



FACTORS DETERMINING BOOK DEMAND AND ONLINE SALES

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ABSTRACT

This research is motivated by the growing interest of consumers in Bulgaria in purchasing their goods via the Internet. With the development of technology, online shopping is becoming increasingly preferred by consumers, owing to a number of advantages.

This study aims to reveal consumers' preferences when buying books online, as well as the right methods for building an online bookstore.

The purpose of this study is to analyze consumer attitudes toward online book purchasing.

To achieve this goal, it is necessary to perform the following tasks: Conducting a survey on user references; Analysis of Survey Results; Presentation of recommendations for creating an online bookstore.

Key words: e-commerce, competitiveness, bookstores

INTRODUCTION

This study is driven by the increasing number of Bulgarian consumers who are interested in buying their goods online. As technology advances, online shopping is becoming more and more popular among consumers due to its many advantages. The emergence of e-bookstore sales offers consumers and businesses a variety of advantages and conveniences.

The expectations of the research are that different age groups of consumers will have wildly different determining factors when it comes to book purchasing. We will present some guidelines for successful marketing of different book genres in an online environment. The increasingly rapid development of the internet is an important prerequisite for the development of electronic markets. Due to the change in the economic environment and the introduction of newer technologies, this type of business is developing at a great pace (Slavova, 2021).

Depending on the needs of users, books satisfy spiritual, professional, and informational needs. Since books are not a commodity of first necessity, the existence of a high elasticity of demand in relation to income is determined, excluding books related to education (Grozdeva, 2010).

Using the virtual environment to make commercial contact with the customer has the advantage of stimulating the user's interest in an individual manner. Through this tool, e-tailers build user loyalty among their customers (Stoyanov 2013).

METHODS

Consumer buying behavior can be divided into three categories: Survivalist, Outward-Oriented, and Inward-Oriented. Survivors are low-income people, and their focus is on meeting household expenses. Externally oriented are characterized by striving to obtain approval from the environment and accordingly purchase products of public interest (Laskova, 2012). Inwardly oriented consumers form their consumer demand based on their own values and impressions of certain goods.

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Consumer behavior has its own specificity determined in the direction of a person-product-situation, which turns it into a complex system determined by personal needs, product, and situational specificity. It is important to note that the behavior of consumers in each segment of the market differs from that of another segment.

For the purpose of the study, a specific questionnaire was created, focused on the main factors determining purchasing decisions among Bulgarian readers. The survey was

conducted online among willing participants from the whole country. The results were analyzed using the methods of analysis and synthesis, induction and deduction, monographic, etc.

RESULTS

For the study, a 10-question questionnaire was created, and 102 people (25 men and 77 women) from all over the country were surveyed regarding their preferences and practices regarding book selection and purchase.

