

# The Effectiveness of Direct Marketing Media Regarding Attitudes of Different Target Groups of Consumers in Serbia

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## Abstract

The characteristics of a given target market are one of the main factors that need to be considered when selecting media to transmit a promotional message and achieve successful advertising. The authors of this paper will present the effectiveness of direct marketing media for different age groups of consumers in Serbia, with the aim of proposing a promotional-media mix of direct marketing media for consumers in different age categories. The aim of the research is to find out which direct marketing media are the most effective and which media are most suitable to respondents as members of a particular target group depending on their age and in relation to consumer habits. Effectiveness was observed on the basis of the frequency of reading promotional advertisements via direct marketing media in relation to the age of respondents.

## Keywords

direct marketing media, effectiveness, communication effects, consumers, age categories

## 1 Introduction

Direct marketing is used to build and maintain partner relationships with current and potential consumers by providing them with satisfaction, and with benefits to the organisation. Through direct marketing, organisations can communicate with their customers directly by omitting marketing channels. "Direct marketing is marketing through various advertising media that interact directly with consumers, generally calling for the consumers to make a direct response" (Kotler et al., 1999:p.910). "Direct marketing techniques are not just communication devices, they are also safe channels in their own right. For example, many companies use direct channels to sell their products. Direct marketing includes catalogues, telemarketing, fax, the Internet and more. Thanks to technological breakthroughs, people can now communicate through traditional media, such as newspapers, radio, telephone and television, as well as through newer types of media (e.g. fax machines, cellular phones, computers)" (Kotler et al., 1999:p.757). Today customers can order a variety of products via the Internet and social media in just a click or two, since many pages related to products have direct links for sales of those products or direct options of buying on the pages themselves.

"Direct marketing provides tangible forms of targeting and the acquisition of competitive advantage, which enables more precise and more accurate measurement of its effects" (Kocić and Senić, 2010:p.87). "The most important decisions regarding targeting relate to the evaluation of the most attractive consumers, active and passive ones, in order to grade the best prospects which will be used to send promotional messages with the expectation of maximum results" (Guido et al., 2011:p.997). "There has been a shift from mass marketing to niche marketing, then to individual marketing, while today we are dealing with post-modern marketing, which is being used to create differences rather than identify similarities" (Cluley and Brown, 2015:p.115). Since the financial resources intended for the promotion (advertising) of a company are limited, it is necessary to carefully consider the efficiency of the selected promotional mix, i.e. the media of communication, as well as their effectiveness regarding different market segments being targeted. In order to examine the effectiveness of direct marketing media, one of the methods used is consumer research. It is used as a prerequisite for a successful marketing strategy in order to obtain information on consumers' habits and preferences in terms of the

use of direct marketing media. When it comes to expressing the effectiveness of the media, both communication and sales effects are taken into account.

The choice of media is influenced by: media characteristics, adaptability to product/service, the scope and characteristics of the reached target group, the costs that different types of advertising media require. In this paper the choice of media depending on the scope and characteristics of the reached target group will be considered. Kotler et al. (2006) emphasize the characteristics of the target market as one of the factors influencing the choice of media, while each of subpopulations has its own favourite, less favourite and unpopular media.

The subject of this paper is consideration of the effectiveness of direct marketing media regarding different age groups of consumers – their preferences of certain direct marketing media (for obtaining information and ordering/purchasing). The aim of the paper is to propose a promotional mix of direct marketing media for consumers of age categories, based on the results of empirical research conducted in Serbia, from the perspective of consumers. The research has measured perceived variables that does not measure actual behavior but attitudes of consumers. The hypotheses of this paper are:

- Null hypothesis  $H_0$ : There is no statistically significant difference between the respondents by age in relation to the variables about frequency of reading/following promotional content (ads) by direct marketing media.
- Alternative hypothesis  $H_1$ : There is a statistically significant difference in respondents' responses by age in relation to the variables about frequency of reading/following promotional content (ads) by traditional direct marketing media (newspaper/magazine, leaflet, that require a direct response from consumers, than, catalogue, direct mail, radio, telephone, TV shop).
- Alternative hypothesis  $H_2$ : There is a statistically significant difference in respondents' responses by age in relation to the variables about frequency of reading/following promotional content (ads) by Internet-based direct marketing media – email and websites.
- Alternative hypothesis  $H_3$ : There is a statistically significant difference in respondents' responses by age in relation to the variables about frequency of reading/following promotional content (ads) by Internet-based direct marketing media – social networks: Facebook and Instagram.

