
The Determinants of the Decision Making Process for Purchasing Fashion Products in the E-Commerce Industry in Light of Research

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Abstract:

Purpose: The development of the Internet as well as constantly changing fashion trends make consumers more willing to shop online. Entrepreneurs from the e-commerce industry must take care of the image of their brand in order to remain recognizable against the competition and attract as many recipients as possible. The main objective of the research was to try to determine the factors and motives influencing purchasing decisions among consumers of fashion products on the e-commerce market in Poland.

Design/Methodology/Approach: The study uses the method of analyzing the literature on the subject, as well as the analysis of source data, including e.g., data from mass statistics. Theoretical considerations were supported by the authors' own research. The sample selection method used was a non-random method of purposeful character. The sample included people of different ages, with different income levels, who regularly shop in the clothing and footwear category via the Internet. The study was conducted using an online questionnaire. One of the tools of quantitative methods, i.e., a questionnaire, was used in the study. The study was conducted online using the Google Forms tool with 758 respondents in the period November and December 2022.

Findings: Contemporary buyers are seeing more and more benefits of e-commerce. First of all, they appreciate the 24/7 availability of clothing and footwear e-shops. The factor determining the attractiveness of e-commerce is also saving time for commuting to shops or shopping malls. Customers are also more and more convinced to e-shopping due to the wider and more interesting offer available in online stores. However, the study showed that young people with experience in navigating websites are still the most common online consumers. The Covid 19 pandemic was undoubtedly a turning point in the wider development and growth of this form of trade also among older groups of buyers who were not inclined to this form. Online shopping is becoming more and more popular in the following years and may become an effective alternative to the traditional form of satisfying shopping needs, not only among young people.

Practical Implications: The article contains information on the current and future shape of the functioning of the e-commerce market in Poland against the background of the situation in this respect in the world. The e-commerce trend is becoming more and more visible in the vast majority of industries, but it is also gaining strength in the case of an ever-wider group of loyal customers.

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Originality/Value: *The study contains important information on the factors and motives influencing purchasing decisions among buyers of fashion products in Poland via e-commerce.*

Keywords: *E-commerce, market behaviour, consumer, clothing market, footwear market, marketing activities.*

JEL Classification: *M31, L11.*

Paper type: *Research paper.*

1. Introduction

Buyers these days have unlimited opportunities to make purchases. In addition, they are far more knowledgeable about the regularities of the market and can acquire much more necessary information than they had a few or a dozen years earlier.

The development of technology, the digitalization of the economy, the rise in popularity of online shopping on a global scale have provided many development opportunities not only for consumers, but also for businesses. Not only expectations have changed, but also the purchasing behavior of consumers. Nowadays, the purchase of a product is often preceded by a number of activities that reassure the buyer that he is choosing a product that will meet his expectations. It has become popular to search for product reviews on search engines, social media, discussion platforms, etc.

Consumers rely on the ability to compare prices, check reviews from other users, follow current market trends, and connect with brands through social networks. Thanks to the possibility of using modern mobile devices, it has become increasingly common to browse offers or follow current promotions using new technologies.

In this simple way, consumers can get the necessary information at any free moment and from anywhere. Also today's marketing activities have gone out of step with technology, and personalized ads tailored to the devices used on a daily basis are increasingly common. Today's consumers do not choose only one traditional way of shopping.

Conventional sales as well as online sales are processes that intertwine and even support each other through selected sales channels (Krzepicka, 2016). The successive development of the Internet has meant that traditional shopping has been expanded to include an online segment. The e-commerce market is gaining popularity every year and gathering more and more loyal followers in many industry markets. This is also the case in the fashion market, and more specifically in the clothing and footwear market, to which this study is devoted.

2. Research Objectives and Methodology

The main objective of this study was an attempt to determine the factors and motives influencing purchasing decisions among consumers of fashion products in the e-commerce market. In order to achieve the main objective outlined in this way, an analysis was made of the dynamics and directions of changes taking place in trade with a particular focus on e-commerce.

In addition, a general characterization of changes in the fashion market in Poland against the background of the general situation that is taking place in the world market, especially in the clothing and footwear market, with emphasis on e-commerce, was made. The theoretical considerations of the topic were supported by the results of own research.

The study used the method of analysis of the literature on the subject, as well as analysis of source data including, among others, data from mass statistics. The research sample for the study was selected by determining the collectivity, which made it possible to obtain results to address the research problem posed. The sampling method used was a non-random, purposive method. The sample included people of different ages, with different income levels, who regularly make purchases from the clothing and footwear category via the Internet. The survey was conducted using an online questionnaire. Neutral individuals were selected for the survey. The selection of experts in the field under study would have negatively affected the reliability of the results obtained.

One of the tools of quantitative methods, a survey questionnaire, was used in the study. The survey was conducted online using the Google Forms tool. The questionnaire consisted of 28 survey questions and 5 metric questions.

A total of 758 respondents took part in the survey. Filtering questions leading to the relevant part of the questionnaire verified whether the respondent purchases clothing and footwear via the Internet. In total, information obtained from 753 respondents meeting the established selection criteria was intended for further analysis. The presentation of the results was developed in graphical form.

3. Changes in the Polish E-commerce Market against the International Market

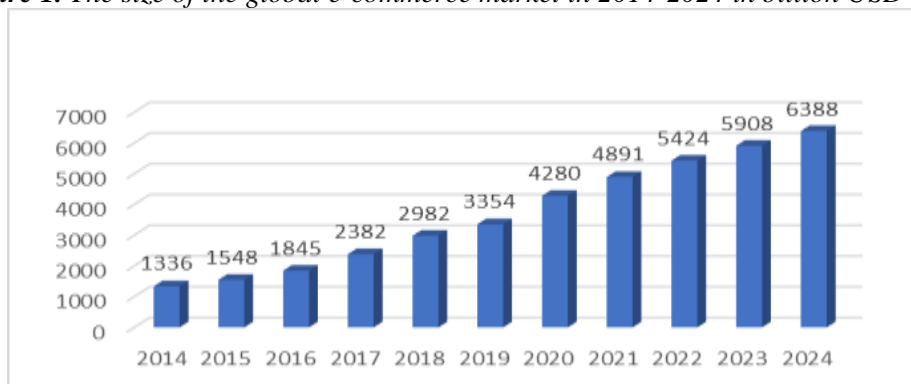
The term e-commerce is derived from English and means e-commerce, or electronic commerce (*marketingwsieci.pl*, accessed 17.08.2022). E-commerce itself is the totality of processes performed to make transactions through modern media. Online stores are sites that provide the opportunity not only to sell online, but also allow consumers to get acquainted with the assortment and offer of a particular store or the offer of the manufacturer itself (*iab.org.pl*, accessed 17.08.2022). They constitute the largest and most popular part of the e-commerce market.

