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INTERNET IN MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS OF COMPANIES IN EUROPE – THE PRESENT AND THE FUTURE

Introduction

A characteristic feature of the present day is the transformation from an industrial society to an information society. Although communication has always accompanied mankind, the internet, in terms of information revolution, is of particular importance. The explosion of information due to technical and scientific progress has far-reaching social and economic consequences. Businesses and consumers are both in the sphere of its influence, whose functioning should take into account new trends in the environment. On the one hand, they induce certain behavior, on the other - offer unprecedented opportunities for the exchange of information. The challenge for today's companies is to conduct a dialogue with customers, not just providing them with information. Such a dialogue is achieved by the information revolution (emergence of new media, telematics, the convergence of the media). Currently, the exchange of information between the firm and its customers can take an interactive character, very similar to interpersonal communication, although it involves a specific intermediary (medium). The Internet is the medium, which enables quite interactive and quick information exchange. The huge development of this communication channel stimulates some changes in marketing communications practices, which result in moving a lot of communication activities from traditional to new media. Although the Internet is not something quite new, it has become very popular and requires some new approaches from a marketing communication's perspective and also stimulates some innovations and new concepts of exchanging the information with target groups. Additionally, the changing behaviour of potential audiences, who have the tendency to transfer a lot of their behaviour "to" the Internet (like reading the press, watching TV etc.) requires some fresh ideas, how to use the potential of this medium in business. The aim of the article is to present the ways of using the Internet in marketing communications both from a company's and consumers' perspective. The analysis is of international character and is based on Eurostat data related to information society. Additionally, some innovations and ideas for the future of the Internet use in marketing communications will also be discussed.

Internet as the medium in marketing communications process

In very broad marketing literature one can find many definitions of marketing communications, in which this sphere of business activity is usually identified with promotion. Generally one can say that marketing communication is communication with target groups in all aspects that affect marketing activities. Ph. Kotler states, that the marketing communication system (sometimes called promotion-mix) consists of five basic instruments, which include advertising, direct marketing, sales promotion, public relations and personal selling. J.W. Wiktor argues with such recognition of a marketing communication system and highlights the ambiguity of defining promotion, marketing communication and communication tools. He emphasizes that marketing

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⁵⁶ D. Picton, A. Broderick, Integrated Marketing Communications. Pearson Education Limited 2005, p. 4.

⁵⁷ Ph. Kotler: Marketing. Analiza, planowanie, wdrażanie i kontrola. Gebethner i Ska Warszawa 1994, p. 546.

⁵⁸ J. W. Wiktor, Struktura systemu promocji. Próba polemiki z koncepcją Ph. Kotlera. Marketing i Rynek 3/2004

communications, in addition to traditional promotional tools also include marketing research, which are used for collection and transfer of market information (they provide feedback and determine the interactive nature of marketing communications) . J. Russell and W. Lane stress that "the components of marketing communications, which include public relations, advertising, personal selling and sales promotion known is the term marketing communications." In the Dictionary of Marketing and Advertising there is the term "marketing communication-mix" (marketing communications mix), which is defined as activities of the company aimed at providing current and potential customers with information about the product. In Dictionary of Marketing Communications the term marketing communications is described as "the combination of the elements, activities and techniques that the organization uses to connect with and persuade the target market to engage in a particular action or response, such as buying a product, using the service or accepting the idea". The major tools pointed out are: advertising, sales promotion, public relations, direct marketing and personal selling. B. Szymoniuk also points out the identification of marketing communication with promotion, but she stresses, that marketing communication is broader than promotion, because it also includes communication with others than clients or market participants through all their marketing activities - and by product, price and distribution. On the whole, we can say that all marketing instruments can be an element of marketing communication (of course, marketing communication is a narrower term than marketing), but the majority of marketing activity is associated with communication.

Broadly speaking,, marketing communication can be defined as a set of devices and procedures for exchanging information about the company and its offer, which should contribute to achieve the basic objectives of the organization. The marketing communication should on the one hand ensure the dissemination of information, and on the other should enable one to obtain the feedback to assess effectiveness and therefore to obtain a better match to the requirements of the target market in the future. In such defined marketing communications, we can distinguish:

- Internal communication – communications in the organization
- External communication – communication with customers / consumers (end-buyers) and communications with other market players (suppliers, dealers, etc.).

For employees, customers and other market entities, marketing communication activities of the company are a source of marketing information about the company and its services. Moreover, nowadays marketing communication arrangements done by companies enable workers, customers and other market entities to express their opinion, share the information and directly interact with the information sender. This is possible, among others thanks to the Internet. We are not going to cover in this article all aspects of internet usage in marketing communication. We just want to examine the technical aspect of communications, which relates the process of information from a certain point (machine or person) to another one via the corresponding channel – in this case - the internet.

The Internet is becoming the fastest growing medium of exchange of information, and therefore it starts to have broad applications in marketing communications. The Internet is defined as the vast, worldwide system of interconnected government, education and business and other computer networks, which permits a computer user to have instantaneous communication with other people, organisations, or information sources as well as to engage in a wide variety of applications" . From a marketing communication point of view, the Internet has a lot of advantages, but also has still some limitations among which we should mention cf Table 1.