## 2 Traditional and internet-based direct marketing media

At the beginning of the application of direct marketing, direct mail was mainly used, while today many other media are being used, both traditional ones - daily newspapers, magazines, catalogues, radio, telephone, television, as well as those based on the interactive media. The technological revolution in the telecommunication area, as well as the new lifestyle, has enabled the emergence of the sale of products and services via mobile phones, while advertising through social networks is also extremely popular.

Direct marketing of printed media is becoming increasingly less applied. That is, the marketing of direct mail is greatly being transformed into a form of email marketing, while the typical catalogue marketing is being replaced by internet marketing, just as newspapers and magazines are increasingly more presented in electronic form. The profitability of newspapers is considerably lower compared to electronic media - television and the Internet. People are increasingly turning to the Internet, where newspapers and magazines have found their place. "Social media alternatives to newspapers, for both news and advertising, have profoundly eroded the economic viability and social position of newspapers" (Katz, 2011:p.51). A profound and precise fragmentation of market, which is enabled by internet marketing and whose final outcome is seen as "one person – one segment", allows the transition from mass marketing to micromarketing. Internet marketing may be defined as "the use of the Internet as a virtual store where products are sold directly to consumers" (Corley et al., 2013:p.177).

Today, "audience targeting is synonymous with online advertising" (Benjamin, 2017). The great advantage of interactive media lies in real-time adaptation (personalisation), which implies dynamic adaptation of advertising messages in a real time frame and which is based on information obtained from targeted consumers or from the situation caused by the interaction between consumers and bidders, i.e. the advertising system (Bauer and Lasinger, 2014). Furthermore, it has been proven that personalisation is successful in terms of increasing the effectiveness of advertising, as this has been confirmed by advertising research, given that the customers who pay more attention to adverts are more likely to feel more useful and memorise the content of adverts much better. Yet, one survey has shown that consumers may react negatively to adverts if they become aware of personalisation. In some cases personalisation is limited due to private settings, so it is not always possible (Bauer and Lasinger, 2014).

In recent years, new media channels, such as Facebook, YouTube, Google and Twitter, have become popular, as well as a new generation of mobile phones which enables consumers to take on a more active role in the market. Facebook is the most commonly used social platform, and takes up 80 % of the market share, according to data from 2016. For now, Facebook has the best options for targeting (demographically), according to the place of residence, gender, age, and interests (Gingerich, 2016; GlobalStats – Statcounter, 2016). In January 2017, in the USA, Agency Sprout Social has conducted research on the topic of social networks, and found out that Facebook is the most popular social network of all generations (Generation X, Generation Y – Millennials, Baby-boomers), although in younger generations it is not as dominant as in the older (Sprout Social, 2017).

Back in 2010, Danaher et al., as a result of their research, strongly recommend that Internet media should be used in media planning (Danaher et al., 2010). "In addition to the quality of the campaign itself, it is equally important to choose the social network through which it will reach the desired target groups" (Drummey, 2017).

The essence of the Internet media can be summarised in two words: integration and interaction. Consumers no longer receive passively information regarding a brand through traditional mass media, and they do not memorise them in case they need them later. Instead, they rather actively look for what they need, when needed, via search tools, mobile phones, blogs and websites. "Social media allow organisations to communicate by establishing personal relationships at the same time. It is possible to establish a dialogue with consumers, respond promptly to complaints and adjust the offer individually to each consumer" (Rapp et al., 2013:p.553). Social media led to the emergence of viral marketing that can be "an effective marketing technique of social networks, as it can trigger a chain of reactions guided by word of mouth" (Mochalova and Nanopoulos, 2014:p.283). Therefore, Internet and social media can be perceived as direct marketing communication tools.

"Unlike traditional advertising methods, nowadays a larger number of consumers can be reached via Facebook advertisements, banners or display ads, as well as paid or organic search ads" (Batra and Keller, 2016:p.122). "Paid search was the largest internet advertising channel until 2015, when it was overtaken by display. Much of its recent growth has come from innovations in mobile and location-based search, and the future growth will come from adapting search ads to voice-activated personal

assistants like Siri and Alexa" (Zenith Media, 2017). According to Batra and Keller (2016), the online communication options of a particular interest to the research are websites, email, mobile phones and social media. Social media advertising is the fastest-growing component of internet advertising – it grew 51 % in 2016, and Zenith Media (2017) forecast it to grow at an average rate of 20 % a year to 2019, and according to the results of this agency (2017), growth of investment in mobile internet advertising on the global level (81,753 billion USD) indicates that social media has great potential, and should be included in the marketing strategy of each organisation.