The business conducted in this form, among others, allows entrepreneurs to reduce the cost of current operations, which is generated mainly by renting or purchasing a stationary sales outlet necessary for trading (Hernik, 2019). The e-commerce market has undergone significant changes in recent years, while the Covid-19 pandemic has further accelerated the digitization of consumers and changed their existing shopping habits. The restrictions that have been imposed on stationary stores have significantly contributed to the increase in the number of users of online platforms.

Many buyers previously made only occasional purchases online or did not use this form of shopping activity at all. The extraordinary changes taking place in the market have also forced many companies to redefine the course of key processes and seek innovative solutions in the changing environment of their business.

In order to gain or maintain a competitive advantage, companies must change their strategy on an ongoing basis, demonstrate flexibility and the ability to build close relationships with customers. The size of the global e-commerce market is growing steadily from year to year, as confirmed by the chart below (<https://fintek.pl/e-commerce-i-rynek-mody>).

Figure 1. The size of the global e-commerce market in 2014-2024 in billion USD



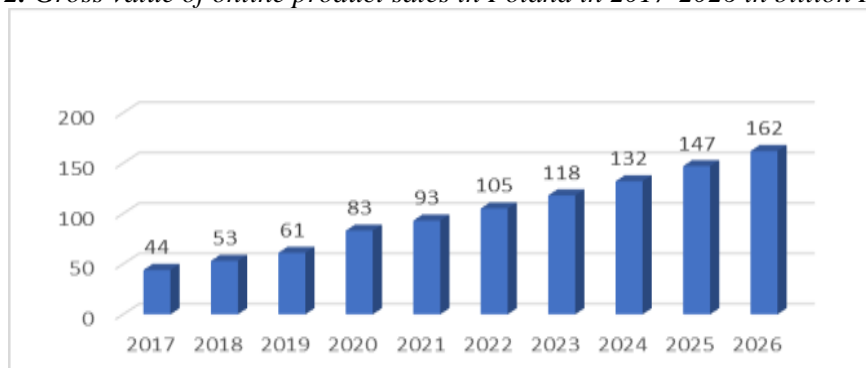
Source: Statista.com.

Against the background of the global e-commerce market, Poland is one of the fastest growing countries among the European Union countries (Czajkowska, 2016). Year after year, the number and activity of domestic consumers opting for online shopping is increasing. Increasingly, traditional sales are being left in the background, due to the numerous benefits that electronic sales offer customers. It should be noted that in 2020 it was reported that there were more than 42,000 online stores and as many as 21.2 million Poles who took advantage of online shopping.

The estimated value of revenue from the e-commerce market for 2026 is expected to reach more than 162 billion PLN

(www.strategyand.pwc.com/pl/pl/publikacje/2022/perspektywy-rozwoju-rynku-e-commerce-w-polsce-2018-2027.html).

Figure 2. Gross value of online product sales in Poland in 2017-2026 in billion PLN



Source: <https://businessinsider.com.pl/biznes/rozwoj-firmy-poprzez-e-commerce-w-2022-roku-najwazniejsze-beda-planowanie-integracja/z1e4yff>.

Poland in recent years has also achieved a clear lead of several percent over the European average in terms of e-commerce turnover dynamics, which remains at around 30%. In Central- Eastern Europe, by comparison, it reaches a range of 20-26%. In 2020, Poland recorded more than 72% of consumers using e-commerce.

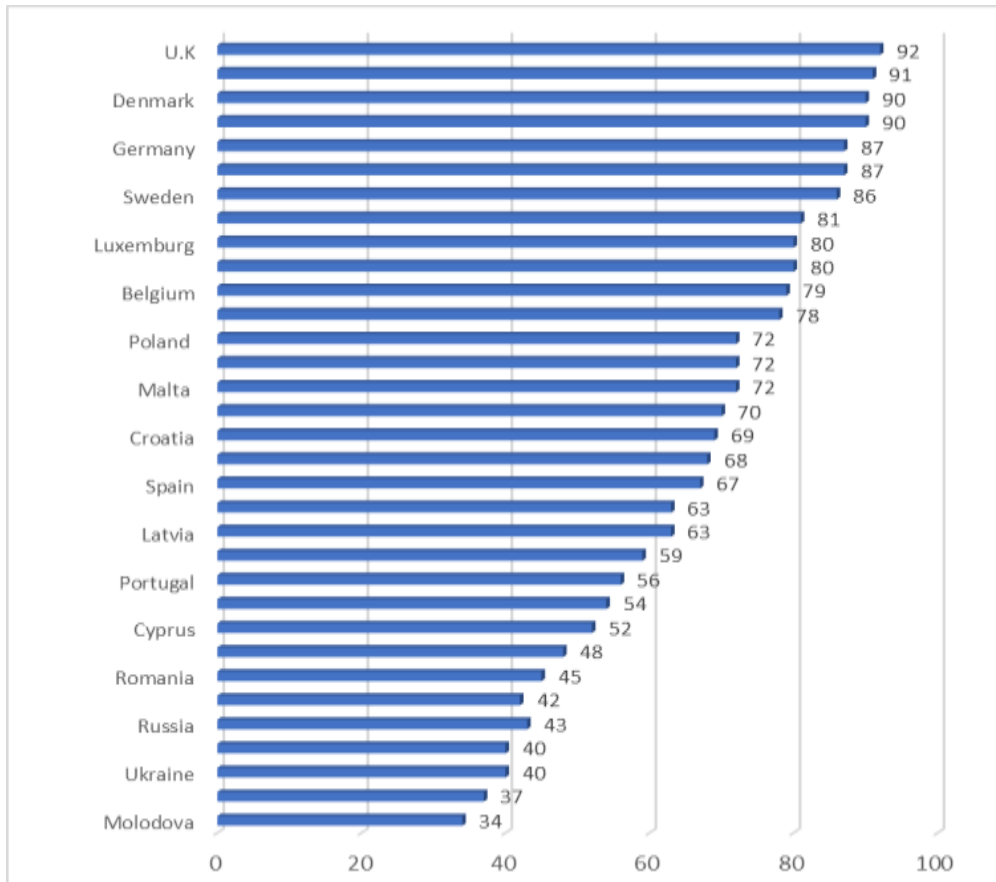
Online sales in 2020 in Poland reached €12 billion, while in comparison, the Czech Republic was worth €9 billion and Slovakia €0.8 billion. The year 2021 saw a further increase in the number of buyers making purchases online, reaching over 73%. It should be mentioned that back in 2016 it was only 50% of buyers (<https://bluemia.pl/baza-wiedzy/blog/ecommerce/nadal-boom-czy-juz-stagnacja-jak-wyglada-sytuacja-branzy-ecommerce-w-polsce>).

