

Content marketing: Gender and age differences in generation Z

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Izvorni znanstveni rad / *Original scientific paper*

UDK / UDC: 658.8:[316.774:004.7-053.6]=111

Primljeno / Received: 04. listopada 2024. / October 4th, 2024.

Prihvaćeno za objavu / Accepted for publishing: 07. studenog 2024. / November 07th, 2024.

DOI: 10.15291/oec.4555

Abstract: There is a growing number of users who expect personalised information and experiences that meet their personal needs and preferences. Therefore, companies emphasise that creating valuable content through digital channels is a vital element for the success and reputation of companies which also creates greater value for their users. The objective of this research is to determine the differences between the age and gender of Generation Z in relation to attitudes towards content posted on Instagram. The sample contained of 311 Generation Z social media users who were surveyed between April and June 2024. Non-parametric statistical methods such as the Mann Whitney U-test and the Kruskal-Wallis H-test were used in this study. The results show that there are statistical differences between age and attitude towards Instagram content. The research results show that there are partial differences between gender and users' activities on Instagram, but not in their intention to follow content in the future. There are also statistical differences between time spent on Instagram and attitude towards Instagram content. The results of this study contribute to the theoretical background of the literature on social media content marketing and also provide an empirical contribution for companies creating customized social media content, especially on Instagram, for Generation Z.

Keywords: Digital environment, Content marketing, Demographic features, Instagram, Generation Z

JEL classification: M31

1. Introduction

Nowadays it is crucial that any content produced and distributed effectively and initially through a digital channel can improve communication between companies and users. Users are used to and expect free information and this is what content marketing must provide, i.e. digital content that satisfies users' needs. Content marketing needs to provide content that is personalised for each user, i.e. a content marketing tactic in the digital, fast-paced and information-driven world. According to Pulizzi (2012b), content marketing is a modern marketing paradigm with many long-term benefits, such as building brand loyalty by engaging the target audience with valuable content without the use of advertising techniques. It is not a new approach, but more and more companies are starting to take an interest in content marketing. According to Rowley (2008), content marketing can be defined as a management process in which a company identifies, analyses and satisfies customer demand in order to generate profits with

the help of content distributed through digital channels. The purpose of content marketing is to recognise, anticipate and satisfy the users' desires, leading to a higher profitability of the company or a better image in the digital environment. The goals of content marketing are therefore to create and distribute valuable, consistent and relevant content to attract and retain users (Content Marketing Institute, 2017) across a variety of platforms to drive engagement, customer value and measurable success for brands and companies (American Content Marketing Association, 2017). Content marketing is an additional way that companies are using to engage with and retain their users, rather than simply doing traditional advertising or providing information about new products and promotions that do not take their attention. Furthermore, Baer (2013) considers content marketing as the tool for companies to inform, educate or engage users as potential customers, resulting in better leads, sales or persuasion. Therefore, content marketing can be seen as one of the best strategies to drive user engagement by providing a compelling content.

Companies are increasingly turning to content marketing to replace interruptive advertising and draw more attention to their brand (Du Plessis 2015; Zahay 2014). Content marketing is often associated with publishing, native advertising, inbound marketing and storytelling (Du Plessis 2015; Holliman & Rowley 2014:270). Content marketing is ideal because it uses unobtrusive pulling rather than pushing techniques to engage consumers with branded content (Liu & Huang 2015). However, content marketing has gradually outgrown this definition. Many researchers such as Du Plessis (2015) and Pazeraite and Repoviene (2016) recognize the complexity of the content marketing process, which should be carefully managed, especially in the context of demographic characteristics. Therefore, the objective of this study is to determine the differences between the age and gender of Generation Z in relation to attitudes towards Instagram content.

In order to achieve the research objectives, the paper is divided into four sections. After the introduction, the theoretical background of content marketing is explained in the second section. The research methodology, data analysis and research findings are presented in the third section. Finally, the paper concludes with conclusions, suggestions for future studies and limitations arising from the study.