From a companies' perspective, the advantage of Internet-based media is also reflected in updating customer databases and creating offers that are in line with consumer needs and preferences. From the consumers' point of view, Internet media enable the creation of networks that allow information sharing, giving advice and commenting, while consumers themselves become authors and distributors of content. According to research results, more than 90 % of all consumers read online reviews before purchasing a product, and most commonly web sites, email and social media are being used (Leeflang et al., 2014). Email is one of the oldest digital media still in use, and by combining it with social media, in order to more efficiently target new consumers and more importantly retain existing consumers, a useful digital marketing tool is formed (Staton, 2016).

The effects of traditional marketing are declining, as confirmed by Srinivasan et al. (2016), who have studied the impact of traditional marketing and online marketing on consumer activity. It has been concluded that online marketing (clicks on paid ads, website visits, and Facebook likes) significantly affects more consumers' attitudes compared to advertising on TV. Only 5 % of consumer activity comes from promotion through television (Srinivasan et al., 2016). According to Risselada et al. (2014) and Sethuraman et al. (2011), the effectiveness of traditional direct marketing media has decreased in many markets and consumers avoid these forms of media. Although traditional media (newspapers, magazines, radio and TV) continue to be used for advertising, interaction through social media is becoming an increasingly important factor in digital strategies (Strauß and Jonkman, 2017).

Marketers continue to invest more in digital media since the price of traditional media is usually much higher (Web Strategies, 2016). On the other hand, generally from the consumer's point of view, the time spent on consuming

online media is continuously increasing, while the time spent on consuming traditional media is continuously decreasing (Web Strategies, 2016).

As stated in the results of the global survey of social media Wave8 (8<sup>th</sup> in a row) from 2014 (Universal Media, 2014), for the first time since this research has been performed, smart phones are used by a higher percentage of users to access social media, compared to desktop computers, tablets and mobile phones of older generations. Globally, the use of media had increased on average from 461.8 minutes per day in 2010 to 485.3 minutes per day in 2014. Over the years, the total time spent on the Internet has almost doubled, from an average of 59.6 to 109.5 minutes per day, while the time devoted to traditional media had been reduced from 402.2 to 375.8 minutes (Zenith Media, 2015). According to the predictions of Zenith Media, the total time spent on media worldwide will continue to grow annually by 1.4 %. They believe the Internet usage will increase at a rate of 9.8 per year and that it will reach 144.8 minutes per day.

Although online communication may have a greater impact than mass communication, mass media may be stronger stimulators. From the practice of business and advertising, it can be noted that "marketers usually combine online and offline communication media to achieve synergy" (Batra and Keller, 2016:pp.127–128).

### 3 The methodology of the research

The quantitative statistical methods used in the analysis are descriptive and comparative statistics (regression and correlation). The data processing and interpretations of results were performed by using the SPSS – Statistical Package for the Social Sciences.

A survey was conducted in the period June to July 2017. The target group were the citizens of the Republic of Serbia aged 15 to 64, and who were surveyed as consumers in order to examine what their habits and preferences were in regard to the use of direct marketing media in terms of obtaining

information about products/services, companies and ordering/purchasing online. The frequency of using direct marketing media for obtaining information and buying/ordering was examined in order to reach the conclusions which media were effective for specific target groups of consumers by age categories. A five-step Likert scale was used, consisting of five offered answers in the form of statements, rated from 1 to 5, where 1 meant *never*, 2 *rarely*, 3 *sometimes*, 4 *often*, and 5 *almost always*. Consumer habits and attitudes regarding the frequency of certain behavior were examined with a questionnaire, which was used in two forms: an online questionnaire (a link was sent to the respondents) and a questionnaire of the same content in printed form (which was given to the respondents). The sample is stratified, and it consists of 1,532 respondents (with a statistical error of 2.5 %). The structure of respondents according to age corresponds to the proportions by age stated in the Statistical Yearbook of the Republic of Serbia 2016 (Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, 2016), which ensures the representativeness of the sample. The respondents aged 15 to 64 were divided into five categories. The distribution of respondents by age category, in relation to the number of citizens in the Serbia, is given in Table 1.

### 4 Research results

In Table 2, results of the research are shown about testing the statistically significant correlation between respondents of different ages, compared to variables related to the frequency of reading promotional contents of direct marketing media and frequency of ordering via them.

