

YOUNG CONSUMERS SHOPPING BEHAVIOR: ANALYSIS OF THE RANDOM SURVEY

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Abstract

Nowadays, we can observe a dynamic development of the youth market, that is why groups of young consumers become the subject of surveys more and more often. The theme of the present paper is the process of making purchasing decisions by young persons. The study is particularly focused on consumers from Z generation. The analysis is based on a questionnaire using the technique of a random survey. The conducted research and the results of statistical analysis allow to reveal the attitude to shopping and show what is important for young consumers in making purchasing decisions.

Key words: *consumers behavior, young consumers, Z generation*

1. INTRODUCTION – GENERATION Z AS NEW CONSUMERS

One of the specific groups of consumers functioning on today's market are young people representing the so-called Z generation. They have only recently become the matter of interest of both entrepreneurs and market researchers, so it seems reasonable to continue exploring this subject. Young consumers, although often linked to the earlier generation – the Y generation, behave differently from those from other ones. They are unique because they perceive the world and receive messages differently, they have distinctive values and behaviors (Adamczyk 2014). The idea itself of distinguishing a new generation as a group of people characterized by specific traits - different from previous generations - suggests that these individuals will be a group of new consumers with distinct characteristics. Generation Z is constituted of people born in 1996 and later (The Center for Generational Kinetics 2016). This group is also called the C generation, because it is defined by four basic words - connection, creation, choice and content. Generation Z is also referred to as the I Generation (I-Gen) because they are the first in history not to know the world without the Internet (The Center for Generational Kinetics 2016). The most important distinguishing features of the Z generation are immediacy, mobility, egoism, pragmatism, individualism, demanding attitude, knowledge of modern technology, continuous connection to the Internet (The Center for Generational Kinetics 2016). The research on the Z generation in the context of their purchasing behaviors must take into consideration its specifics. This group is widely recognized as buyers with significantly reduced financial resources, narrow economic knowledge and limited decision-making capabilities. However, its members, raised from the earliest years in the culture of individualism, democratic values and conditions of capitalist economy, are taught consumer attitudes, self-decision-making and managing a budget (even a small one), so they became much more active actors on the goods and services market than their grandparents, parents, and even older siblings when they were their age. The influence of young consumers on purchasing decisions of their parents is getting significant, and independent shopping choices are observed from an early age, which is a direct consequence of changing the style of educating children, who have shifted from the periphery of the family to its center. Consumers from the Z generation have their own money more and more often. Research shows that young people undertake a job more often and earlier. CBOS data from 2013 indicates that 44% of Poles between 18 and 24 had paid work experience (Fałęcka 2013). In addition, other studies show that 27% of people between 16 and 19 took up paid work during the holiday period (Omyła-Rudzka 2016). Moreover, the same survey proves that 64% of young people receive pocket money from their parents. 67% of them receive up to PLN 100 and 33% several hundred or more (Fałęcka 2013). As the sums of money available to young consumers and their freedom of decision-making are growing, it is therefore justifiable and necessary to profoundly acquaintance with young people as consumers and market participants. The following subsection presents the results of the study on young consumers in the context of their shopping behaviors. The study was conducted in two voivodeships in Poland in early 2017.

2. THE USED RESEARCH METHOD

The study used a quantitative method, the technique of random survey. It was conducted in educational institutions, with the consent of the school principals. The sample was chosen in a random, intentional way. It involved 153 respondents from the Z generation (born after 1995). People aged 16 to 18 were surveyed. The respondents filled in a specially designed, author's questionnaire survey. The aim of the study was to answer the following research questions:

- What is the attitude to shopping of young consumers?
- How do young consumers make purchasing decisions?
- The purchase of what types of products is affected by young consumers?
- What are the significant and insignificant factors for young consumers when shopping?

The next subsection of the present paper presents the analysis of the research outcome.

3. RESEARCH ANALYSIS – YOUNG PEOPLE AND SHOPPING

The following subsection is divided into four thematic parts describing various aspects of young people's purchasing behaviors. Each of them ends with a short comparative analysis of the group of men and women within the given context.

3.1 The attitude to shopping of young consumers

During the survey young consumers were asked about their attitude to shopping. Do people from Generation Z generally like shopping? The answer to this question is shown in Chart 1 below.