2. Literature review

A growing number of users expect companies to deliver personalized user experiences based on their needs and interests while providing a sense of independence and interdependence (Kee and Yazdanifard, 2015). They want companies to tailor their activities to their needs in order to maintain a positive user and shopping experience and create better engagement with the company, i.e. comprehensive individuality. Users are frequently go to social media sites to get valuable, relevant and up-to-date content such as articles, videos, blog posts and more. At the same time, they are looking for a high-quality and personalized experience when they search for content online (Seymour et al., 2014). Users tend to have more trust in companies who value their needs and interests.

Nowadays, companies are forced to take on the role of content producers to create a good relationship with users and keep their attention in order to maintain their business. Kilgour et al (2015) added that content marketing enables active user participation in creating and sharing content in the digital environment, which advertising alone could not. Baer (2013) considered content marketing as a means for companies to inform or entertain exciting and potential users, which can lead to profitable actions that result in more leads, sales and brand image. Wang and Chan-Olmsted (2020) emphasise the flexibility of content marketing in the context of production and distribution via various digital channels. Content marketing is also positioned as a practical, unobtrusive technique that requires marketers to generate original content so that users and followers of the brand can communicate more easily with the company while passing on positive electronic word of mouth (Barbosa et.al., 2023).

Content marketing has been characterised as an online marketing technique that promotes user-generated content (Steenburgh et al., 2011, Du Plessis, 2015a;). Du Plessis (2015a) identified six elements of content marketing based on the analytical review of 55 research articles to understand how content marketing can be successfully implemented. He offered six elements as the process of marketing content realisation: (1) medium element: the type of platform for the content; (2) strategic element: strategic approach to developing the content; (3) design element: the creation of the content; (4) intrinsic element: the way the content occurs; (5) communication element: the technique(s) used to deliver the content; and (6) follow-up element: the predicted consequences of the content.

Content strategy as an integral part of content marketing is the main component in the creation and implementation of content according to the target segment. Likewise, content marketing is linked to the creation of value in order to build a relationship between the user and the brand. Zerbini et al (2007) analyzed how creating value through content can significantly influence consumer buying behavior. In that terms, the prepared content needs to be shareable, easy to understand, incentive, easily accessible, absorbing for users. (Ahmet Andac et al, 2016

Although the creation of marketing content is directly related to the personality and habits of users, it can also cause changes in users' purchasing behavior through company activities aimed at profitability and building a positive image on social media (Cvirik et al., 2022; González-Padilla et al., 2023). Based on the above, Saura et al. (2021a) showed that there are three types of objectives for the development of marketing content in social networks: advertising goals, growth goals, and engagement increase goals (Farooq et al., 2022). According to studies by Chaithanapat et al., 2022; Ribeiro-Navarrete et al., 2021), greater user interactivity with the content placed on social networks leads to an increase in brand awareness as well as an increase in sales profits. Therefore, if the content is not of the required quality and is not directly tailored to the users' needs, users will not pay attention to it (Chopra et al., 2022). The effectiveness of the digital environment to measure, monitor and optimize strategies makes content marketing flexible and adapted to all types of target audiences (Sigurdsson et al., 2021). According to Holliman and Rowley (2014), content marketing generates and distributes effective and valuable content along with a combination of other digital channels to improve business and communication between companies and users. Ashley & Tuten, 2015 explained that liking, sharing, commenting and then sharing content with others, i.e. creating user-generated content, are activities that generate additional engagement. Providing relevant and engaging content to users on social media can significantly improve their satisfaction or impact on decision-making process. Therefore, the content created by companies on their social media platforms can positively influence user behaviour.

According to Kolter et al. (2009), demographic variables are related to consumers' needs and wants and can be crucial variables in determining the type of content in the digital environment. Therefore, demographic characteristics can play a key role in identifying user interests and preferences to create content tailored to users with similar demographic characteristics or preferences for the same content. It is desirable for companies to profile user behavior based on behavioural targeting such as demographic characteristics.

Thus, it should publish different content tailored to different user profiles such as women or men, younger or older users. Existing literature (McCloskey, 2006; Hernandez et al., 2011) recognized the limited technical literacy of older users as barrier to digital outreach. For example, younger people are more likely to engage with the content posted on social media platforms and have a stronger relation with brands, while older people tend not to. Gender influences users' brand engagement and purchasing behaviour. Men and women often react differently to content posted on social media (Lin et.al., 2019). Thus, women tend to be more active on social media (Khan, 2017) and are more likely to respond to posted content on social media platforms.

