

Current Marketing Practices in the Information Society Era

Ion-Dănuț LIXANDRU¹
Daniel Nicolae MĂIȚĂ²
Daniel ALEXANDRU³
Andra Denisa LEUȘTEAN⁴

Abstract

This article examines the adaptation of marketing to the evolution of the information society and the impact of advanced digital technologies on marketing strategies. In an era dominated by the rapid flow of information, organizations need to adjust their tactics to respond to the needs and behaviors of modern consumers. The author explores the role of data usage and big data analysis, digital marketing and online influencers, as well as personalization and customer experience as key elements in contemporary marketing. Integrating these aspects into marketing strategies can support building stronger customer relationships, achieving greater relevance in the market, and meeting business objectives in a competitive and dynamic environment. The paper provides a comprehensive perspective on current trends and future directions in modern marketing, highlighting the need for continuous adaptation to technological and social changes in the context of an evolving information economy.

Keywords: *marketing strategies, information society, cybermarketing*

JEL classification: M31, M37, O33, L81

DOI: 10.24818/RMCI.2024.3.563

1. Introduction

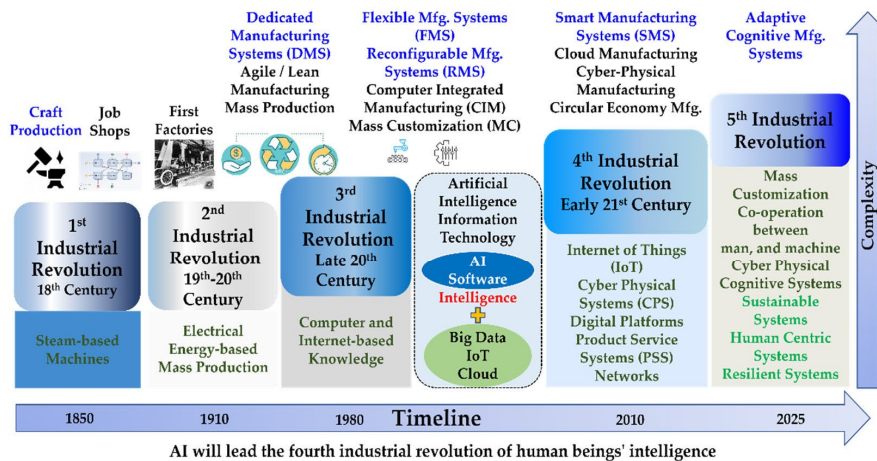
Considering that society is in constant evolution based on the exchange of information, adapting to technological changes, innovation, and social modifications, including consumer behavior, is essential for the success of any organization. Throughout history, individuals have relied on various tools to facilitate their work, whether it be steam engines, electrification, the advent of computers, or artificial intelligence. Currently, their efforts are focused on Industry 5.0, which aspires to add a new dimension by synergistically combining human capabilities with advanced artificial intelligence technologies, as depicted in the graphical representation in Figure 1.

¹ Ion-Dănuț Lixandru, Bucharest University of Economic Studies, danut.lixandru@mk.ase.ro

² Daniel Nicolae Măiță, Bucharest University of Economic Studies, daniel.maita@mk.ase.ro

³ Daniel Alexandru, Bucharest University of Economic Studies, Dan74a@yahoo.com

⁴ Andra Denisa Leuștean, Bucharest University of Economic Studies, leusteanandradenisa@gmail.com



AI will lead the fourth industrial revolution of human beings' intelligence

SW: Software
IoT: Internet of Things

Figure 1. Industrial progress

Source: Mourtzis et al., 2022

As Nath (2017) states, the structure and evolution of the economy, with a focus on information, are commonly referred to as the informational economy, yet the lack of a consensus definition often leads to the term being replaced by other notions such as the knowledge economy or the new economy.

The variation in economic activities within the new economy, as part of the globalization process, leads to transformations in the economic, social, and political environment. The unique definition of these dynamic development processes generates numerous debates regarding the technological, social, and economic paradigms associated with them. In an effort to conceptualize the new stage of the economy, this diversity has led to various terminologies such as "post-industrial economy," "digital economy," "net-economy," "e-economy," "network economy," and according to Ursăcescu (2009, p. 17), the most comprehensive approach integrates cognitive processes and information elements, thus reflecting the term "information and knowledge economy."

