

# Intercultural Differences in the Purchase and Information Behaviour of Young Consumers

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Pressures in the contemporary marketing environment are getting bigger and companies and marketers are required to know consumers and their purchase and information behaviour. In this article we studied the behaviour of consumers and the factors of purchase and information behaviour of young consumers when choosing clothes. We found out about the meaning of individual clothing characteristics having impact on the purchase decision making (price, trademark, fitting of clothing, design, quality, etc.). Consumers receive and look for information at different sources (radio commercials, TV commercials and shows, fashion magazines, catalogue sales, social networks, friends and acquaintances, etc.). With the empiric research we wanted to find out to what measure individual sources influence the purchase decision of an individual. We studied young people aged from 15 to 24 in the countries of the EU (Slovenia, Austria and Germany) and the United States of America. We especially focused on characteristic differences. Knowing intercultural differences is important for global companies of the clothing industry for forming their marketing strategies. On the sample of 440 young people who took part in the survey we found out that intercultural differences exist regarding the influence of individual information sources and regarding the factors of purchase decision making. Considering the stated we propose companies operating in global markets on both continents to prepare differentiated marketing strategies.

**Key words:** consumer behaviour, clothing, marketing strategies, intercultural differences

## 1 Introduction

Consumer purchase behaviour can be defined as behaviour that is demonstrated by consumers when looking for, assessing, purchasing, using and abandoning products and services for which it is expected that they will satisfy the consumer's wishes and needs in the process of change (Solomon et al., 2010). Young people usually adopt new technologies and the newest trends first; they pay remarkable attention to image and besides that they have a relatively high purchasing power (Werbner, 2005). For the clothing industry young people capable of paying are interesting. Young people are to a larger extent independent and self-dependent when making purchase decisions for products which they need (Kroeber-Riel et al., 2009). Research in the world shows that young people are financially well supported, spend irrationally, buy their identity and friendship and they take risks (Solomon, 2011). Besides the specific structure of consumption young people also have specific demands and opinions towards individual products and trademarks. The basic function of clothing is to protect

the body and to have look aesthetic. But clothing is becoming more and more important for today's youth. Clothing also enables identification. Young people nowadays play a central role in fashion as they are in the period of searching for their own identity which is expressed and created through fashion and clothing. They can also be obsessed with their appearance and needs.

In the article we want to answer two basic research questions: what is the importance for young people aged between 15 and 24 from defined EU countries (Slovenia, Austria and Germany) and the USA regarding factors of purchase and information behaviour when purchasing clothing and what is the opinion of the researched population towards fashion clothing. On the basis of the gained results we want to find intercultural differences in the purchase and information behaviour as well as their opinions towards fashion clothing. Culture is reflected as an important factor of purchase decision making. Intercultural differences in the purchase behaviour of consumers on different continents were discovered in more research (Kwan, 2006).

Among the stated countries we compared purchase behaviour to find out if it comes down to intercultural differences. To enter the foreign markets in Austria, Germany and the USA and for the optimum functioning of marketing activities in individual foreign markets it is necessary to know the specificities of their consumers. The results of the quantitative research will be useful for multinational corporations that want to conquer the stated markets. Slovenia was chosen for research as the domestic country. Austria and Germany are important commercial partners for Slovenian companies. Germany with a population of approximately 81 million people also presents the biggest market in the EU. There are more than 9 million young people in the researched age (World Population Prospect, 2011). The market of the USA is interesting for the clothing industry because of its absorption capacity. The USA are the most important trading partner of the EU, the third biggest importer of clothing industry products from the EU and therefore interesting for treating the differences between both continents. According to the data of the UN (World Population Prospects, 2011) there are more than 43 million young people aged between 15 and 24 in the USA and they represent an important market segment (Solomon and Rabolt, 2009). In this article we are finding similarities and differences respectively in the purchase decision making of young consumers. The gained results will be useful for companies especially from the point of differentiation of the marketing functioning on individual markets. We decided to choose the stated countries and continents as there has been no comparison of purchase behaviour of young people choosing clothes among the countries yet. The findings will be an important contribution not only from the scientific point of view but also from a practical one.

