

IS GEN Z SO DIFFERENT? AN ANALYSIS OF THE IMPACT OF COMPARATIVE ADVERTISING

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ABSTRACT:

Comparative advertising, the legislative regulation of which has long discouraged European companies from using it, has become an essential component of promotion in recent decades, although the approach of individual countries to it differs significantly and its influence varies depending on the cultural aspect, or the age of the recipients. The study deals with Generation Z, which differs from previous generations in general, and therefore it is not possible to use the same procedures and methods for them as for the rest of the population. The aim of the study was to find out whether comparative advertising is suitable for Generation Z as an extraordinary cohort and whether this segment of potential customers can be considered as a homogeneous group or a heterogeneous object for business marketing communication. It was determined whether Generation Z trusts this type of advertisement (ad believability) and whether this advertisement positively affects their purchase behaviour (purchase intention). Due to the nature of the research objectives, one-dimensional descriptive statistics and two-dimensional descriptive statistics for the evaluation of interdependent variables (Chi-square test) were used. Based on our research, it can be argued that Generation Z perceives comparative advertising differently from the rest of the population and cannot be subjected to the same processes as other generations.

KEY WORDS:

comparative advertising, credibility, Generation Z, marketing communication, purchase intention, purchasing behaviour

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1 Introduction

Historians date the beginnings of modern comparative advertising to the early 20th century, but its origins go back to the first ancient civilisations. Although it can be stated based on professional publications that comparative advertising has a long-standing tradition, its use has always been and still is, perceived



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controversially.¹ This can be seen in the fact that the attitude of individual cultures to it differs significantly in different parts of the world, which is reflected in its legislative adjustments by individual state departments. The legislative regulation of comparative advertising is quite different across countries, and while in some countries this type of advertising is regulated by legislative restrictions, in other cultures it is possible to use mutual comparison in advertising without limitations.² This contradictory view makes comparative advertising a current and discussed topic among the professional public and leads to constant discussions about its effectiveness and appropriateness of its use compared to non-comparative advertising.³ There are contradictory results in this issue. The fact that comparative advertising relates to the effectiveness of the marketing communication policy of companies is confirmed by Grewal et al.,⁴ Beatty and Jeon,⁵ Thompson and Hamilton,⁶ Schwaiger et al.,⁷ Nye et al.,⁸ Del Barrio-García and Golden,⁹ Muk et al.,¹⁰ Wu and Wen.¹¹ However, some research shows that in terms of effectiveness, it is better to use a non-comparative form of advertising. Alternatively, the survey results point to the variability of efficiency according to the investigated aspect, i.e., mediating, or relational variables.¹² Results vary depending on the specific type of comparative ad, brand, product, and methodology.¹³ Furthermore, although there have been several studies investigating the generalisability of comparative advertising effectiveness, too little attention has been paid to cross-cultural differences in this evaluation. Thus, it is not clear how the effectiveness of comparative advertising varies across countries.

As for the forensic examination of the issue of comparative advertising, information on the applicability of this marketing communication tool in connection with the cultural context clearly prevails. Advertising in accordance with recipients' cultural characteristics is more effective.¹⁴ The frequency of comparative

advertising use and its effectiveness varies from country to country. This difference is not only due to legislative restrictions applied to comparative advertising in some states, but also to other factors.¹⁵ Donthu attributes this fact to the absence of tradition in the use of comparative advertising messages in some countries.¹⁶ De Mooij considers the cultural differences as the reason, the consequence of which is a different perception and response to comparative advertising.¹⁷ He bases this on Hofstede's cultural dimensions.

The cultural value dimension of individualism/collectivism is the most frequently applied framework for cross-cultural advertising research.¹⁸ The next cultural value dimension in the sequence of research is dimension of masculinity/femininity.¹⁹ According to de Mooij, the appropriateness of using comparative advertising depends on the intersection of masculine and individualistic elements in a particular culture. In feminine cultures, comparison with another subject is perceived as a form of aggression, while collectivist states consider the use of comparative advertising to be an intentional humiliation of the other competitor. Countries in which femininity and collectivism are linked are therefore unsuitable for comparative advertising. In individualistic-feminine states, self-labelling as the best alternative is perceived strongly negatively, while in collectivist-masculine states, comparison is used in advertising, but only with other products of the same company, e.g., comparing a new collection with an older one. The best conditions for its use are then in masculine and individualistic cultural areas, which also show a low uncertainty avoidance index.²⁰ Hall distinguishes cultures in terms of context in communication.²¹ A study by Shao et al. which is based on this division of cultures, demonstrated that cultures with low context in communication respond better to direct comparative advertising than indirect. At the same time, direct comparison in advertising showed greater effects in low-context than high-context cultures.²²

Few research has been conducted on comparative advertising in the context of gender and age of respondents. Chang found that the perception of comparative advertising differs depending on the gender of the addressee.²³ In general, men respond positively to comparative advertising. The comparative advertising message helps them to evaluate the advertisement and the promoted brand positively and supports purchase intentions.²⁴ On the other hand, women perceive comparative advertising as a certain form of pressure and manipulation, which in turn leads to a negative attitude towards this promotion and is manifested in reduced purchasing behaviour. Beard dealt with the effectiveness of comparative advertising and its impact on the subsequent actions of the recipients of the advertisement in comparison with non-comparative advertising. In his research, he concluded that an important factor for the perception of advertising is the age of its recipients.²⁵ While younger generations do not show significant differences in reactions to comparative

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23 CHANG, C.: The Relative Effectiveness of Comparative and Noncomparative Advertising: Evidence for Gender Differences in Information-Processing Strategies. In *Journal of Advertising*, 2007, Vol. 36, No. 1, p. 29.