A study by Kim et al. (2021) found that valuable and engaging content on social media can increase customer satisfaction and loyalty. Therefore, users who spend significantly more time on social media are likely to be more inclined to engage in a particular activity or purchase products as a result of content the companies have created and posted.

Companies need to create content that informs and motivates their potential market in order to increase awareness or change the perception of the brand or company image. High-quality and personalized content has the task to motivate users to buy products and turn them into loyal customers and even encourage them to share their satisfaction with the products with other users. By publishing valuable content for the target audience by providing added value, content marketing can influence the user engagement and the buying process.

3. Methodology

The objective of this research is to identify differences between the age and gender of Generation Z in regards to the content on Instagram. Based on the results of the literature review, research questionnaire was created.

A questionnaire was aimed at Generation Z users who already use social media platforms. The research sample comprised 311 respondents. Generation Z is defined as people born in the mid-1990s, and this study includes Instagram users born between 1995 and 2010 (Suderman, 2016).

The sample is acceptable as many social media users are dominated by Generation Z. Survey questionnaires were distributed to respondents via Google forms which were shared on social media and via email.

The required data was collected between April and June 2024. The survey included 26 questions, some of which related to demographic data and the rest to habits and attitudes related to the use of Instagram. The questionnaire composed of two sections. The questions in first section related to the demographic characteristics of the respondents. The second section contained statements about the respondents' intentions and attitudes towards the content posted on Instagram. The second section of the questionnaire contained closed-ended questions on a Likert scale from 1 to 5, where 1 means for "strongly disagree" and 5 for "strongly agree".

The data was analyzed using the Mann-Whitney U test and the Kruskal-Wallis test with the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS 25).

4. Research results

The Mann-Whitney U-test is used to compare whether there is a difference in the dependent variable for two independent groups. It compares whether the distribution of the dependent variable is the same for the two groups and therefore comes from the same population. The test does not assume a specific distribution of the variables in one of the two groups.

The reason for using the Mann-Whitney U-test is that the independent variable (gender and age) formed of 2 groups (gender: "male"/"female", age: "18-24"/"25/29"). To achieve the U-statistic, ranks were used instead of means by ordering the values of from smallest to largest, observing from each group values, and then determining the sum of ranks for the values of each group [Emerson, 2023].

The Mann-Whitney U test was used to assess the significant differences of users in regards of demographic characteristics, gender and age. The test results of the mean ranks for each statement by gender are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Mean ranks

	GENDER	N	MEAN RANK	SUM OF RANKS
I intend to follow content on Instagram in the future.	Male	150	152,18	22826,50
	Female	161	159,58	25689,50
Instagram content encourages me to do some activity on my profile.	Male	150	130,83	19624,00
	Female	161	179,45	28892,00
Instagram content encourages me to buy.	Male	150	125,84	18876,50
	Female	161	184,10	29639,50

Source: Research findings (N=311), 2024.

The following table shows the Mann Whitney test result for attitudes towards Instagram content in relation the gender of Generation Z.

Table 2. Mann Whitney U test - gender of Generation Z and attitudes towards Instagram content

	I intend to follow content on Instagram in the future.	Instagram content encourages me to do some activity on my profile.	Instagram content encourages me to buy.
Mann-Whitney U	11501,50	8299,00	7551,50
Wilcoxon W	22826,50	19624,00	18876,50
Z	-,764	-4,901	-5,893
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	,445	,000	,000

Grouping Variable: GENDER

Source: Research findings (N=311), 2024.

Table 2 shows that there are significant differences in respondents' attitudes towards Instagram content in relation to respondents' gender that are less than $\alpha=0.05$, only for two statements. The significance for intention to follow Instagram content is 0.406 and higher than 0.05, which indicates that there is no statistically significant difference in the intention to follow Instagram content in the future in relation to the respondent's gender. In addition, the results in the table indicate that, there is a significant difference between variable gender and Instagram content encourages me to do some activity on my profile (Mann–Whitney U=8299,00; p = 0.000). The female will be more inclined to perform a certain activity on their profile based on the content provided on Instagram as the rank is 179,45 for females and 130,83 for males (Table 1). It is likely that women react more emotionally and sensitively to content on social media, making them more active on social media than men. Furthermore, the significance for purchase intent based on suggested content less than 0.05 (Mann–Whitney U = 7551,50, p = 0.000), it can be concluded that there is a significant difference in the purchase intentions established on Instagram content in relation to the gender of Generation Z. This is confirmed by Table 1 where the rank result is 184,10 for females and 125,84 for males. The results of the mean rank for attitudes towards Instagram content in relation to the age of respondents are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Mean ranks