## 2 Factors of purchase and information behaviour

Studying factors of purchase and information behaviour is important for the clothing industry from the marketing point of view. Knowing the consumers' marketing needs and understanding their buyers is therefore significant for everybody involved in the production process (Shulz, 2008). Information gained by researching consumers can be used in four areas: marketing mix, segmentation, positioning and differentiation as well as environment analysis and marketing research. Knowing the specific purchase and information behaviour of consumers influences the forming of the marketing mix in companies of the clothing industry. If they want to manufacture commercially successful clothing, experts (designers, marketers and others) have to predict the consumers' taste as well as to understand its target market and to adjust to it in the elements of the marketing mix.

### 2.1 Clothes characteristics and opinions towards fashion clothes

Knowing the factors of purchase decision-making is important in the process of forming marketing strategies and the market-

ing mix for young people's clothes. Numerous authors worked on the factors of purchase decision-making. The consumer's perception of the meaning of different factors of purchase decision-making was measured by numerous researchers in the past (Cassill and Drake, 1987; Zhang et al., 2002), who found 20 characteristics important for the purchase decision-making (colour, comfort, durability, care, label, fitting, style, gender accordance, breathable, trademark, country of origin, price, shop's image, the possibility of usage on different occasions, etc.). They used the Likert scale for measuring whereby one meant very unimportant and five very important. Eckman and others (1990) summed up the factors that influence consumers when choosing clothing from their 21 studies and divided them into 35 extrinsic (price, trademark, country of origin, shop's image, wardrobe accordance, politeness of salespeople, guarantee...) and 52 intrinsic (product composition: style, colour, cut, factory, look, fibre content; product look: care, fitting, durability, comfort, safety, colour; quality: structure, physical, producer; gender accordance). In their research study Forney and others (1999) studied thoroughly the meaning of assessment measures for the acceptance of the purchase decision. They found that 21 factors influence the purchase of clothing: colour, design, trademark, price, comfort, fashionableness, durability, quality, cloth fitting, seller obligingness, maintenance simplicity, country of origin, etc. In the research (Kavčič, 2005) Slovenian consumers attributed the biggest meaning to cloth fitting, comfort, design, etc. A lower value is attributed to the fashionableness of clothing. Adult consumers in the USA give the biggest meaning to cloth fitting, price, cut and colour when making decisions regarding clothing purchase (Lifestyle Monitor, 2009a). Many researchers found that prices are the most important factor when purchasing clothing (Iwanow et al., 2005; Joergens, 2006; Fadiga et al., 2005; North et al., 2003; in Hyllegard et al., 2009). Taylor and Cosenza (2002) in their study found that for older girls the most important criteria for choosing clothes are fitting, look, cut, price and colour.

Young people have different opinions towards fashionable clothes. Some believe that fashionable clothes are of bad quality, made from poor material, not functional and uncomfortable, even bad for health because of the cuts and the material. Successful marketers must be aware of the fact that for young consumers, quality is of essential meaning (Solomon et al., 2009). They also have different opinions towards the prices of fashionable clothes. Some are convinced that the clothing industry (producers) in development and production does not take the wishes of young consumers into consideration. By knowing purchase habits of the young population, producers (clothing industry) design, develop, produce and sell fashionable clothes for young people and form marketing strategies that wake the interest of consumers for a definite sort of product (Kotler, 2004).