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and non-comparative advertising messages, in the case of older generations it was possible to trace that comparative advertising did not lead to the evocation of the desired response,²⁶ i.e., these respondents showed reduced purchasing behaviour after viewing comparative advertising and at the same time a lower probability of spreading a positive reference about the promoted entity. Muk et al., in addition to analysing young consumers, also focused on differences in the perception of different types of comparative advertising.²⁷

The study of advertising is currently constantly on the rise. Advertising is the most powerful medium in the 21st century and influences everyone's lives and is inseparable from modern day life.²⁸ And also, comparative advertising constantly continues to be of interest to researchers,²⁹ because there is a possibility of linking comparative advertising together with content marketing, specifically with native advertising. Comparative advertising also supports increasing consumers' willingness to pay a premium.³⁰

Although a relatively large amount of research has already been carried out in this area, none of it has yet focused on the influence of comparative advertising on the young emerging Generation Z, although this is a generation that is starting to reach productive age, i.e., it is gradually being integrated into the work process and in the next 10 years will become a significant purchasing power.³¹ For marketers with shared growth objectives, Generation Z is considered a valuable source of new brand buyers.³² In addition, these young people are quite different from previous generations due to their intertwining with digital technologies, and therefore it is not possible to apply the same advertising practices to them as to the rest of the population.³³ Generation Z is the most materially endowed, technologically saturated, globally connected, formally educated generation that our world has ever seen.³⁴ Generation Z shows homogenous characteristics in certain areas (entertaining advertising, attractive design) and at the same time, on the contrary, it is a very heterogeneous group.³⁵ The reason for this internal division of Generation Z is the ever-accelerating dynamic development of

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- 32 See: GRAHAM, C., YOUNG, F., MARJAN, A.: The Generation Z Audience for In-App Advertising. In *Journal of Indian Business Research*, 2021, Vol. 13, No. 3, p. 355; VALÁŠKOVÁ, K., KLIEŠTIKOVÁ, J., KRIŽANOVÁ, A.: Consumer Perception of Private Label Products. In *Journal of Competitiveness*, 2018, Vol. 10, No. 3, p. 153-154; SPÁLOVÁ, L., MIKULÁŠ, P., PÚCHOVSKÁ, O.: Attitudes towards Different Influencer Categories – Exploration of Generation Z. In *Communication Today*, 2021, Vol. 12, No. 1, p. 57-58.
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digital technologies³⁶ and social networking sites.³⁷ Morin divides Generation Z into four subgroups, which are: Cyber Generation (1994 – 1997), Rainbow Generation (1998 – 2001), Post-Millennials (2002 – 2005), and the DIY Generation (2006 – 2009).³⁸ Generation Z members are characterised by the simultaneous reception of media content from multiple screens. If the consumption of media content is then interrupted by an ad, their attention will move to another screen for the duration of the ad. For this reason, they do not pay attention and time to an ad that is not valuable to them, while they are generally willing to watch an ad for an average of 8 seconds. The advertiser, therefore, has a relatively short period of time to attract the attention of these recipients and communicate the promoted idea.³⁹ Even though the attention span is short, this generation nevertheless shows positive attitudes towards advertising. Most consumers from Generation Z have a favourable attitude towards online TV advertising, and they appreciate this form of promotion.⁴⁰ They consider advertising as a relevant source in the decision-making purchasing process.⁴¹ They are sensitive to the truth of the advertising message, but comparative advertising fulfils it from a general legal point of view.⁴² Roth-Cohen et al. demonstrated the positive response of Generation Z to mobile ads, mainly based on the mediation of the informative format of the ad.⁴³

Based on the above, it can be stated that comparative advertising is a subject of interest for marketers in the future in connection with Generation Z. There remain many opportunities for new comparative advertising research to explore. Various scholars have pointed out the need to analyse how responses to comparative advertising may vary by target audience traits such as gender or age,⁴⁴ especially in the European region.⁴⁵

This contribution is aimed at analysing the impact of comparative advertising on Generation Z. The generational approach to consumers as a trend has been set by contemporary scientific literature and its importance has been identified as significant.⁴⁶ Since Generation Z also shows heterogeneous characteristics in the intra-group, the analysis was performed not only for a unified whole, but also in the scope of gender and age subgroups according to Morin.⁴⁷ The analysis was carried out in the context of another classification as well, specifically on the basis of various formats of comparative advertising. The types of comparative advertising are established on the basis of fact, as stated by Novotný et al.,⁴⁸ that comparative advertising can compare different characteristics, data and features of entities and their goods or services. At the same time, it can have different shapes and forms. Individual experts therefore divide comparative advertising according to several different points of view into different types.⁴⁹ Although these divisions are different, they often overlap

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at certain points of the classification or are directly parallel to each other. The authors agree on these types of comparative advertising, namely: 1) superlative advertising, 2) indirect mention of a specific competitor, 3) comparison with a general product/service/brand and 4) direct mention of a specific competitor.