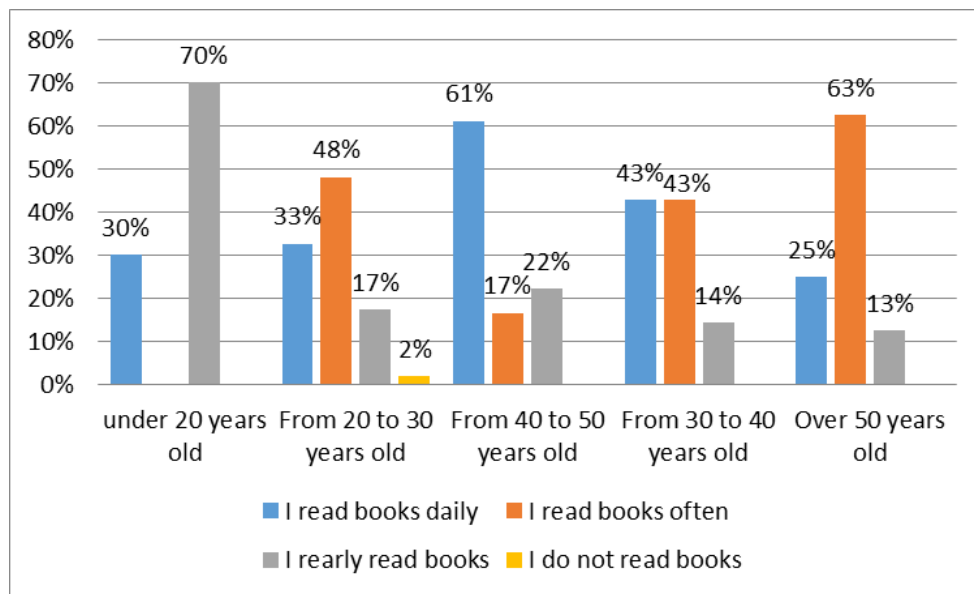


Figure 1. The frequency of reading books by age group

Source: Own survey

The distribution of respondents by age group was as follows: out of 102 people, only 10 were under 20 years old, 58 were between 20-30 years old, 18 were between the age group 30-40 years old, 14 were between 40-50 years old, and 8 were over 50 years old.

Comparing age and how often the respondents answered that they read books (**Figure 1**), we found that the majority of respondents under 20 years of age (70%) answered that they rarely read books, and the remaining 30% often had a book in hand. Among people between 20 and 30 years old, the largest part (48%) sometimes read books, and another large part (33%) often had a book in hand. Only 2% of participants did not read books at all.

The majority of respondents aged between 30 and 40 (61%) often have a book in hand, and only about 1/5 of them rarely read books.

Among older people (between 40 and 50 years), we can say that those who often have a book in hand and those who read sometimes share 43% of the total number for the entire age group, and 14% of them rarely read books. Of the people over 50 years of age that we were able to survey, we found that about 63% of them read books sometimes, 1/5 often had a book in hand, and only one in eight respondents read rarely.

In summary, people who often have a book in hand and those who read it sometimes share 38%. Only 23% of participants rarely read books.

Analyzing the preferred genre for each age group (**Figure 2**), we found that people under 20 prefer to read thrillers and crime books (70%), followed by fantasy, horror and fiction (60%), and romance books (40%). Other genres were not preferred by this age group.

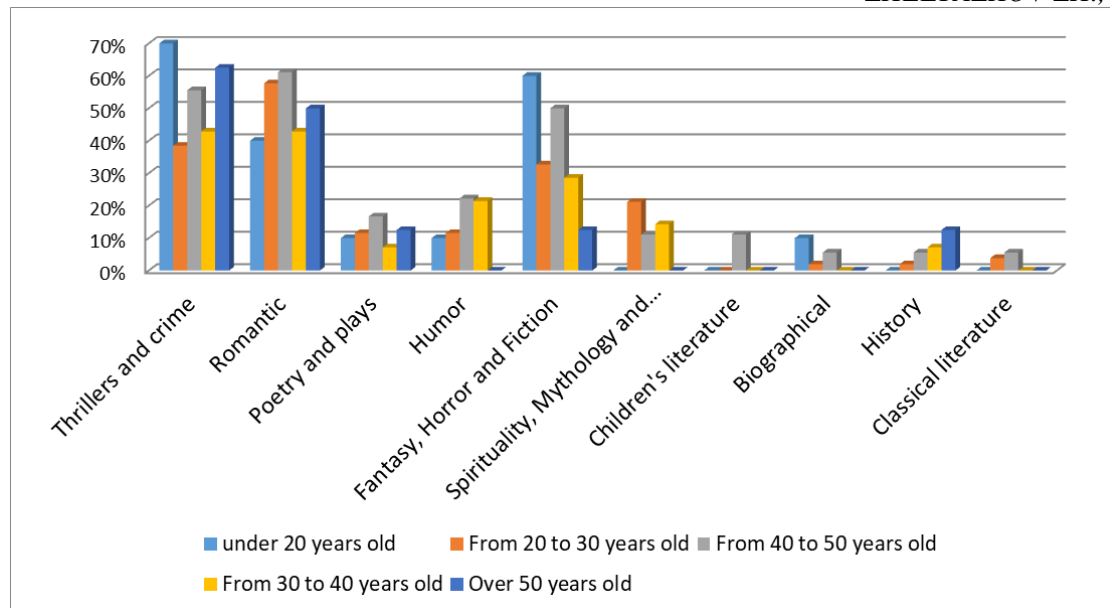


Figure 2. Preferences for literary genre distributed according to the age group of the respondents.
Source: Own survey

The age group between 20 and 30 years old mainly read romance literature - 58%, 38% read thrillers and crime stories, 33% horror and fantasy, and 21% preferred spirituality, mysticism, and esoteric books. The other mentioned genres are not preferred by this age group, with the least interest being shown in children's literature, biographical books and history.