### 2.2 Information sources

In the decision making process information and consumer information behaviour play an important role. From the mass of information consumers are faced with daily we should choose important information or signals which would enable

us to make a purchase decision. The meaning of correct, accurate and timely informing has become decisive in all areas of public and private life. Only the informed has the opportunity of sensible decision making and acting (Devetak, 2007). Consumer information behaviour usually starts with the consumers' wish for information and includes a whole range of activities that serve gaining, processing, storing and further passing on of desired information. There are numerous factors which strongly influence young people as consumers. The most important are family, school, peers, purchase experiences, clothing industry, mass media, etc. Consumers often use informal and social sources respectively when looking for information (Goldsmith and Clark, 2008). Consumers receive and look for information about a product at different sources: a salesman at the shop, word-of-mouth communication and from mass media (newspapers and magazines, test announcements, catalogues, etc.) and lately increasingly the Internet (Blyte, 2008; Devetak and Marulc, 2011). More and more goods are sold on the Internet. Salespeople are convinced that goods are sold better and faster on the Internet (Rickman and Cosenza, 2007). The basic commercial information sources when purchasing clothing are: radio advertisements, TV shows and commercials, fashion magazines, catalogue sales of clothing, the Internet, etc. Marketers will have to pay increasingly attention to the Internet. Virtual communities such as MySpace.com, Facebook and Twitter offer forums where consumers can connect with friends and share different information. Consumers can also join a group of interest that is connected with fashion and express their affection for a definite trademark as well as share their opinion with a broader public (Thomas et al., 2007). At first young people attributed a greater meaning to television when purchasing clothing; later research gives advantage to newspapers, friends and sales staff at the shops (Lumpkin and Greenberg, 1982, Lumpkin, 1985; in Yoo-Kyoung, 2009). Morton (2002) finds that young consumers are mistrustful towards mass media and expose word-of-mouth communication. On the basis of research of young girls in the USA display windows are assessed the highest, followed by other people, catalogues, fashion magazines, etc. (Lyfe Stile Monitor, 2009). The most important information sources about clothing in Slovenia are friends and acquaintances, articles in fashion magazines, passers-by on the street, fashion shows on TV (Kavčič, 2005).

### 3 Research methodology

In the empiric part of the article we carried out a quantitative research whose purpose was to find out what meaning is given to individual purchase factors when purchasing clothing by young people from the EU countries (Slovenia, Austria and Germany) and the USA and which information sources they give preference to when making purchase decisions.

#### 3.1 The sample of the quantitative research

The sample of the quantitative research, N=440, represents students aged between 15 and 24 from the researched EU countries (Slovenia, Austria and Germany) and the USA.

Because this is an international research which is finding intercultural differences among young people in individual countries and great extensions of geographical areas, the usage of the probability sampling cannot be realized. We limited to the quota sample which enables valid intercultural comparisons and is used in most scientific studies and doctoral dissertations, in which we thoroughly study intercultural differences in the purchase behaviour. In quota sampling we choose the units in a way that the sample structure reflects the structure of the whole population. The quota sample must be in accordance with the structure of the whole population from the point of those variables that essentially influence the data we are estimating (Bregar et al., 2005). The interviewees who took part in the survey are homogenous regarding age and gender and so they are consecutively comparable units. The sample is divided into dependent quotas: gender (definite number of male, definite number of female), country and age. We set the quotas in a way that their structure suits the structure of the population. In the quota sample 220 interviewees were included from individual countries of the EU (121 male and 99 female) and from the USA (113 male and 107 female). The usage of homogenous (above all students) samples with improbability sampling is becoming a frequent practice in intercultural research (Burton et al., 2000; Soares, 2004). In scientific research where we thoroughly study intercultural differences mostly samples of students are used (Forsythe et al., 1999; Taylor and Cosenza, 2002; Schaefer et al., 2009; Zhihong and Zhang, 2011).