The goal of the study, based on the existing literature gap, was established as follows: Whether comparative advertising is suitable for Generation Z as an extraordinary cohort and whether this segment of potential customers can be considered as a homogeneous group or a heterogeneous object for business marketing communication. It was determined whether Generation Z trusts this type of advertisement (ad believability) and whether this advertisement positively affects their purchase behaviour (purchase intention) based on the already conducted research model according to Muk et al.⁵⁰ In the scope of the above-mentioned, research hypotheses are set as follows:

- There is statistical dependence between the gender and the credibility of comparative advertising.
- There is statistical dependence between the age group and the credibility of comparative advertising.
- There is statistical dependence between the gender and the purchase influence of comparative advertising.
- There is statistical dependence between the age group and the purchase influence of comparative advertising.

2 Methodology

For research purposes, a questionnaire was created in electronic form using the Survio online service. The questionnaire was completed by 299 respondents born between 1994 and 2009, with one of the submitted forms being discarded due to incompleteness and the other two due to too little time devoted to filling them out. Therefore, data from 296 completed questionnaires was assessed. As the research group, members of Generation Z from the Czech Republic were randomly selected, whose years of birth fall within the years 1994 – 2009 inclusive. This corresponds to the time span established by Morin. Persons born in 2010 were no longer included in the research because, according to some publications, this year is already the beginning of the next Generation Alpha, and at the same time, in Morin's segmentation, there is an intersection of borderline years.⁵¹

The questionnaire consists of analogous questions that are related to five specific examples of comparative advertising. Individual examples include selected types of comparative advertising, namely superlative advertising (Example 1), indirect mention of a specific competitor (Example 2 and Example 3), comparison with a general product/service/brand (Example 4) and direct mention of a specific competitor (Example 5). Examples (types of comparative advertising) are established based on Novotný et al.⁵² This parallel has been transformed into the mentioned examples. At the end of the questionnaire, there were identification questions, which based on the interviewees can be divided according to gender and age.

Due to the nature of the research objectives, which are aimed at comparing the effects of selected types of comparative advertising by all respondents as well as by individual gender and age subgroups, the method of one-dimensional descriptive statistics was used. The perception of individual selected types of comparative advertising was determined in the questionnaire by means of a semantic differential. Respondents expressed their opinion on a specific example of comparative advertising using a scale ranging from -3 to 3. Respondents had to express whether the examples of comparative advertising had any effect: 1) negative/positive, 2) not interesting/interesting, 3) unfair/fair, 4) with distorted information/with true information, 5) with unimportant information/with important information. An important issue for the correct choice of a statistical tool is the scale on which the respondents are asked to rate their perceptions. To measure attitudes towards comparative advertising, a semantic differential scale by Speck and Elliott was applied, which was developed

to measure attitudes towards advertising in all media.⁵³ It is also suitable for determining the attitudes of all age groups.⁵⁴ It used a seven-point semantic differential scale previously validated and used in literature on consumer behaviour.⁵⁵

Subsequently, the method of two-dimensional descriptive statistics was also used to evaluate items in mutual dependence. For two-dimensional descriptive statistics, the Chi-square test was used. The Chi-square test is one of the most utilised statistical analyses⁵⁶ used to determine the relation of concordance or the significance of the connection between two variables in a certain dependency relation in marketing research⁵⁷ when processing qualitative data⁵⁸ and quantitative data⁵⁹ and it is relevant for analysis of the measures of consumer behaviour.⁶⁰ A significance level was determined at 0.05 and corresponded to a 95% confidence interval for all hypotheses stated.

3 Results

Through the five questions in the questionnaire, it was determined, among other things, whether comparative advertising leads respondents to the general idea that the advertised entity or its offer is generally advantageous or is better or more advantageous than its mentioned, indicated or assumed competition (credibility analysis). Each of the questions was related to one of the given examples. Respondents could choose from 'Yes', 'Rather yes', 'Neither/nor', 'Rather no' and 'No'. Figure 1 expresses in percentages what answers were selected by all respondents and by gender as well.

50 MUK, A., CHUNG, C., CHANG, E. C.: The Effects of Comparative Advertising on Young Consumers' Perceptions: Cross-Cultural Comparison Between the United States and Taiwan. In *Journal of Promotion Management*, 2017, Vol. 23, No. 1, p. 115.

51 MORIN, R.: *Generation C: The Confluence Marketing at the Era of Connected Consumers*. Victoria: Friesen Press, 2018, p. 25-58.

52 NOVOTNÝ, P., KOUKAL, P., ZAHOROVÁ, E.: *Nový občanský zákoník: Náhrada škody*. Prague: Grada Publishing, 2014, p. 121.

53 SPECK, P. S., ELLIOTT, M. T.: Predictors of Advertising Avoidance in Print and Broadcast Media. In *Journal of Advertising*, 1997, Vol. 26, No. 3, p. 67.

54 DIVILOVÁ, S.: Semantic Differential as One of the Research Tools Suitable for Establishing the Attitudes of Pupils to Old Age and Seniors. In *Universal Journal of Educational Research*, 2016, Vol. 4, No. 8, p. 1860.