Although Poland is far behind industry leaders such as China and the US, it is constantly developing in this regard. A significant impact on the development of the e-commerce industry in Poland, undoubtedly had the aforementioned coronavirus pandemic. At that time, statistically, one in four Poles decided to make purchases just online, as it was a safe alternative in the epidemiological situation. It was observed that many elderly people, who had hitherto been proponents of traditional shopping, were also persuaded to e-purchase during this period (Jasinska-Biliczak, 2022).

It is widely believed that e-commerce is doing well in densely populated and highly developed markets such as the UK and Japan, where penetration was over 77 percent in 2020. The U.K. may be one of the most advanced e-commerce markets in the world, but even there, online shopping is still not reaching everyone.

Statista's Digital Market Outlook estimates that in 2020, more than 84 percent of Britons made at least one online purchase. While the penetration rate technically does not show how often a country's population shops online. Both penetration rate and e-commerce intensity often do not go hand in hand.

Figure 3. Polish e-commerce market compared to other European countries in 2021 in %



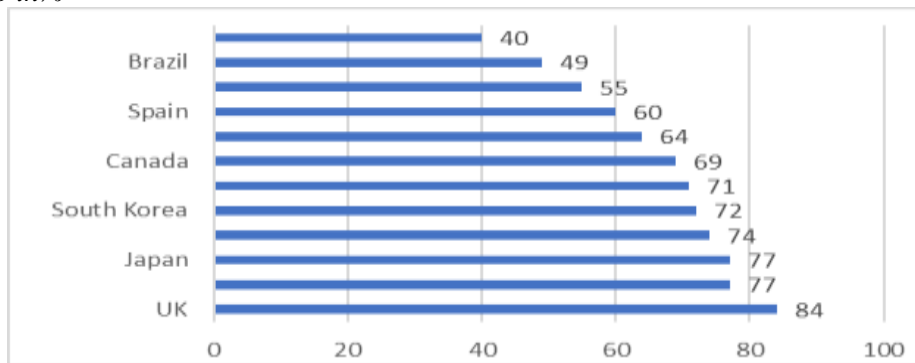
Source: <https://ecommercegermany.com/blog/top-insights-and-findings-from-the-european-e-commerce-report-2021>.

According to eMarketer, 27.5% of retail sales in the UK were already made online - one of the highest rates among developed countries. Larger and more diverse markets tend to move more slowly. The United States, where penetration was also 77 percent, attributed only 14.5 percent of retail sales to e-commerce.

According to eMarketer, 44 percent of retail sales in China already take place online, even though a third of the population does not (yet) shop online. The large urban-rural divide may be responsible for creating intense shopping behavior among urban residents, while broadband, not to mention e-commerce, has yet to reach all Chinese.

Other emerging economies, such as Brazil and India, are catching up gradually, as penetration rates for e-commerce remain low. Southern European countries, Italy and Spain, also showed low rates of online shopping (<https://www.statista.com/chart/24022/e-commerce-penetration-rates/>).

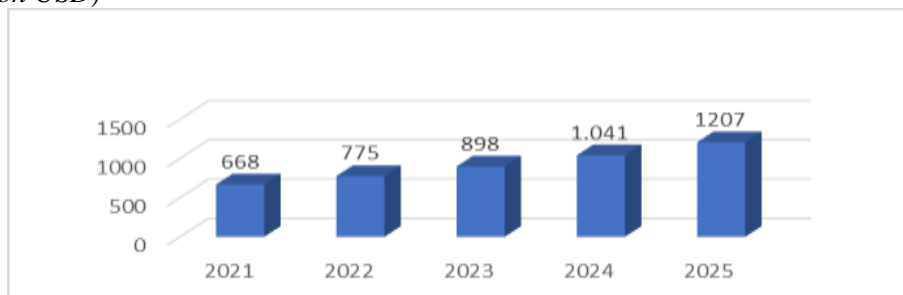
Figure 4. E-commerce market penetration rate in selected countries of the world in 2020 in%



Source: <https://www.statista.com/chart/24022/e-commerce-penetration-rates>.

One of the fastest growing online markets is the fashion market. The global value of this market continues to grow. In 2022, it reached more than USD 760 billion. Despite the global problems of pandemics and lockdowns, sales in this market (and in particular in the footwear and apparel market) are constantly growing. Moreover, forecasts for the coming years estimate that the apparel and footwear e-commerce industry will grow at an average of more than 7% per year, and in 2025 will reach a value exceeding well over USD1 trillion.

Figure 5. Value of the fashion e-commerce market in the world in 2021-2025 (in billion USD)



Source: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1298198/market-value-fashion-ecommerce-global/>.

