

CONSUMER BEHAVIOR IN THE NEW MEDIA LANDSCAPE

The article is devoted to analyzing a transformation of the end consumers' behavior in the changing media environment. Informational, behavioral, and generational approaches to the transformation of consumption content are substantiated. The essential characteristics of the modern media paradigm are considered. The main challenges for traditional media are outlined. Qualitative and quantitative shifts in consumption of various types of media in certain countries are analyzed, and structural changes in media consumption are illustrated using the example of American society. The main causes of disparities in the degree of penetration of new media types are identified. Special attention was paid to the generation factor as the main prerequisite for the transformation of media consumption, as well as the acquisition of new consumer experiences and behavioral patterns. Other elements of the research program of consumption theory are proposed, reflecting the complications and expansion of consumer behavior taking into account the new media paradigm. Changes in roles, functions, structure, and forms of consumption implementation were studied. Distinctive characteristics of the Zoomers generation as a consumer segment are considered and the trends of its behavior in the digital space are reflected. The study exposes the activation and complication of the modern consumer, which is manifested in the diversification of needs and individualization of the information and communication space. It was established that the products are saturated with an informational component, which implies the inclusion of ideological, aesthetic, and other dimensions. The modification of the mechanism of consumer choice is explained by the growing influence of digital communications at each iteration of the purchase process. The algorithm of the consumer decision-making process is outlined, and the factors affecting this process are identified. It is noted that with the development of information and communication technologies and the expansion of the choice of media, the information saturation of the markets is increasing, which emphasizes the importance of partnership relations between the producer and the consumer. The article concludes with an outline of several megatrends and an assessment of their impact on consumer behavior.

Keywords: consumer behavior; media landscape; decision-making; digital natives; generational cohorts.

INTRODUCTION

Consumption is a priority sphere of society's life. It is focused on satisfying the system of the individual's needs, their development and realization. The consumer sector largely determines economic growth because it contributes to the intensification of production, increasing competition, and the implementation of innovations. The volume and structure of consumption affect the macroeconomic level of well-being. The change in the dynamics of consumer demand reflects multiple phenomena and processes in the consumer sphere. In an increasingly complex reality, the totality of objective and subjective factors that directly or indirectly impact changes in consumer behavior is growing.

The relevance of the study of transformational processes in consumer behavior is due to the emergence of global information space and the rapid development of information and communication technologies. These fundamental civilizational shifts have significantly transformed the economic reality. The new role of information and knowledge contributes to developing the digital dimension. New sources and communication channels are emerging, the market is enriched by new actors with an active position. A polystructural communication interaction is formed, and each member has an input in creating common discourse.

Tectonic changes in communication processes are due to the emergence of new media. A significant challenge is facing traditional media, which are accustomed to one-sided influence on consumer segments. New platforms involve interactive relations with a source and other users. Radical transformations in the global media landscape directly affect consumer behavior.

A significant problem remains the identification of patterns in the evolution of consumer behavior since consumer segments are incredibly numerous and dissimilar. They consume and interpret information flows and signals in different ways and have diverse behavioral characteristics. Understanding the prospects for the development of consumer relations is possible by focusing on the behavioral peculiarities of the most advanced generation in terms of using digital technologies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The versatility of the issue allows focusing on different aspects of the transformation of consumption. A number of researchers consider changes in the consumer sector as a particular manifestation of the global socio-economic systems' transformation (J.K. Galbraith, M. McCluen, M. Castells, P. Himanen, D. Tapscott). Conceptions of J. Akerlof, M. Spence, J. Stigler, K. Shapiro are based on the idea of excessive semantic and sign saturation, as a result of which consumer choice is grounded on limited awareness of the subject. In the works of D. Kahneman [16], A. Tversky, D. Ariely, P. Mitkidis, P. Slovik [31], short-term and long-term changes in consumer demand are explained by cognitive, emotional, and behavioral effects.