55 LAMPRIKAKOS, G. et al.: Overt and Covert Customer Data Collection in Online Personalized Advertising: The Role of User Emotions. In *Journal of Business Research*, 2022, Vol. 141, p. 315-317.

56 FRANKE, T. M., HO, T., CHRISTIE, C.: The Chi-Square Test: Often Used and More Often Misinterpreted. In *American Journal of Evaluation*, 2012, Vol. 33, No. 3, p. 457.

57 DURA, C., DRIGĂ, I.: Application of Chi Square Test in Marketing Research. In *Annals of the University of Petrosani: Economics*, 2017, Vol. 17, No. 2, p. 785.

58 SIEGEL, A. F.: Chi-Squared Analysis Testing for Patterns in Qualitative Data. In SIEGEL, A. F. (ed.): *Practical Business Statistics*. London: Academic Press, 2016, p. 518.

59 MARTIN, C. et al.: The Impact of Behavioural Framing Effects on Market Research Conversion Rates. In *International Journal of Market Research*. Released on 14th October 2022. [online]. [2022-12-11]. Available at: <<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/14707853221133048>>.

60 ŠEC, VALÁŠKOVÁ, K., ĐURANA, P., ADAMKO, P.: Changes in Consumers' Purchase Patterns as a Consequence of the COVID-19 Pandemic. In *Mathematics*, 2021, Vol. 9, No. 5, Art. No. 1788, p. 6; SUNDARARAJ, V., REJEESH, M. R.: A Detailed Behavioral Analysis on Consumer and Customer Changing Behavior with Respect to Social Networking Sites. In *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 2021, Vol. 58, Art. No. 102190, p. 5.

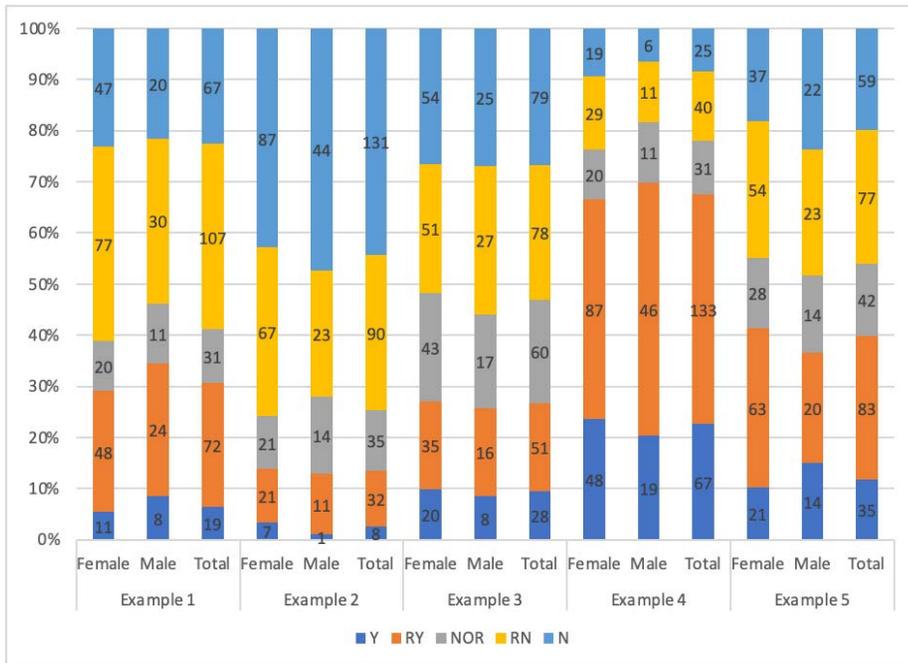


Figure 1: Answers about the credibility of comparative advertising

Source: Own processing

The result of established statistical hypotheses between gender and credibility of comparative advertising is shown in Table 1. To calculate the test statistic for the hypothesis, the IBM SPSS Statistics software was used (Table 2).

Table 1: The result of hypotheses between gender and credibility of comparative advertising

Hypothesis	Level of significance	Test statistics (p-value)	Decision rule	Result of testing
H_0 : There is no statistical dependence between the gender and the credibility of comparative advertising.	0.05	0.801	0.05 < 0.801	H_0 acceptance
H_1 : There is statistical dependence between the gender and the credibility of comparative advertising.				

Source: Own processing

Table 2: Chi-Square tests of hypotheses between gender and credibility of comparative advertising

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	1.641 ^a	4	.801
Likelihood Ratio	1.649	4	.800
N of Valid Cases	1,480		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 49.33.

Source: Own processing

The tables show that the value of Pearson's chi test is 0.801. It is evident that the value of Pearson's chi test (0.801) is above the level of significance. The null hypothesis H_0 is accepted. This means that there is no statistical dependence between the gender and the credibility of comparative advertising. The result of established statistical hypotheses between age groups and credibility of comparative advertising is shown in Table 3. To calculate the test statistic for the hypothesis, the IBM SPSS Statistics software was used (Table 4).