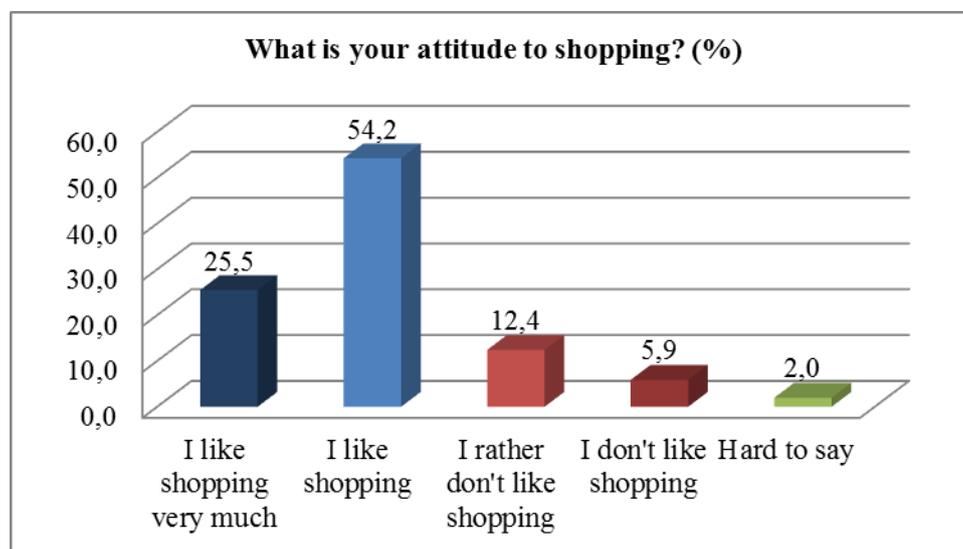


Chart 1. The attitude to shopping of young consumers (source: own work)

The data shows that young people have a positive attitude towards shopping. Nearly 80% of the respondents claim that they like shopping, with over 25% saying they like shopping very much. Only 19% of the respondents declare that they do not like shopping. The research on young consumers conducted by CBOS seems to confirm this positive attitude of Polish young consumers to shopping. It shows that only 29% of adolescent respondents declare that they do not enjoy shopping (Fałęcka 2013). Therefore, it can be concluded that young consumers are eager to participate in the purchasing process. This is confirmed by the popular form of spending time in shopping malls, where youngsters shop, watch products, rejoice in the variety of service (entertainment and food) and simply enjoy their

time. The research of Agnieszka Rochmińska analyzing consumer behaviors indicates that almost a quarter of the surveyed people perceive shopping malls as leisure space, with the largest group of people declaring such a view being young people - under 23 years old. In addition, the author notes that shopping is increasingly regarded not as an uncomfortable duty, but as a form of leisure and pleasure (Rochmińska 2011). This corresponds with the recent trend of shopping malls evolving into shopping and entertainment centers (Wilk 2003). Bearing in mind the behavior of young consumers, this trend can be expected to develop.

In order to compare the group of young men and women in the aspect of their attitude to shopping, a t test was conducted, which allowed to conclude that there is a statistically significant difference in attitude to shopping between the group of women and men (significance level 0.006). The statements show that women like shopping more than men (data from statistical analyzes).

3.2 The manner of making purchasing decisions by young consumers

Due to their age, emotionality and lack of experience, young people often are associated with immaturity and inconsideration in making life decisions. Therefore, it is worth considering how they make their purchasing choices - in a planned or rather impulsive (emotional) way? Respondents were asked explicitly how they make purchasing decisions. A summary of the answers to this question is given in Chart 2 (below).

