

Differences between X and Y Generation in Attitudes towards Online Book Purchasing

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Abstract. Electronic commerce is developing rapidly in European Union and proportion of individuals utilizing online purchasing exceeded seventy percent of population older than 16. The proportion of online shoppers is the highest in younger generations of consumers. Books are one of top five product categories purchased online. Studies in consumer behavior confirmed that age influences consumer choices and purchasing decisions in numerous ways. Therefore, it is necessary to explain are there differences according to consumer's age when it comes to online purchasing of particular product categories. In this paper we examine differences in consumers' attitudes regarding online book purchasing. The paper is based on own primary research conducted in March and April 2018.

Keywords: marketing, retail, e-commerce, electronic retail, online shopping, consumer behavior, generations of shoppers, generation X, generation Y.

1. Introduction

The usage of Internet increased rapidly in the last decade and has empowered consumers with easier access to product and services information and has enabled interactive digital communication between consumers and retailers. Number of online shoppers grew rapidly in the EU in last decade. The proportion of those who bought something online grew significantly in all age groups. In 2008 in age group 55-74 there was 44% of online shoppers in population, while in 2018 the proportion is 55%; for age group 25-54 the proportion grew from 53% to 73%, while in group 16-24 this proportion grew from 45% in 2008 to 73% in 2018 (Eurostat, 2019a). Growth of e-commerce is observed from perspective of companies in the EU. Proportion of companies involved in e-sales activities grew from 13% in 2008 up to 20% in 2017 and proportion of e-commerce in total turnover in companies enabling

e-sales grew from 12% in 2008 up to 17% in 2017 (see Eurostat, 2019b).

According to data in Eurostat (2019a), Gfk (2019) and Lissitsa and Kol (2016) in younger generation the acceptance and utilization of e-commerce is high and younger consumers use online channels to buy a wide variety of products and services. Books are one of the most popular e-commerce categories, usually ranked among top five product categories bought online. In the EU 32% of population bought books online in 2017 (Eurostat, 2019a), while Statista (2019) reports proportion of 38% customers that bought books online in 2012.

On the other hand, studies in field of consumer behavior confirmed that age influences consumer information gathering, purchasing decision making and choices of sales channel as well (Bova and Kroth, 2001; Jiří, 2016; Štulec et al., 2017; Ting et al, 2018; Williams and Page, 2011; etc.).

However, there is a scarcity of research papers dealing with age differences for particular product groups in online retailing. Therefore, the main goal of the paper is to explain differences in attitudes of generation X and generation Y consumers regarding online purchasing of a particular and one of the most popular online product categories - books.

The paper is structured as follows. Firstly, based on secondary literature we discuss theoretical aspects of behavior and characteristics of generation X and generation Y. Then we explain research questions, methodology and sample of our primary research. After that, research results are analyzed and discussed. Finally, based on primary research results, we draw conclusions regarding proposed research questions.

2. Generation X and Y: a theoretical insight

Generation is a group of people defined by age, or people that were born in a particular period of time and that grew up more or less in the same wave and had similar experiences, so presumably they have similar system of values and attitudes. According to the majority of authors and the American society for human resources, there are only four demographic groups or four generation existing in the work market. According to Glass (2007) these are: (a) Veterans – born between 1925 and 1940, (b) Baby-boom generation – born between 1941 and 1960, (c) Generation X – born between 1961 and 1976, (d) Millennials or Generation Y – born between 1977 and 1998. Some other authors give different age structure and add generation Z as those born after mid ninety-nineties (see Jiří, 2016 or Williams and Page, 2011). Each generation has different expectations, experiences, demographic characteristics, life style and perception of life values (Lissitsa and Kol, 2016). These characteristics in particular affect the way in which they buy, i.e. on their shopping behavior (Himmel, 2008; Jiří, 2016; Rosenburg et al., 2008; Štulec et al., 2017). The goal of this paper is to show the 'generation gap' in consumer attitudes regarding online purchasing of books. Therefore, in advance we explain main

characteristics of generations X and Y.