Table 3: The result of hypotheses between age groups and credibility of comparative advertising

Hypothesis	Level of significance	Test statistics (p-value)	Decision rule	Result of testing
H_0 : There is no statistical dependence between the age group and the credibility of comparative advertising.	0.05	0.000	0.05 > 0.000	H_0 rejection
H_1 : There is statistical dependence between the age group and the credibility of comparative advertising				

Source: Own processing

Table 4: Chi-Square tests of hypotheses between age group and credibility of comparative advertising

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	100.632a	12	.000
Likelihood Ratio	102.644	12	.000
N of Valid Cases	1,480		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 32.99.

Source: Own processing

The tables show that the value of Pearson's chi test is 0.000. It is evident that the value of Pearson's chi test (0.000) is below the level of significance. The alternative hypothesis H_1 is accepted. This means that there is statistical dependence between the age group and the credibility of comparative advertising. The results show that more than two-thirds of the respondents gave an affirmative answer to Example 4. Example 4 is also the only one that was described as generally advantageous by the interviewees. Almost 40% of respondents considered the brand promoted in Example 5 to be generally more favourable than its competitors. On the other hand, Example 2 turned out worst, where 44.26% of respondents chose the resolute answer 'No', in total almost three quarters of respondents gave a negative opinion. For the same type of advertisement in Example 3, almost 20% fewer respondents chose a negative answer. It therefore follows that if accurate price comparisons and parameters are given in comparative advertising, then members of Generation Z are more likely to consider the advertised entity and its offer to be generally better or more advantageous than if it did not contain the mentioned information. At the same time, the importance of the information it presents influences whether the advertisement will have a generally more favourable effect. Comparison with general competition leads Generation Z to a general idea of advantage, on the contrary, indirect designation of specific competition does not lead to this idea for most of these people. The direct or indirect designation of a specific competitive subject generally has a more favourable effect on women; on the contrary, superlative advertising and comparison with general competition affects men. However, the differences between the genders are not very fundamental (not statistically significant).

From the results, the dependence of the perception of the trustworthiness of comparative advertising on age can be observed. Respondents born before 2001 rated all Examples of comparative advertising in the questionnaire as less credible than younger respondents. The 1994 – 1997 age group stands out the most, considering the given Examples of comparative advertising to be the least trustworthy compared to other age groups. Thus, for the older two age categories, distrust of comparative advertising increases with increasing age. For people born after 2002 inclusive, this phenomenon is no longer observable and depends not only on the type of comparison, but also on the processing of the advertisement. This follows from the fact that while Example 2 was more credible to respondents in the 2002 – 2005 age group, in Example 3 the comparative ad was more credible to the youngest age group 2006 – 2009.

The next five questions were aimed at finding the influence on the respondents' purchasing behaviour after viewing the advertisement in the given Examples. Respondents could choose from 'Yes', 'Rather yes', 'Neither/nor', 'Rather no' and 'No'. Figure 2 shows the selected answers of all respondents and individual genders as well.

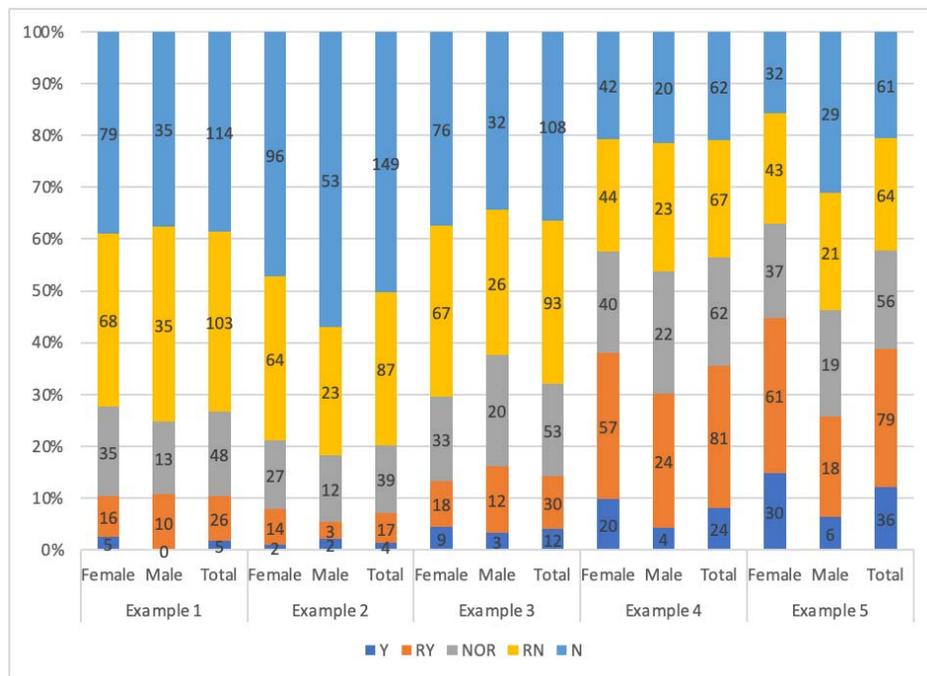


Figure 2: Answers about the influence of comparative advertising on the respondents' purchasing behaviour

Source: Own processing

The result of established statistical hypotheses between gender and the purchase influence of comparative advertising is shown in Table 5. To calculate the test statistic for the hypothesis, the IBM SPSS Statistics software was used (Table 6).