⁵⁹ J. W. Wiktor, Struktura systemu promocji. Próba polemiki z koncepcją Ph. Kotlera. Marketing i Rynek 3/2004

⁶⁰ J. Russell, W. Lane: Reklama według Ottona Kleppnera. Felberg SJA 2000, p.26.

⁶¹ J.M. Rosenberg: Dictionary of Marketing and Advertising. John Wiley & Sons 1995, p.195

⁶² N.A. Govoni, Dictionary of Marketing Communications, Sage Publications 2004, p. 123

⁶³ Komunikacja marketingowa. Instrumenty i metody. Praca zbiorowa pod red. B. Szymoniuk. PWE, Warszawa 2006, p. 16.

⁶⁴ N.A Govoni, Dictionary of Marketing Communications, Sage Publications 2004, p. 103

Table 1. Advantages and disadvantages of the Internet in marketing communications – business/sender and client/receiver perspective.

Specification	Business (sender) perspective	Client (receiver) perspective
Advantages	Interactivity High speed No geographical barriers Access 24 hours /24 hours	
	• Various form of presenting the information • Multimedia message • Message individualization • Message personalisation	• Different sources of information • Easy to verify the message • Possibility to present and spread own opinion • Attractive way of analyzing the offer • Easy to compare the offers
Disadvantages	Technological limitations (internet infrastructure)	
	• High competition in this medium (more and more companies use this channel for marketing communications activities) • Limited control over the content regarding the company (especially on blogs, forums etc)	• Intrusive forms of communications (pop ups, banners, spam, etc.) • Personal data protection • Credibility of information • Huge number of information

Source: Own elaboration base on the literature query

In business the internet can be used for many activities like selling, customer service, promotion and market research. From a marketing communication's point of view, the broad use of the internet hboth in internal and external communications of companies can be observed.

The Internet in companies and consumers' communication behavior in the European Union - secondary data analysis

As we know the nature of the internet and its possible use in marketing communications, we can now examine the development of it in different countries of the European Union. This part of the article is based on Eurostat data related to information society. Presented and analysed data refers to years 2006 and 2011⁶⁵, in order to show some changes which were mentioned in our topic. To examine the use of the Internet in marketing communication we explored:

- the level of the Internet access in enterprises and households in all 27 EU countries
- the ways companies use the internet for internal and external marketing communication,
- Internet activities of individuals related to marketing communications.

The level of the Internet access is crucial to determine how to perform marketing communication through this particular channel. The research results indicate (table 2 and 3), that the level of the Internet access – both in companies and households – increased in all European Union countries between 2006 and 2011.

⁶⁵ In some cases the data was no available for this particular years.

Table 2. Internet in enterprises in EU countries- enterprises with fixed broadband access in years 2006 and 2011 (in%)*

Specification	Years		Change (2006=100)
	2006	2011	
EU (27 countries)	73	87	119
Austria	69	82	119
Belgium	84	86	102
Bulgaria	57	68	119
Cyprus	55	88	160
Czech Republic	69	87	126
Denmark	83	91	110
Estonia	76	90	118
Finland	89	96	108
France	86	92	107
Germany	73	88	121
Greece	58	76	131
Hungary	61	84	138
Ireland	61	90	148
Italy	70	84	120
Latvia	59	82	139
Lithuania	57	87	153
Luxembourg	76	93	122
Malta	83	94	113
Netherlands	82	91	111
Poland	46	73	159
Portugal	66	83	126
Romania	31	54	174
Slovakia	61	76	125
Slovenia	75	92	123
Spain	87	96	110
Sweden	89	94	106
United Kingdom	77	92	119

**Percentage of enterprises with at least 10 persons employed in the given NACE sectors. Enterprises that are connectable to an exchange which has been converted to support xDSL-technology, to a cable network upgraded for Internet traffic, or to other broadband technologies.*

Source: Eurostat and own calculations based on Eurostat

The average increase of the internet broadband access in enterprises for EU countries is 19%, but the most dynamic development in that field can be observed in Romania, Cyprus, Poland and Lithuania – countries, in which the internet access in 2006 was definitely below the average indicator for EU countries. A similar situation can be observed in the case of households with the internet access at home, but here the dynamics of the internet development is definitely more intense – in 2011 almost 50% more households had the internet access at home compared to 2006 . The highest dynamics can be noticed in Romania, Bulgaria, Slovakia and the Czech Republic. It should be stressed that there was a huge development in using mobile phones and laptops to connect and search on the internet. Still the level of using such devices was not high (in 2011 - 8% of EU inhabitants were using mobile phones and 17% were using laptops for the Internet access) and we should expect a very rapid growth of mobile devices for the activities online of individuals.