Generation X. Generation X (also known as 'Why Me' Generation and 'Non-workers' Generation) reached adolescence and majority during economic crisis. They experienced higher influence of personal computers and the growing importance of Internet in everyday life. Williams and Page (2011) claim that they are highly educated although pessimistic, skeptical and disillusioned with almost everything. Lager (2006), Gursoy et al. (2008), Kapor and Solomon (2011) state that the lifestyle and attitudes of Generation X include balancing between family, life and work and that they do not believe in sacrificing personal life for advancement in a company. Bova and Kroth (2001) argue that the main characteristics of Generation X are: (1) independence and adroitness, (2) parallel thinking, (3) accepting changes and diversity, (4) expecting balance between private and business life, and (5) lifelong learning. Jiří (2016) depicts generation X as cautious, conservative and saving when dealing with money; eliminate tasks, self-reliance, skeptical, demanding for structures and directions when it comes to work ethics and values.

Because of their greater need and a bigger financial limitation, they buy online more often at value oriented retailers and they are price sensitive (Williams and Page, 2011). In addition, it is proven that consumers in generation X are less loyal to brands and companies than older because they are more cynical and sophisticated when it comes to products, advertisements and shopping environments. Moreover, they require products and services specifically adapted to their tasks and life style. Adding to this, Himmel (2008) suggests that X generation responds to explanation of necessity of particular product features in marketing communication.

They should be approached from a counselor's perspective than from a seller's point of view (Williams and Page, 2011). They can be reached by using different means of communication starting with personal communication, social events, TV advertisements towards Internet, email and social media communication. In communication they need sincerity, direct facts and open approach, but they appreciate to be involved by asking for feedback (Himmel, 2008; Jiří, 2016; Ting et al, 2018; Williams and Page, 2011)

Generation Y. Generation Y (also known as Millennials, Internet Generation, born between 1977 and 1998). According Carlson (2015) they represent the first generation that spends more time on the Internet than watching TV. Williams and Page (2011) list eight key values for Y Generation, those are: (1) choice, (2) customization, (3) scrutiny, (4) integrity, (5) collaboration, (6) speed, (7) entertainment and (8) innovation. Jiří (2016) depicts generation Y with words “earn to spend” when it comes to dealing with money and with words “What’s next, multitasking, tenacity, entrepreneurial, tolerant and goal oriented” when it comes to work ethics and values.

They value and look for brands that appeal to their peers who often advise them

on products and brand options (Williams and Page, 2011; Knežević et al., 2016). Technology has a significant impact on the way they communicate as they are considered as a wide part of so called “handset generation”. They intensively use mobile technologies, especially smartphones, because they enable access to various information and shopping whenever they feel the need and from every location. (Knežević et al, 2017).

One of the most important ways of communication within generation Y is online messaging (Weyland, 2011). But messaging applications are not only used as a channel of communication and interaction in sense of sending incoming and outgoing short messages, but also as a mean for virtual gathering and setting offline meeting arrangements, exchange of pictures, videos etc. In virtual environment their short messages are often illustrated with emoticons by which they express their current mood and react on incoming materials in one messaging session.

In comparison to consumers of generation X, generation Y consumers are shifting away from consumerism and materialism towards the search form deeper meaning when making their choices and decisions (Cohen, 2009; Rosenburg, 2008).

Williams and Page (2011) suggest keywords for marketing communication with generation Y and those words are starting with “co” and include strong emphasis on their peers: collaborate, connect, co-create and control. Moreover, Kumar and Lim (2008) emphasize that this consumer group is important not only as consumer group, but also as influential group because of their strong influence on family members when deciding what, how, what and when to buy.

3. Methodology and sample

Based on given introduction and given theoretical insight, we propose following research questions:

RQ1: Do generation X and generation Y differ regarding book preferences in general?

RQ2: Are there differences between generation X and generation Y regarding online purchasing adoption?

RQ3: Are attitudes towards online book purchasing benefits more positive in generation Y?

RQ4: Are members of generation X more skeptical when it comes to obstacles of online book purchasing?

In order to answer the research questions the survey was conducted in a period of 2 months, March and April 2018. The questionnaire consisted of 15 questions, 12 questions were one-choice questions, while 3 questions were put in form of Likert scale questions. Questions were divided in several segments and each segment was based on previous research as follows:

(1) socio-demographic characteristics (questions were adapted based on Chen et. al., 2015; Parker and Wang, 2016; Strugar et al., 2011);

(2) occurrence, motivation and characteristics of online purchasing of books (questions were adapted based on Bonera, 2011; Dholakia and Uusitalo, 2002; Nikolaeva, 2006);

(3) benefits of online purchasing of books (questions were adapted based on Bonera, 2011; Dholakia and Uusitalo, 2002; Joines et al., 2003; Laundon and Traver, 2015; Nikolaeva, 2006; Parker & Wang, 2016; Turban et al., 2015);

(4) obstacles of online purchasing of books (questions were adapted based on Petković et al., 2016; Strugar et al., 2011; Suh and Han, 2014; Šimičević et al., 2013).