Table 5: The result of hypotheses between the gender and the purchase influence of comparative advertising

Hypothesis	Level of significance	Test statistics (p-value)	Decision rule	Result of testing
H_0 : There is no statistical dependence between the gender and the purchase influence of comparative advertising.	0.05	0.047	0.05 > 0.047	H_0 rejection
H_1 : There is statistical dependence between the gender and the purchase influence of comparative advertising.				

Source: Own processing

Table 6: Chi-Square tests of hypotheses between gender and purchase influence of comparative advertising

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	9.658 ^a	4	.047
Likelihood Ratio	10.276	4	.036
N of Valid Cases	1,480		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 25.45.

Source: Own processing

The tables show that the value of Pearson's chi test is 0.047. It is evident that the value of Pearson's chi test (0.047) is below the level of significance. The alternative hypothesis H_1 is accepted. This means that there is statistical dependence between the gender and the purchase influence of comparative advertising. The result of established statistical hypotheses between age group and the purchase influence of comparative advertising is shown in Table 7. To calculate the test statistic for the hypothesis, the IBM SPSS Statistics software was used (Table 8).

Table 7: The result of hypotheses between the age group and the purchase influence of comparative advertising

Hypothesis	Level of significance	Test statistics (p-value)	Decision rule	Result of testing
H_0 : There is no statistical dependence between the age group and the purchase influence of comparative advertising.	0.05	0.230	0.05 < 0.230	H_0 acceptance
H_1 : There is statistical dependence between the age group and the purchase influence of comparative advertising.				

Source: Own processing

Table 8: Chi-Square tests of hypotheses between age group and purchase influence of comparative advertising

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	15.205 ^a	12	.230
Likelihood Ratio	15.492	12	.216
N of Valid Cases	1,480		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 17.02.

Source: Own processing

The tables show that the value of Pearson's chi test is 0.230. It is evident that the value of Pearson's chi test (0.230) is above the level of significance. The null hypothesis H_0 is accepted. This means that there is no statistical dependence between age group and purchase influence of comparative advertising.

Most respondents gave an agreeing answer about the impact on purchasing behaviour for Example 5 (38.85%) and then for Example 4 (35.47%); on the other hand, respondents chose a disagreeing answer most often for Example 2 (7.09%). The research also shows that, to the extent that comparative advertising is perceived positively, its fairness, attractiveness and perceived bias, competitiveness, manipulateness, fun, provocation, aggressiveness, or recklessness have no significant and direct effects on the purchasing behaviour of recipients. At the same time, the results of the assumed purchasing behaviour do not exactly correspond with the perceived truthfulness and importance of the information used in the advertisement. By sorting the Examples according to the proportion of respondents who gave an affirmative answer to all those interviewed, the same sequence was obtained as would be obtained by sorting the Examples based on the proportion of respondents who stated that the given example of comparative advertising had a purely informative effect on them. Simultaneously, approximately half of the respondents who chose a positive answer for Examples 3, 4 and 5 described the Examples as purely informative. Thus, the more purely is informative comparative advertising generally perceived by members of Generation Z, the more likely it will lead to higher purchasing behaviour of recipients.

Viewing comparative advertising does not lead to the purchase of the advertised goods or services more often among males of Generation Z, but on the contrary, three-fifths of the mentioned Examples of comparative advertising would probably lead to higher purchasing behaviour among the females of Generation Z, while after viewing four out of the five Examples, the purchase would certainly be carried out by a greater percentage of women.

According to the research, comparative advertising with a direct description of the competition and comparison with the general competition is the most stimulating to increased purchasing behaviour. However, the research results show that the purchasing behaviour of advertising recipients does not only depend on the type of comparative advertising, but also on its processing and content. The questionnaire survey also shows that the more specific verifiable data the comparative message contains, the more likely the comparative advertisement will lead its recipients to purchase. At the same time, direct price comparison leads members of Generation Z to the highest purchasing behaviour.

4 Discussion

Based on the research done, it can be argued that Generation Z perceives comparative advertising differently from the rest of the population and cannot be subjected to the same laws as other generations. As mentioned before, Generation Z shows positive attitudes towards advertising, especially online TV advertising and mobile advertising⁶¹ and they consider it as a relevant source in the decision-making purchasing process,⁶² especially if it provides true information.⁶³ This is also confirmed by the research results, where many respondents point out that just the information comparative advertising presents influences whether the advertisement will have a generally more favourable effect. Comparison with general competition leads Generation Z to a general idea of advantage, on the contrary, indirect designation of specific competition does not lead to this idea for most of these people.

At the same time, it was demonstrated that although this generational cohort represents a homogenous group in terms of common behavioural patterns, in the case of comparative advertising there are some differences between individual consumers of Generation Z. This is obvious in the different perception of the trustworthiness of comparative advertising by older consumers of Generation Z and others. While older age groups do not trust comparative advertising so much, younger age groups have confidence in comparative advertising; however, it depends on the type of comparison and the processing of the advertisement.