The internet access – both of companies and individuals – determines the possibility of using this channel in marketing communication. The Eurostat data enables to identify the ways of using the Internet both for internal and external communications in companies. There are some activities researched by Eurostat, which can be classified as internal communications using the Internet, in particular (table 4):

- Sharing electronically information on sales or on purchases with the software used for any internal function. In 2011, 40% of EU companies were performing this activity within internal communications.
- Using applications for employees to access Human Resources services: In 2008, around 11% of employees in the surveyed countries had such solutions related to internal communications.
- Having teleworkers, who connect to the enterprise IT system from home: In 2008 every third company in the EU area had such employees.
- Although the degree of sharing electronically information inside the company decreased a little in 2011 except for the year 2008, there are many countries in the EU area, which use this way of internal information exchange more particularly in Latvia, Hungary, Spain and Cyprus. The countries, in which this form of activity was more visible in 2011 are Ireland, Austria, Finland and Portugal. Companies from Lithuania, Poland and the United Kingdom were less active in this sphere of internal communications.

Table 3: The internet in households in EU countries in years 2006 and 2011 (in %)

Specification	Households with Internet access at home			Individuals using a mobile phone via UMTS (3G) to access the Internet			Individuals using a laptop via wireless connection to access the Internet		
	Years		Change (2006=100)	Years		Change (2006=100)	Years		Change (2007=100)
	2006	2011		2006	2010		2007	2010	
EU (27 countries)	49	73	149	1	8	800	9	19	211
Austria	52	75	144	1	12	1200	14	29	207
Belgium	54	77	143	1	4	400	7	15	214
Bulgaria	17	45	265	0	1	:	1	4	400
Cyprus	37	57	154	0	3	:	7	6	86
Czech Republic	29	67	231	1	3	300	3	6	200
Denmark	79	90	114	1	15	1500	25	40	160
Estonia	46	71	154	1	3	300	12	28	233
Finland	65	84	129	2	:	:	8	23	288
France	41	76	185	:	12	:	7	18	257
Germany	67	83	124	1	6	600	14	27	193
Greece	23	50	217	0	2	:	1	3	300
Hungary	32	65	203	1	2	200	2	11	550
Ireland	50	78	156	1	3	300	11	32	291
Italy	40	62	155	2	5	250	7	20	286
Latvia	42	64	152	0	2	:	3	12	400
Lithuania	35	62	177	0	2	:	2	5	250
Luxembourg	70	91	130	1	20	2000	31	43	139
Malta	53	75	142	0	3	:	4	11	275
Netherlands	80	94	118	1	15	1500	12	19	158
Poland	36	67	186	0	3	:	3	12	400
Portugal	35	58	166	1	4	400	8	14	175
Romania	14	47	336	0	1	:	1	4	400
Slovakia	27	71	263	0	9	:	4	20	500
Slovenia	54	73	135	3	9	300	6	13	217
Spain	39	64	164	:	13	:	10	16	160
Sweden	77	91	118	5	20	400	15	30	200
United Kingdom	63	83	132	2	10	500	13	22	169

Source: Eurostat and own calculations based on Eurostat

After analysing the use of the Internet for internal communications of companies in Europe one can now examine the fields and activity of companies, when using the Internet for external communications .

Table 4: The internet in internal communications of enterprises in EU countries in years 2006 and 2011 – selected aspects (in %)*

Specification	Sharing electronically information on sales or on purchases with the software used for any internal function**			Using applications for employees to access Human Resources services ***	Having teleworkers who connect to the enterprise's IT systems from home****
	Years		Change (2008=100)	2008 year	2006 year
	2008	2011			
EU (27 countries)	41	40	98	11	33
Austria	59	60	102	19	39
Belgium	58	51	88	17	47
Bulgaria	35	38	109	22	12
Cyprus	46	53	115	7	15
Czech Republic	49	47	96	5	31
Denmark	57	58	102	24	74
Estonia	42	45	107	8	35
Finland	49	53	108	18	52
France	46	42	91	11	:
Germany	33	30	91	16	40
Greece	46	50	109	:	30
Hungary	27	34	126	9	20
Ireland	63	62	98	16	39
Italy	49	49	100	6	11
Latvia	36	48	133	11	15
Lithuania	23	24	104	10	18
Luxembourg	49	39	80	13	36
Malta	58	54	93	19	:
Netherlands	69	47	68	19	57
Poland	24	27	113	8	9
Portugal	53	53	100	21	26
Romania	28	30	107	12	12
Slovakia	45	49	109	13	21
Slovenia	47	45	96	8	40
Spain	40	46	115	:	21
Sweden	47	46	98	16	59
United Kingdom	27	29	107	8	51

*Percentage of enterprises with at least 10 persons employed in the given NACE sectors.

** Sharing information electronically and automatically between different functions of the enterprise under any of the following aspects:

- using one single software application to support the different functions of the enterprise;
- data linking between the software applications that support the different functions of the enterprise;
- using a common database or data warehouse accessed by the software applications that support the different functions of the enterprise;
- automated data exchange between different software systems.

The sharing of information in this survey was studied in case of receipt of a sales order with at least one of the following functions: management of inventory levels, accounting, production or services management, distribution management; in case of sending a purchase order with at least one of the following functions: management of inventory levels or accounting.

*** Applications to see open job positions, request annual leave, view or download payslips, or other services.

****This indicator measures enterprises with employees who regularly work part of their time (half a day per week or more) away from the enterprise's regular work site i.e. at home while having access to the enterprise's computer systems. It covers all enterprises with 10 or more full-time employees that have their main activity in NACE sections: D, F, G, H (groups 55.1 - 55.2), I, K, O (groups 92.1 - 92.2 only).