The formation and adaptation of organizations to the new environment represent a serious challenge for many of them. A report by the European Commission (2023) states that, on average, 26% of the funds allocated by the European Union member states to the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) have been directed towards digital transformation, exceeding the mandatory threshold of 20%, with Austria, Germany, Luxembourg, Ireland, and Lithuania among the countries that have allocated more than 30% of these funds to digital initiatives. The same report (European Commission, 2023) shows that in 2021, only 55% of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) reached at least a basic level of digital technology adoption, with Sweden and Finland leading in terms of the most digitalized SMEs, while Romania and Bulgaria recorded the lowest rates of digitalization. Yet, despite businesses becoming increasingly digitalized, the use of

technologies remains low, with only 8% utilizing AI and 14% using big data, despite 34% already relying on cloud computing in 2021, as observed in Figure 2.

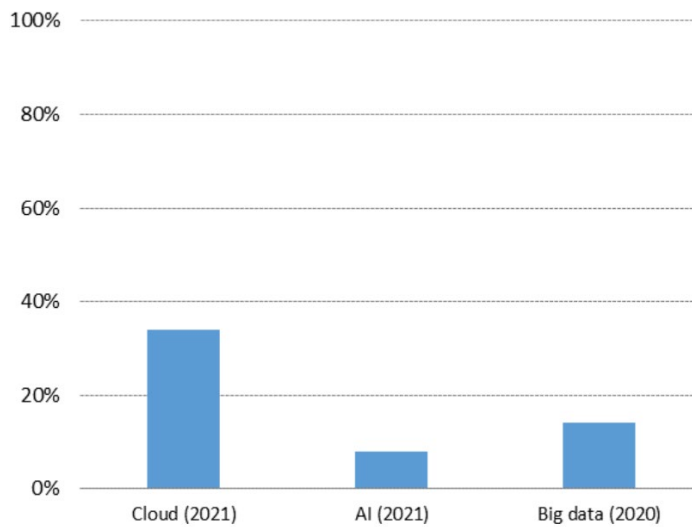


Figure 2. The level of technology adoption across Europe
Source: European Commission (2023)

Even though it's not yet at a high level regarding the implementation of Artificial Intelligence technologies, it seems that organizations are moving towards a new industry. Industry 5.0 represents a forward-looking concept for the industry, promoting a human-centered, sustainable, and resilient manufacturing system, with a focus on the agility and resilience of systems, while also respecting planetary boundaries and promoting diversity and talent, as an evolution of Industry 4.0, which emphasizes digitization and artificial intelligence technologies over the original principles of social justice and sustainability (Huang et al., 2022).

From this essential premise arises a major challenge: how can the marketing department, known for its agility and adaptability, adjust its strategies and tactics to meet the requirements and dynamics of a new world, where technology plays a central and rapidly evolving role?

2. Ways of adapting marketing in the digital era

To underscore the importance of marketing aspects in the context of the information society, it is essential to understand its definition, according to Kotler and Armstrong (2008, p. 6), which illustrates marketing as "the process by which companies create value for customers and establish lasting relationships with them, in order to obtain value in return," and implicitly, a definition of the information society that "reflects changes in the economic, political, cultural, and especially in the field of information and communication technologies within organizations," as indicated by Ghilic-Micu and Stoica (2002).

According to Denner cited in Balaure et al. (2002), marketing, in a comprehensive vision, involves not only identifying and analyzing market demand but also developing and implementing strategies to respond to this demand in a profitable manner. In the era of the information society, where information exchanges are fast and accessible, marketing is evolving towards an approach centered on individualized customer. In this context, the emphasis is on a deep understanding of customers' needs, preferences, and behavior to offer products and services that best meet these requirements. While mass marketing strategies predominated in the past, many companies now focus on niche or personalized marketing approaches, adapting their offerings according to the specific profile of each customer. This trend reflects a shift in the attitude of enterprises, which aim to establish deeper and more enduring relationships with their customers, understanding and anticipating their needs in the most precise and efficient manner. A fascinating example presented in March 2016 (Iqads, 2016), with the debut of the Fibra Awards, was the launch of a campaign to promote more authentic advertising. This initiative emphasized that every day brings evidence of the courage and real abilities of consumers, who are not just numbers from a briefing or a statistic, but authentic people, justifying the need for authentic and empathetic advertising.

Similarly, the progress of information and communication technology in recent years, influenced by advances in fields such as electronics, computing, and communications, has reached a level where it can respond to the requirements of globalization (Ursăcescu, 2009, p. 123). This progress has brought significant benefits in the field of marketing and communication, reducing the time required for creating a commercial or for the process of production, implementation, and sale of a product to the end consumer. Currently, products and services can be marketed exclusively online, eliminating the need for a physical store. Purchasing becomes a convenient experience for the consumer, who receives the product directly at his doorstep, and if not satisfied for any reason, can return the product as easily as purchased. Technological development aims to simplify human activities, thereby freeing up more time for essential activities.

