

# Economics and Business Review

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## CONTENTS

### ARTICLES

**The Incentive Reward Complex and the slowest U.S. post-WW II recovery on record**

*William Beranek, David R. Kamerschen*

**Impact of broadband speed on economic outputs: An empirical study of OECD countries**

*Chatchai Kongaut, Erik Bohlin*

**The cyber-insurance market in Poland and determinants of its development from the insurance broker's perspective**

*Grzegorz Strupczewski*

**Why tourist entrepreneurs are not *homo oeconomicus*? The case of a Polish mountain destination**

*Katarzyna Czernek, Paweł Marszałek*

### MISCELLANEA

**Determinants of social media's use in consumer behaviour: an international comparison**

*Małgorzata Bartosik-Putgat, Nela Filimon, Michael Hinner*

**Benchmarking in the process of creating a culture of innovation in hotel companies**

*Beata Gierczak-Korzeniowska, Grzegorz Gołembski*

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MISCELLANEA

## Determinants of social media's use in consumer behaviour: an international comparison<sup>1</sup>

*Małgorzata Bartosik-Purgat<sup>2</sup>, Nela Filimon<sup>3</sup>, Michael Hinner<sup>4</sup>*

**Abstract:** This research focuses on the impact of social media (SM) on their users' behaviour vis-a-vis their decision to purchase goods and services online as well as their attitudes towards these media. The theoretical framework was grounded in the literature of consumers' behaviour and their interaction with the digital media with a special focus on individual socio-demographics (age and gender). The literature overview allowed the construction of the research hypotheses taking into account the personal traits and the social media usage in terms of consumer activities. The empirical testing of the hypotheses was performed with quantitative methods of analysis applied to a dataset of SM users from six different countries (Poland, China, Spain, Germany, Turkey and US). Findings have shown that SM preferences and their frequency of use have different impacts on consumer behaviour both depending on individual characteristics. Some implications for business managers and marketeers are discussed.

**Keywords:** social media, consumer behaviour, international comparison.

**Jel codes:** M31; M37; M21.

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## Introduction

Consumer behaviour is a significant area of research both in theoretical and empirical fields (Luna & Gupta, 2001; Craig & Douglas, 2006). The factors shaping it as well as individual reactions are very often the first stage of research in creating a new product (new offer) or improving an already existing one (Larivière, Joosten, Malthouse, Van Birgelen, Aksoy, Kunz, & Huang, 2013). Those factors' diversity influences the fact that a discussion about the determinants of consumer behaviour is interdisciplinary. The globalisation and the international expansion of the enterprises impact the importance of this interdisciplinarity and recognize the needs and behaviour of consumers in the international marketplace. The development of technology and Internet's tools may result in the similarity of behaviour of people who come from different countries and cultures but have access to the same media and information (Jiang & Wei, 2012; Duffett, 2017). Such behaviours may be conditioned by using modern media, including social media (SM). In other words, participating in SM may influence, for example, the decision of buying a product because media can be a source of information about goods or producers whose products consumers intend to buy.

The most popular SM are the media that connect people sharing common interests in a network of friends (social connections), e.g. Facebook, or business connections, e.g. LinkedIn. The ones where Internet users can express their opinions in writing, verbally or as a recording, e.g. Twitter, YouTube, Youku, blogs are also widely popular. Escaping from problems or reality makes a lot of people participate in or move to the virtual world, e.g. Second Life or the world of virtual games, e.g. EverQuest. Some of the media can be found in majority of the international markets, however, there are markets with certain limitations of access to the so called international media. Such country is, for example, China, where people use local SM, which are very similar to the so called international. For example, Qzone instead of Facebook, Weibo instead of Twitter, WeChat instead of WhatsApp, etc..

The main objective of the paper is to answer the question whether the use of social media with regard to consumer behaviour may be affected by different factors connected with users' personal traits such as age and gender. The analysis has been based on literature studies and empirical data collected among 1,493 respondents from six countries in order to identify differences and similarities among them (China, Germany, Poland, Spain, the United States and Turkey). In the exploratory empirical study, the authors of the paper used two research to collect the data: CAWI (*Computer Assisted Web Interview*) and PAPI (*Paper and Pen Personal Interview*). The countries were chosen because of different level of development and as examples of west and east countries. The authors of the paper want to investigate if the consumer behaviours through SM are universal or they differ among countries.

The authors decided to investigate SMs users taking in to account their personal traits because these features influence the way of this usage. Gender differentiates the purposes of SM use, the women insist on different things than men, women look for and put in different information than men in SM (Kozinets, De Valck, Wojnicki, & Wilner, 2010). Age impacts also the way of using the SM, for example younger consumers (<30 years) are much more eager to express their thoughts about products or producers than older (>30 years). Besides they usually use SM more often than the others, they like to comment on the brands' activities and take part in different consumer activities (e.g. competitions organized by companies through SM) (Ruane & Wallace, 2013). This problem is becoming more interesting when it comes to the international perspective. It is interesting to find out if gender or age influences the consumer behaviours in SM from an international perspective. The results of the study have a great application for the managerial level, especially they can be useful for all companies which use the SM in their marketing strategies and especially for the companies which focus on demographic traits of their potential clients. They can communicate through SM with their consumers (or potential consumers), find out about consumers' needs, expectations, reflections about their products, engage them in some marketing activities (e.g. competition for fans, discounts for fans). The results can be helpful especially for companies which take part in international expansion and conduct international marketing activities.