Some differences are in the perception of comparative advertising by women of Generation Z, who prefer the direct or indirect designation of a specific competitive subject, and on the contrary by men who are affected especially by superlative advertising and comparison with general competition. Regarding purchasing behaviour, despite the claim of some authors, that women respond less positively to comparative advertising,⁶⁴ the research results show that viewing comparative advertising may lead to higher purchasing behaviour among the majority of females of Generation Z and also probably to carry out the purchase. On the other hand, comparative advertising does not have significant influence on the males of Generation Z and their purchasing behaviour.

Based on the above, for effective application of comparative advertising targeted at Generation Z, it is necessary to follow several recommendations. The primary goal of the advertising campaign, determined by the client, is essential for the processing of comparative advertising and the selection of its appropriate type. Individual areas in which goals are defined require a different approach. Corbin et al. deal with the fact that the advertiser must realise that they are faced with a compromise decision, because the use of comparative advertising can bring them more successful results on the market, but at the same time they must consider the real risk that the public can attribute to them nefarious intentions and therefore perceive it negatively. These negative effects can be mitigated by using demonstrably truthful information, humour, or respectful speech. When asked whether comparative advertising works, Corbin et al. answer that at least sometimes yes, but the matter of its use requires a relatively serious decision.⁶⁵ Comparative advertising, as proven by much research, can help entities in promotion, but at the same time it may not always be suitable. It is therefore necessary to

61 See: AO, H. T., NGUYEN, C. V.: The Reaction of Vietnam's Generation Z to Online TV Advertising. In *The Journal of Asian Finance, Economics and Business*, 2020, Vol. 7, No. 5, p. 182; ROTH-COHEN, O., ROSENBERG, H., LISSITSA, S.: Are You Talking to Me? Generation X, Y, Z Responses to Mobile Advertising. In *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies*, 2022, Vol. 28, No. 3, p. 775.

62 JOSHI, R., GARG, P.: Role of Brand Experience in Shaping Brand Love. In *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 2021, Vol. 45, No. 2, p. 266.

63 See: ALBERT, A. P.: Reflections about Misleading Advertising. In *Methados-Revista de Ciencias Sociais*, 2018, Vol. 6, No. 1, p. 58.; WOŻNA-BURDZIĄK, W.: A Practical Analysis of Comparative Advertising. In *European Research Studies*, 2021, Vol. 24, No. 4, p. 1022.

64 Compare to: CHANG, C.: The Relative Effectiveness of Comparative and Noncomparative Advertising: Evidence for Gender Differences in Information-Processing Strategies. In *Journal of Advertising*, 2007, Vol. 36, No. 1, p. 29; DE MOOIJ, M., HOFSTEDE, G.: The Hofstede Model. In *International Journal of Advertising*, 2010, Vol. 29, No. 1, p. 102; HAJDUK, L., KLUS, M.: *Éducation et dialogue interculturel*. Paris : L'Harmattan, 2016, p. 55-62; KLIŠTIKOVÁ, J., JANOŠKOVÁ, K.: Branding with Understanding: How National Profile of Consumer Influences Brand Value Perception. In *Marketing and Management of Innovations*, 2017, No. 3, p. 155; DE MOOIJ, M.: *Global Marketing and Advertising*. 5th Edition. London : SAGE Publications, 2018, p. 87.

65 CORBIN, R. M. et al.: *Practical Guide to Comparative Advertising: Dare to Compare*. London : Academic Press, 2018, p. 31-50.

assess the adequacy of its use for each specific case. Comparative advertising is evaluated by the recipient only in terms of content, while non-comparative advertising is also focused on its context.⁶⁶ Tyagi and Kumar add that comparative advertising achieves better results and more favourable public acceptance when it is supported by evidence.⁶⁷ At the same time, it is true that comparative advertising should always be true, which is already based on its legislative regulation. Corbin et al. argue that comparative advertising is likely to be successful if it targets topics with which the public is generally dissatisfied. An example can be high prices.⁶⁸ Příkrylová et al. then add that comparative advertising that is funny, ethical and truthful will achieve more positive results.⁶⁹ Beard states that by using comparative advertising, the advertiser acknowledges that there is some competition with which their goods or services can be compared.⁷⁰ Based on this, Příkrylová et al. mention, that in Europe, comparative advertising is used more by smaller companies, which use it to compare themselves to market leaders. Large companies do not want to admit that there is a competitive alternative to their offer.⁷¹ Iyer has already shown through his research that comparative advertising has better sales results if it is used to promote new brands than established ones.⁷² At the same time, however, Murphy and Amundsen found that even for a new brand that competes with big brands in the market, it is more profitable to use non-comparative advertising.⁷³ In the USA, comparative advertising is also widely used by large entities.⁷⁴ Světlík et al. state that the use of comparative advertising is more appropriate for fast-moving goods than for goods with a longer consumption period.⁷⁵

5 Conclusion

The main goal of the study was to analyse the impact of comparative advertising on Generation Z on the case of various formats of comparative advertising. Specifically, the research was aimed on the level of trust in comparative advertising as well as its positive impact on the purchasing behaviour of Generation Z regarding gender and age group. The reason was to explore whether the comparative advertising is suitable for Generation Z as an extraordinary cohort and whether this segment of potential customers can be considered as a homogeneous group or a heterogeneous object for business marketing communication.