Source: Eurostat and own calculations based on Eurostat

After analysing Eurostat data one can point out the following fields of the Internet use in external marketing communications (table 5 and 6):

- receiving orders online;
- using CRM;
- sharing information on Supply Chain Management;
- purchasing online;
- sending and receiving e-invoices;
- using the internet for interaction with public authorities.

According to the data, companies in the European Union within the external marketing communications use the internet mostly for interaction with public authorities (76%) and e-invoicing (31%). Only 13% of enterprises use this medium for receiving orders online, 17% - for CRM purposes, and almost the same number – for sharing information on Supply Chain Management. The greatest development of internet use can be noticed in the field of e-invoicing (sending and receiving invoices in electronic form) and sharing information on the Supply Chain Management. Analysing particular external communications activities of companies regarding given EU members one can observe that, in 2011, receiving orders online was at the highest level in companies from the Czech Republic, Sweden, Denmark and Ireland. Using the Internet for CRM practices was mostly activated by enterprises from Austria, Belgium, Finland and Sweden (in year 2010). Sharing information on the Supply Chain Management was mostly done by companies from Portugal, Latvia, Italy and Belgium (also in 2010). The most active companies in purchasing online (year 2011) were to be found in Ireland, Austria, the Czech Republic and Sweden. E-invoicing in 2011 occurred more often in companies from Italy, Lithuania and Latvia. Companies using the Internet for interaction with public authorities come more often from Finland, Lithuania and the Netherlands.

As one can observe the huge differences in the way of using the internet in external communication, now we should analyse the individuals' behaviour towards it, which is extremely important from a marketing communication's point of view (tables 7 and 8):

Table 5: The internet in external communications of enterprises in EU countries in years 2006 and 2011 - selected aspects (in %) – part 1

Specification	Receiving orders on-line (at least 1%)*			Using CRM **			Sharing information electronically on the Supply Chain Management***		
	Year		Change (2006=100)	Year		Change (2007=100)	Year		Change (2008=100)
	2006	2011		2007	2010		2008	2010	
EU countries) (27	14	13	93	17	17	100	16	18	113
Austria	15	11	73	29	29	100	20	14	70
Belgium	15	22	147	17	28	165	35	34	97
Bulgaria	2	3	150	9	10	111	14	18	129
Cyprus	6	7	117	14	16	114	8	8	100
Czech Republic	8	26	325	15	10	67	12	15	125
Denmark	34	23	68	17	18	106	22	17	77
Estonia	14	11	79	10	9	90	13	11	85
Finland	14	17	121	26	27	104	20	20	100
France	:	11	:	9	15	167	12	13	108
Germany	18	20	111	30	23	77	12	26	217
Greece	7	6	86	15	18	120	21	21	100
Hungary	9	10	111	5	7	140	14	11	79
Ireland	23	23	100	23	25	109	11	13	118
Italy	3	4	133	15	15	100	21	22	105
Latvia	2	9	450	10	11	110	20	34	170
Lithuania	13	21	162	9	12	133	29	34	117
Luxembourg	11	15	136	13	19	146	23	27	117
Malta	14	16	114	22	20	91	19	23	121
Netherlands	23	19	83	14	16	114	13	5	38
Poland	9	8	89	12	13	108	14	17	121
Portugal	7	16	229	15	15	100	31	40	129
Romania	2	4	200	14	14	100	7	13	186
Slovakia	:	13	:	11	25	227	20	27	135
Slovenia	11	11	100	14	11	79	27	19	70
Spain	8	11	138	15	20	133	20	17	85
Sweden	24	24	100	22	24	109	27	27	100
United Kingdom	30	15	50	13	13	100	7	7	100

*Enterprises having received orders on-line (at least 1%) - percentage of enterprises with at least 10 persons employed in the given NACE sectors

** Enterprises using software solutions, like CRM to analyse information about clients for marketing purposes

*** This means sharing information electronically on the Supply Chain Management under the following aspects:

- exchanging all types of information with suppliers and/or customers in order to coordinate the availability and delivery of products or services to the final consumer;
- including information on demand forecasts, inventories, production, distribution or product development;
- via computer networks, not only the Internet but also other connections between computers of different enterprises;
- excluding normal e-mail messages manually written.

Source: Eurostat and own calculations based on Eurostat

Table 6: Internet in external communications of enterprises in EU countries in years 2006 and 2011 - selected aspects (in %) - part 2