The paper is structured as follows: the first section of the paper includes an overview of the literature on consumer behaviour, social media and personal traits such as gender and age. Following this the research method and the results of the empirical study are presented in the second section. In the third section conclusions and implications are presented. The literature review has been combined with the presentation of research hypotheses formulated on the basis of preliminary analysis of source literature referring to the topic of the paper. The main foundation builds on numerous research papers on consumer behaviour, management, sociology, media and international marketing. What proved extremely helpful in formulating hypotheses were the articles presenting the results and conclusions of other authors researching different markets.

## **1. Literature review**

### **1.1. Social media in consumer behaviour**

Social media are the area of interest and research of many practitioners and researchers who deal with how they influence various aspects of life and actions. SM are used not only as objects of interest or study but also very often as a tool which makes it easier to gather data from a large number of users who live in different countries (Patino, Pitta, & Quinones, 2012; Tsimonis & Dimitriadis,

2014). Moreover, SM are the instruments used by marketers to communicate with the consumers e.g. by placing information about products, brands (advertisements, information about company's activities like CSR, competitions, discounts, etc.) (Gil-Or, 2010; Bruhn, Schoenmueller, & Schäfer, 2012; Oancea, 2015). Maintaining good relations with consumers through SM very often positively influences the reception of the business offer and the company's image.

Due to the Internet access SM are not only a source of information but also a lifestyle based on exchanging and collecting information at the very moment without leaving home (such behaviour is usually observed among young people) (Łabuz, 2013). Using these media is becoming more widespread also as a result of the possibility of using applications in mobile phones or smartphones. Berthon, Pitt, Plangger, and Shapiro (2012) describe SM as a series of technological innovations in the areas of hardware and software, which makes it easier and cheaper to create content and interactions between Internet users (see also Dennis, Merrilees, Jayawardhena, & Wright, 2009; Bruhn et al., 2012). Kaplan and Haenlein (2010, p. 61) define SM as a set (group) of applications technically and ideologically based on the foundations of Web 2.0 that allow for creating and exchanging the contents among their users. Defining SM stems from their ability to connect people to groups, exchange information about both private and professional lives because they are the mechanism enabling communication with a large number of people in the whole world (Williams, Crittenden, Keo, & McCarty, 2012; Bruhn et al., 2012). SM should, thus, increase the ability for consumers to exchange information about purchases which in turn can influence their buying decisions as was already described by Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) before the advent of SM in 1975 and 1980. According to Okazaki and Taylor (2013) SM differ from traditional media in three fundamental aspects. Firstly, they enable greater availability of information. Next, they make it possible to move value production from an enterprise to a consumer (it stems from increasing consumer's activity). And thirdly, they change the direction of influence and power of a consumer. SM show a new trend observed and practiced by companies which involve consumers in the production process (Chandler & Chen, 2015). Such consumers are said to be prosumers, because they participate both in consumption and production (Župič, 2013; Howard 2014).

Current research on the significance of SM focuses on several aspects connected with consumer behaviour (Okazaki & Taylor, 2013; Barreto, 2013): quality analysis of the influence of posts and commentaries in media on the effectiveness of company's image and their performance (e.g. Muntinga, Moorman, & Smit, 2011; Smith, Fischer, & Yongjian, 2012; Dennis et. al. 2009), analysis of people whose significance in electronic Word of Mouth is the greatest (Chen, Fay, & Wang, 2011), analysis of consumer behavioural patterns in SM (Steyn Ewing, Van Heerden, Pitt, & Windisch, 2011), the role of SM in advertising in the international market (Okazaki & Taylor, 2013). The paper concentrates on the analysis of consumer behaviours through SM like gathering an infor-

mation about products, sharing information about brand with other SM's users, participating in competitions announced in SM, obtaining and using discounts using SM, etc.

There are not many studies on the importance of SM in consumer behaviour that have been conducted in different markets. One of the most studied areas is the significance of SM in searching and exchanging the information about the products the consumer is going to buy (or already bought). In the traditional media the power of word of mouth (WoM) is said to be a source of information about a product, brand, company, etc. (Bachleda & Berrada-Fathi, 2016). Its power sometimes is greater than expensive advertising campaigns. Consumers are more prone to believe other consumers who are on the same side than words of producers which are spread by the means of marketing tools, e.g. as advertising messages (Chen, Fay, & Wang, 2011). SM play a very important role in public relations or making an opinion on particular products and companies on the Internet (Lee, Lee, Taylor, & Lee, 2011). These actions are called electronic word of mouth (e-WoM) where nowadays the platform of conveying information is the SM (Chatterjee, 2011; Wallace, Buil, & De Chernatony, 2014; Cabosky, 2016). Moreover, international access to numerous SM makes it possible to collect and exchange information internationally (Williams et al., 2012). For example, in the research done by Ho (2014), conducted among Facebook users, it was shown that positive opinions on a product that are shared with friends directly influence the trust for a particular brand. In other words, communication between Facebook users (e-WoM) has significant influence on perceiving a brand and building brand trust (Kucukemiroglu & Kara, 2015; Balaji, Khong, & Chong, 2016). Generally, e-WoM is one of the most important and researched consumers' activity where social media are used (Zhang, Omran, & Cobanoglu, 2017).

## **1.2. Personal determinants influencing the social media's use**

The importance of SM in consumer behaviour is related to the way of SM's use by consumers and their level of activity (frequency of use). The significance of a particular activity refers to choosing a particular medium from among many in the market which makes this activity possible. This choice is connected with meeting the particular needs of users which enables maximum utility (Whiting & Williams, 2013; Hsu, Tien, Lin, & Chang, 2015). Consumer behaviour is an area connected to media which enables communication with other participants (e.g. in a particular community), exchanging and gathering information about a product or manufacturer the consumer is interested in (Murugesan, 2007; Zhang et al., 2017). Such use of SM is also determined by personal traits of individual users like gender and age. The following paragraphs concern the literature overview according to gender and age influence on consumer behaviour through SM.