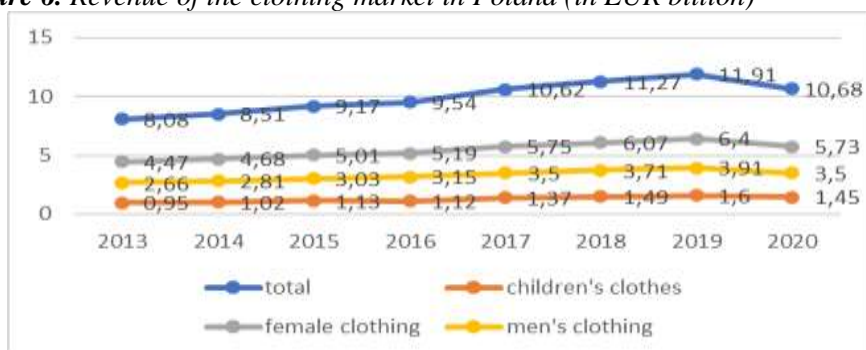
As the world undergoes socio-economic changes, consumers are changing their approach to online shopping. Buyers are less and less concerned about mismatches in products ordered online, due to the increasing return options currently offered by the vast majority of online stores (Wulff, 2022). The apparel and footwear market is reaching its highest point on the international trade front. Since online shopping has become easy and widely available, it is clothing and shoes that have become the most frequently purchased products

(<https://www.statista.com/statistics/1298198/market-value-fashion-ecommerce-global/>).

4. Characteristics of the Footwear and Apparel Market in Poland

The Polish apparel market is one of the largest and most attractive markets in Central and Eastern Europe. It ranks extremely high in the European ranking. The market is referred to as a mature market. In 2020, there were more than 12,440 companies operating in the sector (CSO, 2021), the vast majority of which were private businesses (Bartosik-Purgat and Jankowska, 2020). Nearly two-thirds of the total number of enterprises, are companies that produce clothing (about 13,000 companies), nearly one-quarter are entities that produce textiles (about 5,000 companies), while the smallest share are companies that produce leather and leather products (more than 2,000 companies), (KPMG, 2018).

Figure 6. Revenue of the clothing market in Poland (in EUR billion)



Source: Own study, <https://www.statista.com/outlook/cmo/apparel/poland?currency=EUR>.

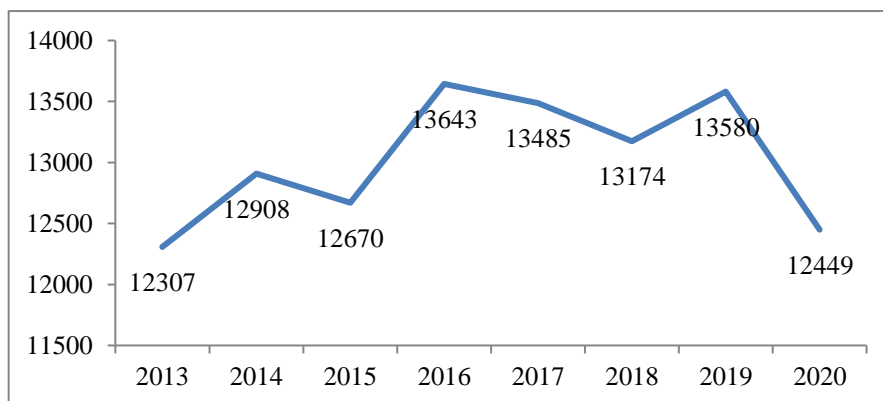
In 2019, the Polish apparel market was worth more than 13.1 billion euros. This market has been developing very dynamically. The coronavirus pandemic slowed its growth slightly, from 11.6% in 2019 to 9.4% in 2020, when its value was 14.4 billion euros. The value of apparel exports from Poland in 2020 totaled €7.4 billion.

The main customers of the Polish apparel industry in 2020 were Germany (€4.1 billion), the Czech Republic (€312.5 million), Romania (€267 million) and the Netherlands (€239.3 million). The industry's global imports totaled 332.7 billion euros. The largest domestic importers were the United States with 62.4 billion euros, Germany with 32.5 billion euros and Japan with 21 billion euros. (https://markethub.pl/rynek_clothing, Będkowska, 2022).

In 2019, the assortment owned by manufacturers amounted to more than 19 million garments (Wolak, 2020, p. 38), and specialists valued it at more than PLN 15 billion. In addition, Poland is perceived as a service recipient, fulfilling orders for well-known European apparel brands (Łapińska, Kądziałowski, and Dziuba, 2019). A characteristic feature of this industry is high labor intensity and low capital and energy intensity (Wolak, 2020, pp. 61-62). The garment industry in Poland also stands out in terms of its long-standing traditions, as well as its significant share of national industrial production and employment.

The industry is located mainly in the Mazowieckie, Łódzkie, Śląskie, Wielkopolskie, Małopolskie and Dolnośląskie provinces, where more than 70% of the country's apparel enterprises are located. A characteristic feature is that the Polish apparel industry has only just over 2% of enterprises that employ more than 49 people (Wolak, 2020). The number of garment manufacturing businesses has been constantly changing over the years (Figure 7).

Figure 7. *Number of economic entities producing clothing in Poland (in total) in 2013-2020*



Source: *Own study based on the Central Statistical Office, 2014-2021.*

There are several thousand clothing and footwear brands in Poland, which have a strong position in the industry (Witek-Hajduk, Grudecka, and Napiorkowska, 2022). Entering this market is described as easy, but staying in it is quite a challenge for both new and longer-established entrepreneurs. Therefore, numerous mergers as well as acquisitions can be observed in the discussed industry (analizarynku.eu, 2018).

Looking at the fashion market from the buyer's point of view, it should be mentioned that until 2016, Polish consumers' spending on clothing was constantly increasing, while from 2017 onward there was a successive decline, until 2020. The reason for this was not only the pandemic, but also the associated savings of buyers and the diversion of spending to more important needs in the opinion of consumers.

According to CSO reports, spending in these years was directed increasingly toward food, housing use and transportation (CSO, 2018-2021). Relatively the most money is spent on clothes by people who follow trends and style of dress is important to them. (KPMG Report, 2020).

Figure 8. Average monthly expenditure per capita in households (in % of total expenditure) on clothing and footwear in 2013-2022



Source: Own study based on statistical yearbooks of the Central Statistical Office, 2014-2022.