Initial set of questions from the field of e-commerce and online purchasing was adjusted according to characteristics of the specific product category - books. The survey was conducted via electronic questionnaire form by using constraint snowball sampling method (see Baltar and Brunet, 2012; Wall Emerson, 2015). Online questionnaire was shared by posting on the social network Facebook, and then via e-mail, and other telecommunication models like WhatsApp, Viber, Facebook Messenger. At the end, the gathered poll consisted of 177 answered and validated questionnaires from respondents in Croatia aged between 20 and 57 years as they are, by definition, members of generation X and generation Y.

Table 1: Sample structure

Characteristic	Option	Absolute frequency	Relative frequency
Gender	Male	76	42.9%
	Female	101	57.1%
	Total	177	100.0%
Age (Generation)	20-41 (generation Y)	129	72.9%
	42-57 (generation X)	48	27.1%
	Total	177	100.0%
Working status	Student	41	23.2%
	Employed	129	72.9%
	Unemployed	7	4.0%
	Total	177	100.0%

Source: own research

The structure of respondents is shown in Table 1. Out of 177 respondents, 57.1% were females, 42.9% were males (see Table 1). When it comes to age groups, the majority of respondents (72.9%), belong to generation Y (aged 20 - 41 years), while in generation X (aged 42-57 years), there are 27.1 % of respondents. In addition, the majority of respondents are employed (72.9%).

4. Discussion of results

Majority of respondents in both age groups prefer to read traditional printed books versus electronic books. Figure 1 shows that 87.50% of the X generation members prefer books in traditional printed format, and in Y generation this proportion is 76.64%. Anyhow, we did the chi squared test and upon the $p\text{-value} = 0.0500$ we can claim that at the alpha level of 0.05 there is statistically significant difference between generation X and Y when it comes to preference of book format. In addition, based on data shown at Figure 1 we can conclude that in generation Y there is statistically significant number of consumers that prefer electronic books in comparison to generation X.

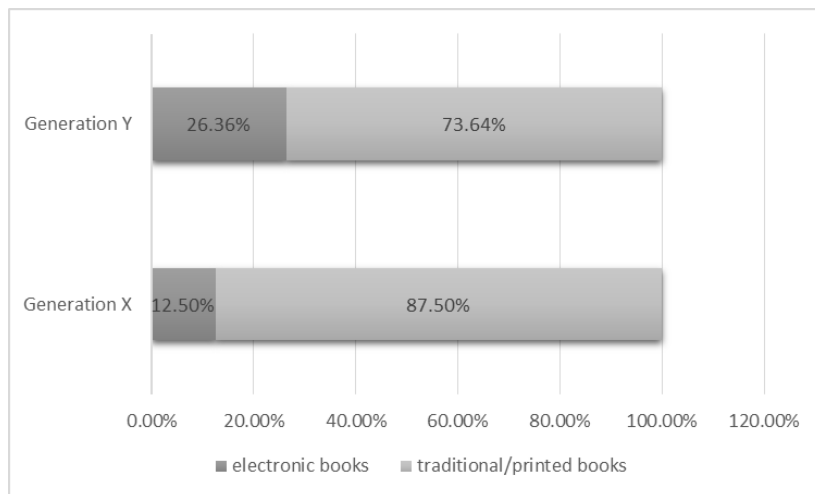


Fig. 1: Preferred book formats

In addition, respondents were asked about motivation of respondents to buy a book. Figure 2 shows dominant drivers. In generation Y there is a significantly higher proportion of respondents that are buying books for educational purposes than in generation X. This is confirmed by chi-squared test where calculated $p\text{-value}$ is 0.0000 and this claim can be accepted at the level of 0.05 significance.

Next questions were regarding online purchasing in general and online purchasing for books. In Table 2 we can observe that in both generations majority of respondents buys online (for generation Y proportion is 85.27% and for generation X proportion is 77.08% of online shoppers). When it comes to books as a specific online assortment, the proportion of respondents that are buying online is above a half (54.17%), while in generation Y proportion of respondents is lower than a half (44.96%). In generation Y there is higher proportion of those who intent to buy books online in future (27.91%, compared to 20.83% in generation X). Even though there are some observed differences in proportions, chi-squared tests $p\text{-values}$ are higher than 0.05 for both questions, thus we cannot claim that observed differences between two age groups are statistically significant for online

purchasing questions.