It has been found that the influence of the age of respondents to the frequency of ordering the products via the TV shop ( $R^2 = 0.105$ ,  $p = 0.00 < 0.05$ , 10.5 % variability of depending variable – the frequency of ordering via the TV shop, is determined by the influence of the age of the respondents), as well as the statistically significant correlation between the variables, i.e. the age of the respondents and the frequency of ordering the products offered via the

**Table 1** The distribution of respondents by age category in relation to the number of citizens in the RS

Categories by age:	Population in RS	Population in RS (%)	The number of respondents	The number of respondents (%)
I category: 15–24	841,735	17 %	307	20 %
II category: 25–34	976,648	20 %	314	20 %
III category: 35–44	963,862	20 %	307	20 %
IV category: 45–54	1,004,330	20 %	287	19 %
V category: 55–64	1,124,693	23 %	317	21 %
Total	4,911,268	100 %	1,532	100 %

Source: The results of the empirical research conducted by the authors of the paper

**Table 2** Testing statistically significant correlation between respondents of different ages in relation to next questions – dependent variables

Dependent variables	Error risk	<i>p</i>	Pearson Correlation
I pay attention to parts in newspapers/magazines where products/services are promoted.	0.01	0.000*	0.188
If I come across an interesting offer of products/services in the newspapers or magazine, I put aside that part of the newspaper and put it in a special place.	0.01	0.000*	0.197
I cut the coupons from the newspapers/magazines and send them hoping to get a reward, i.e. I use them for a discount.	-	0.367	0.023
When a leaflet is found in my hand, I read what it says.	-	0.246	0.030
I am interested in envelope letters which offer products and I read them.	0.01	0.000*	0.146
I respond positively to the received letters (I order the offered product).	-	0.936	0.002
I buy products from catalogues.	0.01	0.000*	-0.096
I listen to what is offered to me and I buy some of the offered products, i.e. I become a user of the offered service by telephone.	0.01	0.000*	0.101
I positively react to the promo message that arrives on my mobile phone (I am interested in more details).	-	0.866	-0.004
I listen carefully to promotional jingles on the radio.	-	0.241	0.030
I watch the TV shop.	0.01	0.006*	0.071
I order products offered via the TV shop.	0.01	0.000*	0.325**
I visit websites on the Internet in order to obtain information about products/services.	0.01	0.001*	-0.088
I click on banners on websites.	0.01	0.000*	0.128
I order products/services via the Internet.	0.01	0.001*	-0.083
Before buying something, I get informed on the Internet.	-	0.815	-0.006
I only use the Internet to obtain information, and then I go to the store.	0.01	0.000*	0.126
I read absolutely every promotional message that I receive via email.	0.01	0.000*	0.189
I like receiving and reading emails from preferred brands.	-	0.798	-0.007
I am happy to try new products/services of preferred brands that I am offered.	0.01	0.000*	-0.110
I buy products/services promoted via email.	-	0.432	0.020
I have a Facebook profile and I visit this social network.	0.01	0.000*	-0.409**
I follow Facebook pages that I like.	0.01	0.000*	-0.420**
I order products/services via Facebook.	0.01	0.000*	-0.203
I have an Instagram profile and I visit it.	0.01	0.000*	-0.517**
I follow Instagram pages that I like.	0.01	0.000*	-0.531**
I order products/services via Instagram.	0.01	0.000*	-0.283

Source: The results of the empirical research conducted by the authors of the paper

\* It is marked with the asterisk where the correlation is taken into consideration ( $p < 0.05$ ).

\*\* It is marked with two asterisks where the correlation is a statistically significant (at least medium strength - values greater than 0.30 or less than -0.30, and weak correlations are neglected).

TV shop (Pearson Correlation = 0.325, for a confidence interval of 99 % and the risk of error 1 %, where the correlation is positive and medium by strength, which means that the frequency of ordering via the TV shop increases in parallel with the age of the respondents).

It has been found that the influence of the age of respondents to the frequency of visiting Facebook ( $R^2 = 0.167$ ,  $p = 0.00 < 0.05$ , 16.7 % variability of depending variable is determined by the influence of the age of the respondents) and to the frequency of following Facebook pages ( $R^2 = 0.177$ ,  $p = 0.00 < 0.05$ , 17.7 % variability of depending variable is determined by the influence of the age of the respondents), as well as the statistically significant correlation

between age of the respondents and the frequency of visiting Facebook (Pearson Correlation = -0.409), and between the age and the frequency of following Facebook pages (Pearson Correlation = -0.420), where the correlations are negative and medium in strength, which means that the frequency of visiting Facebook and following Facebook pages increase when the respondents are younger).