People between 30 and 40 years of age prefer all the indicated genres, most often reading romance books (61%, 56% read thrillers and crime, 50% prefer fantasy, horror and fiction. The least preferred are classical literature, history, and biographical books, each with 6% of the respondents.

The group of between 40 and 50 years are drawn to thrillers and romantic works equally at 43% for each of the two genres. After them, 29% of people focused on horror and fantasy, and 21% preferred humorous books. Not a single person in this age group noted that they purchased and preferred children's literature, classics, and biographies.

The last age group is people over 50 years of age who prefer to read mainly thrillers and crime stories—63% and 50% romance books, respectively. Other genres were not among the favorites of this age group.

Analyzing the preferences of users for the genre in relation to their gender (**Figure 3**), there is a

distinction between a group of three genres, which are the most popular among the respondents. These are romantic, criminal, and fantasy.

As expected, the biggest fans of romance novels were women, as 70% of the women surveyed showed this genre as their favorite, while only 4% of men preferred this type of books.

With thrillers and crimes, the results were relatively balanced by gender, as 44% of the women preferred this genre, while the interest of the gentlemen was higher, as nearly 60% of them enjoyed reading books of this genre.

In fantasy and horror novels, men again have a higher interest, with three out of five men showing that they like the respective genre, and about 1/3 of women showing this type of book as their favorite.

Biography, history, and classical literature are the primary objects of male readers' attention. There is relatively less interest in other genres, with the values between men and women being fairly balanced.

If we analyze what attracts a certain reader when buying a book according to gender (**Figure 4**), we note that for women, for 4/5 of them, the genre is of primary importance, followed by the title. This means that they also focus on what message the book title conveys.

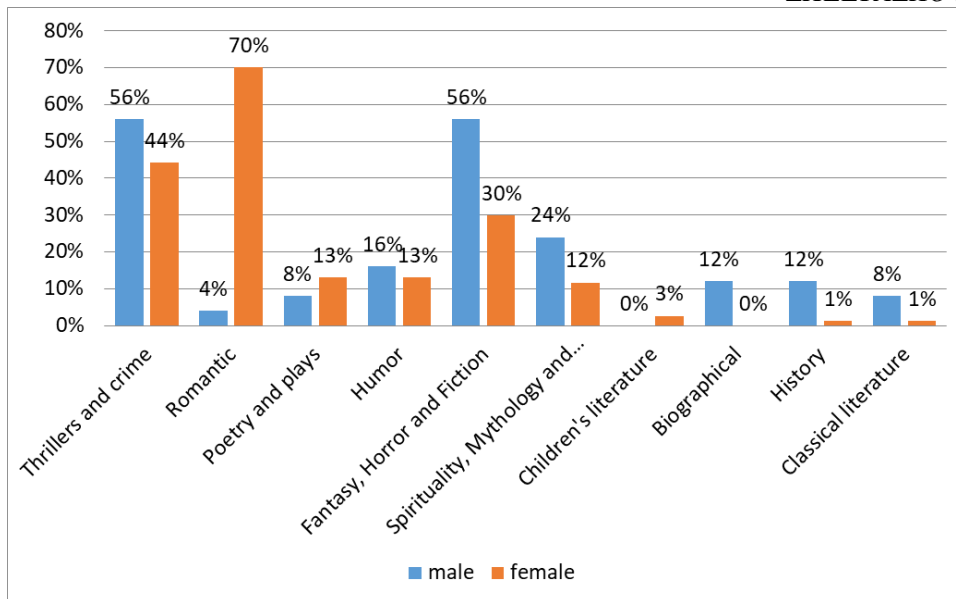


Figure 3. Preferences for literary genre distributed according to the gender of the respondents.
Source: Own survey

For example, with romantic novels, the book can be easily recognized based on the author (where he has established himself in the genre)

and the cover, but in these cases, the title should further specify the story itself and emotions, if possible.