Specification	Purchasing on-line*			Sending and/or receiving e-invoices**			Using the Internet for interaction with public authorities***		
	Year		Change (2006=100)	Year		Change (2007=100)	Year		Change (2006=100)
	2006	2011		2007	2010		2006	2010	
EU (27 countries)	28	19	68	18	31	172	63	76	121
Austria	37	41	111	18	18	100	81	75	93
Belgium	16	:	:	31	39	126	59	77	131
Bulgaria	3	6	200	9	26	289	46	64	139
Cyprus	10	1	10	10	10	100	44	74	168
Czech Republic	17	39	229	33	17	52	76	89	117
Denmark	34	:	:	37	39	105	87	92	106
Estonia	17	:	:	25	39	156	69	80	116
Finland	23	33	143	27	36	133	93	96	103
France	:	20	:	10	36	360	66	78	118
Germany	48	:	:	19	36	189	49	67	137
Greece	11	6	55	10	16	160	84	77	92
Hungary	11	18	164	4	8	200	45	71	158
Ireland	53	49	92	26	28	108	84	87	104
Italy	10	11	110	34	56	165	87	84	97
Latvia	3	14	467	25	46	184	40	72	180
Lithuania	17	27	159	15	52	347	76	95	125
Luxembourg	30	32	107	23	37	161	83	90	108
Malta	25	22	88	24	37	154	67	77	115
Netherlands	32	28	88	11	35	318	70	95	136
Poland	16	12	75	8	16	200	61	89	146
Portugal	14	14	100	14	27	193	60	75	125
Romania	:	9	:	15	18	120	39	50	128
Slovakia	:	15	:	14	34	243	77	88	114
Slovenia	18	18	100	7	10	143	75	88	117
Spain	15	20	133	9	25	278	58	67	116
Sweden	44	38	86	18	28	156	80	90	113
United Kingdom	51	:	:	15	14	93	52	67	129

* Enterprises having purchased on-line (at least 1%) - percentage of enterprises with at least 10 persons employed in the given NACE sectors

** Enterprises sending and/or receiving e-invoices - percentage of enterprises with at least 10 persons employed in the given NACE sectors

*** Enterprises using the Internet for interaction with public authorities - percentage of enterprises with at least 10 persons employed in the given NACE sectors

Source: Eurostat and own calculations based on Eurostat

Internet activities of individuals, which may be quite important for MarComm activities of enterprises can be described on the base of the following Eurostat information Society characteristics:

- finding information about products and services;
- ordering goods and services;
- posting messages to social media or instant messaging;
- reading/downloading online newspapers /news magazines;
- listening to webradio/watching web TV;
- playing or downloading games, films or music.

Research results indicate, that all internet activities of individuals mentioned above increased in 2011 or 2010 year in comparison with the past. The greatest increase can be observed in the use of webradio and web TV, reading online newspapers and ordering goods and services.

Table 7. Internet activities of individuals of EU countries related to marketing communications in years 2006 and 2011 (in %) – part 1

Specification	Finding information about goods and services			Ordering goods or services			Posting messages to social media sites or instant messaging*		
	Years		Change (2006=100)	Years		Change (2006=100)	Years		Change (2009=100)
	2006	2011		2006	2011		2009	2010	
EU (27 countries)	41	56	137	26	43	165	28	32	114
Austria	47	62	132	32	44	138	22	27	123
Belgium	51	43	84	19	43	226	28	30	107
Bulgaria	13	28	215	2	7	350	22	24	109
Cyprus	27	48	178	7	21	300	21	25	119
Czech Republic	32	56	175	13	30	231	22	26	118
Denmark	68	72	106	55	70	127	51	45	88
Estonia	44	54	123	7	21	300	38	35	92
Finland	67	76	113	44	62	141	27	42	156
France	36	67	186	22	53	241	25	31	124
Germany	60	70	117	49	64	131	35	33	94
Greece	23	39	170	5	18	360	18	21	117
Hungary	35	54	154	7	22	314	35	36	103
Ireland	42	53	126	28	43	154	17	25	147
Italy	23	41	178	9	15	167	18	21	117
Latvia	36	52	144	8	20	250	32	28	88
Lithuania	30	55	183	4	16	400	37	41	111
Luxembourg	64	66	103	44	65	148	39	39	100
Malta	26	53	204	14	45	321	24	31	129
Netherlands	73	82	112	48	69	144	24	40	167
Poland	25	44	176	12	30	250	35	41	117
Portugal	30	41	137	7	18	257	21	35	167
Romania	10	27	270	1	6	600	16	17	106
Slovakia	33	54	164	11	37	336	29	39	134
Slovenia	42	54	129	13	31	238	35	36	103
Spain	38	47	124	15	27	180	31	31	100
Sweden	74	75	101	55	71	129	35	46	131
United Kingdom	55	66	120	45	71	158	33	36	109

*Posting messages to chat sites, social networking sites, blogs, newsgroups or online discussion, or the use of instant messaging.

Source: Eurostat and own calculations based on Eurostat

When analysing the internet behaviour of individuals from different EU countries in the sphere of finding information about goods and services the biggest change can be noticed between 2006-2011 in the cases of Bulgaria and Malta. Yet, the percentage of consumers using the internet for this purpose in 2011 is quite small compared to such countries like the Netherlands, Finland, Sweden and Denmark. While ordering goods and services via the Internet is becoming more and more popular (26% of EU inhabitants in 2006 and 43% - in 2011), the greatest development in that sphere can be observed in the cases of Romania, Lithuania, Slovakia, Malta and Estonia. Again, the percentage of customers using the Internet in these countries for the purpose mentioned above is less than the average for all EU countries. The highest rate of this indicator in year 2011 is in the United Kingdom, Denmark, and the Netherlands.

With the development of social media and instant messaging a more intense use of that Internet activity can be noticed as far as companies and individuals are concerned. In EU countries social networking and instant messaging increased within a year mostly in Portugal, the Netherlands and Finland. In 2010 the most active individuals in posting messages to social media sites or doing instant messaging were coming from Sweden and Denmark.