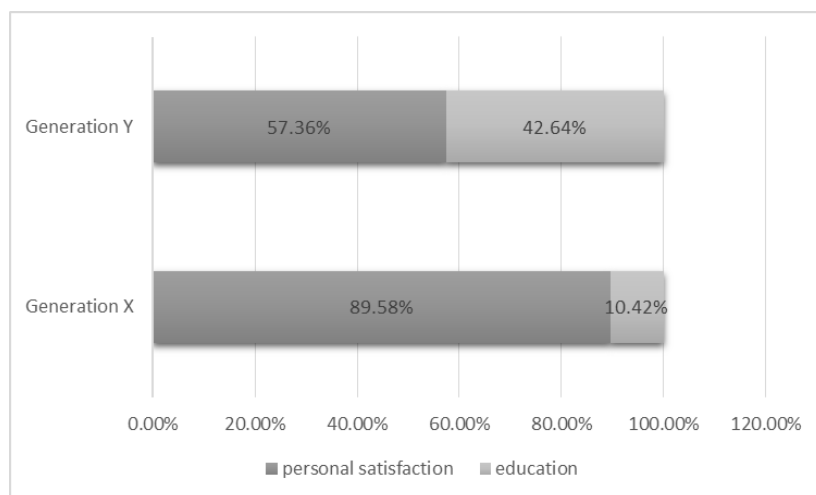


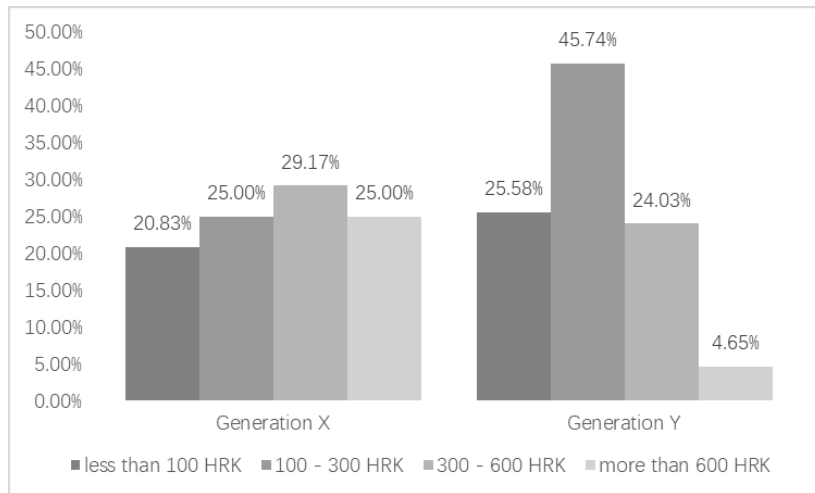
Fig. 2: Motivation of book purchase

Table 2: Online purchasing

Question	Options	Generation X	Generation Y	Total
Do you shop online? Please answer generally, including all sorts of goods (e.g. event tickets, travel arrangements, apparel, electronic etc.).	Yes	77.08%	85.27%	83.05%
	No	22.92%	14.73%	16.95%
	Total	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
	Chi squared test p-value			0.1968
Do you purchase books online?	Yes	54.17%	44.96%	47.46%
	No, but I will in a future	20.83%	27.91%	25.99%
	No and I will not do it in a future	25.00%	27.13%	26.55%
	Total	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
	Chi squared test p- value			0.5071

In Figure 3 relative frequencies of value spent on online book purchase are shown. For chi – squared test p-value is 0.0000. Therefore, we can claim that there is statistically significant difference between generations of consumers when it comes to annual spending on buying books online. In generation X more than a half of respondents spends more than 300 HRK annually for buying books online, while

in generation Y there is less than one third of those who spend more than 300 HRK online.



Note: 1 EUR=7.4 HRK

Fig. 3: Annual spending on purchasing books online

Then followed the question on relevancy of proposed benefits of online book purchasing. The question included seven statements (see Table 3). Respondents were asked to express the level of relevancy of each benefit. The Likert 5 scale was used starting from 1 completely irrelevant to 5 completely relevant. In Table 4 average ratings, modal values and chi-squared test results are shown.