**Gender.** Results of various research projects show that there are differences between sexes both in using the Internet as well as shopping online (Jayawardhena, Wright, & Dennis, 2007; Cho & Workman, 2011). Women are undoubtedly an important link in nearly every social networking website and are also a very good target for advertisers. They are more active, get involved in a dialogue with a brand or share content more eagerly than men (Barker, 2009). Marketing specialists fight most fiercely for the attention of female social media users in the Net (Randall, Pauley, & Culley, 2015). It is more difficult to convince women than men to purchase something, because women are more suspicious and make decisions slower, checking at the same time as many sources as possible (Chan, Cheung, Shi, & Lee, 2015). The research done by the PEW Research Center in American society shows that even older women are more active in Internet communities than older men (52% of women and 39% of men aged 65+ are SM users). Amongst a slightly younger generation (the so called baby boomers, aged around 50) there are also significant differences between women and men (56% of women and 45% of men at this age use SM) (Pew Research Center, 2014). Within the scope of the subject matter presented in the paper the results of the research conducted by other authors show that participating in social networks influences the buying decisions of women who shop online (McCormick & Livett, 2012). Moreover, women often treat SM as a source of information, especially when it comes to fashion products (Kozinets et al., 2010). Taking into account the previous research accomplishments of other authors within the field discussed, the following hypothesis has been formulated: *H1. Women use social media in their consumer behaviour to a larger extent than men.*

**Age.** Nowadays there are different generations of social media users in the market (Cabosky, 2016). One of them is Generation X that includes people born between 1961–1985 (Kucharczyk, 2013). They live in a traditional way and technological novelties are a challenge they need to face in order to keep up with the market. Generation Y, born between 1986 and 1994, has characteristics that will significantly influence the changes in the working system, management and organization because this generation differs from its predecessors. One of the differences might be the fact that in almost all areas of life, they skilfully use technology and digital media while living in the global village which makes them boldly communicate with their friends all around the world (Altimier, 2006; Kwok, 2012). They are very self-confident because they are well educated and eager to develop/grow. Generation Z consists of very young people, born between 1995 and 2010 during the dynamic increase of the importance of the Internet and new communications technology (Solnet & Hood, 2008; Chi, Maier, & Gursoy, 2013). They are also described as the generation M (Multitasking) or Net Generation (Kilian, Hennigs, & Langner, 2012). New technologies have existed for them “forever” and these technologies are their natural environment, essential for their effective performance. The digital world

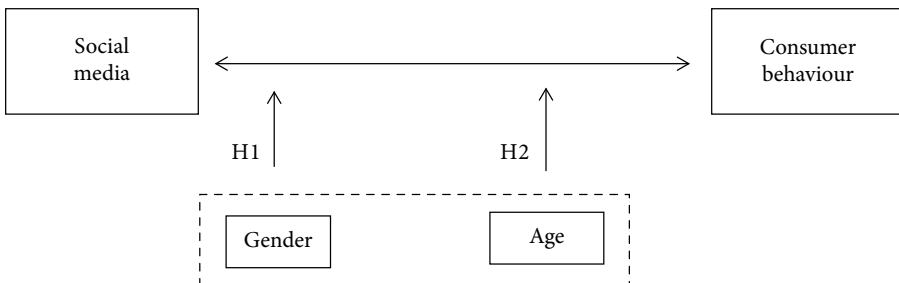


is their fundamental point of reference. For this generation it is not conceivable that a world existed without the Internet. They are constantly connected to the Net – at home, school, work, on the bus, on vacation. They meet their friends more often online than face-to-face, but their friends can be counted in the thousands. The ease with which they use various communication platforms has an influence on changing the meaning of different cultural conditions or norms, especially in the context of choices and ways of making decisions. They greedily and very skilfully grab all innovations (Kilian et al., 2012).

Similar conclusions were the effect of the research titled „How do we shop” which was conducted by CBRE Poland (Łabuz, 2013). According to the report, young consumers (age 16–24) are very often described as “digital natives” because they have better skills in using modern mobile equipment and technological solutions. They use SM and blogs to search for information on products, companies and brands. One of the goals is to compare prices and know the opinions of others on a particular subject as well as express their own views and share the experience. As a result, they are also called smart shoppers who mainly shop online (Łabuz, 2013). Ruane and Wallace (2013) state that the representatives of Generation Y primarily use the Internet to search and compare information in order to narrow down alternatives related to making decisions among others. The results of the research developed and conducted by the Pew Research Center (2014) team in groups of American teens and young adults show a significant increase of SM participants in both the researched groups. However the pace of increase and the percentage share is greater in the younger group (Lenhart, Purcell, Smith, & Zickuhr, 2013).

Taking into account the previous research accomplishments of other authors in relation to interdependencies between age and the significance of SM, the following hypothesis has been formulated: *H2. Younger people (= <30 years) more often use SM for consumer behaviours than the older ones (>30 years).*

The literature review and the authors’ hypotheses about the influence of the personal traits on the significance of SM’s use in consumer behaviour have made it possible to develop a framework shown in Figure 1.



**Figure 1. Framework of personal traits influencing the social media’s use in consumer behaviour**

The interdependencies between social media's use for consumer behaviour and gender/age of users have been verified in the empirical research presented in the next section of the article.

## 2. Methodology

### Measurement development and data collection

The project started in 2015, but the gathering of data was conducted in 2016 in China, Germany, Spain, Poland, Turkey and the United States. The countries were chosen because of different level of development and as examples of west and east countries. The criterion for selecting the countries was conditioned also by the possibilities for preparing and conducting the test procedure there.