One criterion for dividing the apparel market is the number of customers for the goods produced, which is determined by the availability of funds for this type of expenditure. Taking into account this important factor, the apparel market can be divided into the "haute couture" department, which deals with the creation of custom-made clothes for a specific customer (Stewart, 2008), and the "pret-a-porter" department, which literally means "ready-to-wear" (Pirnay, De Vos, Verbeken, Merabishvili, 2010, p. 937), i.e., a collection of clothes available in stores, from short-run production, long-run branded clothing, long-run unbranded or unbranded clothing, and the specialty clothing market: work wear, protective wear, business wear.

The "pret-a-porter" market is very popular among consumers. The reason for this is the moderate, competitive prices and the very large selection of products on the market. People pay a lot of attention to their own appearance, regardless of gender, age or income. They also pay attention to the appearance of others - they are increasingly inspired by the fashions of people they meet on the street, browse fashion blogs or social network accounts.

In the consciousness of Poles, clothing brands such as Reserved, 4F, Big Star, Wólczanka, Diverse, Monnari, Wojas, Solar, Tatum, Bytom, Top Secret, Carry, Vistula, Cropp, House, Medicine, Lancerto, Lavard remain the most well-known. Meanwhile, the most strongly recognized footwear brands are CCC, Gino Rossi, Wojas, Rylko or Ochnik.

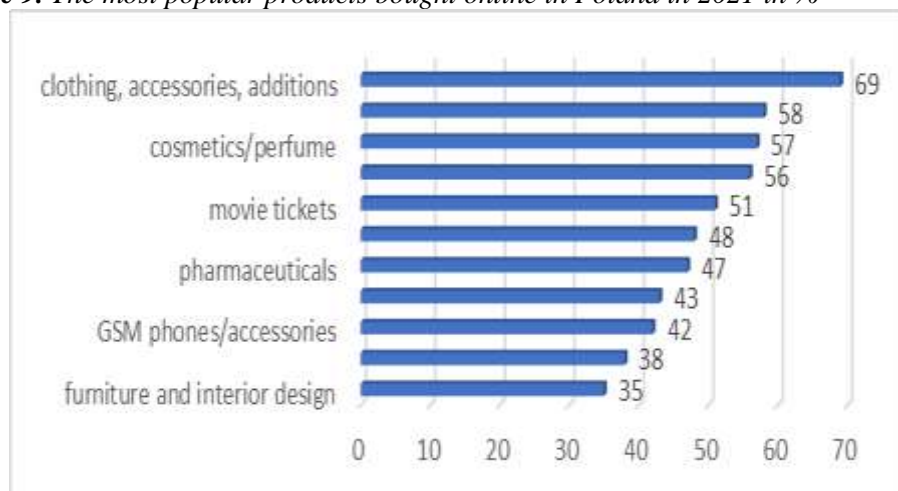
The market leader is the LPP group, which owns such clothing brands as Mohito, Reserved, Cropp, House and Sinsay. The company currently owns more than 1,850 stores, which are spread across 40 countries. Stores belonging to the aforementioned group can be found in Poland, Germany, Russia, the Czech Republic, Ukraine and also in England, where the LPP group's flagship store, Reserved, was established on Oxford Street in 2017. In the 2020/21 fiscal year, the group's net profits totaled more than 7.8 billion. (Frost-Gorgon, 2014).

In the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic, stationary stores of many apparel and footwear brands experienced significant losses that could not be recovered (Piosik, 2022).

In the European market, the percentage of losses was about 19% in 2020, while in the comparable period in Poland it was 16.3% (Klich, 2021). A PMR survey conducted in August 2021 found that as many as 42% of Polish respondents felt the need to replenish footwear and clothing after more than a year of pandemonium, which was associated not only with an increase in interest in stationary shopping, but also with an improvement in the turnover of fashion tenants.

Nevertheless, malls continue to lose popularity year after year, in favor of online shopping. Nowadays, an ever-growing trend in the e-commerce sector is spending on clothing and accessories, as well as footwear (Kręć, 2020). The fashion e-commerce industry in recent years has offered consumers a huge choice and often increasingly attractive sales offers compared to stationary stores (E-commerce Report 2022, interactive.com). The next most frequently purchased product category via the Internet is food items. Categories such as cosmetics and perfumes, children's goods and toys, and pharmaceutical products also remain popular among online buyers (Retail Sales Dynamics in July 2022, CSO).

Figure 9. *The most popular products bought online in Poland in 2021 in %*



Source: *Own study based on E-commerce in Poland 2021 - Gemius report.*

Both the global and Polish markets are successively expanding year by year with new online sales platforms, but for many years the giants have been building their position, enjoying great popularity among both consumers and sellers. The most popular of these are portals such as Allegro, Ebay, Amazon, Aliexpress, Shoppe, OLX, Empik, Ceneo, Vinted, Eobuwie, Zalando, etc. In addition to the

aforementioned platforms, e-commerce is also developing more and more strongly through social networks (e-commerce manager.pl, 2017).

5. Research Results and Discussion

The survey conducted for this study involved 753 people, as mentioned above, of whom 62.1% were women and 37.9% men. The largest group of respondents were those in the 18-30 age range (87%). This situation is not surprising, and can undoubtedly be linked to the easier ability of young people to navigate the Internet, as well as to the digitalization that young people are dealing with at school, in college or on a daily basis at work.

In addition, given the subject matter of the survey, the younger generation is more confident in making online purchases, and they also have fewer concerns about making e-payments. Younger people, due to their knowledge drawn mostly from social networks, are also more sensitive to common online scams. Older people may have problems related to using online channels due to their often less exposure to modern devices and technological innovations. This may also be related to less trust in online transactions.