Reading online newspapers/magazines is one of the most visible changes in individuals' behaviour. The dynamic change in this sphere is the highest among individuals from Romania, Ireland and Germany. Yet, the countries, in which the largest group of people read or download online newspaper and/or magazines are Sweden, Finland, Estonia and Denmark (in 2011).

The internet is more and more used for listening to the webradio and or watching web TV. This is the most visible change in the individuals' behaviour in the European Union. The biggest change can be noticed in countries such as Romania, Greece and Italy, but the percentage of individuals using the Internet for that purpose is the highest in Sweden, the Netherlands and Finland (in 2010).

Table 8. Internet activities of individuals of EU countries related to marketing communications in years 2006 and 2011 (in %) – part 2

Specification	Reading/downloading online newspapers / news magazines			Listening webradio/watching web television			Playing or downloading games, images, films or music		
	Years		Change (2006=100)	Years		Change (2006=100)	Years		Change (2006=100)
	2006	2011		2006	2010		2006	2010	
EU (27 countries)	18	40	222	11	26	236	18	28	156
Austria	26	42	162	7	15	214	15	18	120
Belgium	16	37	231	11	22	200	20	:	:
Bulgaria	11	29	264	11	18	164	12	22	183
Cyprus	20	36	180	9	22	244	17	29	171
Czech Republic	19	53	279	6	22	367	12	29	242
Denmark	46	66	143	27	40	148	26	36	138
Estonia	50	68	136	17	32	188	28	38	136
Finland	46	76	165	20	44	220	33	47	142
France	9	23	256	10	26	260	9	28	311
Germany	19	52	274	12	25	208	18	29	161
Greece	14	38	271	5	18	360	11	18	164
Hungary	25	56	224	12	22	183	22	32	145
Ireland	8	29	363	9	18	200	11	20	182
Italy	13	30	231	5	16	320	11	19	173
Latvia	27	58	215	17	30	176	24	38	158
Lithuania	30	57	190	17	26	153	24	32	133
Luxembourg	29	61	210	22	38	173	26	38	146
Malta	17	53	312	10	25	250	17	27	159
Netherlands	36	53	147	28	53	189	42	51	121
Poland	16	18	113	10	22	220	16	24	150
Portugal	16	32	200	11	25	227	16	22	138
Romania	7	32	457	4	15	375	11	21	191
Slovakia	25	44	176	8	24	300	18	32	178
Slovenia	24	51	213	15	40	267	21	29	138
Spain	:	45	:	:	27	:	23	28	122
Sweden	41	77	188	28	56	200	34	25	74
United Kingdom	23	45	196	15	38	253	24	33	138

Source: Eurostat and own calculations based on Eurostat

The fact, that individuals are playing online games or downloading games, films or music from the Internet can be another important information from a marketing communication's perspective, especially for online product placements' potential. EU individuals use the Internet for such purposes, but the greatest change can be observed in the cases of France and the Czech Republic. Yet in 2010 playing or downloading online games, images, films or music was at its highest in the Netherlands, Finland, Denmark, Italy and Luxemburg.

Innovations and the perspectives of the Internet in Marketing Communications – selected issues

Increasing the use of the Internet in marketing communications will probably stimulate more attractive and more sophisticated activities of marketing communication done via this channel. We can find some innovative ways of using the Internet, also for marketing communications practices. They can cover internal communications, advertising, public relations, consumer services, market research personal selling and other fields in marketing communication. Among some of these innovations on the Internet, which are important from a marketing communication's point of view we can mention:

- Geolocation
- QR codes
- Augmented reality
- Virtual tours
- Social media marketing communications
- Online product placement

Geolocation is the identification of a geographical location from which you connect to the Internet. Search engines use geolocation for example, to provide search results tailored to the request of their country of origin. "Geolocation is a term used to describe the capability to detect and record where you and other people are located, and to use the information to enhance the desktop use of an Internet-connected computer or device. Geolocation information can be obtained in a number of ways including data about a user's IP address, MAC address, RFID, Wi-Fi connection location, or GPS coordinates." Poland has eagerly embraced the phenomenon of geolocation. The research results indicate that Polish customers take advantage of geolocation out of curiosity and for fun. Over the last year geolocation in Poland has grown at a rapid rate. It turns out that, by this time, there has been a sharp increase in both the number of places in which they registered at, and the number of registrations. Services are created to allow users to "check in" at selected locations and inform friends, producing at the same time a mobile map of interesting places. Also, advertising projections indicate that more and more budgets will be directed toward mobile advertising. Marketing communication based on the geolocation means presenting the content of marketing message, depending on preferences and location of recipients. Tools for implementation of such kind of activity are:

- geo-location based services (location-based services LBS) - mobile applications such as "Foursquare" service,
- communication technology (Near-Field Communications NFC) - technical solutions enabling the exchange of information between mobile devices at close distances,
- geo-location based advertising (location-based advertising LBA) - presentation of advertisements based on users' location.