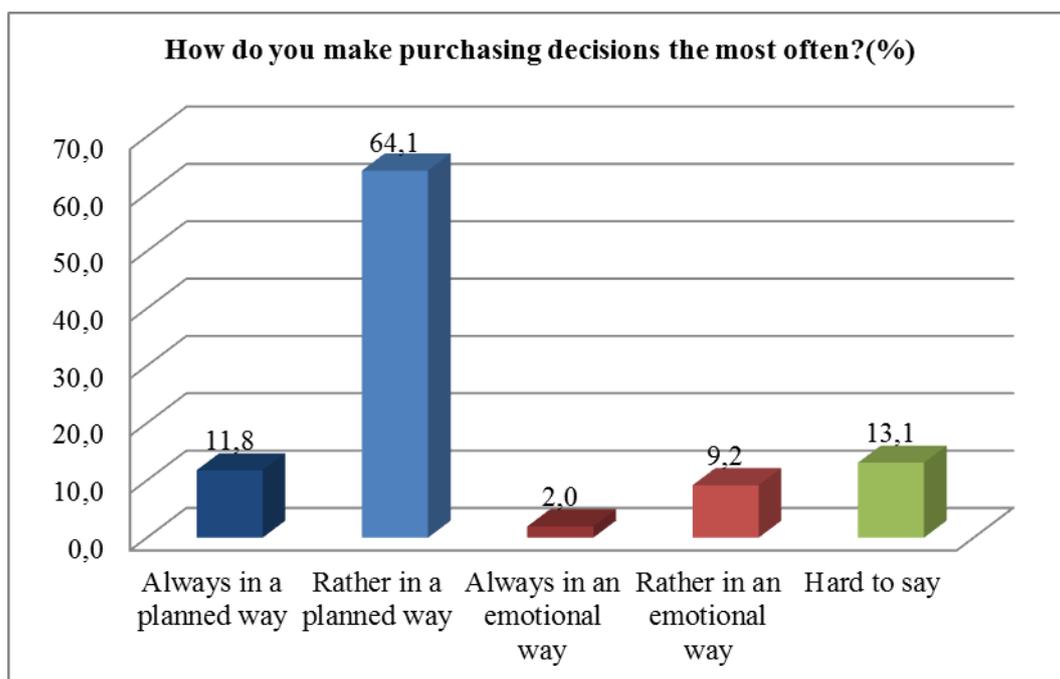


Chart 2. Purchasing decisions of young consumers (source: own work)

The research and data in Chart 2 show that young people try to plan their purchases. More than 75% of respondents declare that they shop in a planned manner, only slightly over 11% of them state that they buy under the influence of emotions. These results can be compared with the CBOS study on shopping behavior of consumers aged 18-24, which indicates that 57% of the respondents admit that they shop with a predetermined plan (Fałęcka 2013). Chart 2 shows that 13.1% of the respondents chose the "hard to say" response, which does not seem surprising, because determining whether shopping is more emotionally or rationally driven is difficult to pinpoint. It is interesting that there is a large number of people who, despite their young age, identify their purchases as always or rather planned. Perhaps the youthful enthusiasm, emotion and carelessness of young people is limited by their small budget, which requires sound planning and consistent implementation. On the other hand, young

people may declare planning because they want to present themselves as prudent and mature, and in reality often make decisions in an emotional way. In addition, the attitude of young people pointing to purchases in a planned manner may be due to their knowledge of the marketing measures used or, conversely, lack of such knowledge. Young people may simply be unaware of the amount and power of marketing instruments, which often lead to the acquisition of goods and services, being only apparently a rational purchasing decision. Of course, it cannot be excluded that the statements of young people are considerate and true, which may indicate that the new generation of consumers will make purchasing decisions in a less emotional and more planned way than older ones. Young consumers are surrounded by information and intensive marketing from an early age, and therefore, may no longer be sensitive to traditional marketing instruments affecting the emotional sphere of a human being, to which they are simply accustomed and perhaps to some extent immune.

In order to compare the men and women in terms of their manner of shopping, a test was performed for independent groups. The test did not show any statistically significant difference between the groups of women and men. However, it is interesting to note that responses indicating shopping under the influence of emotions have been reported more frequently for women than for men (data from statistical analyzes not provided in detail in the paper).

3.3 Categories of products on the purchase of which young consumers have influence

Young consumers are often considered "defective" because they do not have a lot of financial resources and complete freedom to make purchasing decisions. That is why it is worth considering on the purchase of which categories of products they have and do not have influence at all for. Several categories of products were presented to the respondents who were asked to indicate the degree of impact they had in the household on their purchase. The results of the analysis are presented in Chart 3.