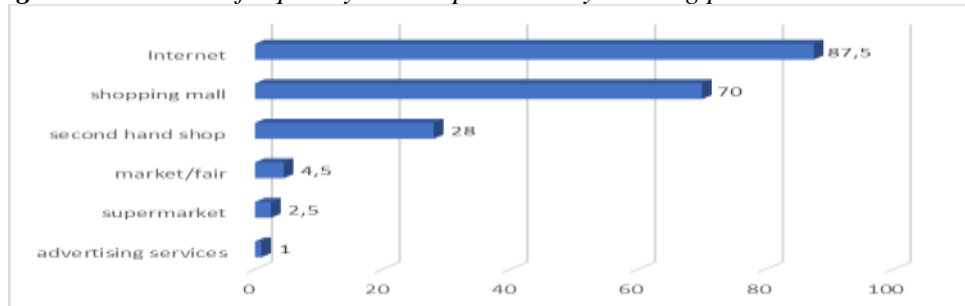
As for the variable related to place of residence, it was fairly proportional. Those residing in villages, cities from 150,000 to 500,000 and above 500,000 achieved similar quantitative results. The largest number of people declaring to shop for clothing and footwear on the Internet showed their earnings at the level of PLN 3001-5000 net.

Another large group was represented by those earning between PLN 2,000 and PLN 3,000. Fewer people represented the group with an income of more than PLN 5000. As for the education of the respondents, the most numerous group was made up of people with higher and secondary education. A general conclusion can be drawn in that with education the respondents are definitely more involved in e-commerce processes.

Looking at the surveyed group through the prism of how and where they shop for fashion products, it turns out that the most common place where the surveyed respondents shop was the Internet (87.5%). A very large proportion of respondents also buy clothes in shopping malls (70%). Other places where respondents store for clothing products and footwear are second-hand stores (28%), a market or fair (4.5%), a supermarket (2.5%) and classifieds sites (1%).

As far as the frequency of online purchases in the clothing and footwear category is concerned, it can be observed that more than half of the respondents (51.6%) buy clothing online several times a year, nearly 21% of people indicated that they do such shopping once a month, and 17,6% several times a month. A big difference, however, appeared in the question about the frequency of buying shoes.

Figure 10. The most frequently chosen place to buy clothing products in %

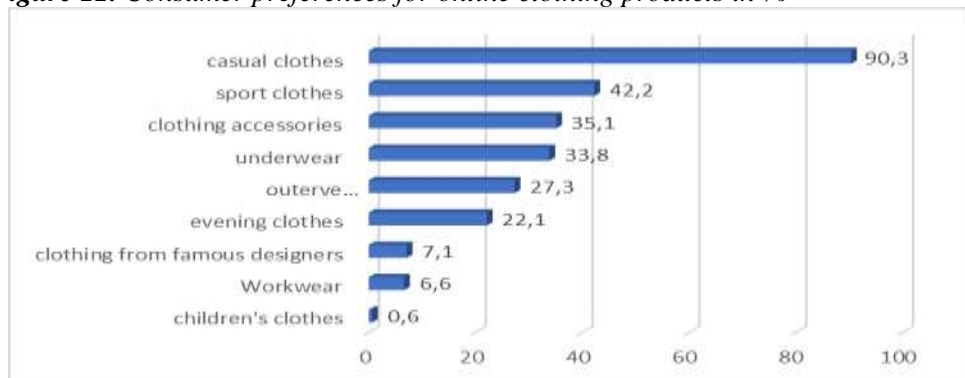


Source: Own research.

As many as 52,3% of people buy shoes online only a few times a year, and over 41% of respondents do it less frequently. Shopping preferences regarding the place (method of purchase) of clothing were divided. More than 54% of respondents said that they prefer to search for and buy clothes via online stores. On the other hand, 45,5% leave their preferences to traditional shopping. Over 59% of respondents prefer shopping for shoes in brick-and-mortar stores, and over 40% choose e-shopping on the footwear market. A large percentage of respondents (20,1%) stated that it was important for them to try on shoes in stationary stores before buying online. This may be due to the fact that footwear is less versatile in terms of size compared to clothing products. However, almost 50% of respondents do not measure shoes in traditional stores before buying from an online source, and 33,1% do it sometimes.

Among the clothing categories, the most frequently appearing product category was low-value clothes, worn every day (90,3%), i.e., T-shirts, blouses, trousers, etc. They were followed by the purchase of sports clothes (42,2%), accessories such as glasses or hats (35,1%), underwear (33,8%), outerwear (27,3%) and evening clothes (22,1%). Less important products on the clothing market were clothes from well-known fashion designers (7,1%), workwear (6,5%) and children's clothing (0,6%).

Figure 11. Consumer preferences for online clothing products in %

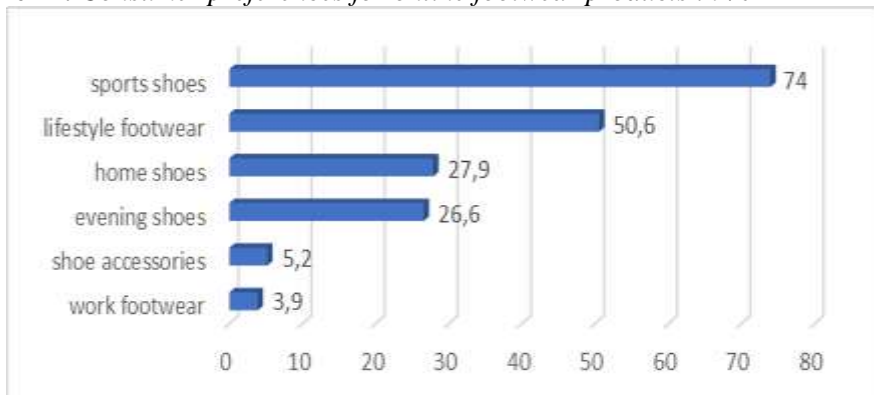


Source: Own research.

More than 64% of respondents most often make clothing purchases from the H&M brand. A large portion of respondents, when shopping, also choose offerings belonging to the Inditex clothing holding company (57.5%), which includes: Zara, Pull&Bear, Bershka, Stradivarius, Oysho, Zara Home, Massimo Dutti and Uterqüe. 47.5% of respondents most often store at: Reserved, House, Cropp, Mohito and Sinsay owned by the Polish clothing company LPP. Other emerging brands where respondents most often buy clothing are Adidas (29.5%), Nike (32.5%), C&A (13.5%), Tommy Hilfiger (13%), Mango (12%) and Ralph Lauren (4%). Other lesser-known brands accounted for 14% of responses.