#### 3.2 Research procedure

The survey was carried out between 15 June 2011 and 15 October 2011 at secondary schools and faculties in Slovenia (Murska Sobota, Maribor, Slovenj Gradec, Celje, Ljubljana, Koper and Novo Mesto), in Austria (Vienna, Graz, Klagenfurt and Salzburg), in Germany (Berlin, Essen, Marburg in Ingolstadt) and in the USA (Boston (Massachusetts), Austin (Texas), Fort Wayne (Indiana) and Berkeley (California)). We presume that young people independently decide on clothing and that sampled units in towns where research will take place do not essentially differ from the purchase behaviour of the remaining population in the country. We also presume that information plays an important role and can essentially influence consumers' behaviour, especially in the sense of purchase decision making. In each country the survey was carried out for as long as it lasted to get enough answers from people who provide comparable samples that are balanced regarding the country, gender and age. The survey was required out personally in groups in class. The interviewees themselves answered the questions in the questionnaire in written form with the attendance of an interviewer.

The questionnaire included 37 questions. The main part of the questionnaire included the following areas:

1. Perception of influence of individual information sources on the purchase of clothing,
2. perception of importance of individual factors of purchase decision-making and
3. opinions towards fashion clothing.

Information sources and factors of purchase decision-making when choosing clothing were defined in the questionnaire on the basis of findings of numerous authors in domestic and foreign secondary literature (Eckman et al., 1990; Taylor and Cosenza, 2002; Law, 2002; Forsythe et al., 1999, Kwan, 2006), but at the same time interviewees had the alternative to write an answer which was not predicted among the given ones. Statements that influence opinions in connection with fashionable clothes were formed on the basis of interviews with hundreds of young people at home and abroad. To assess the influence of individual information sources on purchase decisions we used the five-level Likert scale, where grade 1 means no influence at all and grade 5 complete influence. The assessment of the factors of purchase decision-making was also done using the five-level Likert scale, where grade 1 means absolutely unimportant and grade 5 very important. To find out young consumers' opinions towards fashionable clothes we also used the five-level Likert scale of agreement, where grade 1 means I do not agree at all and grade 5, I totally agree. Before starting the survey we tested the questionnaire. When forming the questions we checked the ideas and word choice with the focus group of secondary school students and students from higher educational institutions in Slovenia. Afterwards we discussed the questionnaire with colleagues and experts from the treated field and the field of methodology. Finally we tested the questionnaire by personal surveying on the sample of 40 people (20 men and 20 women) aged 15 to 24 from Slovenia, Austria, Germany and the USA. For the performance of the research in Austria, Germany and the USA we translated the questionnaire into English and German. Based on the testing of the questionnaire there were some changes made to it. To assure good measure quality we assessed the reliability of the measure instrument by Cronbach's alpha coefficient of reliability. The input and analytical processing of data was carried out by the statistics software IBM SPSS Statistics 19. Data processing shows descriptive statistics, t-test and basic data comparisons.

On the basis of defined research questions and in accordance with the research goals we set basic research hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 1:** Between the groups of young people in the countries of the EU and the USA there are statistically important differences in assessing individual factors that influence the purchase of clothing.

**Hypothesis 2:** Groups of young people from the EU and the USA differ importantly in the perception of the influence of individual information sources on the purchase of clothing.

**Hypothesis 3:** Opinions of young people towards fashionable clothes differ importantly in reference to the continent (EU, USA).

### 3.3 Main results of the empirical study

In continuation of the article we present the most important findings of the research.

#### 3.3.1 Testing the hypothesis

The set alternative hypothesis H1 is tested with the T Test (Independent Samples T Test procedure). The hypothesis is accepted if the characteristics level is  $P < (\alpha = 0,05)$ , which means that the difference is characteristic. In case that the stated conditions are met only with individual factors, the alternative hypothesis is partly accepted with the declaration of the factor. The results of the T Test are shown in table 1.

The results of the T test show that the alternative hypothesis H1 is partly accepted. The differences between young people in the countries of the EU and the USA are characteristic for the following factors of purchase decision-making: colour, design, trademark, fashionableness, price, comfort, maintenance simplicity and country of origin. For the stated factors the alternative hypothesis is accepted on the basis of the sample data.