On the other hand, companies have increasingly invested in online advertising, diminishing the budget allocated for traditional advertising, especially because the online environment provides precise data for marketing specialists, allowing them to track the path of consumers and accurately evaluate the performance of campaigns. In contrast, traditional advertising does not provide such concrete data, only estimates of the audience watching a commercial or reading a newspaper or magazine. Without certainty whether those consumers are actually viewing the presented ads or engaging in other activities, such as phone calls or going to the bathroom during commercial breaks, marketing managers prefer to have precise information regarding the effectiveness of investments so they can adjust their strategies accordingly. Moreover, online advertising offers a better understanding of consumer behavior and needs, allowing marketers to identify moments when a customer abandons a purchase and subsequently adapt offers through remarketing, providing relevant products or services.

For the ongoing adaptation to the requirements of both marketing and the information society, an anticipatory approach to the evolution of the climate of one's own habitat is necessary. Socio-economic dynamism creates a bridge between these two distinct domains leading to a new form of the economy, with the essential factors in this development represented as follows in the following figure:

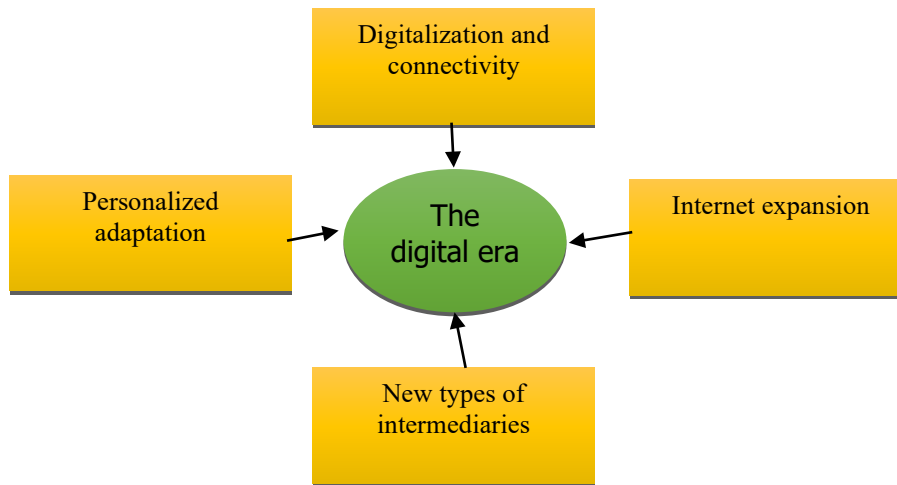


Figure 3. The forces shaping the digital era
Source: Kotler & Armstrong (2008, p. 773)

For this connection to be possible and for information to be transmitted, there needs to be a means of connection through which the flow of information circulates. The Internet represents the most relevant means of connecting individuals for the purpose of sharing information among network members. Technological development has led, in the case of marketing, to the formation of new concepts, starting with telemarketing, e-marketing, to the emergence of cybermarketing (Ghilic-Micu, Stoica, 2002, p. 151). A broad definition of this term is given by Imber, cited in Orzan & Orzan (2004, p.7), which emphasizes the idea that "cybermarketing means the process of creating and maintaining customer relationships through online activities facilitating the exchange of ideas, products, and services for the benefit of both parties," a definition that includes the central terms of marketing and the information society. In order to satisfy the needs of both parties, adapting products or services to consumer preferences requires a deep and indispensable approach, without which survival in the contemporary business environment is not possible, and cybermarketing represents one of the best communication methods, due to the multiple benefits it offers.

Strong brands are undoubtedly present online, on Social Media, striving to maintain a close relationship with their customers. Thus, they not only maintain a lively connection with existing users but also provide additional information and are always available to potential customers to convert them into loyal customers. In order to maintain good communication, brands should always respond to and resolve

the problems of customers present online. Another way companies try to be as close to their consumers as possible and maintain a positive relationship with them is by creating a mobile application through which they aim to make application users relax, have fun, and "befriend" their brand through the various activities they provide along with that application. As early as 2017, Promenada Mall launched "the only shopping app worth having," the a-Ha! app (StirilePROTV, 2017), which aims to build user loyalty through the points system offered with each purchase and their transformation into gifts at a certain point. Thus, it tries to stimulate customer loyalty by offering exemplary services and products, rather than trying to encourage a single sale. The long-term relationship with a loyal customer represents a stable relationship that cannot be easily toppled by main competitors. On the other hand, this type of relationship is valuable because a loyal customer brings more sales to the company, and maintaining a relationship with them costs much less than attracting a new customer who may only generate a single purchase.