Looking at the most frequently selected categories among footwear, sports footwear received the most indications (74%). This was followed by lifestyle footwear (50.6%), winter footwear (40.3%), home footwear, i.e., slippers, etc., (27.9%) and evening footwear (26.6%). At the lowest level of purchase interest, respondents rated the demand for work footwear (3.9%) and footwear accessories (5.2%).

Figure 12. Consumer preferences for online footwear products in %

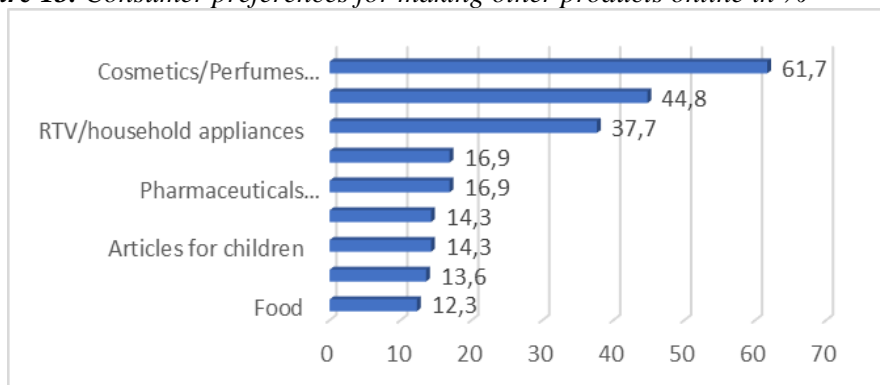


Source: Own research.

In addition to fashion products, other products are also growing in popularity for online shopping among respondents, indicating the general approach to online shopping of the surveyed group. The most frequently declared categories included cosmetics and perfumes (61.7%), cinema, theater and concert tickets (53.2%) as well as books, CDs, movies (44.8%). They were immediately followed by household appliances and electronics (37.7%) and cell phones, smartphones, tablets and GSM accessories (26.6%).

Pharmaceutical products, children's articles and toys, furniture, computer software, food products, and jewelry received half the interest of e-consumers. Respondents were given the opportunity to indicate their own suggestion of products they were eager to buy online, and there were responses such as public transportation tickets, construction equipment, car parts and chemicals, etc.

Figure 13. Consumer preferences for making other products online in %



Source: Own research.

As indicated by a number of studies conducted in the analyzed market, consumer attitudes toward online shopping have changed significantly over the past few years. Gradually, buyers' fear of ordering products on the Internet is being eliminated. (Hoffman and Novak,1999). Current trends and opportunities make it less and less necessary for the customer to visit stationary stores in advance in order to get acquainted with the object of his purchase interest before later buying online. An additional selling point in the online apparel and footwear market is the activities of companies that build consumer confidence.

This is because Internet users pay attention to the appearance and functionality of the offerer's websites. An important element of the created sites becomes their aesthetics, which builds trust and encourages purchases (Chetioui, Lebdaoui, and Chetioui, 2021). Also a very important element that builds buyer loyalty is the opinions of other buyers, which is relatively easy on the Internet. According to many consumers, traditional stores very often lack reliable and up-to-date product reviews.

In contrast, unlike stationary shopping on the Internet, consumers can obtain comprehensive information and make comparisons of competing offers through insightful information about both the product itself and its supplier (Luo, Cheng, Zhou, Song, Yu, and Lin, 2021). This makes it much easier to make a purchase decision, and it also shows that other users have chosen the product and are satisfied with it, which reassures the buyer that the decision was right.

On the Internet, users who use newsletters or have an account on a given site also receive discounts far more often than with traditional purchases (sempire.pl), (Kijan, 2018). All of the aforementioned factors have a huge impact on consumers' decisions regarding online shopping (Bashar and Wasiq, 2013). At the same time, it should be mentioned that the fashion market and its individual departments have become very powerful online, so online shopping has become a permanent part of a

kind of trend that will certainly continue to develop in the future towards e-commerce shopping (<https://www.sempire.pl/co-sprzedawac-w-internecie.html>).

As the study's authors have shown, the e-commerce channel provides consumers with completely different opportunities to make purchases compared to the traditional market. This is followed by a number of motives and numerous benefits that have a significant impact on consumers' purchasing decisions. As the main advantages of being able to buy online, respondents surveyed pointed to a wide selection of assortments (62.7%) and saving time related to shopping (62.1%).

Convenience of making a purchase (47.1%) and convenient time to make purchases (41.8%), thanks to the operation of online stores continuously 24 hours a day and seven days a week, also turned out to be important. Equally often indicated advantages of this form were various forms of promotions and discounts (32%) as well as the absence of crowds of shoppers spending time in shopping malls or queues when making purchases (39.9%).

An interesting option for respondents when shopping over the Internet was the possibility of free delivery or easy return of purchased goods (18.3%) Less attractive for respondents was the varied choice of forms of payment (5.9%) and often limited method of delivery of the purchased product (9.2%).

Figure 14. Advantages of shopping for clothes and shoes online in %



Source: Own research.

E-commerce, in order to function properly, requires continuous and accurate analysis of data about customers and their needs in order to tailor universal and effective marketing instruments (<https://www.dlhandlu.pl/e-commerce/wiadomosci/rynek-e-commerce-w-2022-roku-jakie-zaszly-zmiany,114357.html>).