In Table 3 we can observe that, generally, for all statements both consumer groups express positive attitudes (average grade is higher than 3 and modal grades are 4 or 5 for all statements offered.) Moreover, we can observe that generation X has average grades lower than generation Y, the exception are only two statements (out of seven): “Better availability of information on price, discounts and actions” and “Easy price comparison”.

However, differences between generations were tested with chi-squared tests for each statement. The tests showed that for the statement “There is no pressure of sales staff”, the difference between generations is significant on the level of 0.05. Furthermore, at the level of significance 0.1 we can accept that there is a difference between generations for three more statements: (1) “Possibility to buy products that are not available at home market”, (2) “Possibility to purchase 24 hours, 7 days a week, 365 days in year” and (3) “Access from any location with available Internet connection”. While for the other three claims, the difference between generations is not statistically significant. Meaning that for only three out of seven statements differences between consumer generations are not statistically significant at the level of $\alpha = 0.1$.

Table 3: Benefits of online purchasing of books

Statement on online book purchasing benefits	Generation X		Generation Y		Chi-squared test p-value
	Average grade	Modal value (% of respondents)	Average grade	Modal value (% of respondents)	
Possibility to buy products that are not available at domestic market	3.35	4 – relevant (31.25%)	3.64	4 – relevant (31.01%)	0.0755**
Possibility to purchase 24 hours, 7 days a week, 365 days in a year.	3.15	4 – relevant (45.83%)	3.47	4 – relevant (27.13%) 5 – completely relevant (27.13%)	0.0570**
Access from any location with available Internet connection.	3.63	4 – relevant (37.50%)	3.87	4 – relevant (41.09%)	0.0956**
Better availability of information on price, discounts and actions.	4.13	4 – relevant (37.50%)	4.04	4 – relevant (37.21%) 5 – completely relevant (37.21%)	0.3488
Easy search for opinions of other customers.	3.46	4 – relevant (39.58%)	3.85	4 – relevant (35.66%)	0.2193
Easy price comparison	3.96	4 – relevant (60.42%)	3.95	5 – completely relevant (37.21%)	0.2293
There is no pressure of sales staff.	3.42	4 – relevant (29.17%)	3.95	5 – completely relevant (35.66%)	0.0003*

Note: Likert 5 scale was used (1 – completely irrelevant; 5 – completely relevant); * - statistically significant for alpha 0.05, ** - statistically significant for alpha 0.1

Based on all said above, we can conclude that (1) both generations consumers have positive attitudes towards benefits of online books purchasing. Moreover, (2)

consumers of generation Y express more positive attitudes towards benefits of online book purchasing than consumers of generation X. Attitudes towards obstacles of online purchasing of books are examined with the Likert scale question as well. Respondents were offered seven statements on obstacles of online purchasing (see Table 4). They were asked to express the level of agreement on given statements on a 5 scale starting from 1 – completely disagree to 5 – completely agree. In Table 5 average grades, modal values and chi-squared test p-values are shown for each statement.

Table 4: Obstacles of online purchasing of books

Statement on online book purchasing obstacles	Generation X		Generation Y		Chi-squared test p-value
	Average grade	Modal value (% of respondents)	Average grade	Modal value (% of respondents)	
Online transactions are unsafe and unsecure.	3.73	4 – agree (47.92%)	3.03	4 – agree (24.81%)	0.0137*
Retailer easy gives wrong information on purpose.	4.04	4 – agree (52.08%)	3.51	4 – agree (31.78%)	0.0023*
There is a huge possibility of a wrong delivery.	4.02	4 – agree (45.83%)	3.45	4 – agree (34.88%)	0.0060*
There is a huge possibility not delivering product at all.	3.95	4 – agree (52.08%)	3.51	4 – agree (35.66%)	0.0135*
Usually there are some hidden costs (such as shipping and packaging).	3.73	4 – agree (43.75%)	3.43	3 – neutral (32.56%)	0.02629*
There is a large possibility of consumer identity theft.	4.00	5 – completely agree (39.58%)	3.38	3 – neutral (28.68%)	0.0675*
The privacy of data on consumer preferences is very low.	4.06	5 – completely agree (41.67%)	3.38	4 – agree (26,36%)	0.0024*

Note: Likert 5 scale was used (1 – completely disagree; 5 – completely agree); * - statistically significant for alpha 0.05.