In the exploratory empirical study the authors of the paper used two research to collect the data: CAWI (*Computer Assisted Web Interview*) and PAPI (*Paper and Pen Personal Interview*). Firstly, authors used CAWI with an online questionnaire as a research instrument filled out by the respondents themselves (Craig & Douglas, 2006) in order to collect fast responses. But the use of an online questionnaire has not produced great feedback, 3.5% of all questionnaires returned. Secondly, the authors decided to use the PAPI method in each market. Designated research assistants gave out and gathered the questionnaires from the respondents in different regions of particular countries. The questionnaire was an original instrument prepared for the purpose of the described research. The only element differentiating the measuring instrument in particular countries was the language. The original language of the questionnaire was Polish. It was later translated into English, Spanish, Chinese, Turkish, German and English using a forward and backward translation method. In the beginning the questionnaire was translated from Polish into another language and then again into Polish. The original version was compared to the final one in order to eliminate errors coming from linguistic, lexical or contextual differences, etc. (Malhotra, Agarwal, & Peterson, 1996; Craig & Douglas, 2006). The questionnaire included closed questions with regard, firstly, to the frequency of usage of different social media (authors gathered different media examples from different countries, e.g. Qzone, RenRen, Xing, etc.), secondly, to the way of that usage (purposes of the social media usage), and thirdly, personal traits of respondents.

The project started in 2015, but the data was gathered in 2016 amongst 1,493 respondents, including China (n = 295), Germany (n = 117), Poland (n = 296), Spain (n = 130), the United States (n = 260), and Turkey (n = 395). The countries are differentiated, as emerging market economies like China, Poland and Turkey are compared with developed economies such as United States and Germany (Craig & Douglas, 2006). The respondents were selected using

a non-probabilistic sampling method. The consequences stemming from the applied sampling method are connected with the interpretation of the results obtained which, in the discussed case, should not be fully generalized for the population of the researched countries and SM's users. The differences in size are caused by the reluctance of people to participate in the study. The country where the data was gathered very quickly and in a large number is Turkey where people participated in the research very willingly. They were happy to be part of the project. In other countries the gathering of the data was slower and authors decided to stop it, because the social media are developing fast and the respondents' behaviour via SM could change if the authors extended the time for collection.

### 3. Results and data analysis

#### 3.1. Respondents' profile

The respondents surveyed in each country were people who agreed to participate and were willing to express themselves on how they use SM. The study involved people of all ages and five age groups were distinguished, i.e. 15–20, 21–30, 31–45, 46–59, 60 or more (Table 1). In Germany, China, Poland and Turkey the respondents within 21–30 age group predominated. Also in Spain this age span was the most important, however here the difference between them was not as significant as in other countries. On the other hand, in the United States most participants belonged to the age group 15–20. Considering the number

**Table 1. Respondent profile – gender and age (%)**

Features	China N = 295	Germany N = 117	Poland N = 296	Spain N = 130	United States N = 260	Turkey N = 395
Gender						
N	N = 293	N = 117	N = 294	N = 130	N = 259	N = 389
Women	68.1	50.4	70.9	50.8	56.5	48.7
Men	31.2	49.6	27.7	49.2	43.1	49.7
No data	0.7	0.0	1.3	0.0	0.4	1.5
Age						
N	N = 295	N = 117	N = 296	N = 130	N = 260	N = 395
15–20 years	14.2	14.5	35.5	40.8	79.6	9.6
21–30 years	66.4	82.9	63.5	50.8	16.9	76.5
31 years and more	19	2.6	0.7	0.0	3.5	13.4

of participants within the age ranges, it can be stated that in the groups studied the representatives of the so-called Generation Y are prevalent. The smallest number of respondents was observed in the age group of 31 and more. The differences in age groups sizes were caused because young people were more eager to take part in the research and agreed to fill the questionnaire more than the older age groups. The numbers of respondents from the following groups such as 31–45, 46–59 and 60 or more were very small. That is why authors decided to put them in one  $\geq 31$  group to be able to make statistical calculations.

Taking into account the diversity of the study group in terms of gender it should be emphasized that it is difficult to determine whether there is a significant dominance of any gender. In many countries gender parity was nearly a given (e.g. Germany, Spain, the United States and Turkey), i.e. almost equal proportions of both genders. The biggest number of women was observed in two groups, Chinese (68.1%) and Polish (70.9%), where their structure in terms of gender is very similar.

### 3.2. Variables' operationalization and data analysis

On the basis of the literature analysis the authors formulated research hypotheses which refer to the relationship between the personal traits of respondents and their SM's use for consumer purposes.

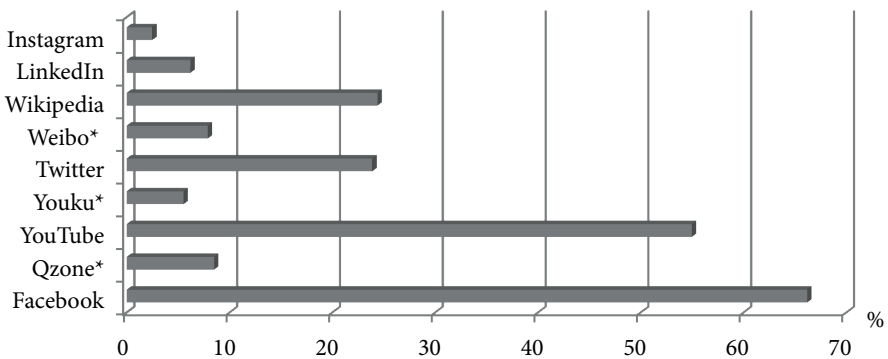
To examine the interdependence between personal traits, i.e. gender, age, and ways of using SM for consumer purposes, firstly indicators of the structure of the respondents who use various media on a daily basis were analysed. Secondly, in order to identify consumer behaviour activities (CB), the respondents were asked to specify the frequency of performing them (*very often, often, from time to time, rarely, very rarely, never*) for particular statements which characterize consumer behaviour of people using SM. In the reliability analysis, according to the scale used, Cronbach Alpha was used. The level of Cronbach Alpha –  $\alpha = 0.78$  – confirms that the proposed scale is a reliable tool for measuring (Nunnally, 1978, pp. 245–246). In order to identify the use of SM in consumer behaviour a trial assessment was performed. It made it possible to distinguish the most frequent activities of the users. That is why in the next part the authors present the interdependencies between personal factors and consumer behaviour (CB) such as:

- searching for information about products and services (CB<sub>1</sub>),
- following advice of friends on buying a product or using a service (CB<sub>2</sub>),
- recommending various products, which according to a particular person are worth it, to other users (CB<sub>3</sub>) or informing other potential buyers if the purchased product has turned out to be of very low quality (CB<sub>4</sub>),
- placing buy/sell offers (CB<sub>5</sub>),
- paying attention to media advertisements (commercials, photographs of collections, etc.) (CB<sub>6</sub>),

- watching advertisements placed there (commercials, photographs, etc.) (CB<sub>7</sub>),
- participating in contests organized by companies/brands a particular person is a fan of (CB<sub>8</sub>),
- taking part in competitions organized by the firms/brands of which a particular person is a fan (CB<sub>9</sub>).

Thirdly, to determine the significance of differences between the personal traits of respondents (gender and age) in each country and the nature of using SM (in general, without distinguishing particular media), Pearson's chi-square statistics was used. On the other hand in order to determine the strength of the interdependence between gender, age and indicated behaviours, Cramer's *V* coefficient was applied. Using the figures identified stems from the features of scales of measure applied in the questionnaire.

The respondents were asked to indicate the frequency of using the SM identified (they could choose from a long list of media). Figure 2 presents the media that are most often used by the respondents (without differentiating them into groups) at least once a day. The first place is held by Facebook which in all the countries (except for China) also has the most users. On the other hand, in China most people use Qzone which is called the Chinese equivalent of Facebook.



\* Social media used in China

**Figure 2. Social media that are most often used by the respondents at least once a day**

The second medium in terms of the number of the researched users was YouTube, which turns out to be more popular than Facebook, e.g. in Turkey. Around 74.2% of the respondents use YouTube in the Turkish group studied at least once a day. In Poland YouTube is used on an everyday basis by 69.9% of the respondents, in Germany 61.5%, in the United States 55% and in Spain 53.8%. In China 8.47% of the researched respondents use YouTube daily and Youku (the Chinese equivalent of YouTube) is used by 27.5% of the respondents.

Twitter is also the most popular in the United States as 53.5% of the respondents use it daily. Slightly fewer daily users of Twitter were observed in Turkey (51.5%). On the other hand, in the Spanish group it is only 16.9%, in the German group it is 4.27%, while in the Polish group it is even less at 3.04%. It must be noted that the Chinese equivalent of Twitter is Weibo which is used every day in the Chinese group by 44.75% of the respondents.

Also Wikipedia is an often used site. The high frequency of its use might be caused by the age of the respondents and their education as it is often a source of information applied when studying. In the groups studied the majority of daily users of Wikipedia were observed in Turkey (28.5%), Germany (27.3%) and Poland (21.9%). Slightly fewer users can be found in the American (16.5%), Chinese (13.5%) and Spanish (13.1%) groups.

Instagram has most daily users in the American groups (33.8%), while in the other groups it was indicated by very few respondents. On the other hand, the greatest number of daily LinkedIn users was observed in Turkey (13.6%) whereas in the other groups it is a medium used by a small number of people.

Taking into account the significance of the results obtained by means of Pearson's chi-square statistics in relation to gender and age of respondents, as well as determined consumer activities for which SM (in general) are used, the ones where statistical significance reached  $p < 0.01$  and  $p < 0.05$  were analysed and discussed in detail. In these cases the aforementioned determinants are statistically significant in terms of influencing the ways social media are used for consumer purposes. The statistics of the Chi-square test and the Cramer's  $V$  coefficient which are presented in the tables show that there are differences between the countries researched in relation to the correlation between gender and age and using SM in consumer behaviour.

Referring to the criterion of gender (see Table 2), it needs to be emphasized that a significant differentiation of gender's influence on particular behaviours in the studied countries was observed. Gender influences consumer behaviour to the greatest extent in the Chinese and American groups as significant correlations in four out of nine behaviours studied were distinguished.

According to particular consumer behaviours ( $CB_1, \dots, CB_9$ ), gender influences the search for information through SM ( $CB_1$ ) in the Polish group ( $p < 0.01$ ,  $V = 0.25$ ), where it is most often done by women. On the other hand, gender differentiates the frequency of seeking advice through SM on purchasing a product ( $CB_2$ ) in the Chinese ( $p < 0.01$ ,  $V = 0.21$ ) and the Spanish ( $p < 0.01$ ,  $V = 0.31$ ) groups. It is interesting that in China it is most often done by women while in Spain it is done by men.