Table 1: T Test of differences between arithmetic means of grade of two groups

	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Colour	2,783	438	,006
Design/fashion	9,259	438	,000
Trademark	4,028	438	,000
Quality	,356	438	,722
Fashionableness	3,623	438	,000
Price	-6,484	438	,000
Fitting clothes	,871	438	,384
Comfort	-2,394	438	,017
Maintenance simplicity	-5,055	438	,000
Seller obligingness	-,346	438	,730
Country of origin	4,288	438	,000

Source: Own research 2011

Table 2: T Test of differences between arithmetic means of grade of two groups

	<b>t</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>Sig. (2-tailed)</b>
Radio advertisement	2,566	438	,011
Ads and shows on TV	,912	438	,362
Ads and articles in newspapers	6,220	438	,000
Fashion magazines	4,595	438	,000
Catalogue selling	4,852	438	,000
Showroom advertising	6,893	438	,000
Direct mail	6,690	438	,000
Friends and acquaintances	-,224	438	,823
Clothes seller	-1,870	438	,062
Hoardings on the streets	6,699	438	,000
Websites on the Internet	,435	438	,664
Facebook, MySpace, Twitter	-,204	438	,838

Source: Own research 2011

Table 3: T Test of differences between arithmetic means of grade of two groups

	<b>t</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>Sig. (2-tailed)</b>
Fashion clothes producers pay regard to wishes of young people.	2,941	438	,003
Fashion clothes are of bad quality (poorer material, harder maintenance, ...).	1,034	438	,302
Fashion clothes are not functional and uncomfortable.	2,082	438	,038
Fashion clothes are harmful for health (wide neck, short vests, light materials in winter, ...).	2,415	438	,016
Fashion for young people changes too fast.	3,029	438	,003
Market prices for fashion clothes are too high.	6,917	438	,000
I can use fashion clothes for many seasons.	4,537	438	,000
Fashion clothes improve my self-image.	1,813	438	,071
Fashion clothes attract attention with people.	,122	438	,903

Source: Own research 2011

For the factors of purchase decision-making: quality, clothes fitting and seller obligingness the results of the T Test do not show the characteristic difference. On the basis of the sample data for these sources the Null hypothesis is accepted as young people on both continents do not differ in the assessment of the factors that influence the purchase of clothing.

The alternative hypothesis H2 is also tested with the T Test (Independent Samples T Test procedure).

The results of the T Test show that the alternative hypothesis H2 is partly accepted. Differences between young people in the countries of the EU and the USA are characteristic for the following information sources: radio advertisements, advertisements and articles in newspapers, fashion maga-

zines, catalogue sales, showroom advertising, direct mail and hoardings on the streets. For the stated sources the alternative hypothesis is partly accepted on the basis of the sample data.

For the information sources: TV commercials and shows, friends and acquaintances, clothes sellers, Internet websites and social networks (Facebook, MySpice, Twitter) the results of the T test do not show characteristic differences. On the basis of the sample data for these sources the Null hypothesis is accepted as young people on both continents do not differ in the assessment of information sources that influence the purchase of clothing.

The set alternative hypothesis H3: Opinions of young people towards fashionable clothes importantly differ in

reference to the continent (EU, USA) is tested by the T Test (Independent Samples T Test procedure). The hypothesis is accepted if the characteristics level is  $P < (\alpha = 0,05)$ , which means that the difference is characteristic. In case that the stated conditions are met only with individual opinions, the alternative hypothesis is partly accepted with the declaration of the opinion. The results of the T Test are shown in table 3.

The results of the T Test show that the alternative hypothesis H3 is partly accepted. Differences between young people in the countries of the EU and the USA are characteristic for the following statements: »fashion clothes producers pay regard to wishes of young people«, »fashion clothes are not functional and uncomfortable«, »fashion clothes are harmful for health«, »fashion for young people changes too fast«, »market prices for fashion clothes are too high« and »I can use fashion clothes for many seasons«. For the stated opinions the alternative hypothesis is partly accepted on the basis of the sample data.