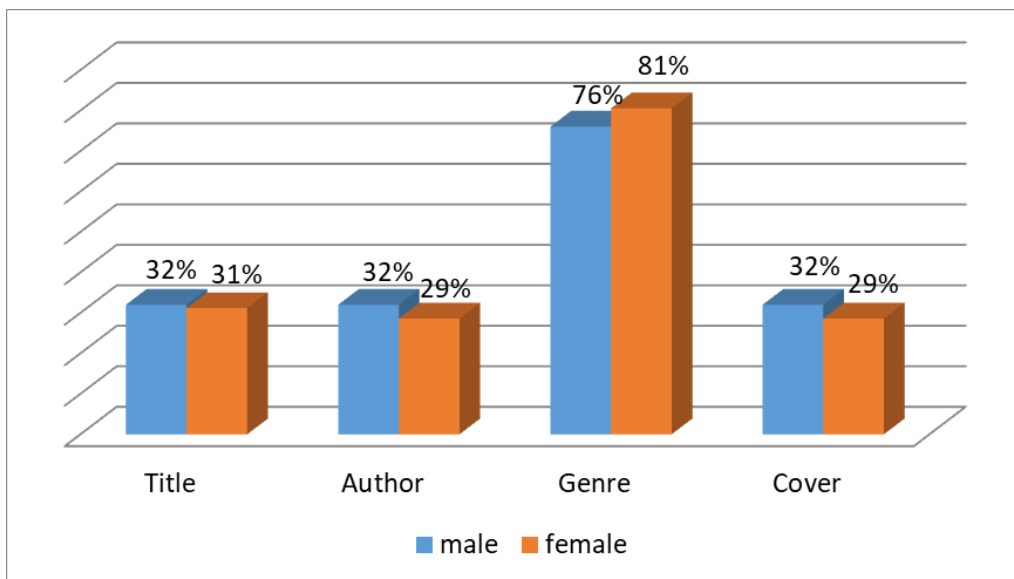


Figure 4. Consumer preferences in choosing a book by gender.
Source: Own survey

For men, the situation is similar, as 3/4 of them showed that for them, the genre was also the leading factor when choosing a book, but they gave equal weight to the other elements (over 30%). When recognizing the genre, they focus on both the cover and the author and title. According to this, when positioning, for example, crime, the cover, and the title need to be well designed and redirected at a glance at the genre in question, the author's name should be placed so as to be easily noticeable.

Analyzing what attracts readers to a book in relation to their preferred genre (**Figure 5**), for all it is leading to which genre the book falls (the percentage here is over 65% for the different genres).

Focusing on the other elements - author, cover and title, which help to easily recognize the genre, the evidence shows that adherents of romantic novels attach importance to the title and cover, and for them the author is not of primary importance. The same is true for fantasy and horror.