Modern research is based mainly on applied aspects—for example, N.H. Khoi analyzed the impact of consumer online content on perceived utility and purchase decisions [19]. Another study assesses the effect of electronic "word of mouth" on the formation of brand trust [27]. In the context of a changing media landscape, the analysis of the influence of media stimuli on the consumers' emotions and involvement is of particular interest [21]. In Western scientific literature, laboratory experiments on consumer reactions to new forms of interaction with a product, including through augmented and virtual reality, are widespread [5, 20]. The ethical aspects of the impact on consumers in the digital dimension are also not ignored [14, 18, 26].

Ukrainian researchers make a significant contribution to the development of the perspective. N. Grazhevskaya and V. Virchenko analyzed the integration of the traditional labor market into the information and network environment as an essential prerequisite for the transformation of consumer relations [12]. The issue of meeting globalized consumer needs in conditions of political tension is investigated by O. Kanishchenko [17]. A. Starostina, M. Sitnicki and other researchers concluded that the dynamics of business environment factors is becoming less predictable and this complicates the analysis of new trends and models of consumer behavior [32].

Although the generational approach is criticized in the scientific community, it is readily used by scientists from various fields to identify new consumer behavior patterns. Segmentation of the consumer market by generation is most often found in sociological and marketing research. The main focus is on the youngest groups [24, 42, 46]. Comparative analysis of generations is widely used. The areas of generational gaps have been studied to a lesser extent. Some scientists are trying to adapt the theory of generations to various socio-cultural environments (post-Soviet space, the Asian market, the Nordic countries etc.).

The abundance of research in this subject field does not negate the fact that most of them are fragmentary. Some scholars focus on the behavioral aspects of consumer choice, while others concentrate on value determinants. Often, the modification of the consumption process is considered in isolation from the factors of the media environment, which obviously distorts the real processes.

Statement of research gap. New tendencies and consumer behavior patterns in the digital economy have not yet been sufficiently studied. They require deep reflection and scientific justification. The development of this issue lacks a systemic character. To display real qualitative and quantitative changes in the consumer sphere, a comprehensive assessment of shifts in the environmental conditions in which the consumer makes decisions is necessary. In this regard, the main attention in the article is paid to the debatable issues of the media environment's influence on the transformation of consumer decision-making.

The purpose of the paper is to analyze the impact of the changing media environment on the transformation of the economic behavior of consumers, to identify new trends in consumer behavior in the context of the digitalization of the economy, and to elaborate on practical managerial implications concerning the development of an effective business strategy for modern consumer markets.

METHODOLOGY

The methodological basis of this study is the synthesis of the information theory of consumption and the

generational approach. The information society paradigm explains the development of a new type of consumption and the evolution of socio-economic mechanisms which regulate this area. The generational approach made it possible to fill the gap in socio-historical knowledge during the period of radical transformations, to explain the observed phenomena in the consumer sector, and predict further evolution. The author used a complex of general scientific and special research methods. The analytical method made it possible to analyze the individual components of consumption relations. The structural-functional method contributed to forming a general concept of the modern media landscape based on individual factual and statistical data. Using the hypothetical-deductive method, the main factors that determine the heterogeneity of media consumption across the globe are derived. The behavioral method made it possible to focus on the cognitive processes of the individual and the emotional-volitional components of decision-making. The conceptual-phenomenological method allowed to leave out of the scope of the study such consumption factors as gender, religion, social status, and others. The application of the praxeological method helped to assess subsequent shifts in consumer habits.

RESULTS

The global spread of the Internet gives an impetus for the transformation of economic relations, including relations in the sphere of consumption. The development of the digital space has modified the type of interaction between market actors. The structure of the time fund has changed, and new forms of employment have been outlined and well established in the market environment, which has led to an increase in labor productivity and incomes of the population. Consequently, there have been profound transformations in the consumer segment, which are mainly manifested in an increasing dependence of consumers on online technologies as well as changing behavioral patterns, consumer practices, and habits. The figure below (Fig. 1) helps to evaluate the scale of these tendencies: in the period 2000–2021, the number of Internet users in the world increased by thirteen times: from 361 million people to 4.6 billion.