Based on results shown at Table 4, we can observe that generation X express greater concern about the potential dangers of book online purchasing than generation Y. For all given statements generation X has higher average grade (i.e. express higher level of agreement) than generation Y. Moreover, for all statements differences between generations are significant on the significance level of 0.05 (in Table 4, column “Chi squared test p-values”, p-values are lower than 0.05). Therefore, we can conclude that generation X is more concerned about obstacles than generation Y when it comes to online purchasing.

5. Conclusion

Internet shopping is becoming a rising trend and a more popular focus for more and more people. Internet today has a big role in people's lives. Based on literature in field on consumer research, generation of consumers significantly differ for various products and various sales channel. In our primary research presented in this paper, we investigated and discussed attitudes of two shoppers' generations (X and Y) regarding electronic book retail. We proposed four research questions and based on previous discussion, conclusions are as follows.

RQ1: Do generation X and generation Y differ regarding book preferences in general?

We tested and confirmed that there are statistically significant differences regarding (a) preferred book formats, (b) motivation for book purchase and (c) annual spending on purchasing book online. In generation Y there are more e-book readers than in generation X. In addition, in generation Y there is larger number of consumers that purchase books for educational purposes. Finally, in generation Y more than 70% of consumers spend less than 300 kunas (i.e. less than 40 EUR) on books annually while this proportion in generation X is 45%. Meaning that on annual level, generation X annually spend considerably higher amount of money than generation Y.

RQ2: Are there differences between generation X and generation Y regarding online purchasing adoption?

In both generations, we observed high proportions of online shoppers in generation X more than 75% respondents buy online, in generation more than 85%. Online purchasing and future intention to purchase book online exceeds 70% in both generations. However, differences are not confirmed as statistically significant.

RQ3: Are attitudes towards online book purchasing benefits more positive in generation Y?

At level of significance 0.10 we accept that there are differences in attitudes towards online book purchasing between analyzed generations based on acceptance of 4 offered statements on benefits (out of 7). Thus, we can claim that generation Y has more positive attitudes towards benefits of online book purchasing.

RQ4: Are members of generation X more skeptical when it comes to obstacles

of online book purchasing?

For all offered statements regarding on line book purchasing obstacles, generation X members expressed higher level of agreement on given statements than members of generation Y and all differences are statistically significant at level 0.05. Therefore, we can state that members of generation X are more skeptical and concerned about obstacles of online book purchasing. These findings can be useful for further scientific research in fields of consumer behavior and electronic commerce because they, on one side, confirm the existence of generational differences between consumers in online environment and on the other side, fill in the literature gap on generational differences for specific product groups in electronic commerce. Moreover, in case of adoption of on line shopping in young generations our research confirms the convergence of number of online shoppers in younger generations in Croatia, which is also observed in official EU statistics (see EU, 2019). This statement is accepted because there are more than 75% of on line shoppers in both generations and that observed difference is not statistically significant between generations. EU average for both generations is larger than 72% and comparing for other years before 2015 the difference between generation X and Y in adoption of online shopping is converging to zero. Therefore, we can say that our findings fill the literature gap when it comes to structure of young consumers in one specific, under researched region of Central and Eastern Europe. Furthermore, confirmation of differences between generation X and Y in are of on line book retail is useful for managers and marketing experts. Based, on the results they have to pay attention that newest generation of consumers (i.e. generation Y members) are considerably different when it comes to on line book purchasing. They are more open to on line sales channel because they have more positive attitudes towards online book purchasing on one hand, and they express less skepticism towards online sales obstacles than generation X. Moreover, there is considerably higher proportion of generation Y members 15 who reads electronic books. All this means that managers and marketing experts in book retailing will have to change their policies in forthcoming period, by making more e-books available online and developing strategies of communication via on line channels.

The most important limitation of this research is the size of the sample as there were 177 respondents in total. Another limitation is geographical concentration of sample because all respondents were from one country and one region in Croatia. In addition, we have to mention an unequal representation of Generation X and Generation Y in sample because there were more than 120 participants from generation Y. This sample structure resulted from used methodology of data collection. Therefore for further research we propose following: (1) broadening sample by number of survey participants, especially taking into account generation X participation, (2) using additional channels for data collection, i.e. conducting survey in paper, not only digital form, (3) broadening research geographically in

order to be able to draw comparisons between consumers in various markets.

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