For the statements »fashion clothes are of bad quality«, »fashion clothes attract attention with people« and »fashion clothes improve my self-image« the results of the T Test do not show the characteristic difference. On the basis of the sample data for these statements the Null hypothesis is accepted as

young people on both continents do not differ in the assessment of opinions towards fashion clothes.

### 3.3.2 Data analysis and discussion

The comparison of both groups shows that there are intercultural differences in the meaning that is given to the factors of purchase decision making by young people from countries in the EU and the USA. We are finding that the biggest differences in value are in the following factors: colour, design, trademark, fashionableness, price, comfort and maintenance simplicity. Both groups attribute the least meaning to the country of origin and the seller obligingness. Young people from the USA assessed the following factors essentially lower: design, trademark, fashionableness and country of origin whereas they assessed the following factors essentially higher: price, clothes fitting and simplicity of maintenance. In table 4 the descriptive statistics of the grades of purchase decision-making factors by continent are shown.

Young people from the EU on average assessed the following factors the highest:

Table 4: Descriptive statistics of grades of purchase decision-making factors by continent

	Continent	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Colour	EU	220	4,30	,969
	USA	220	4,04	,983
Design/fashion	EU	220	4,48	,857
	USA	220	3,49	1,336
Trademark	EU	220	2,87	1,247
	USA	220	2,39	1,286
Quality	EU	220	4,08	,913
	USA	220	4,05	,961
Fashionableness	EU	220	3,74	1,232
	USA	220	3,32	1,216
Price	EU	220	3,90	1,085
	USA	220	4,50	,857
Fitting clothes	EU	220	4,55	,840
	USA	220	4,48	,802
Comfort	EU	220	4,07	1,018
	USA	220	4,29	,890
Maintenance simplicity	EU	220	3,00	1,170
	USA	220	3,55	1,111
Seller obligingness	EU	220	2,24	1,279
	USA	220	2,28	1,202
Country of origin	EU	220	2,04	1,221
	USA	220	1,57	1,064

Source: Own research 2011

- clothes fitting (4,55),
- design (4,48),
- colour (4,30),
- quality (4,08) and
- comfort (4,07).

Young consumers from the USA attribute the biggest meaning in purchase decision making when choosing clothes to the following factors:

- price (4,50),
- clothes fitting (4,48),
- comfort (4,29),
- quality (4,05) and
- colour (4,04).

The most important difference shows in the price which is the most important factor of purchase decision making in the USA whereas in the EU it takes the last position. Also design does not have an important influence for young people in the

USA which is, on the other hand, highly preferred by young people in the EU (second most important factor).

In table 5 the descriptive statistics of the grades for information sources by the continent is shown. Among young people in the EU and the USA we are finding differences in the assessment of information sources influence on purchase decision making when choosing clothes. The comparison of young people in the EU and in the USA shows that there are characteristic differences in the assessment of sources.

The results of checking hypothesis 2 show typical value differences for the following information sources: radio advertisements, advertisements and articles in newspapers, fashion magazines, catalogue sales, showroom advertising, direct mail and hoardings on the streets. All the stated information sources are assessed essentially higher by young people from the EU. Both groups attribute the lowest influence on purchase decisions to the sources: radio advertisements and social networks (Facebook, MySpace, Twitter). Young people from the USA assessed the following sources essentially lower: radio adver-

Table 5: Descriptive statistics of the grades for information sources by continent