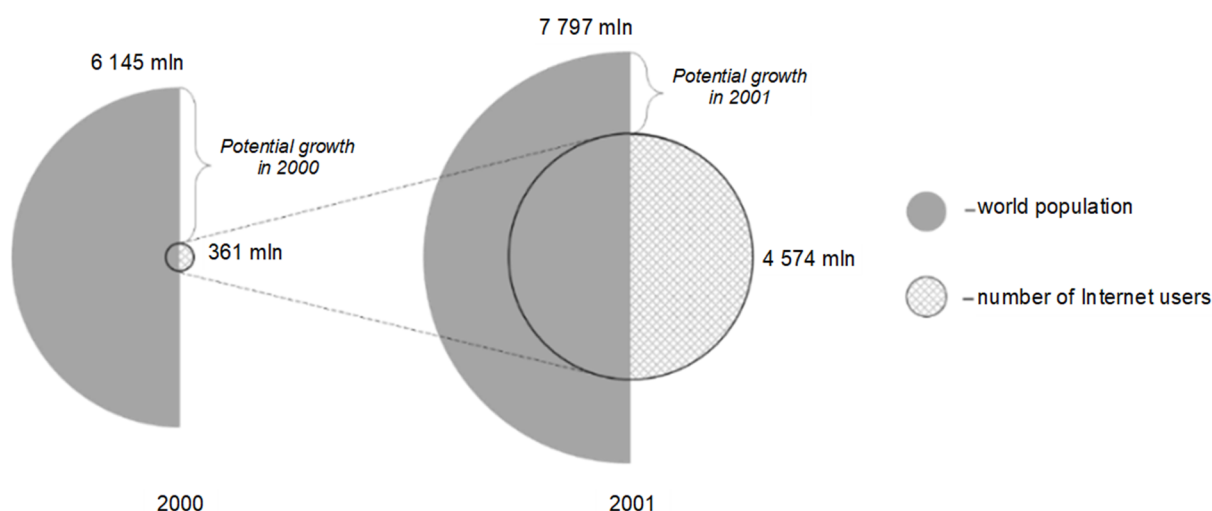


Fig. 1. Change in the ratio of Internet users to the world population (2000 versus 2021), million people

Source: compiled by the author based on data of Internet World Stats [15].

The digital revolution has caused an unprecedented shift in information consumption and global media landscape. There are two interdependent processes: on the one hand, there is rapid progress in mass communication technologies, and on the other hand, consumer behavior in media use is being modified significantly. Identifying the media in terms of the main sectors (television and radio, print and online media) is no longer the primary approach. Content, distribution, versatility and search functions play an increasingly important role [1].

The modern paradigm of media communications is mainly based on polylogical and multi-channel nature. New forms of interaction between subjects are emerging, and various media and communication platforms coexist in organic unity. The fragmentation of the communication and information space is increasing, and new mass and niche media are becoming necessary. These processes challenge traditional media, such as television or press, with a unique feature of unilaterally applying messages without audience participation. For instance, in 2021 in Norway, the average daily time spent on Internet consumption was twice the time spent on television viewing (241 and 125 minutes, respectively) [35]. In the United Kingdom, average daily individual television viewing time has fallen by 25 % from 2011–2019 (although in the weird 2020, TV viewing time increased due to the lockdown) [36]. A similar trend is typical for the French [37], German [34], Polish [38], and many other television markets.