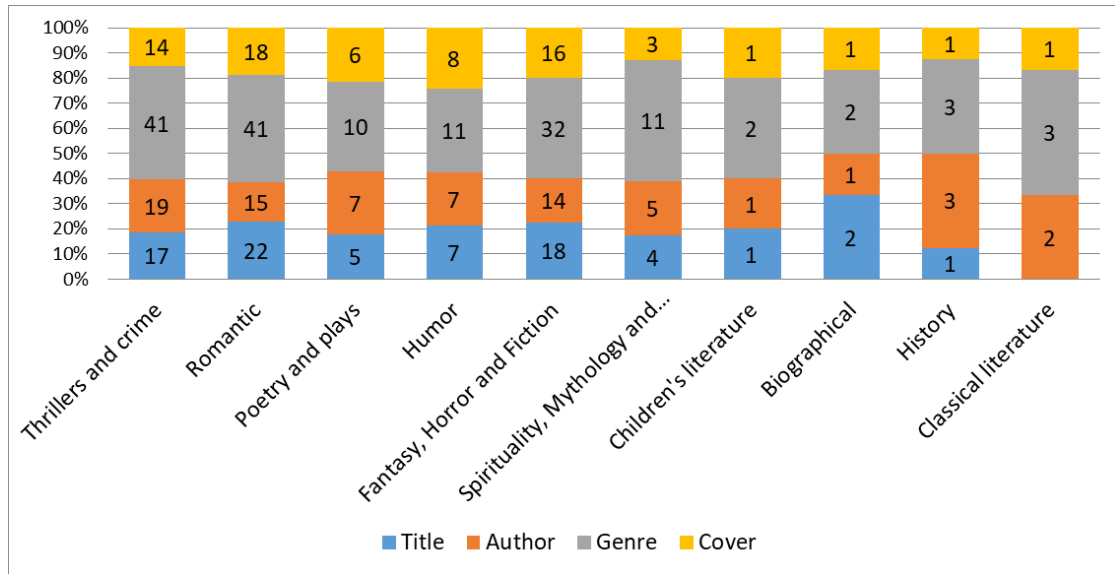


Figure 5. Book selection preferences by genre

Source: Own survey

This suggests that when positioning them in an electronic store, the emphasis should be on attracting attention to these elements - the design of the cover and the title of the book.

The author is of primary importance in thrillers and crime stories, which is understandable given that there are many popular authors in this genre. Here, too, part of the attention falls on the title, which is indicative of the genre. The author is also relevant to the genres of spirituality, mythology, poetry, and plays. This makes it necessary to present these three genres of books in the online catalogs to emphasize the author, and a way of grouping the books by author can

also be implemented, which would facilitate the user in finding the relevant book.

Analyzing the frequency of purchases in relation to the preferred genre of users (Figure 6), it can be seen that the most frequently purchased genres are fantasy and horror, as well as romantic novels, followed by thrillers and crime.

For fantasy and horror fans, about 20% of respondents indicated that they buy a book every month, and a large number buy a book from this genre every week. The results for romance and crime novels are similar.

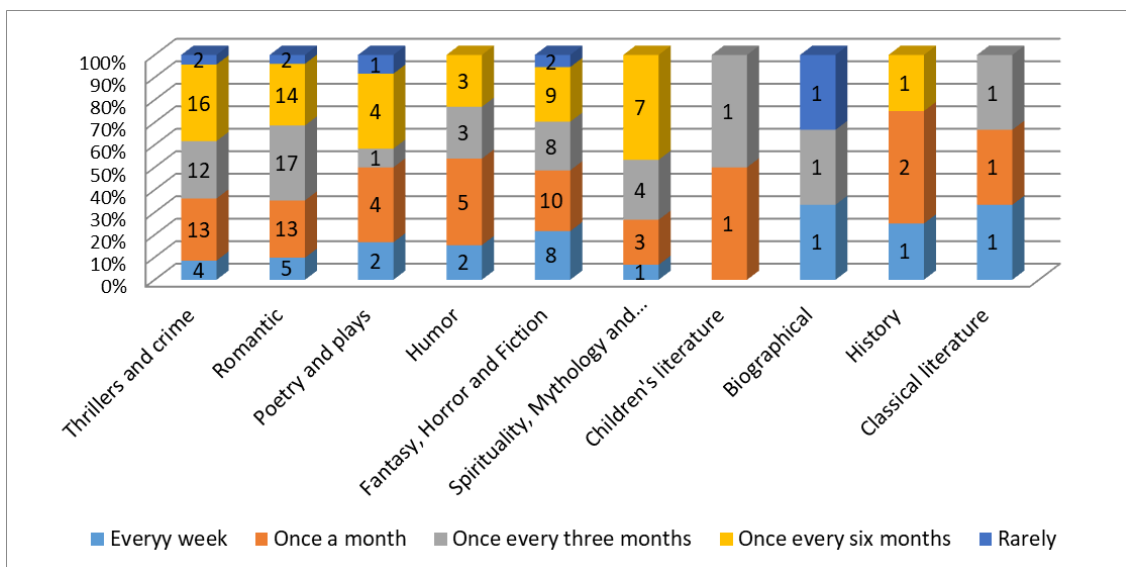


Figure 6. Frequency of purchasing books according to their genre

Source: Own survey

Genres related to spirituality and mythology were purchased relatively infrequently. The same is true of poetry and plays. Sales are incidental, mainly due to the influence of the respective author and the frequency of publication of their work. For this reason, it is necessary for online bookstores to promote new Bulgarian authors from the specified genres in order to attract the attention of users and increase the frequency of purchases.