Based on the findings of the research these questions have been answered and it is possible to claim, that in general, comparative advertising represents a suitable tool of marketing communication for Generation Z. At the same time, it highlighted differences in perception of comparative advertising by age groups and gender. These findings are important for theory because they complement previous research and provide different perspective of the comparative advertising and its use in business practice, bringing new knowledge to the issue of comparative advertising and its impact on purchasing behaviour of Generation Z.

The practical implications consist of the use of research findings in managerial practice. When using comparative advertising, for the promoted subject to appear credible to the recipient, it is desirable to provide specific data that can be verified. If the brand wants to appear in the minds of the recipients of comparative advertising as an advantageous choice in the particular category on the market or generally more advantageous than the competition, then the most beneficial use is comparison with the general competition. The desired effect can also be achieved by a comparison with a direct but also an indirect designation of a competitor for

66 VYSEKALOVÁ, J., MIKEŠ, J.: *Reklama*. 4th Edition. Prague : Grada Publishing, 2018, p. 154.

67 TYAGI, C. L., KUMAR, A.: *Advertising Management*. New Delhi : Atlantic Publishers and Distributors, 2004, p. 100-115.

68 CORBIN, R. M. et al.: *Practical Guide to Comparative Advertising: Dare to Compare*. London : Academic Press, 2018, p. 31-50.

69 PŘIKRYLOVÁ, J. et al.: *Moderní marketingová komunikace*. 2nd Edition. Prague : Grada Publishing, 2019, p. 42-85.

70 BEARD, F.: The Effectiveness of Comparative Versus Non-Comparative Advertising. In *Journal of Advertising Research*, 2015, Vol. 55, No. 3, p. 300.

71 PŘIKRYLOVÁ, J. et al.: *Moderní marketingová komunikace*. 2nd Edition. Prague : Grada Publishing, 2019, p. 42-85.

72 IYER, E. S.: The Influence of Verbal Content and Relative Newness on the Effectiveness of Comparative Advertising. In *Journal of Advertising*, 1988, Vol. 17, No. 3, p. 18.

73 MURPHY II, J. N., AMUNDSEN, M. S.: The Communications – Effectiveness of Comparative Advertising for a New Brand on Users of the Dominant Brand. In *Journal of Advertising*, 1981, Vol. 10, No. 1, p. 35-36.

74 PŘIKRYLOVÁ, J. et al.: *Moderní marketingová komunikace*. 2nd Edition. Prague : Grada Publishing, 2019, p. 42-85.

75 SVĚTLÍK, J. et al.: *Reklama: Teorie, koncepce, modely*. Rzeszów : University of Information Technology and Management, 2017, p. 415-418.

the indication of a price comparison and preferably also other accurate and verifiable data. At the same time, it is always advisable to process advertising in a fun way. It is significantly more difficult to gain trust of older members of Generation Z, i.e., the Cyber Generation and Rainbow Generation, than younger recipients through comparative advertising. The Cyber Generation is the least trusting towards comparative advertising. For the recipients to trust the information contained in the advertising message, it is necessary to make it as concrete as possible and at the same time not to present data that cannot be verified. If the brand wants to use comparative advertising primarily for the purpose of increasing sales, and therefore increasing the purchasing behaviour of consumers, it is appropriate to include a price comparison and in the advertising claim to provide detailed specific verifiable information about the compared companies or their offer, e.g., performance parameters, composition, etc. Such a comparative advertisement should have an informative character, despite the possible use of humour. With the aim of increasing purchasing behaviour, comparative advertising can be effectively targeted mainly at women from Generation Z. In this age group, unlike the rest of the population, it is not the case that women show lower purchasing behaviour after seeing a comparison in advertising than men. For women, it is most appropriate to use a comparison with a direct description of a competitor, or a comparison with a generalised company, product, or service, which is also most suitable for men.

The crucial limitation in our research is firstly its territorial validity, i.e., national and cultural specifics of consumers from the Czech Republic. So, when using comparative advertising, it is necessary to take into account cross-cultural differences and modify the advertising in accordance with the cultural characteristics of consumers. As mentioned, advertising in accordance with recipients' cultural characteristics is more effective because there is a different perception and response to comparative advertising due to the cultural aspects of consumers. However, Hofstede's cultural dimensions in the Czech Republic have several well-founded criticisms based on the inadequacy of the sample size and representativeness of the sample,⁷⁶ so the research limit is also a justification for obtaining relevant data that is applicable not only from a theoretical point of view, but also from a practical one.

Secondly, the applicability of the suggested recommendations based on research outcomes is justified only according to the perception of comparative advertising by Generation Z. This means that it is not fully possible to apply these claims and recommendations to general effective practice. However, this limitation can be removed if the research is tailored to consumers of the selected generational cohort, and in the case of foreign consumers, national and cultural specifics will be considered. In this way, the results of the research could be considered as relevant, and they could be subject to subsequent verification in the specific environment, including foreign environments.

There is still space for further discussions on specific activities of comparative advertising as an effective tool of marketing communication for Generation Z, and this issue has great potential for the further research. It would be appropriate to examine and compare the perception of comparative advertising by Generation Z regarding national and cultural specifics.

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⁷⁶ SVĚTLÍK, J. et al.: *Reklama: Teorie, koncepce, modely*. Rzeszów : University of Information Technology and Management, 2017, p. 415-416.

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