⁶⁶ Own elaboration based on: <http://www.websearchfactory.pl/slownik-pozycjonowania-i-e-marketingu/geolokalizacja/>

⁶⁷ <http://www.webopedia.com/TERM/G/geolocation.html>

⁶⁸ Own elaboration based on: <http://socialpress.pl/2011/06/geolokalizacja-w-polsce-korzystamy-z-ciekawosci-i-dla-zabawy/>

⁶⁹ For more information see: <http://socialpress.pl/2012/01/geolokalizacja-w-polsce-rozwija-sie-w-zawrotnym-tempie/>

⁷⁰ Own elaboration based on: <http://interaktywnie.com/biznes/artykuly/biznes/geolokalizacja-po-polsku-meldujemy-sie-coraz-chetniej-17400>

⁷¹ For more information see: http://www.web.gov.pl/aktualnosci/19_1540.html

Geolocation based applications are an increasingly popular trend in mobile marketing. Analyst firm “mobileSQUARED” predicts, that the European market for mobile advertising will be worth \$ 1 billion by the end of 2014. A similar company “eMarketer” forecasts, that the global mobile advertising market in 2013 will reach \$ 6.9 billion.⁷²

QR codes are another innovation, which may have a more common application in marketing communication in the future. QR codes are two-dimensional barcodes that can be read by many cell phones and smartphones. The codes, which are small squares with black and white patterns, appear in a variety of places, such as magazines and newspaper ads, outdoor ads, leaflets, packages etc.. A QR code is used to encode some sort of information, such as text or a URL. The QR code main objective is the condensation of large amount of information in a compact form. High-volume information codes contributed to their development beyond the automotive industry, where they were used originally. The QR Code allows you to quickly view on a smartphone or tablet screen the web page, photo or video, depending on what you want to promote. But you need a special application that the user has to download to his/her mobile device. Abroad, QR codes have become quite popular but in Poland this trend is just starting, and, this year it is unlikely to be quite impressive both for companies and users. In the future there's bound to be an increase of this form in marketing communications, but not for now. No doubt, it will be an interesting addition - not going beyond a niche.

“Augmented reality” may also be perceived as some sort of innovation in marketing communications, and may probably develop more intensively in the future communication practices. “Augmented reality” (AR) refers to the technology that offers a real-time view of one's immediate surroundings altered or enhanced by computer generated information. When users examine their environment through AR devices, they see information superimposed on the objects around them”. AR is the way to enhance one's current perception of reality with computer-generated sensory input such as sound, video, graphics, or GPS data. That information appears as an “overlay” to our real-world view as one can see it through a viewfinder, webcam, smartphone, etc.. According to another definition, “augmented reality is a type of virtual reality that aims to duplicate the world's environment on a computer. An augmented reality system generates a composite view for the user that is the combination of the real scene viewed by the user and a virtual scene generated by the computer that augments the scene with additional information. The virtual scene generated by the computer is designed to enhance the user's sensory perception of the virtual world he/she is seeing or interacting with.

The goal of Augmented Reality is to create a system in which the user cannot tell the difference between the real world and the virtual augmentation of it. Today Augmented Reality is used in entertainment, military training, engineering design, robotics, manufacturing and other industries”. There are various techniques for using augmented reality for marketing communications.

- Detection of specific symbols (markers),

⁷² http://www.web.gov.pl/aktualnosci/19_1540.html

⁷³ <http://cellphones.about.com/od/phoneglossary/g/QR-Codes.htm>

⁷⁴ Own elaboration based on: <http://wiadomosci.mediaron.pl/artykul/marketing-marketing,kody-qr---dlugi-marsz-do-sukcesu,42105,2,1,1.html>

⁷⁵ Own elaboration based on <http://interaktywnie.com/biznes/artykuly/mobile/kody-qr-dobre-w-teorii-w-praktyce-sie-nie-sprawdzaja-22472>

⁷⁶ Own elaboration based on:

<http://interaktywnie.com/biznes/artykuly/mobile/kody-qr-dobre-w-teorii-w-praktyce-sie-nie-sprawdzaja-22472>. For more information on possibilities of using qr codes in marketing communications see:

<http://wiadomosci.mediaron.pl/artykul/marketing-marketing,kody-qr---dlugi-marsz-do-sukcesu,42105,2,1,1.html> and

<http://storybailey.hubpages.com/hub/How-to-use-QR-Codes-in-Marketing-Communications>

⁷⁷ <http://lexicon.ft.com/Term?term=augmented-reality>

⁷⁸ <http://www.imediaconnection.com/content/31213.asp>

⁷⁹ http://www.webopedia.com/TERM/A/Augmented_Reality.html

⁸⁰ For more information see: <http://marketing.org.pl/index.php/go=2/act=2/w=1/aid=m4b1c1b29717fe>

- Face detection,
- Determine the direction (compass, accelerometer, GPS) and geographical coordinates (GPS),
- Motion detection.