Thus, for better collaboration and closeness to consumers, Kotler and Armstrong (2008) assert that it is imperative for organizations to be present online through the means presented in Figure 3:



Figure 4. Methods of implementing online marketing
Source: Adapted from Kotler & Armstrong (2008, p. 773)

3. Marketing Communication - a tool of marketing in the digital era

The primary model underlying communication through the internet communication network is represented in Figure 5, which illustrates "one-to-many" and "many-to-one" communication, the central benefit of this type of communication being "the possibility of obtaining an immediate response and customization of the messages transmitted by the sender" (Orzan and Orzan, 2004, p. 11).

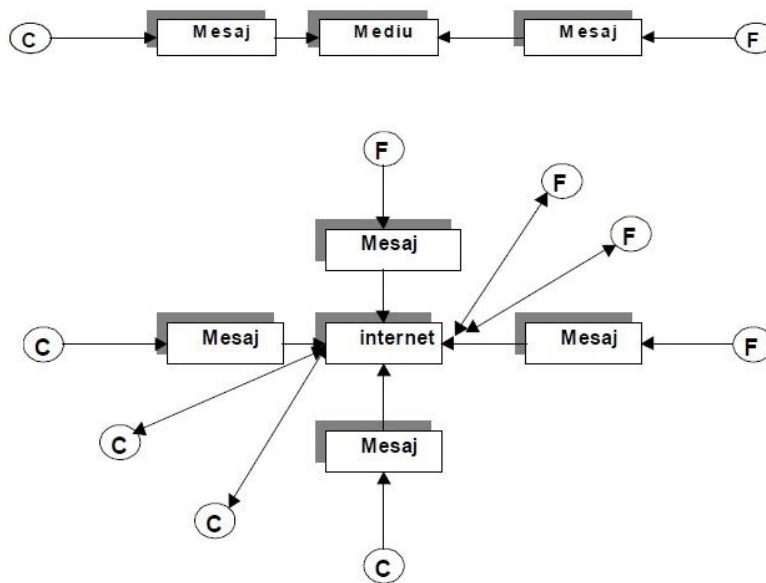


Figure 5. World Wide Web Communication Models (one-to-many and many-to-one)
Source: Hoffman and Novak cited in Orzan and Orzan (2004)

This personalized adaptation, according to specialists Kotler and Armstrong (2008), does not only mean adapting offers to demand but even includes "the ability to design their own offers," and the strongest advantage that cybermarketing offers is building relationships with customers. Additionally, among the multiple benefits of this type of marketing, there is also profit generation from the reduction of multiple costs (service costs, forecast costs, product development costs, community development costs, or loyalty) by establishing a broader contact with customers (Ghilic-Micu and Stoica, 2002, p. 152). Thus, mass marketing has become increasingly less used, with brands often adopting niche marketing or even individual marketing, one-on-one, where customers can design their own offers online or even have the possibility to manufacture or customize desired products in the traditional environment. Gloria Jean's Coffees and many other coffee shops allow consumers to prepare their coffee according to their tastes by adding the ingredients they desire. A more eloquent example is the clothing brand Adina Buzatu, which tailors suits for gentlemen based on their body shape and preferences. All these personalized actions by brands help build a close and long-lasting relationship with their customers, as well as turning potential customers into loyal ones.

To better understand the difference between traditional marketing and cybermarketing, Orzan (2016) elaborated a series of advantages of the latter, as follows:

- More efficient targeting of targeted consumer segments;
- Formation of a long-term relationship with consumers;
- Reduced costs;
- Opportunities for developing new products/services;

- Competitive advantages in line with the exploitation of the development of new products/services.

In other words, alongside the discussed benefits for establishing a connection with consumers, cybermarketing can save time and money in reducing the marketing budget since online costs are much lower than those in the traditional environment and, also, it makes customers' work easier, reduces their purchase time, thus offering them a much wider range of choices, as well as an easier way to buy different products.

