

THE PREVAILING FEATURE OF CONSUMER NEEDS IN THE POSTMODERN ERA: CONSUMER NEEDS ANALYSIS IN THE LITHUANIAN MOBILE TELECOMMUNICATIONS SECTOR

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Abstract. *The scientific problem lies in the fact that consumer needs in the postmodern¹ era, as a response to the growing significance of the socio-emotional values in contemporary society, are stated rather than examined in a specific industry context to identify the feature of the needs which dominates in consumers within a specific industry. The paper presents an analysis of the motivating consumer needs within the Lithuanian mobile telecommunications sector, enabling identification of the prevailing type of consumers (based on the features of motivation needs), which affects consumer commitment to a specific service provider.*

This work aims at testing the assumption that the socio-emotional feature dominating in the needs of consumers in the postmodern era is characteristic of the consumer needs in the Lithuanian mobile telecommunications sector. The dominating feature of consumer needs was identified on the basis of the scientific literature examining the concept of postmodern marketing, which reveals the system of needs characteristic of contemporary consumers and its features.

The analysis of consumer needs, made in the Lithuanian mobile telecommunications sector, is relevant in that motivating consumer needs are differentiated into the notional types depending on the characteristics of those needs. The practical outcome of the analysis is relevant as it explains the basic causes that determine the consumer commitment and/or buying/consumption decisions.

Key words: *postmodern marketing, consumer needs in the postmodernist era, motivating needs, perceived customer value, socioemotional needs*

¹ *Postmodernism* is used as the defining term which covers the peculiarities in the evolution of contemporary society determined by the changing values of the social environment and by lifestyle and consumption. The term *postmodernist society* is used as a synonym for the *postindustrial, information or knowledge* society used to distinguish a new type of society and its characteristics.

The term *postmodernist era* is used to define the historic period which started in 1970, and discloses the conceptual changes not only in arts (architecture, music, etc.), but also in science. The period in the evolution of the science of marketing where the consumers' commitment to the company and/or their choice to consume a specific product is based not only on the rational and functional, but also on socio-emotional factors, is defined in this paper by the term "postmodernist marketing." The concept of postmodernist marketing covers the management of the needs and wants of the new type of consumer through symbols and their meanings, which are used to shape the consumer's needs on the socio-emotional grounds.

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Introduction

When the dominating needs of contemporary consumers and their characteristic features are identified, a significant role falls on the *personal value orientations* in the postmodernist era, which shape the needs of the individual as a consumer in the market. The postmodern era highlights the importance of the person's social values which cause fundamental changes in the consumer needs system. Consumer needs, as an outcome of the person's value system, are examined for the following reasons:

1. The shift of personal values catalyses changes in the consumption behaviour: depending on the characteristic system of personal values, the individual's inclination for consumption or for commitment to a company may be based on the rational or socio-emotional needs.

Consumer needs and their characteristic features enable the understanding of the consumer motives that determine his buying decision and commitment to a company or to its product brands.

2. The growing significance of the social and emotional consumer needs in the postmodern era highlights not the importance of the product as an article of the market exchange, but rather its semantic values which shape the needs of consumers and/or stimulates their commitment to a company or to its product brands.

The above reasons provide sufficient grounds to explain why typologization of consumer needs according to their characteristic features is a relevant issue in the science of marketing, which aims at breaking down the dominating consumer needs into notional types. Typologization of the characteristic consumer needs is significant in that it provides a possibility to explain the basic reasons for the behaviour of a specific consumer, group of consumers or even industry in the market and, on the basis of these reasons, to identify the required marketing concept to manage consumer needs.

Based on the *concept of postmodern marketing* (Brown, 1992, 1993, 1997, 2006; Firat, Venkatesh, 1995; Firat et al., 1995), the *socio-emotional features* characteristic of the needs system in contemporary consumers disclose the person's individuality and uniqueness: such distinguishing of the consumer's individual needs highlights the possibility to view the consumer through the qualities of *individuality* and *social significance* and to reinforce mutual lasting ties between the company and the consumer, which develop into a *relationship*. With these assumptions in mind, it should be noted that postmodernism transforms the system of consumer needs, the form and content whereof highlights the characteristic *socio-emotional* features of consumer needs.