Considering the patterns of development in Internet consumption, it is important to emphasize the growing role of mobile devices amid a slow decline in desktop web traffic. According to the *Similarweb* report, traffic generated by PCs and laptops decreased by 3.3 % for 2017–2019, while mobile traffic jumped by 30.6 % in the same period [30, p. 6]. Under the company's assessment, in 2019, the volume of mobile web traffic exceeded the desktop one. In subsequent years the gap continues to widen in favor of mobile devices – as of May 2022, the share of the global traffic market for smartphones was 64 % versus 34 % for desktop computers

and 2 % for tablets [29]. Other sources record similar observations: although *Statcounter's* calculations are based on a different methodology, they also indicated that by 2021 the majority of Internet traffic would be generated by mobile devices (about 57 %) [33]. In this regard, the ratio of web traffic by region is of interest. Oceania is the least adapted to mobile Internet usage (43 % of total traffic volume). In Europe and North America, the bulk of web traffic was also generated by personal computers, although the preponderance is slight (up to 6 %). In South America, traffic from smartphones led by a small margin. The regions of Asia and Africa turned out to be the most focused on the mobile Internet – 66 % and 69 % of Internet traffic generated by mobile phones. In this context, the advancement of the African continent is related to the successful implementation of *mobile money technology*. Until recently, households in Sub-Saharan Africa were forced to send cash to their relatives over long distances through non-transparent operations, including transferring money via intermediaries. These informal processes came with significant risks, and digital payment technology has enabled direct and low-cost person-to-person transfers. Expanding access to financial services in a resource-constrained environment results in mobile traffic growth among households in the region: in 2021, two-thirds of all global transactions in the mobile payment segment were carried out by countries of Sub-Saharan Africa [13].

An attempt at the most comprehensive analysis of the evolution of media consumption was made on the example of the US adult population (Fig. 2). The dynamics show that television remains the primary medium for American society, although the time spent watching linear TV has been decreasing from year to year. In contrast to this trend, spending time in digital space (using mobile devices) is increasing steadily. In 2020, the mobile Internet became a full-fledged competitor to television. The classical consumption of the press and radio is gradually being replaced by digital activities, which provide the overall growth of media consumption.

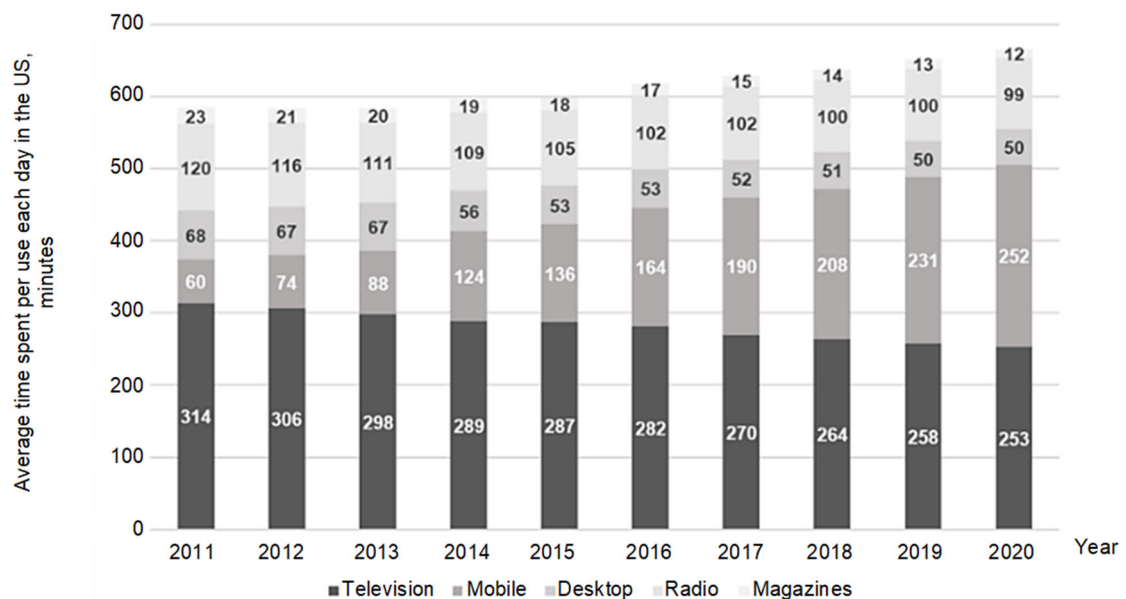


Fig. 2. Change in volumes and structure of media consumption in the USA by type of media (2011–2020), minutes

Source: compiled by the author based on Media Zenith data [22].