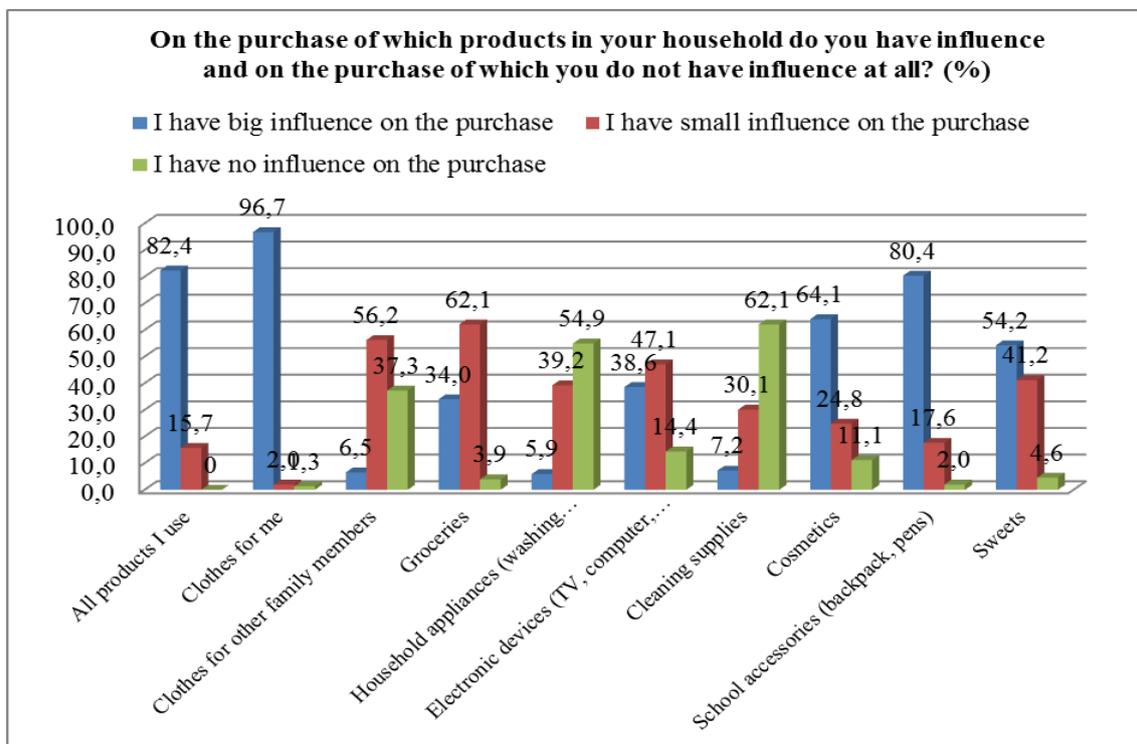


Chart 3. Young consumers and their influence on the purchase of individual categories of products (source: own work)

The study shows that young consumers have the greatest influence on buying the products of which they are the main users. This proves a big range of young people's decision-making. Over 80% of the respondents indicate that they have a strong impact on the purchase of their clothes and school accessories. It can then be assumed that they are the main decision makers for the products they use. In addition, the respondents indicate that they have a high impact on household purchase of: sweets (54.2% have a big impact on the purchase, and only 4.6% had no impact on the purchase at all), and cosmetics (64.1% have a big impact and 24.8% of the respondents have a little one). It is also worth paying attention to the categories "groceries" and "electronic devices". According to the survey, young consumers have significant impact on the purchase of these household goods. In the case of food, 34% of respondents have large impact, 62.1% have little impact, and only 3.9% have no influence on the purchase of these products. As far as electronic devices are concerned, more than 38% of respondents declare that they have a strong influence on the purchase of these products, over 47% have little impact and only slightly over 14% have no influence on the purchase at all. This means that young people are involved in household purchasing decisions, even in the case of quite expensive products such as electronic equipment (e.g. TV, computer, telephone). This may be due to young people's relatively big knowledge of technological innovations which may be helpful in purchasing such articles. The categories of products on which young people have the least influence are: household appliances (washing machines, refrigerators), no influence at all admitted by 54.9% of the respondents; and cleaning supplies, on which as much as 62% do not have influence. This can be explained by the fact that young people are likely to be uninterested in household appliances or cleaning supplies, as they rarely use them themselves, it is their parents who do it more often (usually mothers).