1. System of personal values as the basis for the development of new consumer needs in the market

The characteristic consumer needs are treated as inherent features of personal actions² and relationships where changes of one feature may impact the shift of the person's other value³ elements. Thus, consumer needs in the market are shaped by their characteristic *personal value system* which is used to examine consumer needs in the market. According to S. Brown (1992, 1997, 2006), consumer behaviour in the postmodern era reveals a *dynamic shift of needs* rather than stability; therefore, the features of authenticity and of consistent personality become weaker, reducing the chances to predict and explain consumer needs in the market.

In the context of marketing, contemporary consumers seek to satisfy their needs not through the functions and characteristics of the product, but through the *semantic meanings of product brands*, which people themselves attribute to products based on their characteristic value system (Firat, Venkatesh, 1995; Goulding, 1998). The same product enables different consumers to satisfy their different needs due to their diverse value-related attitudes through which an individual associates a specific product with the different semantic meanings of brands. This leads to the basic conclusion that consumer needs in the postmodern era include emotional features which affect the consumer's behaviour in the market. The importance of the socio-emotional consumer needs in the market can be justified by J. Habermas' (2002) viewpoint on the individual world of living, which is constructed by the individual as a proactive player in communication.

This paper is based on the assumption that the consumer's buying / consuming decision is increasingly influenced by the socio-emotional rather than by the rational qualities of the exchanged objects and of exchange as such. The specific nature of those qualities determines the levels of buying / consumption, consumer commitment and the type and duration of the relationship⁴.

² The definition of the concept of action is based on M. Rokeach and J. F. Regan's (1980) viewpoint stating that action is a conscious behaviour aimed at specific goals, and that these actions are influenced by the person's needs, values, social norms, etc. (Rokeach, Regan, 1980). Focusing of action on a specific goal or task consists of two components: one is closer to the needs and stimuli and the other to values. The latter, called 'value orientation', determines the choice of the nature of action, the development of the new and submission to the old forms.

³ 'Value' can be understood as an object of the person's needs, desires and aims, stated assessments and attitudes. Value is what the person consciously senses and can experience, what affects the person's behaviour and entirety of viewpoints (Rokeach, 1968). According to M. Rokeach and J. F. Regan (1980), values do not stand alone, their system exists; this means that individual values are positioned in such a way that they have a corresponding meaning regarding other values. **A person's values are conditioned by personal attitudes, background, social standards and cultural norms:** It is their entirety that determines the person's behaviour in the market.

⁴ Types and characteristic features of the relationship exchange are broadly examined in the works by J. G. Barnes, D. M. Howllet, 1994, 1998; V. Liljander, I. Roos, 2002; S. Rao, Ch. Perry, 2002; L. L. Berry, L. G. Gresham, 1986; J. R. Copulsky, M. J. Wolf, 1990; P. Doyle, 1995; R. Christy et. al., 1996; R. J. Brodie et al., 1997; Ch. Gronroos, 1994, 1997, 2004; P. D. Berger, N. I. Nasr, 1998; E. Gummesson, 1994, 1998, 2004; K. Moller, A. Halinen, 2000).

Consumer needs in the market can be examined from the standpoints of different theories: a) *from the standpoint of the hedonistic theory*, where, according to R. B. Brandt (1998), the consumer's buying / consumption is stimulated only by those features of exchange or exchanged object which *give pleasure*; b) *from the standpoint of the rational choice theory*, which defines the value as something that can be perceived by the mind and explained. According to this theory, the consumer's choice is based on the *rational motives* (Pruskus, 2005). This paper examines consumer needs and their characteristic features *from the standpoint of the hedonistic theory* by disclosing the prevailing socio-emotional feature of consumer needs, which is not always based on the rational choice of the company, products or their brands.

The analysed viewpoints of different scholars lead to the conclusion that the postmodern era reveals two types of features in consumer needs:

1. The value of the actually existing object in semantic meanings of product brands, which enables each individual to interpret the product / service brands expressed in symbols based on their level of knowledge, experience and erudition.
2. The value of external objects for emotional qualities of exchange or of exchanged objects, creating a value for consumers through satisfying their psycho-symbolic needs.

Characteristic consumer needs in the market highlight the emotional nature of personal values, which makes it difficult to find a rational explanation for the individual's behaviour in exchange. On the other hand, the needs of contemporary consumers can be treated as people's natural *need for information*, the materialisation whereof in quantity and content enables minimisation of cognitive dissonance⁵ in exchange with the company. The postmodern era *reveals the importance of the individuals*, highlights their characteristic values and individuality and has many links with consumption which is the axis of contemporary society; therefore, in the context of marketing exchange, *it is identified by the value-filled symbols* (Firat, 1991; Firat et al, 1995; Pranulis, 1998). Values reflect *people's behaviour* and their *aims* and *inclinations* affected not only by clearly determined cost-benefit incentives, but also by individual *social or psychological needs*.