An integrated assessment of behavioral change in media consumption on a global scale is quite complicated. Historically, different countries have used various methods for measuring media consumption, and it is rather challenging to unify them in practice. We can assume that the results obtained by the American study, in general terms, reflect the overall picture, albeit adjusted for significant disproportions in the development of information and communication technologies across the globe. Societies differ in the degree of openness, formal and informal norms, historical path of development, propensity to accept innovations, the hierarchy of information dissemination, etc. Obviously, the process of changing media consumption habits is also influenced by psychological characteristics, specifics of information perception, and assimilation, which is related to the age of the individuals. To identify significant changes in the consumer segment, it is essential to track differences in the behavior of separate generational groups.

In 2021, a third of Internet users worldwide belong to the age group of 25–34 years (excluding people under 18 years old) [39]. This generational segment makes up about 15 % of the world's population [44]. The second significant segment is the younger generation (18–24 years old). According to *DataReportal*, people under 34 used the Internet for at least seven hours a day in 2021 [3]. The core audiences of the most dynamic social media (such as Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat) are formed by young customers [23]. Internet users actively make online purchases from any device of all generations [17, p. 227–231]. Online shopping using a mobile device is more typical for the segments 16–24, 25–34 and 35–44 years old, while people in the range of 45–64 years old gravitate to purchase via desktops.

Recent analytical reports on behavior in the digital space are increasingly highlighting the difference between the youngest generation, or *generation Z*, from the rest of the economically active generations. Representatives of generation Z (*Zoomers*), born approximately in 1997–2005, draw the attention of researchers for two main reasons. Firstly, in 2019 their number exceeded 1.2 billion people, which means vast market potential and the need for effective marketing solutions to influence these consumers. Secondly, Zoomers determine the trajectory of further civilizational advancement. They are also called "digital natives" because they are accustomed to receive information through digital channels from birth or early childhood [25]. This generational cohort declares fundamentally distinctive values: learning new skills, exploring the world and other cultures, etc. The main interests are music, food and drink, films, cooking, technologies, and traveling [10, p. 7]. Zoomers stand out for their concern about climate change [41], while having optimistic expectations in the context of pandemic restrictions [7, p. 45; 10, p. 9]. This cohort is willing to pay more for an environmentally friendly product, although Zoomers are less solvent than older generations. They are less inclined than others to long-term waiting for goods and declare their willingness to pay extra for urgent delivery [2, p. 14]. Digital generation is the least attached to locally produced products. At the same time, the particular importance of purchasing goods directly from the brand is emphasized [2, p. 17]. Even though Zoomers and Millennials (the closest older generation to the Zoomers) are most familiar with the practice of digital communication, both cohorts value the in-store experience higher than others when purchasing grocery, health, and beauty products [2, p. 12].

The digital generation is the most active consumer of social media [17, p. 83]. Depending on the world region, the youngest users (up to 38 years old) spend 2.5 hours or more

on social networks every day [11]. Social networks are not just a space for a carefree pastime – they are actively used to build a career, and establish business connections for learning and self-development. People younger than 34 years old are more likely than others to search for information about brands of interest through social networks [45, p. 99]. A significant segment in the media consumption of young people is video content. However, instead of cable and network television, they prefer on-demand TV viewing and streaming services [43]. The lion's share of participants in the global online learning process falls in the 16–24 years old segment [40]. Inter alia, Generation Z is characterized by a high fascination with gaming (according to various estimates, 70 to 90 % of this cohort systematically play online games). Zoomers articulate the social attractiveness of gaming [8, p. 31]. This is primarily a form of communication and building social ties for them, and secondary motives are learning new skills, improving coordination, and escapism. Generation Z also expresses the most significant interest in participating in the metaverse [9]. Thus, the video game industry has ceased to be a hobby solely for teenagers. Nowadays, it reaches the more mature and solvent audience, which expands the bridgehead for the launch of new products and related categories.