Professionals argue that the potential of AR is huge and the scale of using it will grow at a rapid rate. A growing group of marketers open to innovation are trying to pay more attention to consumers, who are bored with traditional communications activities. Marketers try to invent something surprising and new, which has the power to attract customers' interaction and interest.⁸¹ Virtual tours can be the example of another innovation of using the Internet for marketing communications. Virtual tour is a panoramic view or a video simulation of an existing place that can be viewed online, often for travel or vacation-related research. A virtual tour is usually a collection of panoramic images that are played in sequence to view like a moving video with added sound and text effects, or a virtual tour may use models in place of real-life video and images. A virtual tour is designed to give the viewer a more life-like 3D view of the location being presented in the tour. Virtual tours are also popular in the real estate industry where a realistic 3D view of a home or property can be presented to prospective purchasers. A virtual tour may also be called a "panoramic tour". It is a way of promoting attractive places and objects using a modern, interactive visualization technology on the internet. It provides an interesting presentation to residents, visitors or customers. "Virtual walk" is a big step for Internet marketing and marketing communications techniques. It allows to obtain information about any place that is presented by interconnected photo panoramas. Each panorama can present freely selected area or the inside of a building. Putting a virtual walk on the websites can show the promoted object to any interested person. Virtual walk may present cultural attractions, landscapes and culinary attractions as well as economic sectors or information for potential investors. Social media marketing communication is related to using social networking for marketing purposes. In general, social media are specific communication channels, which enable the interaction between Web users. They include using forms such as blogs, forums, discussion groups, podcasts, emails, instant messaging, VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol), sharing music, videos and photos. Marketing communication activities in the social media generally focus on creating content that will attract users' attention and encourage them to share it with friends. Business materials are sent from user to user, and because they come from a reliable source, they are more credible. Nowadays it is more and more popular to use for marketing purposes some universal social services such as Facebook or Twitter and business services (e.g. LinkedIn) or other professional services. Social media advertising is the most dynamic sector in digital advertising business.

Online product placement is another innovative way of using the Internet for marketing communications purposes. In general, product placement is a communication technique that involves arranging for an advertiser's product to appear in use or at least be clearly visible during a movie, show, game, videoclip etc. Product Placement has quickly become popular on the Internet, where it occurs in the form of banner ads in online games, blogs, discussion forums, and articles published on the websites. As the web surfer can decide whether or not to read the article or watch other internet content (contrary to TV). Normally, people read or watch something when they feel and express such a need. This situation favors the development of online product placement and makes it extremely effective here. In 2014 online product placements are expected to lead the category of overall product placement. Sometimes "advergaming" is treated as a particular form of product placement, but it is totally devoted to a particular brand and represents a more advanced

⁸¹ Own elaboration based on: <http://interaktywnie.com/kreacja/artykuly/projektowanie-interakcji/rzeczywistosc-rozszerzona-zaczelo-sie-od-zabawy-10420>

⁸² http://www.webopedia.com/TERM/V/virtual_tour.html

⁸³ Own elaboration based on: <http://www.ispacer.pl/>

⁸⁴ Own elaboration based on: <http://socialmedia.pl/tag/spoleczne-media-definicja/>

⁸⁵ <http://www.adweek.com/news/advertising-branding/trends-social-media-advertising-135802>

⁸⁶ N.A. Govoni, Dictionary of Marketing Communications, Sage Publications 2004, s. 170

⁸⁷ For more information see: <http://portalmedialny.pl/art/15677/product-placement-bardziej-skuteczny-w-internecie.html>

⁸⁸ <http://www.bizreport.com/2010/07/forecast-online-product-placement-to-outpace-television.html#>

form. Advergame is “an online video game that promotes a particular brand, product, or marketing message by integrating it into the game.”

Conclusions

Research results indicate that, in companies, the Internet is used more intensively for external communications than for internal communications. In the case of individuals, we can observe a dynamic increase of using smartphones and laptops for the Internet access. Although in 2010 the level of using such devices was not high it is expected to grow rapidly for the Internet related activities of individuals. The rapid development of the internet stimulates more intense and sophisticated activities in the field of internal and external marketing communications. These latter are stimulated also by the changing behaviour of individuals who have the tendency to switch their activity to Internet related fields. They take advantage of new possibilities and opportunities offered by the Internet – reading the online press, watching the web TV, listening to the webradio etc. The growing importance of the virtual world in consumers’ lives attracts the growing attention of business to broader and more innovative uses of the internet in marketing communication activities. We can expect intensification of online product placements, geolocating strategies, AR applications and social media advertising in marketing communications activities.

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SUMMARY

The aim of the article is to present the new trends to use the internet in marketing communications by companies in Europe as well as to discuss the future possibilities of this medium from a business perspective. The huge development of this communication channel leads to some changes in marketing communication practices, which result in moving a lot of communication activities from traditional media to new ones. Although the internet is not something new, it has become very popular so it requires some new approaches from a marketing communication’s perspective and it also stimulates some innovations and new concepts of exchanging the information with target groups. Additionally, the changing behaviour of potential audiences who have the tendency to transfer a lot of their activities “to” the Internet (like reading the press, watching TV etc.) requires some fresh ideas about how to use the potential of this medium in business. The article is based on secondary data delivered by Eurostat, as well as on some findings and conclusions of the author coming from both her theoretical studies and her own quantitative and qualitative research. This article is an attempt to present the scope of using the Internet in marketing communications by companies in different European countries (comparative analysis), innovative ways of using the internet in marketing communications, and the future of the internet in business.

⁸⁹ <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/advergame>