Depending on how often they buy books and how much they spend on books (Figure 7), 45%

of respondents spent up to BGN 50, 31% spent between BGN 50 and 100, 11% spent between BGN 100 and BGN 200, and only 13% of respondents spent more than BGN 200.

Of the people we surveyed, 7% bought books every week, 27% bought books once a month, 25% bought books once every three months, 30% bought books once every six months, 5% bought books less often than once every six months, and 6% did not buy books

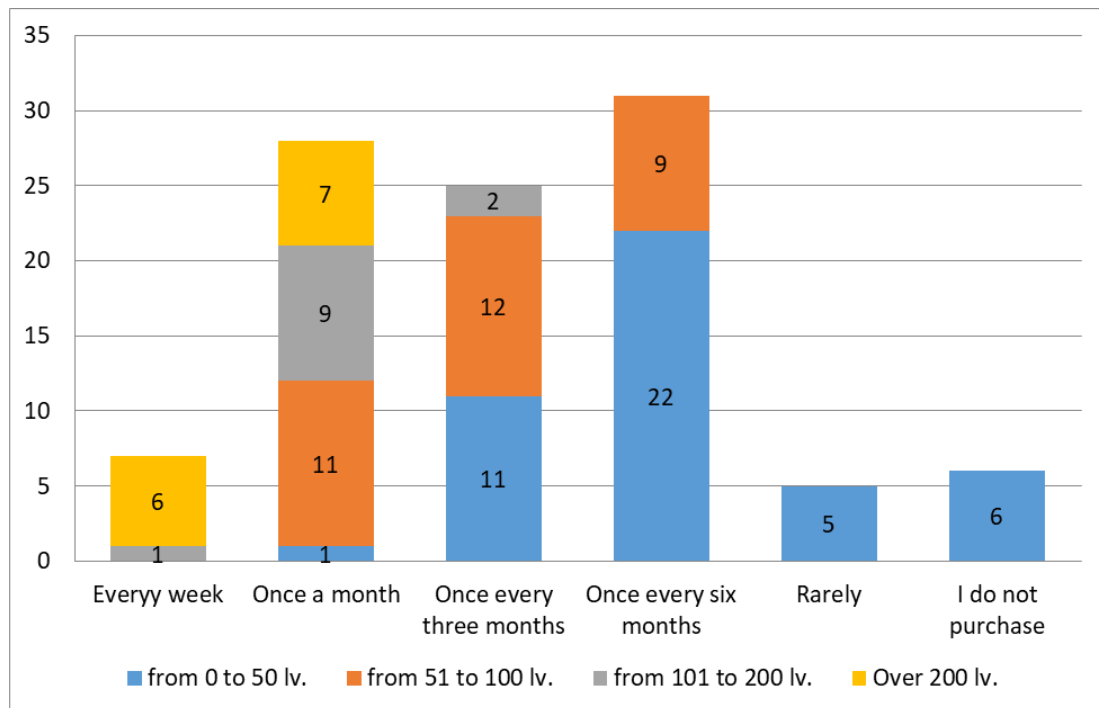


Figure 7. Funds set aside by users for purchasing books in relation to their frequency.

Source: Own survey

People who do not buy books, we assume, use the services of local libraries or other people give them books as gifts, as when asked if they read books, only one person answered that they did not read. Of the people who buy a book every week, 86% spend over BGN 200 per year, and 1/7 spend between BGN 100 and BGN 200 every year.

Of the readers who buy a book every month, the main part (39%) spends between BGN 50 and BGN 100 annually, about 1/3-between BGN 100 and BGN 200 every year, and 25 who spend

more than BGN 200 on books. For people who buy a book once a quarter, the traditionally allocated amounts are between BGN 50 and BGN 100 per year, while a large part of them spend up to BGN 50 on books annually.