Thus, the involvement of young people in digital communications reflects their needs for dynamism, comfort, flexibility, and distraction. As a sophisticated audience, "digital natives" can filter information signals and adapt the media space in such a way as to maintain inner comfort and move closer to rational behavior. The younger generation is most concerned about information hygiene, the issues of misinformation, and disinformation [28]. It uses ad-blocking tools more often than others [45, p. 75]. Therefore, the media landscape is evolving toward customizing the communication environment. Modern users independently form their own information "bubble" and master it, having the opportunity not to intersect with other information spaces. This tendency is reinforced by social approval and digital ostracism, expressed as ratings, likes and dislikes. On the one hand, we are witnessing a democratization process of communication and expansion of human participation. On the other hand, it is fraught with social fragmentation and narrowing the world picture of the average person.

One cannot conclude that the transformation of the entire consumer relations system, including the digital sphere, is provided only by young people. Society is being transformed as a whole, but these changes are more noticeable in younger generations. Differences in the intensity of digital experience, and age-related differences in the perception, processing, and interpretation of uncertain and complexly organized informational stimulation partly explain the asynchrony in the consumption change. Young generational cohorts are more flexible and malleable due to early experience of interaction with digital media. They significantly influence decision-making in the family as well as the consumer habits of older people – parent-child relationships are humanized, and the generational gap is being erased.

The transformation of consumption can be represented as a set of deep systemic changes in its successive elements: subjects, objects, and commodities, the decision-making mechanism, and the form of implementation of the economic behavior of consumers. Changes at the subject's level are related to the increasing heterogeneity of consumers, and the complication of their functionality in a market economy. As a result, consumer demand diversifies, and objects of consumption become more complex, combining informational, scientific, ideological, symbolic, aesthetic and

other components. The impact on the consumer is intensified through information and communication technologies, which significantly complicates the decision-making process and contributes to the strengthening of subjective factors. In

the digital age, every phase of a purchase journey is accompanied by the influence of the online environment. An attempt to depict the complication of the consumption process is presented below (Fig. 3)