It has been found that there is an influence of the age of respondents to the frequency of visits to Instagram ( $R^2 = 0.267$ ,  $p = 0.00 < 0.05$ , 26.7 % variability of depending variable is determined by the influence of the age of the respondents) and to the frequency of following Instagram ages ( $R^2 = 0.282$ ,  $p = 0.00 < 0.05$ , 28.2 % variability of

depending variable is determined by the influence of the age of the respondents), as well as the statistically significant correlation between the age of the respondents and the frequency of visiting Instagram (Pearson Correlation =  $-0.517$ ), and between the age and the frequency of following Instagram pages (Pearson Correlation =  $-0.531$ ), where the correlations are negative and medium by strength, which means that the frequency of visiting Instagram and following Instagram pages increase when the respondents are younger.

Based on the values of the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ), it is apparent that the influence of the age of respondents on the frequency of consumption of a particular direct marketing media increases as the media is "younger". For example, the influence of the age of respondents on the

frequency of following pages on Instagram is almost twice as big as the influence of the age of respondents on the frequency of following pages on Facebook, which is logical because new media, especially Instagram, are used more by young people than those in middle age or older.

In all other considered relations, the influence of the age of respondents on dependent variables is negligible, and there is no statistically significant correlations.

In the Table 3, the distribution of respondents by age category is presented on issues related to the effectiveness of direct marketing media. Mean values are presented in Table 3 and calculated on the basis of minimum and maximum values, which range from 1 to 5 for each issue, without exception.

**Table 3** The distribution of respondents by age category regarding the effectiveness of direct marketing media

Questions in the form of statements	Mean 15–24	Mean 25–34	Mean 35–44	Mean 45–54	Mean 55–64
I pay attention to parts in newspapers/magazines where products/services are promoted.	1.95	2.28	2.39	2.65	2.43
If I come across an interesting offer of products/services in the newspapers or magazine, I put aside that part of the newspaper and put it in a special place.	1.54	1.65	1.91	1.82	2.21
I cut the coupons from the newspapers/magazines and send them hoping to get a reward, i.e. I use them for a discount.	1.41	1.38	1.51	1.37	1.48
When a leaflet is found in my hand, I read what it says.	3.19*	3.50*	3.46*	3.35*	3.28*
I am interested in envelope letters which offer products and I read them.	1.93	2.16	2.42	2.44	2.33
I respond positively to the received letters (I order the offered product).	1.46	1.34	1.43	1.44	1.42
I buy products from catalogues.	2.21	2.13	2.14	2.07	1.88
I listen to what is offered to me and I buy some of the offered products, i.e. I become a user of the offered service by telephone.	1.49	1.46	1.43	1.68	1.70
I positively react to the promo message that arrives on my mobile phone (I am interested in more details).	1.86	2.15	2.20	2.31	1.71
I listen carefully to promotional jingles on the radio.	1.87	1.97	2.01	2.06	1.89
I watch the TV shop.	1.50	1.35	1.48	1.46	1.65
I order products offered via the TV shop.	1.26	1.36	1.45	1.55	2.49
I visit websites on the Internet in order to obtain information about products/services.	3.55*	4.32*	4.40*	4.13*	2.96
I click on banners on websites.	1.87	2.05	2.47	2.27	2.23
I order products/services via the Internet.	2.68	3.23*	3.31*	2.59	2.50
Before buying something, I get informed on the Internet.	3.53*	4.16*	4.32*	3.91*	3.45*
I only use the Internet to obtain information, and then I go to the store.	3.44*	3.72*	3.74*	3.89*	3.76*
I read absolutely every promotional message that I receive via email.	1.91	2.06	2.18	2.85	2.29
I like receiving and reading emails from preferred brands.	2.31	2.40	2.49	2.72	2.15
I am happy to try new products/services of preferred brands that I am offered.	2.48	2.56	2.72	2.60	2.01
I buy products/services promoted via email.	1.63	2.01	2.04	1.82	1.73
I have a Facebook profile and I visit this social network.	4.00*	4.28*	4.13*	2.99	2.23
I follow Facebook pages that I like.	3.64*	3.90*	3.56*	2.50	1.77
I order products/services via Facebook.	1.83	2.07	1.89	1.45	1.24
I have an Instagram profile and I visit it.	3.86*	3.19*	2.37	1.78	1.34
I follow Instagram pages that I like.	3.63*	2.89	2.18	1.49	1.17
I order products/services via Instagram.	1.91	1.49	1.89	1.12	1.17

Source: The results of the empirical research conducted by the authors of the paper

\* Values greater than 3.00 are marked with an asterisk.