The conducted t-tests comparing the group of women and men in terms of categories of products on the purchase of which they have influence show statistically significant differences in the category of clothes for other family members (significance level 0,000), household appliances (significance level 0,002), electronic devices (significance level 0,000), cleaning supplies (0,004), cosmetics (0,000) and school accessories (0,001). Women declare more impact on the purchase of clothes for other family members, cleaning supplies, cosmetics and school accessories. Men, on the other hand, are more likely to influence the purchase of such products as household appliances and electronic devices. The conducted analysis reveals a stereotype image of female and male roles and their influence on the purchase of individual household products (women - cosmetics, cleaning supplies, clothes, men - electronic devices). This, in the era of progressive egalitarianisation of both sexes, seems quite surprising (in the present study, such distribution of answers may be due to the specificity of the surveyed voivodeships, which are considered in Poland to be areas of worshipping traditional values).

3.4 Significant elements during purchase

When analyzing the issue of purchasing behaviors of young consumers, the authors' attention is often put on the media, which is used to communicate with the new generation (Pieczonka-Gierczak 2017), (Żórawski 2015). However, it is also important to examine various marketing-mix components used by entrepreneurs and targeted at the young generation. The respondents participating in the study were asked to indicate which of the items presented to them are insignificant and significant for them during shopping.

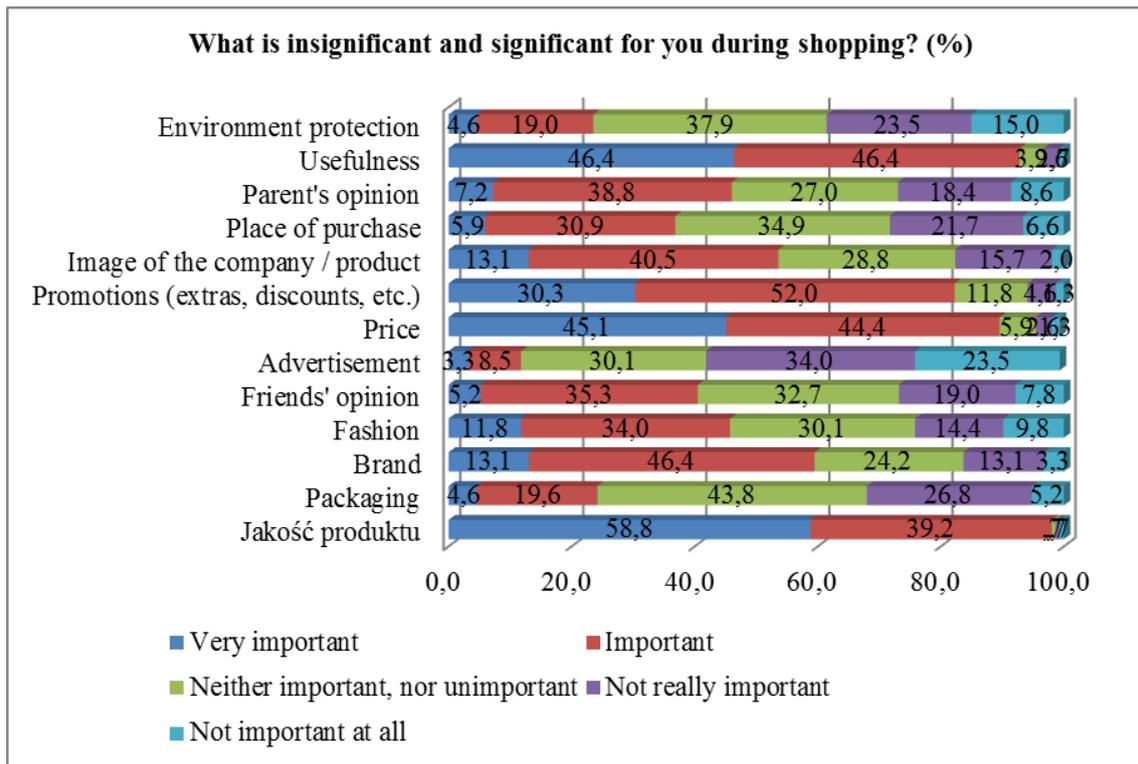


Chart 4. The significance of particular elements in purchasing decisions made by young consumers (source: own work)