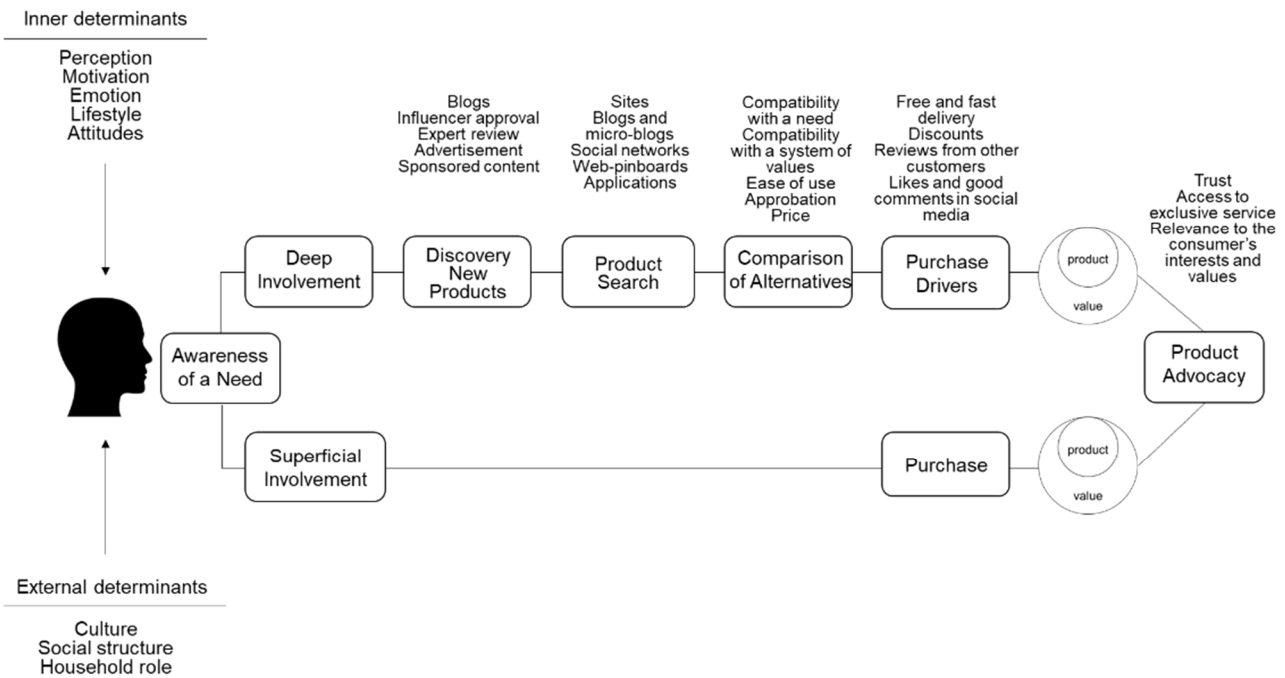


Fig. 3. Consumer decision-making process in the digital environment

Source: compiled by the author.

Notwithstanding the high quality of individual digital experience, the phase of product advocacy has decisive importance. This is the highest form of partnership between the producer and the consumer, which means that the latter does not just give preference to a particular product or service among others in the market but professes the same values with the brand and protects it in the public space. This underlines the dominant role of the consumer in the information economy. The consumer statements serve as an additional information signal and allow catalyzing market competition. Thus, active consumer participation in the process of creating the final product forces the manufacturer to carefully satisfy preferences of different heterogeneous consumer segments.

In recent years, two prevailing global trends have emerged that will only intensify the processes of changing the media landscape and transforming consumption. Firstly, this is a post-COVID reality associated with physical restrictions and an increase in the consumption of digital content. A prolonged pandemic has an impact on work and living conditions and, consequently, on consumer behavior. This evolutionary transition will gravitate towards flexibility, omnichannel, and diversification of consumer demand with an emphasis on intangible goods and services. Also, virtual and immersive practices will be increasingly important, diversifying the consumer experience and enhancing the emotional factor in decision-making [6]. The second global trend is political turbulence, resulting in society's destabilization. The sharpening of the political situation causes a crisis of trust in the government and the media as two of the most critical public institutions [4]. In this context, a stabilizing function is assigned to business structures. Modern brands are expected to be spokespeople for the views and

values of their consumers. This implies the external visibility of a responsible brand and a conscious attitude at every stage of product creation and promotion. The product is no longer thought of as socially neutral, it must express a clear position on socially significant issues.

CONCLUSIONS

In general, this analysis shows the logic of modifying consumer behavior in the context of the digitalization of society. The development of information and communication technologies contributes to the formation of new media, and new formats of interaction between consumers and manufacturers. Changing the structure and properties of the media space transforms the lifestyle of a modern consumer, as a result of which the environment and context of economic decision-making are significantly changing. The role of the consumer is activated, and its complication and strengthening of subjective factors are noted. The multifaceted informational impact on the consumer generates various behavioral effects, and cognitive distortions. Applying the generational approach helped outline the main prospects for the development of the consumption sector. However, the results described rather general trends: the media landscape is developing towards strengthening digital platforms and displacing traditional types of media, and the barrier-free online environment is becoming the most preferable for involved and conscious consumption. The boundaries between the elite and the mass are blurred, as well as the differences between producers and consumers. With time, the split between generations is minimized, and new consumer practices are inherent in young and older people.