The postmodern era, with the prospering improvement, clarification and reinterpretation of classical paradigms, introduces new meanings which can communicate naturally the specific nature of the contemporary social environment with its characteristic socio-emotional features. All this leads to the conclusion *that consumers treat as valuable the exchange or exchanged objects through which they express their feelings, i.e. satisfy their emotional needs*.

⁵ Cognitive dissonance occurs when two or more attitudes of the individual start contradicting one another or when the person's behaviour contradicts his or her attitudes. Acting and gaining experience in the market, consumers develop their attitudes which affect their behaviour on the market and buying/consumption habits. The consumer's opinion in the context of exchange demonstrates the individual's positive or negative evaluations, feelings and attitude to a company or to its products/services.

Characteristic consumer needs in the postmodern era reveal the complex nature of communication and the importance of intensity and dissolution, which consistently (re) create new images and meanings which, in turn, establish their rules and present them as lifestyles. The postmodern era is notable for the significance of social orientations, therefore the *emotional relation* between the company and the consumer becomes a meaningful value of exchange for consumers due to their characteristic personalized relation which is used to exchange non-material objects: *information, knowledge, feelings, experiences, etc.* Informational and communicational processes shift the attitude to the traditional object of exchange – the product/service, highlighting their symbolic meanings which serve to stimulate the consumer's *emotional experiences* by brands and by their semantic meanings, thus minimising the production and marketing costs for the development and marketing of new products/services. In the contemporary market, consumers become dependent on the myriads of rapidly changing symbols *which are created by the content and quantity of information.*

Characteristic consumer needs for emotional expression are treated as inner signs of personal actions and relationships. Thus, consumers' social behaviour in the market is formed by the emotional features of products and/or of their brands conditioned by the changing ethos of the social environment and by the new approach to personal values.

2. The prevailing feature of consumer needs in the postmodern era

It should be stated that one of the principal features of the postmodern era is the changing *role of consumption* (Jameson, 2002) influenced by the transformation of the basic personal values. In the postmodern era, consumers' needs in the market gain new traits which reveal a consumer as an individuality whose consuming behaviour is formed by the *socio-emotional 'wants'* rather than rational needs. In postmodernism, the term of consumption is totally new and is based on the new perception, which creates and establishes the new (postmodern) culture of consumption occurring hand in hand with the new consumer needs in the market.

Analysis of the scientific literature (Firat, Venkatesh, 1995; Venkatesh, 1999; Firat, Dholakia, 2003; Brown, 1993, 1995; Jameson, 2002), which examines the concept of postmodern marketing and the events that form it, confirmed the prevalence of the *socio-emotional* feature of the consumer needs in the postmodern era. It should be noted that the most frequently distinguished needs include *personal individuality, fragmentation of needs* and *hyper-reality*, which develop in contemporary consumers as the *expression of the prevailing personal values.* Therefore, the characteristic values of personalities directly influence their (people's) needs in the market, which gain new features in the postmodern era. For instance, the need for *personal individuality* reveals the following prevailing features:

- a) the consumer's personality and the need to draw attention in order to gain distinction from other consumers by actions, lifestyle attitudes and consumption;
- b) stimulate the search for the products that enable people to express their personal lifestyles and disclose the authenticity of needs.

The need for the *fragmentation of needs* enables people to express themselves and their relations with other consumers in the market through the consumption of products characteristic of a specific social group. The need for hyper-reality calls for the relationships with a company or with its brands, based on the informal and lasting personal trust which provides an opportunity to express oneself through different images created in the symbols of product brands. The basic needs of contemporary consumers in the market reveal the socio-emotional feature which becomes more important than meeting the rational needs. Consumer satisfaction in the modern era and his commitment to a company or to its brands is conditioned by the 'material' features of benefit – the product, rendering value to it. Modernism emphasised the object as the proof and 'core' of the economic activity, whereas, according to the postmodern approach to the market and its users (Brown, 1993, 1997; Firat, Venkatesh, 1995), consumer needs have the following characteristic features:

1. An emphasised relation with the consumer as an individuality whose needs and expectations may differ from the needs and consuming behaviour of other consumers.
2. Consumer behaviour in the market develops on the socio-emotional grounds seeking social and emotional attachment to a company or to its products and / or brands.