It appears that for consumers of the Z generation the most important factors when making purchasing decisions are: product quality (for 98% of respondents the quality is important or very important), product usefulness (92.8% consider it important or very important), price (89.5%) and various promotions (82.3%). The remaining elements are declared to be less important for young consumers when making purchasing decisions. However, elements such as the brand or image of the company/product are also evaluated fairly high, as more than 50% of respondents considered them important or very important in making purchasing decisions. The next factors indicated as important elements for more than 40% of respondents (in each of the mentioned categories) are fashion, parent's opinion and the friends' opinion. However, it should be noted that the parents' opinion is chosen slightly more often than that of friends, even though the results are similar. This indicates the high impact of the peer group on the purchasing decisions of young people. Elements such as environment protection and packaging do not seem to be significant for young consumers. Only about 25% of the respondents identify them as important or very important. This may seem a bit surprising, because a healthy lifestyle and the environment protection are today's values particularly promoted by the society, and young people from early childhood learn to behave healthily, segregate waste and care for the environment. One more aspect of the study is worth mentioning. Namely, advertising as the element which is definitely the lowest rated one by young respondents. As many as 57% of them rate advertisement as insignificant or not taken into account in purchasing decisions, for more than 30% it is indifferent, and only less than 12% of respondents pinpoint the advertisement as important or very important when making purchasing decisions. So it seems that the younger generation does not like ads. This widely used marketing element does not seem to be adequate for young buyers because they declare that it has no influence over their purchasing decisions. Ads may be negatively associated – with manipulation; young consumers are tired of such messages or bored with advertising that is not appropriate for them.

The tests conducted in order to determine the differences between men and women in terms of the marketing elements which are the most important when shopping indicate that in the case of fashion

(significance level 0,027), promotions (significance level 0,018), company image (significance level 0,003) and the parents opinion (0,003), there were statistically significant differences. Women pay more attention to fashion, promotions and the opinion of the parents, while men pay more attention to the image of the company / product than women.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The conducted study indicates a positive attitude of young consumers to shopping. Respondents asked about their relationship to shopping directly in the vast majority declare that they like shopping, only a few reveal their negative attitude to it. At this point it is worth noting that, according to Grażyna Adamczyk's research, positive emotions are conducive to greater activity in the buying process (Adamczyk 2014). In addition, young consumers declare that purchases are made in a rather planned manner, without making a decision impulsively. Although it may be worth noting that this may depend on the type of product, because in the case of goods such as modern technology or sports equipment, young consumers show more rationality than when buying goods such as sweets or cosmetics (Adamczyk 2014).

The study also proves that young consumers have a strong influence on household purchasing decisions. Young consumers as buyers can play many roles - decision makers, consultants or informants. They have the biggest impact on buying products they use themselves. However, the study reveals that they have a significant impact on the purchase of such categories as sweets, cosmetics, electronics and groceries. This allows to claim that the purchasing power of young consumers should not be overlooked, and may even be considered unappreciated by marketers and entrepreneurs. Elements important to young people in purchasing decisions are e.g. quality, Usefulness and price. On the other hand, the study shows that advertising as a marketing tool has only a small effect on the purchasing decisions of young people.

The conclusions of this study correspond with the results of a survey on shopping decision making styles which show that young consumers are sensitive to the quality and price of their products, and that they seldom shop impulsively (Smalej 2017).

The comparison of males and females shows statistically significant differences between these groups. Young women are more fond of shopping than young men. They also have influence on buying other categories of products for the household use. These products correspond to the traditional perception of gender roles of women and men. The differences between groups were also observed in the case of marketing elements relevant to shopping. Women pay more attention to aspects such as fashion or promotions, while men look at the company or product image.

Of course, there is a number of other factors such as emotions, personality, lifestyle or values which influence the manner young people's shopping behaviors and which are not analyzed in the present paper (Adamczyk, 2014).

Researchers studying shopping behaviors and changes in this area are increasingly aware that these behaviors, along with the generational change, begin to assume a different form than before. In the eyes of young people shopping is pleasant and become a form of spending time (Rochmińska 2011). It can be concluded that the pattern of shopping behavior of young consumers will be widespread.

The research presented in this paper is exploratory and superficial, mainly due to the small sample size and the vague nature of the questions posed to the respondents. The analysis may, however, provide the basis for future research on young consumer behaviors. The specific issues addressed in the text require deepening and further research, as the new generation is characterized by traits and behaviors different from the previous ones and should, therefore, be adequately described and characterized so that market players can better tailor their actions to the needs of young consumers and thereby increase the effectiveness of communication and to increase the satisfaction of young consumers whose purchasing power in the future will grow.

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