	AGE	N	MEAN RANK	SUM OF RANKS
I intend to follow content on Instagram in the future.	18-24	176	164,28	28913,50
	25-29	135	145,20	19602,50
Instagram content encourages me to do some activity on my profile.	18-24	176	179,41	31576,00
	25-29	135	125,48	16940,00
Instagram content encourages me to buy.	18-24	176	171,68	30215,50
	25-29	135	135,56	18300,50

Source: Research findings (N=311), 2024.

The results of the Mann Whitney test for attitudes towards Instagram content in relation to the age of the respondents are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Mann Whitney U test - age of Generation Z and attitudes towards Instagram content

	I intend to follow content on Instagram in the future.	Instagram content encourages me to do some activity on my profile.	Instagram content encourages me to buy.
Mann-Whitney U	10422,50	7760,00	9120,50
Wilcoxon W	19602,50	16940,00	18300,50
Z	-1,959	-5,391	-3,624
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	,050	,000	,000

Grouping Variable: AGE

Source: Research findings (N=311), 2024.

As for the content of the Instagram statement, as the Mann–Whitney results show, there are significant differences between the age and attitudes towards Instagram content statements. All p-values are less than the significance level of 5%, and it can be concluded that there is a significant age difference relating to the intention to follow Instagram content. For each statement (Table 3), younger Generation Z respondents ranked higher than older respondents. This result reveals that younger respondents are more inclined to follow and search for valuable and interesting content on Instagram in the future. Since the significance for activity intention based on suggested content is below 0.05 (Mann–Whitney U = 7760,00, $p = 0.000$), it can be outline that there is a statistically significant difference in purchase intentions based on Instagram content in relation to Generation Z age. In addition, younger respondents are likely to perform some activities such as liking or commenting on content posted on Instagram. When considering the age difference, it is clear that younger respondents are more likely to agree with the statement than older respondents, as the rank for younger is 179,41 and for older is 125,48 (Table 3). The research findings suggest that younger Generation Z respondents view Instagram content as a convenient and popular place to shop. Most likely, content posted on Instagram is useful to younger

respondents in the context of purchasing. Younger respondents are probably to agree with the statement that Instagram is a good additional sales and advertising channel than older respondents.

The rank for younger respondents is 171,68 and for older respondents 135,56 which is confirmed by the results in Table 3. They consider Instagram to be suitable place where you can get timely information through content in order to make purchases without risk.

The Kruskal-Wallis H-test is non-parametric test that can be used to determine whether there are significant differences between two or more groups, independent variable on an ordinal dependent variable. It is considered as extension of the Mann-Whitney U test to allow the comparison of more than two independent groups.

The reason for using the Kruskal-Wallis H-test in this study is that the independent variable time spent on Instagram consists of more than 2 groups (less than 1 hour, 1 to 2 hours, 2 to 3 hours, 3 to 4 hours and more than 4 hours per day). The next table shows the mean ranks for each statement according to the variable time spent on Instagram.

Table 5. Mean ranks

	TIME SPENT ON INSTAGRAM	N	MEAN RANK
I intend to follow content on Instagram in the future.	less than 1 hour	84	127,02
	1 to 2 hours	121	166,53
	2 to 3 hours	70	167,06
	3 to 4 hours	23	164,89
	more than 4 hours per day	13	169,96
Instagram content encourages me to do some activity on my profile.	less than 1 hour	84	126,34
	1 to 2 hours	121	156,43
	2 to 3 hours	70	161,23
	3 to 4 hours	23	206,61
	more than 4 hours per day	13	225,92
Instagram content encourages me to buy.	less than 1 hour	84	131,90
	1 to 2 hours	121	150,05
	2 to 3 hours	70	169,42
	3 to 4 hours	23	202,28
	more than 4 hours per day	13	213,00

Source: Research findings (N=311), 2024.