On the other hand, Orzan (2016) argues that "cybermarketing is primarily digital, disregards space and time, is interactive and dialogue-oriented, strongly relational with facts, and any marketing strategy design is permanently and directly focused on individualized customers, at the global market level." According to Orzan and Orzan (2004, pp.13-15), there are a series of personalization steps and techniques through which cybermarketing becomes easy for both parties involved (organization-consumer), namely: attracting consumers to the site, motivating consumers by providing incentives, collecting consumer information to maintain the connection, profiling the consumer, and maintaining active dialogue with the customer for profiling purposes. Thus, it is not enough for brands to attract consumers to the site through online advertising, but it is very important to provide them with the information they are looking for, answer their questions, and present them with the best products or services available to them. If the landing page content is not relevant and the consumer has not found the information they needed, they will immediately leave that page and will not return, and thus, from a minor mistake, there is a possibility that the brand will lose many relevant users. To avoid this situation, it is necessary for the organization to apply techniques involving interactivity.

Ghilic-Micu and Stoica (2002) place the aspects of interactivity in the context of the information society and cybermarketing based on direct communication (referring to the length of the communication channel), individual choice (specifically, the suggestion as an alternative to the inability of consumer choice), and user-friendly technology (inclined towards familiarity and ease of use of new technologies). As a result of cybermarketing development, four areas of its applicability are distinguished, as shown in the accompanying figure (figure 6):

	Targeted towards consumers	Targeted towards firms
Initiated by firms	B2C	B2B
Initiated by consumers	C2C	C2B

Figure 6. Areas of application of cybermarketing
Source: Kotler & Armstrong (2008, p. 778)

The greatest attention is given to B2C e-commerce - business to consumer, and although Romanian consumers were particularly hesitant when it came to online purchases, sales in this form continue to grow at an astonishing rate. According to a recent analysis by GPeC and iSense Solutions, "Romanian buyers visit online stores on average 3-4 times a week, and 77% of them make purchases at least twice a year from the same store, with the highest amounts allocated for tourism services and the purchase of electronics and appliances" (Roşu, 2017). Thus, electronic marketing targets people who actively select which websites they want to visit and what information to receive about certain products, compared to traditional marketing, which addresses a somewhat passive audience more.

Another interesting approach to how marketing and communication work in the marketing era is shown by Wu et al. (2015), who demonstrated how a company in China develops an operational service system based on integrated cybermarketing in the energy network, using data mining technology to improve enterprise decisions and customer relationships. By integrating various data sources, the system aims to support marketing capabilities, provide support to energy users, and contribute to improving company management, with the integration model represented in Figure 7.

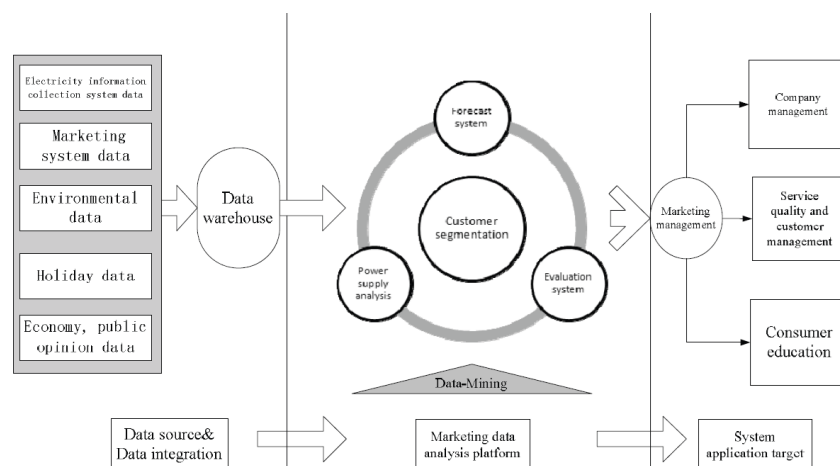


Figure 7. Integration model of cybermarketing

Source: Wu et al. (2015)

Regardless of the domain in which it is applied and the chosen model, Ghilic-Micu and Stoica (2002, p. 155) argue that certain parameters must be strictly followed, namely: Communication method; Symmetry of the communication environment; Content of the environment; Sources of information; Coordination of communication; Interactivity, a view also supported by Wu et al. (2015), who state that its implementation can help, compared to traditional marketing, by improving customer relationships and streamlining work processes.

The presence of the internet and the availability of information leading to a demographically heterogeneous and behaviorally homogeneous market, the existence of online databases, and the extensive communication possibilities, give a prevalent character to information and communication technology. The existence of new technology, through which a new type of economy facilitated by the internet is developed, considered as the global network of informatics, represents the basis for creating new knowledge about the characteristics of a new economy (Ursăcescu, 2009, p. 24). Additionally, conducting business in the new digital era will necessitate changes and modifications in marketing strategy. The digital era has fundamentally changed consumer behavior regarding convenience, price, speed, product information, etc.