It is important for companies to use a multi-channel marketing strategy, through which different sources of information, promotion and advertising can be combined to reach the customer as widely and effectively as possible. There are several aspects

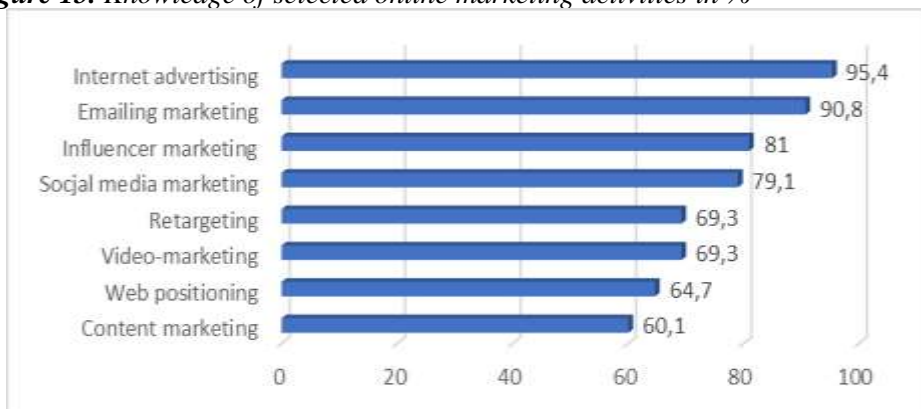
by which companies can achieve success in e-commerce and break through the huge competition. One of the most important online marketing activities is content, i.e., all kinds of content that entrepreneurs present on their websites, platforms or portals.

Descriptions of products, categories, presentation of iconographics, news, trivia or interviews are elements that enrich messages and help in ongoing promotional activities (Li, Zhao, and Pu, 2020). Attracting attention with interesting content is extremely important in creating audience groups.

Internet advertising (95.4%), in the form of web banners placed on various sites and in pop-ups, turned out to be the most frequently identified tool for the company's communication with the market, according to respondents. Equally recognizable among respondents was also e - mail marketing (90.8%), which often appears in the form of newsletters, promotional messages or store offers that consumers receive directly to their email inbox.

Influencer marketing (81%) and social media marketing (79.1%) also stood out among all tools. Stachowiak-Krzyżan, 2021). Respondents rated retargeting, video marketing, SEO and content marketing at a similar level of familiarity.

Figure 15. Knowledge of selected online marketing activities in %

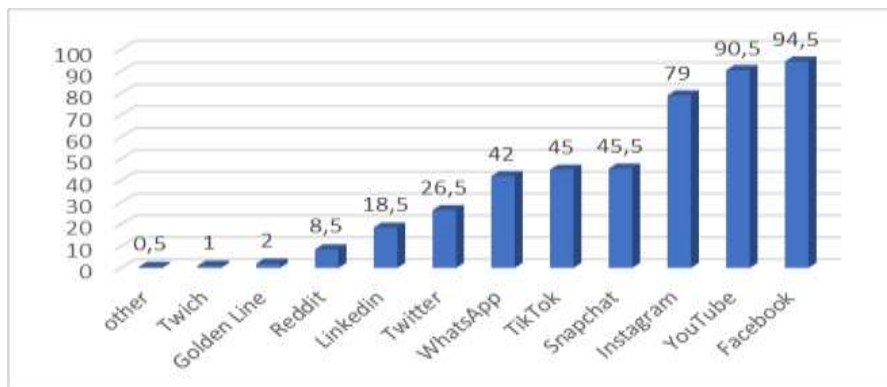


Source: Own research.

Today's buyers are also increasingly using social media when making purchasing decisions. When asked which social media respondents use when obtaining sales information, 94.5% of respondents indicated that they use the Facebook social media platform, 90.5% the YouTube platform and 79% the Instagram platform.

A large number of respondents also use social media such as Snapchat (45.5%), TikTok (45%), WhatsApp (42%), Twitter (26.5%) and LinkedIn (18.5%). Respondents also included those using Reddit (8.5%), Tumblr (8%), GoldenLine (2%), Twitch (1%), BeReal (0.5%), Pinterest (0.5%), Telegram and Discord (0.5%).

Figure 16. Social media used by respondents when obtaining information and goods in %



Source: Own research.

Activity in social media is one of the most important forms that allow companies to organize promotional actions, contests, as well as to inform about the quality of products and services that are offered to consumers. Thoughtful promotion makes it possible to expand the audience of regular customers and to develop loyalty among regular customers (semcore.pl, 2021).

As the respondents indicated, promotional activities on the web are an indispensable and, in their opinion, extremely important element of the functioning of the e-commerce market. Nearly 61% stressed that effective marketing is an essential and integral part of the functioning of this market. It is noteworthy that more than 81% of the respondents confirmed the fact that the broad promotional activities carried out on the Internet significantly influence their decisions when making online purchases.

6. Conclusions

Today's buyers are recognizing more and more benefits that e-commerce brings. First and foremost, they value the 24/7 availability of clothing and footwear e-stores. This is a key factor in their decision-making due to the convenience of shopping at a convenient time. Equally important for online shoppers is the absence of queues and crowds, which often in stationary stores becomes tiresome and inconvenient and even discourages them from making a purchase. Saving time on commuting to stores or shopping malls is also a factor in the attractiveness of e-commerce.

Customers are also becoming more and more convinced of e-commerce due to the wider and more interesting offerings available in online stores. Sales platforms are gaining an advantage over traditional (face-to-face) forms of sales through the number of products available. Often more cuts, models and even sizes of clothing and footwear are available online.

Nowadays, more and more brands are choosing to make their products available only through e-sales. Quite a few brands do not have stationary stores and only operate online stores. The possibility to return products without giving a reason plays a big role in purchasing decisions. Often, customers making online purchases have doubts about the size and cut of shoes or clothing, so they value the possibility of easy and hassle-free returns in case of a wrong purchase. A significant motivating influence in choosing chain stores is the increasingly common discounts.

However, the survey showed that young people with experience in navigating websites still remain the most frequent online consumers. The Covid 19 pandemic was undoubtedly a turning point in the broader development and growth of this form of commerce also among older groups of buyers who were not inclined to this form. Online shopping is becoming more and more popular in the next few years may become an effective alternative to the traditional form of satisfying shopping needs, and not only among young people.

Of course, the shape of this form of sales will be significantly influenced by marketing activities, especially promotional campaigns, to which buyers are paying increasing attention, because without them not only clothing and footwear products, but many other product categories would not be so eagerly purchased.

The e-commerce market is a market with an undisputed future and developmental character due to the ever advancing processes of globalization and digitalization. The dynamically changing Polish society in the digital direction, as well as the considerable benefits of online shopping, indicate that in the future this form will slowly displace traditional ways of purchasing products from many industries.

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