Table 5 shows the ranking of time spent on Instagram. It can be seen that respondents who mainly use Instagram more than 4 hours per day are more likely to explore content on Instagram as the rank 169.96 is higher than others.

Table 6. Kruskal Wallis H test – time spent on Instagram and attitudes towards Instagram content

	I intend to follow content on Instagram in the future.	Instagram content encourages me to do some activity on my profile.	Instagram content encourages me to buy.
Kruskal_Wallis H	13,369	25,940	20,714
df	4	4	4
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	,010	,000	,000

Grouping Variable: Time spent on Instagram

Source: Research findings (N=311), 2024.

Table 6 shows the result of the Kruskal-Wallis test for attitude towards Instagram content in relation to time spent on Instagram. Since the significance for the intention to follow Instagram content is 0.010 and below 0.05, it can be determined that there is a statistically significant difference in the tendency to follow Instagram content considering the time spent on Instagram by the respondents.

There is statistical significance for the activity intention 0.000 which shows that there is a statistically significant difference in intention to do activities based on Instagram content in regards of the time consumption on Instagram. Respondent who spent more than 4 hours on Instagram will probably do some activities on their profile such as sharing or comments posted content. This is defining by the results in Table 5 where the rank result for respondents that spending more than 4 hours per day is the highest of the other variables (rank is 225,92).

The results show that respondents who spend more than 4 hours per day on Instagram (rank is 213,00), are more likely to agree with the statement that content on Instagram encourages them to buy than other respondents. These respondents are more likely to buy products that have been advertisement via content on Instagram. Furthermore, they tendency to purchase will increase with the time they spend on the social media such as Instagram.

5. Discussion

The research results show that there are significant differences in attitudes towards Instagram content in relation to the gender of the respondents, with the exception of the statement, the intention to follow Instagram content in the future. The female respondents are more inclined to perform a certain activity on their profile based on the content offered on Instagram and are likely to have a higher purchase intention based on the content offered. These findings may confirm the results of previous research that showing that women are more engaged on social media (Khan 2017; Duffet, 2017; Noguti et al. 2018; Yau and Reich 2019; Asogwa et al., 2020). Men and women often respond differently to content posted on social media. Women show a higher level of liking and participate in social media activities to a greater extent than men, especially in Generation Z (Duffet, 2017; Noguti et al. 2018). Studies by Asogwa et al. (2020) have shown that the purchasing behaviour of men and women is influenced by advertising on social media, with women being influenced twice as much as men.

There are also significant differences between the age of Generation Z and respondents' attitudes towards Instagram content, suggesting that younger Generation Z respondents are more likely to follow and search for valuable and interesting content on Instagram. In addition, younger respondents are likely to perform some activities such as liking or commenting on content posted on Instagram. The research findings suggest that younger Generation Z respondents view Instagram content as a convenient and popular place to shop. Most likely, the content posted on Instagram is useful to younger respondents in

the context of shopping. Studies by Janavi et al (2021) show that Instagram has the greatest influence on user behaviour. Therefore, younger respondents are likely to agree with the statement that Instagram is a good additional sales and advertising channel and that younger users make more actual purchases of online content than older users (Yang et. al., 2015). They consider Instagram to be a resourceful place to get well-timed information through content to make purchases without risk. Younger people are more likely to engage with the content posted on social media platforms and have a stronger relationship with brands. This finding is consistent with previous studies that younger Generation Z users are more likely to accept and follow content on social media (Benhamou, 2015; Williams, 2015).

Some researchers measure social media usage by time spent on a site (Johnson & Yang, 2009; Joinson, 2008; Wang & Tchernev, 2012), while others count specific activities such as creating new content and updating profiles (Leung, 2009; Quan-Haase & Young, 2010). Social media such as Instagram offer unique features and functions associated with high-quality visual content, suggesting that users are more engaged compared to other social media (Pentina et al., 2018). The research results show that respondents who primarily use Instagram more than 4 hours per day are more likely to explore content on Instagram and perform some activities on their profile, such as sharing or commenting on content. These findings are similar to the results of studies by Giunta (2017) and Kim et al. (2021), which show that valuable and engaging content on social media can increase customer satisfaction and loyalty and predict usage behaviour. In addition, creating and sharing content on Instagram leads to purchase among respondents who spend more than 4 hours per day on Instagram. This means that the more time they spend on social media, the more likely they are to have higher level of engagement and purchase intent. These findings support the study results of de Oliveira Santini et al. (2020). These results show the importance of developing an effective content marketing strategy that influences the purchasing behaviour of Generation Z customers on social media such as Instagram.