4. Conclusions

To conclude the aforementioned points, as stated by Ghilic-Micu and Stoica (2002), online technology blends characteristics from other communication models, both traditional and contemporary, presenting greater effectiveness and accessibility for both companies and consumers, while constantly evolving in terms of technical capabilities, becoming increasingly adapted and interactive. Consequently, this directs all actions of a brand towards its consumers, through the use of niche or individualized marketing. Although brands have moved online to be closer to their customers, an effective marketing strategy also includes various techniques or actions in the traditional environment, as the skills and practices that have yielded results in the past need to be retained and simultaneously improved and adapted to thrive in the new online environment.

Therefore, to address the needs and behavior of modern consumers, marketing strategies must integrate elements such as data usage and big data analysis, digital marketing, personalization, and customer experience. The evolution towards an informational economy implies a profound change in marketing approach, from mass strategies to personalized or niche approaches. Companies need to be present and active online, using various channels and technologies to build and maintain strong relationships with customers. Adapting to these changes requires effective and bidirectional communication, facilitated by digital technology, which allows message personalization and provides the opportunity to obtain immediate and detailed feedback from consumers. In conclusion, marketing in the digital era is not limited to promoting products or services; it represents an essential component in building and maintaining customer relationships, constantly adapting to changes in the online environment and technological evolution.

References

1. Balaure, V. (coord.), Adăscăliței, V., Bălan, C., Boboc, Ș., Cătoiu, I., Olteanu, V., Pop, N.A., Teodorescu, N. (2002) *Marketing*, Ediția a II-a revăzută și adăugită, București: Editura Uranus

2. European Commission. (2023). *Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) 2022 Thematic chapters*.
3. Ghilic-Micu, B. & Stoica, M., 2002. *eActivitățile în societatea informațională*. București: Editura Economica.
4. Huang, S., Wang, B., Li, X., Zheng, P., Mourtzis, D., & Wang, L. (2022). Industry 5.0 and Society 5.0—Comparison, complementation and co-evolution. *Journal of Manufacturing Systems*, 64, 424–428. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jmsy.2022.07.010>
5. Iqads. (2016). *Premiile FIBRA – O campanie pentru o publicitate mai buna*. <https://www.iqads.ro/articol/34224/premiile-fibra-o-campanie-pentru-o-publicitate-mai-buna>
6. Kotler, P. & Armstrong, G., 2008. *Principiile marketingului*. 4th ed., București:Teora.
7. Mourtzis, D., Angelopoulos, J., & Panopoulos, N. (2022). A Literature Review of the Challenges and Opportunities of the Transition from Industry 4.0 to Society 5.0. In *Energies* (Vol. 15, Issue 17). MDPI. <https://doi.org/10.3390/en15176276>
8. Nath, H. K. (2017). The information society. *Space and Culture, India*, 4(3), 19–28. <https://doi.org/10.20896/saci.v4i3.248>
9. Orzan, G. & Orzan, M., 2004. *Cybermarketing*. București: Uranus.
10. Orzan, M., 2016. *Cybermarketing-curs introductiv*, Unpublished
11. Roșu, R. (2017, May 16). *Românii vizitează magazinele online de 3-4 ori pe săptămână; cele mai mari cheltuieli sunt pentru turism și electronice*. Ziarul Financiar. <https://www.zf.ro/zf-24/romanii-viziteaza-magazinele-online-de-3-4-ori-pe-saptamana-cele-mai-mari-cheltuieli-sunt-pentru-turism-si-electronice-16314820>
12. StirilePROTV. (2017, May 10). *A aparat aplicatia care te rasplateste cu cadouri pentru timpul petrecut la mall*. <https://stirileprotv.ro/a/p-a-aparut-aplicatia-care-te-rasplateste-cu-cadouri-pentru-timpul-petrecut-la-mall.html>
13. Ursăcescu, M., 2009. *Economia informației și a cunoștințelor*. București: Editura Universitară.
14. Wu, W., Wang, H., He Lishi, & Li, Y. (2015). The research and application of Power Integrated Cyber-marketing. *2015 5th International Conference on Electric Utility Deregulation and Restructuring and Power Technologies (DRPT)*, 147-151. <https://ieeexplore.ieee.org/abstract/document/7432226>