The prevailing needs of contemporary consumers require limitation to the *rationality discourse*⁶ in the context of marketing when the consumer's commitment to a company is examined. The idea of the rational choice should be associated with the modern era when consumers base their actions on the market in *rational* ways which can be satisfied by applying the established traditional *orientations of production, goods and sales marketing*. In the postmodern era with the prospering *improvement*, clarification and reinterpretation of *classical paradigms*, the new meanings that are able to naturally communicate the peculiarities of the contemporary social environment are introduced, which include the feature of the *socio-emotional needs* as a response to the increasing rationality not only in consumption, but also in lifestyle habits.

Analysis of the scientific literature revealed the following characteristic trends in the system of consumer needs: *social identity*, since consumers seek to identify themselves with a specific social or religious group or family wanting to pay more for the product/

⁶ A characteristic feature of a rational discourse is denial of personal values which are attributed to the category of senses as an opposition to scientific causal argumentation.

service to satisfy the need of exclusivity and belonging to a specific social group, *fragmentation of needs* can be attributed to this group; *emotional*, as consumers seek extra attention, individuality and exclusivity which serve to satisfy their specific needs not characteristic of other consumers and emphasising the exclusivity of a person, consumption and lifestyle in order to satisfy the sense of security (Christy et al., 1996) and the need for consistency in making decisions, which minimise the potential risk of choosing the product / service / company (Barnes, Howllet, 1994, 1998; Rao, Perry, 2002) and the amount of information about the company and its product / service. Needs for *personal individuality* and *hyper-reality* can be attributed to this group.

In conclusion, it should be noted that the needs of contemporary consumers reveal a multi-faceted society which seeks to establish its *different interests and values*. One of the basic traits of the postmodern era is the *changing concept of consumption needs*, based on the new perception which creates and establishes a new consumption culture and thus a new type of the consumer whose qualities differ from the consumer features in the modern era. The postmodern approach to consumer needs denies the principle of modernity, treating the consumer as a *fragmented personality* whose consumption system is dominated by the *symbols and their meanings* that influence the replacement of exchange developed in the economic categories with an *emotional* relation. In the postmodern era, the concept of exchange gains new meanings interpreted as the relation between a company and a consumer, which manifests itself as long as *mutual emotional* satisfaction is in place. That is why the characteristic needs of contemporary consumers cannot be examined from the purely rational point of view because the consumer's exchange with the company takes place *not only as the exchange of material values*, but also as an emotional action which creates mutual relationships.

3. The type of motivating needs which affect consumer commitment: consumer needs analysis in the Lithuanian mobile telecommunications sector

Relevance of analysis. From the scientific point of view, the significance and relevance of the above analysis lies in the fact that it enables identification of the type of needs that motivate consumer commitment⁷, i.e. breaking down the motivating consumer needs into the notional groups depending on the kind of perceived value created for the consumer: *rational-functional or socio-emotional*. The analysis was aimed to determine whether the motivating consumer needs in the Lithuanian mobile telecommunications sector include the socio-emotional feature, which is revealed in the the examined scientific literature as one of the basic features in the contemporary consumer needs. From the scientific point of view, the analysis allowed to summarise the different needs that

⁷ Commitment in this paper is understood as the consumer's loyalty towards a company, its products or their brands.

motivate consumer commitment in the Lithuanian mobile telecommunications sector by attributing them to the specific *type of needs* – all this provided the possibility to explain consumers' motives with regard to mobile communications not through the analysis of specific needs, but rather as a characteristic type of their entirety.

The *aim of the analysis* was to identify the type of needs that motivate consumers of the Lithuanian mobile telecommunications services to the commitment⁸, dividing them into *rational* and *socio-emotional* on the basis of the *consumer perceived value aspect*.

The *object of the analysis* is the type of needs that motivate post-paid⁹ private¹⁰ consumers to the commitment in the Lithuanian mobile telecommunications sector.

The process of the analysis:

1. Proceeding from the secondary findings from the TNS Gallup (2008) market survey, consumer needs are divided into two notional types according to the characteristic features – *rational* and *socio-emotional*.
2. Typologization covers only those consumer needs which in the research conducted by the TNS Gallup (2008) are included into the group of 'motivating factors'¹¹,¹². This group was chosen as the notional category which affects the consumer's commitment to the company and to its products or brands and / or increases levels of consumption and buying. 'Motivating factors' reveal the consumer needs that, when satisfied, create an added value for the consumer and are viewed by consumers as affecting their commitment.
3. The analysis covers only those consumers, who fall into the type of post-paid private consumers on the basis of the theoretic pre-assumption that the behaviour and habits of private consumers disclose the characteristic traits of the personality not limited by any specific commitments (in contrast, consumers of the business customer type may be notable for 'unnatural' behaviour owing to the internal corporate views, goals of using mobile communication services, etc. which limit them), whereas the value perceived by private consumers is created by the socio-emotional elements of the exchange and the exchanged objects.