According to the Table 3, it can be seen that the Internet, flyers (printed media), Facebook and Instagram are noted as the most effective direct marketing media in terms of communication effects for respondents aged 15 to 24, and it is the most effective investment of funds in the mentioned media for consumers aged 15 to 24. For each question regarding the effectiveness of the media, the mean value has been calculated, in the Table 3, where the values of media which containing at least one value higher than 3.00 are considered for the observed media, in order to highlight the more effective media.

According to Table 3, it can be seen that the Internet (in terms of communication and sales effects), flyers, Facebook and Instagram are noted as the most effective direct marketing media types for respondents aged 25 to 34. By means of flyers, it is possible to achieve only communication effects. The results of the survey showed that via Facebook and Instagram only good communication effects can be achieved, and the sales effects are still quite weak via these social networks.

It can be seen that the Internet (in terms of communication and sales effects), flyers and Facebook are noted as the most effective direct marketing media for respondents aged 35 to 44, the Internet and flyers are noted as the most effective direct marketing media for respondents aged 45 to 54, and the leaflet and the Internet (in terms of communication effects) are noted as the most effective direct marketing media types for respondents aged 55 to 64.

The summarized results regarding the most effective direct marketing media for all target groups of consumers, according the age category, are presented in Table 4.

In line with the presented results of the survey, it can be noted that the Internet is the most prominent direct marketing medium (that is, used for the purpose of information search and ordering), regardless the age category. The oldest (55+) believe that a leaflet is more effective in terms of providing information to consumers. Generally, after the Internet, the leaflet has relatively high communication effects for all categories, followed by social networks - Facebook and

Instagram, which are most commonly used among respondents, aged 15 to 35, while Facebook is also present among respondents of III category.

### 5 Conclusion

Since digital technology has become an integral part of our lives, it is speculated whether the disappearance of traditional media will follow due to the intense spread of the Internet. It is logical that certain old forms are replaced with new ones if they are intended for the same purpose, but if viewed from the users' perspective, it is evident that people use different forms of media to meet their needs according to their preferences. No medium can be an absolute alternative to another, as each has its own specific characteristics (advantages and disadvantages in terms of advertising), and it is often used in combination with some other media, that is due to its specific characteristics. Adopting a new medium does not necessarily imply abandoning the old one.

Deciding to choose two or more media has far more advantages than using only one medium in terms of not only coverage but also the different ways of accepting a promotional message. The combination of direct marketing media provides far more powerful effects. In time, consumers develop their own preferences, habits and behaviour, as a result of communication of various sources. Thus, while planning certain media and implementing promotional activities, one should keep in mind that different forms of communication are approached in an integrative way.

The survey results showed that the leaflet, as a printed direct marketing medium, has very good communication effects in the world of digital technologies. Thus, only a leaflet stands out in terms of communication performance among all traditional direct marketing media, according to consumers of all the surveyed age categories (from 15 to 64). Another survey in Hungary has shown that the leaflet has very good advertising effects on university students, better than newspaper and radio and a bit weaker than a TV spot (Süle, 2012). When it comes to Internet

**Table 4** The most effective direct marketing media according to the age categories

Age categories	15–24 (I category)	25–34 (II category)	35–44 (III category)	45–54 (IV category)	55–64 (V category)
Media	Google Ads	Google Ads	Google Ads	Google Ads	Google Ads
	Leaflet	Leaflet	Leaflet	Leaflet	Leaflet
	Facebook	Facebook	Facebook	-	-
	Instagram	Instagram	-	-	-

Source: The results of the empirical research conducted by the authors of the paper

media, it has been shown that consumers generally surf the Internet to a great extent, and accordingly investing in Google Ads would be rather effective. Still, the younger population in Serbia finds social networks to be attractive in terms of visiting them, following pages on Facebook and Instagram, which also suggests the allocation of a certain amount of funds for ads on social networks.

Based on Table 2, it is concluded that the alternative hypothesis  $H_1$  has not been confirmed - it was found that there is no statistically significant difference in the responses of respondents of different ages compared to the variables related to the frequency of consuming the promotional contents of traditional direct marketing media. The alternative hypothesis  $H_2$  has not been confirmed - it was found that there is no statistically significant difference in the responses of respondents of different ages compared to the variables related to the frequency of reading ads via email and websites. The alternative hypothesis  $H_3$  has been confirmed - it was found that there is a statistically significant difference in the responses of respondents of different ages compared to the variables related to the frequency of reading ads via Facebook and Instagram. As one alternative hypotheses ( $H_3$ ) has been confirmed, the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) has been automatically rejected - there is statistically significant difference between the respondents by age in relation to the variables regarding the frequency of consuming ads via the direct marketing media.