Among readers who buy a book once every six months, a large proportion (71%) spend up to BGN 50 per year on books, and the rest (29%) between BGN 50 and 100. Correspondingly, among people who buy a book less often for six months, 100% spend up to BGN 50 per year on books.

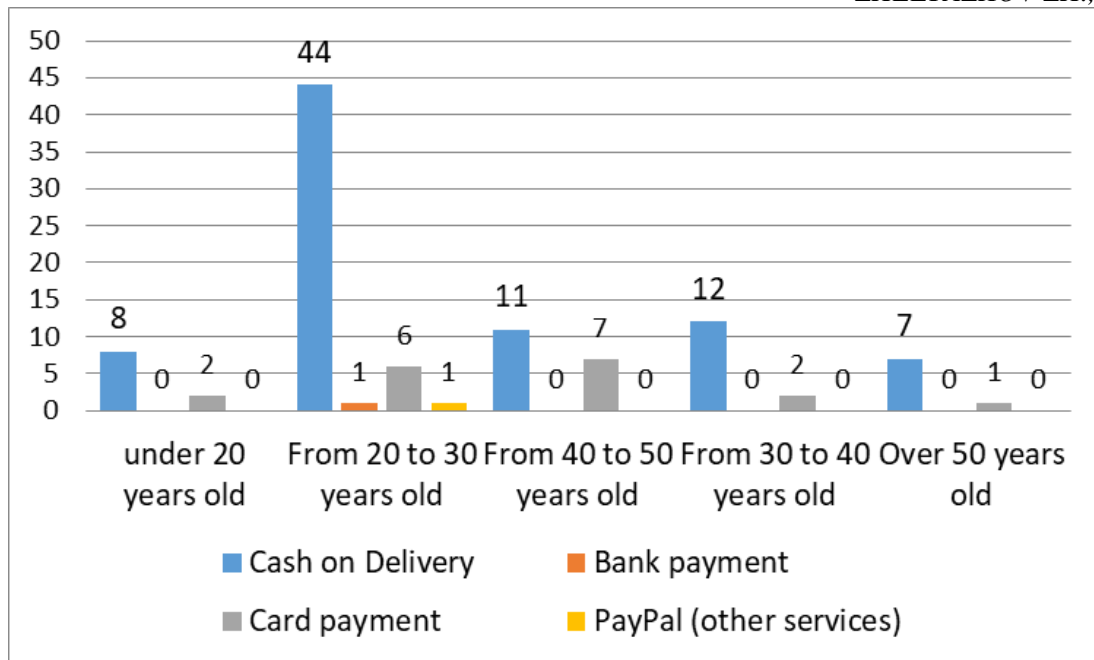


Figure 8. E-shop payment method preferences by age group

Source: Own survey

From the results in Figure 8, we can conclude that the preferred payment method remains cash on delivery. People between the ages of 20 and 30 comprise the largest share of respondents (51 %) as their preference for cash on delivery, followed by card payment as a payment method. Among the respondents, the group that prefers card payments the most compared to all other age groups is people between 30 and 40 years old.

CONCLUSION

The highly competitive online bookselling market necessitates accurate fulfillment of consumer preferences. With the popularization of e-books in Bulgaria, attracting loyal users to a certain site or platform is a key factor for economic success.

Based on the analyzed results, we present the following recommendations for building an online bookstore:

- People between the ages of 20 and 30 read and buy their books the most among all age groups, suggesting that exposure to books is mainly suited to that age.
- The most popular genres among the respondents were romance novels, thrillers, crime, and fantasy and horror, which require them to be highly concentrated in their respective online stores. In addition, fans of

these genres make purchases most often, which places an additional emphasis on them.

- It is necessary for each separate genre to draw attention to different elements of the respective book - for romance and fantasy - title and cover, for crime and poetry and spirituality and mythology the most important factor for customer selection is the author. In genres with an emphasis on the author, it is beneficial to promote new authors to attract users to them, and incentivize sales.

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