	Continent	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Radio advertisements	EU	220	1,41	,914
	ZDA	220	1,22	,618
TV ads and shows	EU	220	2,34	1,156
	ZDA	220	2,24	1,197
Advertisements and articles in newspapers	EU	220	2,52	1,168
	ZDA	220	1,83	1,063
Fashion magazines	EU	220	2,70	1,140
	ZDA	220	2,12	1,322
Catalogue sales	EU	220	2,69	1,189
	USA	220	2,08	1,287
Showroom advertising	EU	220	3,21	1,061
	USA	220	2,35	1,398
Direct mail	EU	220	2,40	1,237
	USA	220	1,64	1,091
Friends and acquaintances	EU	220	3,30	1,169
	USA	220	3,32	1,296
Clothes sellers	EU	220	2,31	1,121
	USA	220	2,53	1,248
Hoardings on the street	EU	220	2,18	1,044
	USA	220	1,54	,898
Internet websites	EU	220	2,70	1,245
	USA	220	2,64	1,450
Facebook, MySpace, Twitter	EU	220	1,73	1,095
	USA	220	1,75	1,136

Source: Own research 2011

tisements, advertisements and articles in newspapers, fashion magazines, catalogue sales, direct mail and hoardings on the streets whereas they assessed the following sources essentially higher: clothes sellers and showroom advertising.

Young people from Europe assess the following factors the highest:

- friends and acquaintances (3,30),
- showroom advertising (3,21),
- Internet websites (2,70),
- fashion magazines (2,70) and
- catalogue sales (2,69).

The lowest assessed were the sources: radio advertisements (1,41) and social networks (1,73).

The following sources on young people in the USA in purchase decision-making when choosing clothes have the biggest influence:

- friends and acquaintances (3,32),
- Internet websites (2,64),
- clothes sellers (2,53),
- showroom advertising (2,35) and
- TV ads and shows (2,24).

The following sources have the least influence: radio advertisements (1,22) and hoardings on the street (1,54).

The comparison of both groups in table 5 also shows that showroom advertising have a bigger influence on young

people in the EU when choosing clothes whereas they do not have a noticeable influence on young people in the USA. Among countries of the EU there are no big differences. In all countries of the EU the biggest influences are friends and acquaintances, showroom advertising and Internet websites. In Slovenia direct mailing about clothing, which is placed lower in the other countries, is an important source of information. In Austria and Germany young people value catalogue sales highly.

By checking hypothesis 3 we found characteristic differences among young people in the EU and the USA for the following statements: »fashion clothes producers pay regard to wishes of young people«, »fashion clothes are not functional and uncomfortable«, »fashion clothes are harmful for health«, »fashion for young people changes too fast«, »market prices for fashion clothes are too high«, »I can use fashion clothes for many seasons« and »fashion clothes improve my self-image«. Table 6 shows that young people in the EU express a higher level of agreement with the following statements: »fashion clothes producers pay regard to wishes of young people«, »fashion clothes are harmful for health«, »I can use fashion clothes for many seasons« and »fashion clothes improve my self-image« whereas young people in the USA assess the following statements higher: »fashion clothes are not functional and uncomfortable«, »fashion for young people changes too fast« and »market prices for fashion clothes are too high«.

Table 6: Descriptive statistics of grades of opinions towards fashion clothes by continent

	Continent	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Fashion clothes producers pay regard to wishes of young people.	EU	220	3,35	,993
	USA	220	3,05	1,111
Fashion clothes are of bad quality (poorer material, harder maintenance, ...).	EU	220	2,52	1,040
	USA	220	2,62	1,081
Fashion clothes are not functional and uncomfortable.	EU	220	2,52	1,116
	USA	220	2,74	1,127
Fashion clothes are harmful for health (wide neck, short vests, light materials in winter, ...).	EU	220	2,22	1,193
	USA	220	1,96	1,011
Fashion for young people changes too fast.	EU	220	3,10	1,165
	USA	220	3,45	1,258
Market prices for fashion clothes are too high.	EU	220	3,63	1,109
	USA	220	4,30	,923
I can use fashion clothes for many seasons.	EU	220	3,60	1,165
	USA	220	3,08	1,210
Fashion clothes improve my self-image.	EU	220	3,12	1,208
	USA	220	2,90	1,365
Fashion clothes attract attention with people.	EU	220	3,45	1,144
	USA	220	3,44	1,198

Source: Own research 2011

## 4 Summary and conclusions

With quantitative research we found intercultural differences in purchase and information behaviour as well as opinions towards fashion clothes. Many researchers claim that young people all over the world have similar tendencies towards products and that there is a general trend in the sense of unity in global economy. According to Friedman (2007) and on the basis of the findings of our research, cultural differences still exist. Cultural traditions are deeply rooted in individuals' values. A study that would show differences in purchase behaviour in choosing clothes among young consumers in the countries of the EU and the USA has not been done yet therefore the findings of our research are so much more important.

