability. Online ads, according to the respondents' responses, are informative and educational, while the texts published online about health products are considered very useful. The respondents were divided as to whether or not they observed advertisements in magazines.

The respondents agreed that promotions and tastings at the points of sale are of great benefit and supportive in making purchase decisions. They are willing to pay more for food that does not contain additives, artificial flavours, flavour enhancers, etc. and are very cautious when reading the food labels for supplements contained in the products they are buying. Most of the respondents are reluctant with regard to believing in online promotional messages in general and promotional messages on the points of sale. Regarding personal sales as the best way to promote health products, the respondents generally agree or are abstaining regarding such a claim.

Most respondents consider very important the level of education and information of the retailers, while for social networks they consider that they are in most part helpful to get information and education on health products. Leaving reviews of the consumers online is found to be very useful. The respondents generally or completely agree that the customer reviews are the single-largest stimulus in buying health products for the consumers in Croatia. This is also evidenced by a number of researches that point to the importance of recommendations, whether by close persons or friends or an unknown person, as highly relevant factors when deciding to buy a certain product, in this case a health product. The respondents generally agree to buy health food depending on the seasonality. Google's search engine is the most common tool used to get new information on health products, while promotional messages on mobile phones are not considered useful and informative.

3.5. Discussion and research limitations

The first limitation of this particular research is surely the deliberate sample that, although essentially non-representative, may still represent a part of the Croatian consumers, to see how they look upon the issue of online promotion of health-related products. The sample was obtained online, which is fully in line with the topic surveyed, as it contains respondents who are of interest to the research. The online research method provides greater scope and reach, but it only provides information about the habits of the existing internet users, not the total population. The questionnaire was primarily distributed by the snowball method (snowball sampling), so that each respondent distributed the questionnaire onto other persons. Another deficit of such a sampling method is the high percentage of the respondents with a higher level of education, which is not the case in the actual distribution of the population in the Republic of Croatia. Therefore, it should be noted that this research has only given an indicative sample of a particular share of the consumers. In addition, the researchers carried out behavioural analyses of the users on the internet, thus only general information was gathered on the platforms used, but not how they are used and how the ads are consumed. The level of education of the Croatian market is still insufficient and there is no full understanding of the respondents for certain channels and terms related to online advertising and their distinction. Nevertheless, this research can be considered relevant because it presents the current situation and perception of the respondents about health products, the purchase of such products, and online advertising and promotion related to certain online tools used in Croatia today. Future and more extensive research based on the results of this research as a preliminary research may be focused on specific digital channels such as display advertising, social network advertising, search engine advertising, video advertising, e-mail advertising, and on the perception of the respondents about their consumption. In many segments this research can be useful to the producers and distributors of health-related products.

4. CONCLUSION

The trend of a healthy diet is increasingly present in the Croatian market. On the other hand, the globalization has yielded many new technologies and digitization. Today, everybody has an online presence, with profiles on various social networks, or by visiting web portals, websites of brands or companies, by leaving reviews, sharing and liking interesting pages or articles. It all points to the fact that the research topic is extremely relevant because it is important for everyone in the healthcare domain to have information on the future trends and the statistics and market positions on these products and how they are sold, promoted and presented. We will conclude this paper with the elaboration of the previously set hypothesis:

Hypothesis H1 of this paper refers to the **“level of awareness about buying health products among Croatian consumers (that is) growing exponentially"**. As the secondary research shows (data released by MasterCard on the topic of online commerce), the European trend of e-commerce growth is also present in Croatia. The secondary and the primary research show that a healthy lifestyle (58%) and health (57%) are the most important reasons for purchasing health products where the level of awareness of consuming such products is built up from the younger generations. When purchasing health products, it is important to the consumers that the products are organic, produced without the addition of flavour enhancers or artificial colours, and emphasis is placed on the level of education of the sellers and their relevant know-how about the product sold. Everything suggests that this **first hypothesis can be fully accepted as true.**

The second hypothesis H2 refers to the claim that **"healthy products are also expensive products".** The data published by Euromonitor International show the value of global sales of health products, and Nielson's Global Health & Wellness research has shown that many are willing to pay more for products that improve their health and stimulate weight loss. Although the willingness to pay more for a health product is falling with age, it is significant that Generation Z and the millennials are willing to pay more for health products. The price of foods is an important factor of choice and is consequently a factor that determines the quality of the diet to a substantial degree. Research in Europe has shown that people with a lower socio-economic status are at greater risk of an inadequate diet. De Irala-Estevez et al. (2000) argue that a higher income is not *per se* a guarantee of a more adequate (healthier) diet, but is associated with a greater choice of food and a greater variety/diversity. In the primary study we have conducted, 86% of the respondents agree that health products are generally more expensive products. Hypothesis H2 can **therefore be accepted as true.**

The **third hypothesis H3** outlines that **"online promotional activities of health products"** are the **“single strongest channel of communicating such products to the consumers"**. The data from secondary sources of research literature shows that the millennials, i.e. Generation Y, followed by the digital natives (Generation Z), most often buy online. A significant part of them get information about new products through ads and online media. Generally, when researching new products, people get inspired on the internet. The primary research has also shown that 64.5% of the respondents find the online sales of health products to be a good sales channel. 65% of the respondents agreed that promotional messages on health products influenced their way of thinking and encourage them to consume such products, while most respondents (73%) observed the promotion of health products online, and 72% of the respondents first observe the promotional message. However, the majority of respondents are still buying health products at retail stores (55%), while online shopping has not yet established itself due to a smaller number of web shops. The primary research has shown that a large number of respondents are still getting information at the points of sale and agreed that promotions and tastings at the points of sale are of great benefit and supportive when making purchase decisions. The majority of the respondents consider the level of education and information of the seller to be very important. Hence,

hypothesis 3 today can not yet be fully accepted as true, but only in part, because there is a tendency for online sales and promotional activities to gradually increase day by day.

The **fourth hypothesis H4** claims that **"customer reviews are the single-largest stimulus in buying health products for the Croatian consumer"**. The analysed research literature shows that the millennials rely heavily on their peers when they want to get information on new products. Today's buyer largely takes into account the reviews and studies the comments about the products (The Center for client retention, 2016). 83% of the internet users regularly read reviews and comments about products and services (Connected Consumer, 2016) and according to the research carried out by Bright Local (2014), 88% of the consumers believe in online reviews as much as they believe in a personal recommendation of a close person. The primary research we have conducted also shows that providing a feedback/review and consumer experience online is considered by the respondents to be very useful, as more than half of them agree with them fully. Also, the respondents generally or completely agree that customer reviews are the single-largest stimulus in purchasing health products, hence this hypothesis can in any case be **accepted as true.**

The **fifth and final hypothesis H5**: **"the users are looking year after year for more information about health products online."** This hypothesis can also be **accepted as true**, because our secondary sources indicate that in Croatia the number of internet users every year is growing, same as the number of smartphone users and the percentage of persons shopping online. (Connected Consumer, 2016, accessed on 20.2.2018) The millennials are not just digital, they are mobile and frequently visit social networks (67%), searching for information on search engines (62%), watch online video presentations (56%) and make queries for possible purchases (43%) (Consumer Barometer, Mobile is their go-to device, 2017, accessed on 20.2.2018). The Consumer Barometer Survey 2014/15 (accessed on 20.2.2018) shows that search engines are still ranked in first place, taking up 91%, followed by commercial websites (35%), social networks (34%) and finally tips and reviews on websites (34%). According to our research, information sources are largely occupied by search engines (66%), followed by brand websites (31%). Finally, 83.2% of the respondents are informed about healthy foods and cosmetic products online.

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