⁸ The author of the paper relies on the findings of the telecommunications market survey conducted in August 2008 by the market research company TNS Gallup (TNSG, 2008), where each respondent evaluated his/her main provider of mobile communications services. The research was carried out in order to determine the relevance of consumer needs to the commitment to the company and to its product brands.

⁹ Post-paid type of users means subscribers who use the company's services and pay for them against issued invoices.

¹⁰ The private user segment is defined as a target group of customers including all subscribers of the company who use the company's services to satisfy their private needs.

¹¹ The term 'motivating factors' is hereinafter used to define the analysed entirety of consumer needs.

¹² In the market survey, consumer needs are grouped into 'hygiene', 'motivation' (based on Herzberg's two-factor theory), 'potential' and 'unused opportunities' factors, where 'hygiene factors' include obligatory (required) consumer needs, which slightly impact their motivation to choose the specific service provider or offered product; 'motivating factors' include consumer needs which stimulate a higher level of motivation, whereas 'potential' and 'unused opportunities' factors include all factors that are significant for consumers and can be used as additional attributes to attract / retain consumers.

4. The study examined consumer findings from the three largest mobile telecommunications service providers by market share (UAB Omnitel, UAB Bitė Lietuva and UAB Tele2), which ensured the representativity and validity of the study without limiting it to consumer needs for a single company.

Limitations to analysis:

1. The study used consumer findings from a single country, which limited its representativity and prevented from identifying the general trends of the characteristic consumer needs of the telecommunications sector and their characteristic features in the global context.
2. The type of motivating consumer needs is attributed to the analysed entirety rather than a specific consumer; therefore, the assumption that a specific need and its corresponding type are characteristic of all consumers in the sector of mobile telecommunication services is erroneous. The analysis reflects only the features that are characteristic of the examined entirety.
3. The study used the secondary rather than the primary findings of the market survey, which prevented a detailed interpretation of the answers from the chosen sample of consumers and of survey findings.

3.1. Method of analysis

In order to identify the characteristic feature of the motivating consumer needs in the Lithuanian mobile telecommunications sector, findings of a survey conducted by the market research company TNS Gallup (2008) were used. In this survey, consumer needs were divided into four notional groups: potential, unused opportunities, hygiene and motivator. TNS Gallup survey aimed to identify the consumer needs that influence the consumer's commitment, by dividing the needs into notional groups according to their impact on the commitment. However, the TNS Gallup research fails to disclose the type of consumer needs, i.e. the survey distinguished only the characteristic needs without explaining their characteristic features. The analysis described in this paper expands the TNS Gallup survey by identifying a characteristic feature of the motivating consumer needs (factors), which shows which consumer-perceived value can be added to improve consumers' commitment to the company or to its brands. The consumer-perceived value aspect used to identify the type of motivator factors reveals the consumer's real incentives and targets in the market. The consumer-perceived value was chosen as a way to explain the basic motives that stimulate the consumer to the commitment and can be *rational* and / or *socio-emotional*.