Considering the found intercultural differences in the researched factors of purchase and information behaviour as well as the opinions towards fashion clothes, the use of differentiation strategy in the global market is reasonable. Therefore we propose to companies that operate with their clothing for young people on the markets of the EU and the USA to use the following unified media on both continents: clothes sellers in Internet websites. Only in the EU markets we propose to pay greater emphasis on advertisements in fashion magazines and catalogue sales when developing a marketing communication policy whereas in the US market TV commercials and shows have a great influence on the purchase decision. From the point of advertising policy we also propose to companies to think about the meaning of word of mouth communication (friends and acquaintances) and to take advantage of modern technology (social networks, Internet websites) for spreading positive information about a product and company. For young people in the researched countries also Internet websites, which give consumers visual and other information about clothes, fashion and trends in a simple and accessible way, are important. Regarding the factors of purchase decision making that are connected to the clothes characteristics the biggest deviations between the continents are in the price, which is most important for young people in the USA and the design, whose importance for a purchase decision was highly assessed by young people in the EU. When developing a marketing strategy for both markets the knowledge of differences in opinions is important. Young people in the EU express a higher level of agreement with the following opinions: »fashion clothes producers pay regard to wishes of young people«, »fashion clothes are harmful for health«, »I can use fashion clothes for many seasons« and »fashion clothes improve my self-image«, whereas young people in the USA assess the following opinions higher: »fashion clothes are not functional and uncomfortable«, »fashion for young people changes too fast« and »market prices for fashion clothes are too high«.

The findings have practical value for the biggest clothes producers for young people such as Inditex, H&M, C&A, S. Oliver, New Yorker and others, which supply the global markets with their products.

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### Medkulturne razlike v nakupnem in informacijskem vedenju mladih porabnikov

Pritiski v sodobnem tržnem okolju so vse večji in zahtevajo od podjetij in tržnikov, da poznajo porabnike in njihovo nakupno in informacijsko vedenje. V prispevku smo proučevali vedenje porabnikov in dejavnike nakupnega in informacijskega vedenja mladih porabnikov pri izbiri oblačil. Ugotavljali smo pomen posameznih lastnosti oblačila, ki vplivajo na nakupno odločitev (cena, blagovna znamka, prileganje oblačila, dizajn, kakovost, idr.). Porabniki prejemajo in iščejo informacije iz različnih virov (oglasni na radiu, oglasi in oddaje na televiziji, revije o modi, kataloška prodaja, družbena omrežja, prijatelji in znanci, idr.). Z empirično raziskavo smo želeli ugotoviti, v kolikšni meri posamezni viri vplivajo na posameznikovo nakupno odločitev. Proučevali smo mlade v starosti od 15 do 24 let v državah Evropske unije (Slovenija, Avstrija in Nemčija) in Združenih državah Amerike. Posebej smo ugotavljali značilne razlike. Poznavanje medkulturnih razlik je pomembno za globalna podjetja oblačilne industrije pri oblikovanju marketinških strategij. Na vzorcu 440 anketiranih smo ugotovili, da obstajajo medkulturne razlike v ocenah vpliva posameznih virov informacij in v dejavnih nakupnega odločanja. Glede na navedeno predlagamo podjetjem, ki nastopajo na globalnih trgih obeh kontinentov pripravo diferenciranih marketinških strategij.

**Ključne besede:** vedenje porabnikov, oblačila, marketinške strategije, medkulturne razlike