Gender differentiates to the greatest extent the recommendation of good products to other users ( $CB_3$ ) because in the three groups statistically significant correlations were observed. In the Chinese group it is more often done by women ( $p < 0.01$ ,  $V = 0.2$ ), while in the German ( $p < 0.01$ ,  $V = 0.34$ ) and American ( $p < 0.01$ ,  $V = 0.22$ ) groups it is mostly done by men. Moreover, in

**Table 2. Correlations between gender and the way of using SM for consumer behaviour**

Sign	China N = 295		Germany N = 117		Poland N = 296		Spain N = 130		United States N = 260		Turkey N = 395	
	$\chi^2$	V	$\chi^2$	V	$\chi^2$	V	$\chi^2$	V	$\chi^2$	V	$\chi^2$	V
CB <sub>1</sub>	3.0	0.1	3.4	0.17	<b>16.98*</b>	<b>0.25</b>	5.48	0.21	6.3	0.15	6.5	0.13
CB <sub>2</sub>	<b>12.04**</b>	<b>0.21</b>	3.2	0.17	0.7	0.05	<b>11.75**</b>	<b>0.31</b>	5.8	0.15	4.4	0.11
CB <sub>3</sub>	<b>10.3*</b>	<b>0.2</b>	<b>13.9*</b>	<b>0.34</b>	6.07	0.14	6.9	0.23	<b>12.4**</b>	<b>0.22</b>	7.9	0.14
CB <sub>4</sub>	<b>18.64*</b>	<b>0.26</b>	7.5	0.25	4.04	0.12	6.08	0.23	<b>12.7*</b>	<b>0.22</b>	6.5	0.13
CB <sub>5</sub>	1.69	0.08	3.6	0.18	1.7	0.08	4.5	0.19	7.9	0.27	<b>29.17*</b>	<b>0.3</b>
CB <sub>6</sub>	4.25	0.12	<b>13.4*</b>	<b>0.34</b>	3.9	0.12	6.88	0.23	2.08	0.09	3.8	0.1
CB <sub>7</sub>	6.9	0.15	5.07	0.21	7.9	0.17	6.3	0.22	<b>18.7*</b>	<b>0.27</b>	<b>28.96*</b>	<b>0.3</b>
CB <sub>8</sub>	3.4	0.11	6.0	0.23	<b>11.2**</b>	<b>0.2</b>	0.44	0.06	3.79	0.12	7.01	0.14
CB <sub>9</sub>	<b>12.86**</b>	<b>0.22</b>	2.79	0.16	6.2	0.15	<b>12.03**</b>	<b>0.31</b>	<b>14.16*</b>	<b>0.23</b>	<b>18.87*</b>	<b>0.23</b>

$\chi^2$  – Pearson chi2 statistics.

V – Cramer's indicator.

\* Correlation is significant at the  $p < 0.01$  level.

\*\* Correlation is significant at the  $p < 0.05$  level.

the German group the strength of this relationship was established at the moderate level ( $V = 0.34$ ). Therefore gender differentiates this way of using SM to a significant extent. In the other groups, this relation is at a weak, but statistically important level.

In the Chinese ( $p < 0.01$ ,  $V = 0.26$ ) and the American groups ( $p < 0.01$ ,  $V = 0.22$ ) women more often warn others against a product that turned out to be shoddy (CB<sub>4</sub>). Gender also differentiates watching commercials available in SM (CB<sub>6</sub>) in the German group ( $p < 0.01$ ,  $V = 0.36$ ), where it is more often done by women. On the other hand, in the Polish group gender influences the use of discounts in the shops of which one is a fan (CB<sub>8</sub>). It is more often done by women than men ( $p < 0.01$ ,  $V = 0.2$ ).

Interesting results were obtained in the Turkish group. They are related to the influence of gender on placing sell/buy offers (CB<sub>5</sub>) and advertisements on products and services (CB<sub>7</sub>) in SM. In both cases men predominate in the Turkish group as far as these SM activities are concerned. It is indicated by the Chi-square test correlations ( $p < 0.01$ ) and the coefficient determining the strength of this relation ( $V = 0.3$ ) shows that this interdependence is moderate.

Chi-square correlation coefficients demonstrate that gender influences participating in competitions organized by companies of which one is a fan in SM (CB<sub>9</sub>) to the greatest extent. In four out of six researched groups the observed correlations between gender and CB<sub>9</sub> were statistically significant. In

the Chinese group it is more often done by women ( $p < 0.01$ ,  $V = 0.22$ ), while in the Spanish ( $p < 0.01$ ,  $V = 0.31$ ), American ( $p < 0.01$ ,  $V = 0.23$ ) and Turkish ( $p < 0.01$ ,  $V = 0.23$ ) groups men more often take part in competitions organized by companies through SM. Moreover, while in the Spanish group the strength of this relation ( $V$ -value) was established at the moderate level, in the other groups this relation is statistically significant but at a weak level.

Referring to the criterion of age (Table 3) it needs to be emphasized that in three groups – Polish, American and Spanish – age does not differentiate among consumer behaviours through SM of the researched respondents. No significant correlations ( $p < 0.05$ ) between the age criterion and the distinguished consumer activities were identified.

**Table 3. Correlations between age and the way of using SM in consumer behaviour**

Sign	China N = 295		Germany N = 117		Poland N = 296		Spain N = 130		United States N = 260		Turkey N = 395	
	$\chi^2$	V	$\chi^2$	V	$\chi^2$	V	$\chi^2$	V	$\chi^2$	V	$\chi^2$	V
CB <sub>1</sub>	<b>18.82**</b>	<b>0.18</b>	16.7	0.27	7.8	0.11	1.88	0.12	16.4	0.17	<b>30.6*</b>	<b>0.21</b>
CB <sub>2</sub>	14.6	0.16	<b>30.3*</b>	<b>0.36</b>	8.2	0.12	2.4	0.14	3.2	0.08	<b>31.1*</b>	<b>0.21</b>
CB <sub>3</sub>	<b>18.4**</b>	<b>0.18</b>	<b>56.4*</b>	<b>0.5</b>	8.4	0.12	2.47	0.14	10.5	0.14	<b>17.47**</b>	<b>0.15</b>
CB <sub>4</sub>	<b>21.3*</b>	<b>0.2</b>	<b>18.3**</b>	<b>0.28</b>	7.7	0.11	0.3	0.05	6.07	0.11	13.5	0.13
CB <sub>5</sub>	10.4	0.14	<b>19.75**</b>	<b>0.3</b>	10.8	0.14	3.9	0.18	6.7	0.11	15.6	0.14
CB <sub>6</sub>	13.9	0.16	10.3	0.21	10.3	0.13	5.5	0.21	8.6	0.13	10.6	0.12
CB <sub>7</sub>	14.3	0.16	15.15	0.26	9.8	0.13	7.1	0.24	14.8	0.17	16.3	0.1
CB <sub>8</sub>	14.7	0.16	<b>27.16**</b>	<b>0.35</b>	7.1	0.11	6.7	0.24	6.4	0.11	<b>30.4*</b>	<b>0.2</b>
CB <sub>9</sub>	14.5	0.16	3.48	0.12	5.7	0.1	1.4	0.12	10.8	0.14	<b>19.6**</b>	<b>0.26</b>