Based on the research results, it has been concluded that investing in Google Ads in Serbia would be effective, since it has been confirmed that the Internet is a medium which enables excellent communication and sales performance for all respondents regardless the age category. From the perspective of younger consumers (aged from 15 to 34) in Serbia, investing in Google Ads, Facebook, Instagram and printed flyers is the most effective; while for the consumers aged 35 to 44, it's most effective to invest in Google Ads, Facebook and flyers, and for the consumers aged 45 to 64, Google Ads and a leaflet are the most effective.

It is necessary to point out that marketing communication, apart from the effectiveness of direct marketing media, also depends on the effectiveness of the promotional message that is being transmitted via these media. Also, in order to achieve the desired effects of direct communication with consumers, it is necessary to pay special attention to the message content. Furthermore, the choice of media for transmitting a promotional message is based on the preferences of the target audience regarding a medium, while the impact of other factors

influencing the choice of media has not been considered (the promoted product, the intended message to be transmitted and the costs of individual media). Accordingly, the obtained research results for target groups according to age should be considered as indicative values (guidelines) in the marketing planning process, i.e. the obtained results may serve as a significant information that can be useful for modeling optimal direct marketing campaigns – using "econometric models of marketing effectiveness which has grown substantially over the last few decades" (Hanssens et al., 2005:p.432) for different target groups of consumers in Serbia and in neighbouring countries (because they have a similar aspect of social, cultural and economic development), according to their age. Every country, region and continent has some specifics regarding customer behavior in terms of marketing, media, culture and etc. Therefore, the research made in one specific country – Serbia can be put in international context since the countries of Balkans, especially countries of ex Yugoslavia have similar markets and cultures.

It is clear that different generations and target groups use different direct marketing media. The emergence of new media, especially social networks, in addition to introducing new items, has changed these relationships, so continuing research dealing this topic is important for marketing practitioners, especially advertisers and sales. In addition, the authors are convinced that the further development of new media and the current picture that will be shown at the regional level by this research will be changed in the future. Therefore, continuous research of this problem is necessary in order to achieve effective and, consequently, efficient business results supported by direct marketing and advertising.

#### **Limitations of the research**

This paper analysed the effectiveness of direct marketing media for different target groups of consumers in the Republic of Serbia, which may be used for modeling optimal direct marketing campaigns for different target groups of consumers, not only in Serbia but also in neighbouring countries that have a (very) similar aspect of social, cultural and economic development. The intensity of use of certain media varies from country to country, therefore research of this type could be useful in other countries as well.

This empirical study examined general consumer acceptance of direct marketing media in Serbia with a large and representative sample. The authors are aware of the limitations that the study did not include an examination of the effectiveness of a given media considering



a specific advertisement as a part of a promotional campaign. A deeper study would include an examination of the acceptance degree of a specific direct marketing medium in terms of the form, content and promotional appeals of the ad, as well as the campaign in terms of the length of the

campaign, the frequency of the adverts, and its affiliation with previous campaigns of the advertiser. The authors believe that this research is a good basis for further research into the mentioned factors affecting effectiveness, and their plan is to present such research next year.

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**Appendix**

Table 5 shows that the most effective direct marketing media for respondents aged 15–24 are: Internet, leaflet (as print media) and social networks - Facebook and Instagram. For each question regarding media effectiveness, mean values have been calculated and they are shown in Table 3, where values (values of media which containing at least one value higher than 3) were considered for the observed media in order to highlight more effective media, and Table 5 is derived. An arithmetic mean was calculated for each of media in Table 5 (taking into account the values related to communication and sales effects, together). Based on the results presented for respondents aged 15–24, the most effective is to invest to advertise with: Google Ads, leaflet (as print media), Facebook and Instagram.

Table 6 shows the most effective direct marketing media for respondents aged 25–34. For each question about media effectiveness, mean values have been calculated and they are shown in Table 3, where values (values of media which containing at least one value higher than 3) were considered for the observed media in order to highlight more effective media, and Table 6 is derived. The arithmetic mean was calculated for each of media in Table 6 (taking into account the values related to communication and sales effects, together). Based on the results presented for respondents aged 25–34, the most effective is to invest to advertise on Internet - Google Ads, Facebook ads, Instagram ads and investing in ads on leaflets.