The prolonged coronavirus pandemic and political confrontation upsurge have accelerated tendencies in economic

consumer behavior that had already been rising. In the rapidly changing economic environment, enterprises need to innovate and adapt to new market conditions and seize the opportunity offered by the new media landscape to meet the needs of consumers optimally. The conducted research allowed to define essential managerial implications for the development of an effective business strategy that takes into consideration recent changes in consumer behavior:

1) enterprises should use an omnichannel approach to interact with consumers. This will allow a company to satisfy segments with different media consumption habits more comprehensively. It is essential that each of the communication channels broadcast well-articulated brand messages – this will help reduce the potential consumer's transaction costs for searching for information about the product, as well as create a clear information signal from the seller to the buyer;

2) enterprises should test virtual and immersive practices to persuade an individual to buy. Such an interaction experience with the product involves the consumer to a greater extent, in contrast to traditional methods. Virtual reality can be compelling not only for young consumers but also for older age groups, as it contributes to the activation of the emotional factor when making purchase decisions;

3) enterprises should be informative to customers. Communication channels should be aimed at increasing the probability of a purchase and reducing the risks of uncertainty for the consumer. This will help overcome behavioral effects such as uncertainty avoidance, the ostrich effect, status quo bias, etc. The characteristics of the product or service are subject to clarification, but also the position of the enterprise on socially significant issues.

DISCUSSION

Further research should take into account asynchrony in generational alternation. The change of generations is due not only to the development of the digital space. It is largely influenced by historical events, the political system, dependence on the previous development trajectory, and the cultural background. The findings outlined in this article should become the basis for an empirical study of the transformation of consumer behavior in Ukrainian realities. It is assumed that the combination of global perspectives with the peculiarities of the Ukrainian way will provide a complete picture of how different generational cohorts consume in Ukraine, how their initial motivation is ranked, and how the decision-making mechanism differs. In the future, this will allow us to develop a macroeconomic concept for the sustainable development of Ukrainian society.

This article does not provide primary research. In war conditions, a population survey is challenging to implement. It is even more difficult to get an objective picture of media consumption in Ukraine in the new realities. The TV industry has joined forces and is now broadcasting a single marathon, eliminating competition and content differentiation. There has been a significant influx of audiences into digital media. In addition, there are barriers to collecting a representative sample, as a considerable part of the population has left Ukraine. An unexplained point is an ethical reason for polling Ukrainians who currently live in extreme stress and uncertainty.

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СПОЖИВЧА ПОВЕДІНКА В НОВОМУ МЕДІАЛАНДШАФТІ

Проаналізовано трансформацію поведінки кінцевих споживачів під впливом нового медіаландшафту. Розкрито інформаційний, поведінковий і поколінчастий підходи до дослідження трансформації споживчої поведінки. Розглянуто специфіку сучасної медіапарадигми. Проілюстровано структурні зміни в медіаспоживанні на прикладі американського суспільства. Розглянуто відмінні особливості покоління Зумерів як споживчого сегмента та відображено тенденції його поведінки в цифровому просторі. Вказано на активацію та ускладнення сучасного споживача, що проявляється в диверсифікації потреб та індивідуалізації інформаційно-комунікаційного простору. Констатовано насиченість продукції інформаційною складовою та зростання інформаційної насиченості ринків. Модифікація механізму споживчого вибору пояснюється зростанням впливу цифрових комунікацій на кожній ітерації процесу купівлі. Викладено алгоритм процесу прийняття споживчого рішення та наведено фактори, що впливають на цей процес. Окреслено декілька мегатрендів і оцінка їхнього впливу на характер споживчої поведінки.

Ключові слова: споживча поведінка; медіаландшафт; прийняття рішень; цифрові аборигени; когорти поколінь.