$\chi^2$  – Pearson chi2 statistics.

V – Cramer's indicator.

\* Correlation is significant at the  $p < 0.01$  level.

\*\* Correlation is significant at the  $p < 0.05$  level.

Age differentiates consumer behaviours to the greatest extent in the German and Turkish groups. In five out of nine cases correlations were significant. In the Chinese group, only three activities from the area of consumer behaviour depended on age.

Taking into account specific behaviours it should be emphasized that age differentiates to the greatest extent the recommendation of good quality products to other users through SM (CB<sub>3</sub>). In the German group ( $p < 0.01$ ,  $V = 0.5$ ), as well as in the Chinese ( $p < 0.05$ ,  $V = 0.18$ ) and the Turkish ( $p < 0.05$ ,  $V = 0.15$ ), Chi-square statistics returned significant correlations. In each of these groups the respondents from the 21–31 age range predominated in relation to CB<sub>3</sub>.



It is worth highlighting that in the German group the strength of this relation was established at the strong level ( $V = 0.5$ ), i.e. age differentiates this way of using SM to a significant extent. In the other groups this relation is at a weak, but at a statistically significant level.

In the Chinese and Turkish groups age also influences consumer behaviour when looking for information on various products with the help of SM ( $CB_1$ ). The predominant number of the Chinese researched ( $p < 0.05$ ,  $V = 0.18$ ) and Turkish ( $p < 0.01$ ,  $V = 0.21$ ) respondents, aged 21–30, use SM to gather information on products before buying them.

On the other hand, seeking advice from friends on purchasing a product ( $CB_2$ ) is most often done by the respondents aged 21–30 from the German ( $p < 0.01$ ,  $V = 0.36$ ) and Turkish ( $p < 0.01$ ,  $V = 0.21$ ) groups. It is worth adding that in the German group the Cramer's  $V$  coefficient has shown the average strength of this correlation.

Among the Chinese ( $p < 0.01$ ,  $V = 0.2$ ) and German ( $p < 0.05$ ,  $V = 0.28$ ) respondents age also differentiates in relation to warning friends against buying a particular product that turned out to be shoddy. It is most frequently done by the respondents from the 21–30 age group.

Age also influences the use of discounts at the shops of which the users are fans in SM ( $CB_8$ ). This is done in the German ( $p < 0.01$ ,  $V = 0.35$ ) and the Turkish ( $p < 0.01$ ,  $V = 0.2$ ) groups and is most often done by the respondents from the 21–30 age range. In the German group the Cramer's  $V$  coefficient  $V = 0.35$  indicates a moderate strength of this relationship/correlation. In the German group the influence of age was also observed in terms of placing buy/sell offers in SM ( $CB_5$ ) where it is most often done by the respondents aged 21–30 ( $p < 0.05$ ,  $V = 0.3$ ). On the other hand, in the Turkish group age does not influence the decision on taking part in competitions organized by the companies for those users who are their fans in SM ( $CB_9$ ). It is most frequently done by the Turkish respondents aged 21–30 ( $p < 0.05$ ,  $V = 0.16$ ). In none of the researched groups did age play a role in behaviours related to watching commercials ( $CB_6$ ) and placing one's own advertisements ( $CB_7$ ) in SM.

## **4. Discussion**

The analysis presented in the previous part of the paper shows that there are differences between the groups studied both in terms of SM that are used as well as the factors influencing SM. The slightest differences between the researched groups were noted in relation to using Facebook (except for China) as in the majority of countries this service is most often used. In contrast differences were noted in the countries when it comes to the frequency of using the other SM.

The main objective of this paper has been to show personal traits influencing the use of SM for consumer behaviours. The Chi-square statistical test ( $p < 0.01$

and  $p < 0.05$ ) indicated a differentiated occurrence of correlations between gender and age in the researched groups. In Table 4 the correlation ( $p < 0.01$  and  $p < 0.05$ ) between using SM in consumer behaviours as well as gender and age are summarized for the investigated countries.

**Table 4. Correlations between gender and age and the SM using SM in consumer behaviour**

Internal factor	China	Germany	Poland	Spain	United States	Turkey
Gender	V	V/X	V/X	V/X	V	V/X
Age	V/X	V	X	X	X	V

V – there is a correlation in more than three activities denoted as  $CB_1, \dots, CB_9$ .

X – no correlation.

V/X – there is a correlation in relation to three and less activities denoted as  $CB_1, \dots, CB_9$ .