6. Conclusion

The development of social media is transforming traditional marketing into interactive marketing, where content has become an important factor for the direct interaction of users with companies. To capture the attention of a target audience and motivate them to take productive actions, companies need to create and share useful, relevant and consistent content to satisfy their needs and offer content with the characteristics of uniqueness and individuality. The objective of this study is to determine the differences between the age and gender of Generation Z in terms of posted content on Instagram.

The limitations of this study are reflected in the recommendations for future research. The limitations of this study are reflected in the recommendations for future research. The most important limitation is that the sample is not representative of the studied population, as it is a non-probability sample. Another limitation of this study relates to a sample consisting only of Generation Z users, which also limits the generalizability of the research findings. As this study has certain limitations, it would be good for future research to include other generations or additional variables that would allow for a better understanding of user behaviour on social media as well as to determine comprehensive profile in terms of purchasing behaviour on social media such as Instagram. In addition, it is still necessary to consider and optimize the content marketing strategy, as well as provide sufficient product knowledge for Generation Z. A deeper understanding of demographic differences such as gender and age can be useful for academics and experts to better understand user purchase behavior on social media. Companies should offer the valuable content where users can easily request information about the product. Providing valuable content increases user trust and loyalty. For this reason, it is recommended that companies create a friendly and personalized content channel to influence the users who spend most of their time in the digital environment. With strategies such as content personalization, innovative content, or real-time

advertising, companies can enable companies to reach existing as well as potential users. Therefore, appropriate, valuable and rich content is needed to trigger purchasing behavior and influence users buying habits on social media. Therefore, they should involve users in the decision-making process user generated that will certainly reach a more audience and have greater engagement in the social media such as Instagram.

Finally, reference is made to certain areas that have been neglected, but would lead to further research that would advance this area of study. This comprehensive literature review contributes to the body of knowledge on content marketing. Sharing content on social media is more important than just being present in the digital environment. Therefore, companies should understand that content is an important power and can create value through social media and turn followers into loyal customers.

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Sadržajni marketing: razlike po spolu i dobi kod generacije Z

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Sažetak: Broj korisnika koji očekuju personalizirane informacije i iskustva koja zadovoljavaju njihove osobne potrebe i preferencije raste. Stoga tvrtke naglašavaju da je stvaranje vrijednog sadržaja putem digitalnih kanala ključan element za uspjeh i reputaciju tvrtki, a ujedno stvara veću vrijednost za njihove korisnike. Cilj ovog istraživanja je utvrditi razlike u dobi i spolu generacije Z u odnosu na stavove prema sadržaju objavljenom na Instagramu. Istraživački uzorak sastoji se od 311 korisnika društvenih mreža iz generacije Z koji su anketirani između travnja i lipnja 2024. godine. U ovom istraživanju korištene su neparametarske statističke metode poput Mann-Whitney U-testa i Kruskal-Wallis H-testa. Rezultati pokazuju da postoje statističke razlike u dobi i stavovima prema sadržaju na Instagramu. Rezultati istraživanja pokazuju da postoje parcijalne razlike prema spolu i aktivnostima korisnika na Instagramu, ali ne i u njihovoj namjeri praćenja sadržaja u budućnosti. Također, postoje statističke razlike u vremenu provedenom na Instagramu i stavovima prema sadržaju na Instagramu. Rezultati ovog istraživanja doprinose teorijskoj podlozi literature o sadržajnom marketingu na društvenim mrežama i pružaju empirijski doprinos za tvrtke koje stvaraju prilagođeni sadržaj na društvenim mrežama, posebno na Instagramu, namijenjen generaciji Z.

Ključne riječi: digitalno okruženje, sadržajni marketing, demografske značajke, Instagram, generacija Z

JEL klasifikacija: M31