**Table 5** Distribution of respondents of age 15–24, according to questions regarding the most effective direct marketing media, in terms of communication and sales effects

The most effective media	Questions in form of a statement	Mean	Average
Internet	I visit websites on the Internet in order to obtain information about products/services.	3.55	3.30
	I order products/services via the Internet.	2.68	
	Before buying something, I get informed on the Internet.	3.53	
	I use the Internet only to obtain information, and then I go to the store.	3.44	
Leaflet	When a leaflet is found in my hand, I read what it says.	3.19	3.19
Facebook	I have a Facebook profile and I visit this social network.	4.00	3.16
	I follow Facebook pages that I like.	3.64	
	I order products/services via the Facebook.	1.83	
Instagram	I have an Instagram profile and I visit it.	3.86	3.13
	I follow Instagram pages that I like.	3.63	
	I order products/services via the Instagram.	1.91	

Source: The results of the empirical research conducted by the authors of the paper  
 \* Table 5 is derived from Table 3.

**Table 6** Distribution of respondents of age 25–34, according to questions regarding the most effective direct marketing media, in terms of communication and sales effects

The most effective media	Questions in form of a statement	Mean	Average
Internet	I visit websites on the Internet in order to obtain information about products/services.	4.32	3.86
	I order products/services via the Internet.	3.23	
	Before buying something, I get informed on the Internet.	4.16	
	I use the Internet only to obtain information, and then I go to the store.	3.72	
Leaflet	When a leaflet is found in my hand, I read what it says.	3.50	3.50
Facebook	I have a Facebook profile and I visit this social network.	4.28	3.42
	I follow Facebook pages that I like.	3.90	
	I order products/services via the Facebook.	2.07	
Instagram	I have an Instagram profile and I visit it.	3.19	2.52
	I follow Instagram pages that I like.	2.89	
	I order products/services via the Instagram.	1.49	

Source: The results of the empirical research conducted by the authors of the paper

\* Table 6 is derived from Table 3.

Table 7 shows the most effective direct marketing media for respondents aged 35–44, and based on the results presented in this table, for respondents aged 35–44, the most effective is to invest to advertise with: Google Ads, leaflets and ads on Facebook.

Table 8 shows the most effective direct marketing media for respondents aged 45–54, and based on the results for respondents aged 45–54, the most effective is

to invest to advertising on Internet with Google Ads and to advertising with leaflets.

Table 9 shows the most effective direct marketing media for respondents aged 55–64, and based on the presented results for respondents aged 55–64, the most effective is to invest to advertising with leaflets and on Internet with Google Ads.

**Table 7** Distribution of respondents of age 35–44, according to questions regarding the most effective direct marketing media, in terms of communication and sales effects

The most effective media	Questions in form of a statement	Mean	Average
Internet	I visit websites on the Internet in order to obtain information about products/services.	4.40	3.94
	I order products/services via the Internet.	3.31	
	Before buying something, I get informed on the Internet.	4.32	
	I use the Internet only to obtain information, and then I go to the store.	3.74	
Leaflet	When a leaflet is found in my hand, I read what it says.	3.46	3.46
Facebook	I have a Facebook profile and I visit this social network.	4.13	3.19
	I follow Facebook pages that I like.	3.56	
	I order products/services via the Facebook.	1.89	

Source: The results of the empirical research conducted by the authors of the paper

\* Table 7 is derived from Table 3.

**Table 8** Distribution of respondents of age 45–54, according to questions regarding the most effective direct marketing media, in terms of communication and sales effects

The most effective media	Questions in form of a statement	Mean	Average
Internet	I visit websites on the Internet in order to obtain information about products/services.	4.13	3.63
	I order products/services via the Internet.	2.59	
	Before buying something, I get informed on the Internet.	3.91	
	I use the Internet only to obtain information, and then I go to the store.	3.89	
Leaflet	When a leaflet is found in my hand, I read what it says.	3.35	3.35

Source: The results of the empirical research conducted by the authors of the paper

\* Table 8 is derived from Table 3.

**Table 9** Distribution of respondents of age 55–64, according to questions regarding the most effective direct marketing media, in terms of communication and sales effects

The most effective media	Questions in form of a statement	Mean	Average
Leaflet	When a leaflet is found in my hand, I read what it says.	3.28	3.28
	I visit websites on the Internet in order to obtain information about products/services.	2.96	
Internet	I order products/services via the Internet.	2.50	3.17
	Before buying something, I get informed on the Internet.	3.45	
	I use the Internet only to obtain information, and then I go to the store.	3.76	

Source: The results of the empirical research conducted by the authors of the paper

\* Table 9 is derived from Table 3.