The distinguished determinants such as gender and age differentiate to the greatest extent the use of SM in consumer behaviour in the Turkish, Chinese and German groups. The assumed criteria on the correlation between gender, age and  $CB_1, \dots, CB_9$  indicate the existence of a correlation in the Turkish group with respect to age. Single correlations were also obtained in relation to gender because the majority of men use SM for  $CB_5, CB_7$  and  $CB_9$ . Also in the Chinese and German groups the influence of one of the variables on the majority of consumer behaviours in SM (China – gender, Germany – age) was noted. In the American group only gender influences consumer behaviours with the use of SM and in the Polish and Spanish groups single correlations between consumer activities in SM and gender were observed.

Also in referring to personal traits in differentiating particular consumer behaviours ( $CB_1, \dots, CB_9$ ) with the use of SM it needs to be stated that gender differentiates these activities to a greater or lesser degree in each of the groups studied. The summary presented in Table 5 shows that it happens to the largest extent in the Chinese, American and Turkish groups. A slightly smaller number of correlations was observed in the German, Polish and Spanish groups. However it needs to be emphasized that in the Chinese and Polish groups the respondents who predominated in terms of using SM in consumer activities were women, whereas in Turkey, Spain and the United States they were men. On the other hand, in Germany, in the case of  $CB_3$ , it was the men while as far as  $CB_6$  is concerned, it was the women. Therefore, when referring to *H1* which states that *women use social media in their consumer behaviour to a larger extent than men*, it was only validated in the Polish and Chinese groups. *H1* was not confirmed in the Turkish, American, Spanish and German groups.

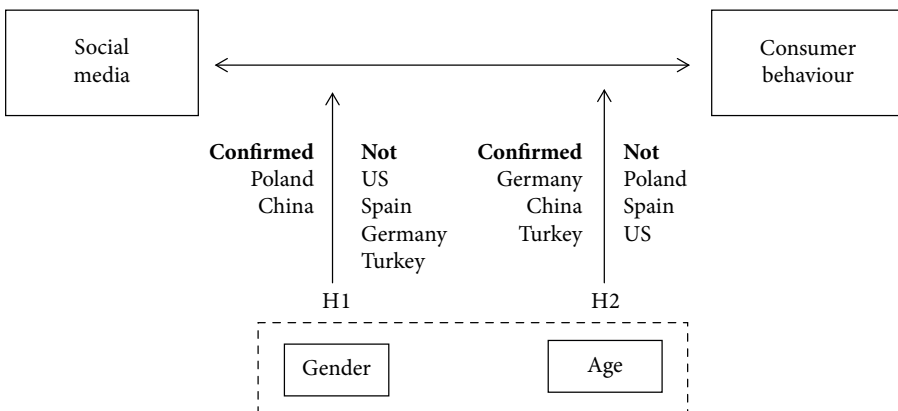
Age differentiates to the largest extent in consumer behaviours with the use of SM in Germany and Turkey. In the Chinese group single statistically sig-

**Table 5. Consumer behaviour and personal traits (gender and age)**

Sign	China N = 295		Germany N = 117		Poland N = 296		Spain N = 130		United States N = 260		Turkey N = 395	
	A	G	A	G	A	G	A	G	A	G	A	G
CB <sub>1</sub>	V					V					V	
CB <sub>2</sub>		V	V					V			V	
CB <sub>3</sub>	V	V	V	V						V	V	
CB <sub>4</sub>	V	V	V							V		
CB <sub>5</sub>			V									V
CB <sub>6</sub>				V								
CB <sub>7</sub>										V		V
CB <sub>8</sub>			V			V					V	
CB <sub>9</sub>		V						V		V	V	V

A – age.  
G – gender.  
V – correlation.

nificant correlations were observed with regard to the influence of age on consumer behaviours (three to nine). No single significant correlation was noted in this case in the Spanish, Polish and American groups. It is worth emphasizing that in the case of each statistically significant chi-square correlation ( $p < 0.01$  and  $p < 0.05$ ) between age and consumer behaviours, the respondents from the 21–30 age range were the group who predominated in these activities.



**Figure 3. Model of determinants influencing the social media's use for consumer behaviour**

Therefore, it can be noted that *H2* which states that *younger people ( $\leq 30$  years) more often use SM for consumer behaviours than the older ones ( $> 30$  years)* has been validated in the German, Turkish and Chinese groups, while in the Polish, American and Spanish it was not confirmed.

Figure 3 sums up the above analysis regarding the research and testing of the hypotheses that were formulated at the earlier stage of the study. The only cultural group where both the assumed hypotheses were validated is the Chinese group. On the other hand, as far as Spanish and American respondents are concerned, none of the hypotheses that were earlier indicated were confirmed. Personal traits such as gender and age do not influence consumer behaviour of SM's users in these countries.

## Conclusions and implications

The results obtained have a significant practical value. The knowledge as to where particular media are used can be essential for various groups of stakeholders. Firstly, such information may be useful for creators of social networking websites in specific countries, and, secondly, for enterprises that would like to use particular media in marketing communication in the selected foreign markets.

The information on the interdependencies between the internal characteristics of users and their use of SM in consumer behaviours is also of a great value. This knowledge is vitally important as SM are tools that are used more often when making purchasing decisions. The knowledge about who uses SM in a particular way might be used by companies that want to reach a particular segment of consumers. For example, information that in the Spanish and Turkish groups it is the men who are the ones who take part more often in competitions organized by companies/brands of which they are fans can be used by companies (in their marketing activities) whose customers are men. On the other hand, the information that in Poland women more often look for information on various products in SM could also be of use to companies/brands whose main customers are women. These companies might use SM in their marketing communication strategies.

The results presented in this paper are also interesting from the perspective of companies that already operate in or want to enter a particular foreign market. It turns out that identical solutions cannot be implemented everywhere as the results indicate significant discrepancies between the markets, thus, adding to the existing evidence on the impact of local cultures on consumers' behaviour and business' market strategies.

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