Figure 1 provides findings from the TNS Gallup (2008) market survey which serves

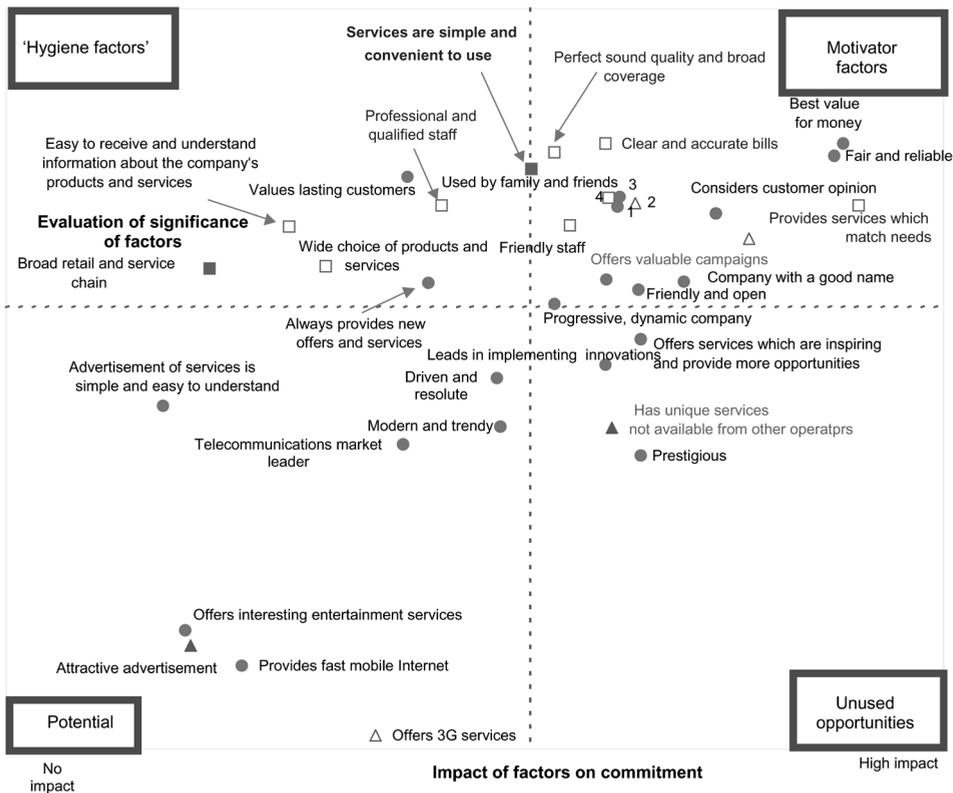


FIG. 1. Consumer needs and their impact on the commitment

as the basis for the consumer needs analysis and for attributing them to the notional type of motivating needs.

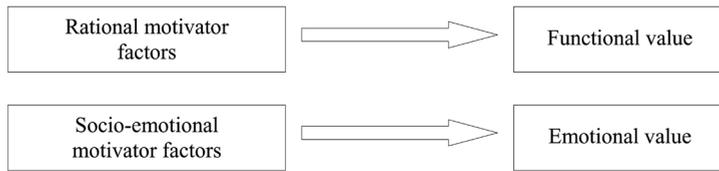
Grouping of motivator factors:

1. Motivating needs–factors are grouped into two notional types depending on their perceived value for the consumer: *functional (rational) or emotional*¹³.
2. Motivating needs–factors that serve to create functional (rational) value for the consumer are included into the *rational type of factors*, whereas the motivator factors that serve to create an emotional value for the consumer are grouped into the *socio-emotional type*¹⁴. Figure 2 shows the relation between the different

¹³ Broadly, the consumer-perceived value and its types were examined by J. V. Anderson, J. A. Narus, 1998; G. Mada, 2005; Ch. Gronroos, 1997, 2004; A. Raval, Ch. Gronroos, 1996; M. R. Morgan, D. Sh. Hunt, 1994; R. N. Bolton et al., 2004; V. A. Zeithaml, 1988.

¹⁴ The socio-emotional type includes the motivating factors which serve to:

- a) create the consumer-perceived value on the grounds of the social relation between the company and the employees or in order to identify with a specific social / religious group.
- b) create the consumer-perceived value on the grounds of the emotional relation between the consumer and the product / the company's brand.



types of consumer-perceived values and their impact on the motivating needs – factors.

FIG. 2. Types of motivating needs–factors and perceived value for the consumer, which they serve to create

It should be argued that a rational explanation of consumer behaviour may not always be found for the subjective needs of the consumer’s emotional expression; therefore, seeking consumer commitment to the company or to its brands, it is important to identify the consumer needs that affect the *long-term and short-term* consumer-perceived value, determining the duration of the commitment. The consumer-perceived value is created to satisfy rational (by product functions, price, etc.) or emotional consumer needs on the basis of the needs that motivate consumers to the commitment and on their characteristic features. Emotional consumer-perceived benefits become one of the basic methods to improve the positive consumer-perceived value as well as the strength and lasting nature of the commitment to the company.

In Table 1, the examined motivating needs are grouped into two notional types according to the following criteria:

1. The consumer needs that create a functional (rational) value for the consumer are included into the *rational motivating needs* type. From the viewpoint of the author of the paper, a functional value is created for consumers through the satisfaction of their needs for product pricing, technological characteristics and quality parameters as well as for distribution.
2. The consumer needs that create a socio-emotional value for the consumer are included into the *socio-emotional motivating needs* type. The socio-emotional value for consumers is created through the stimulation of their needs for social identity, security, reliability, risk reduction, cognitive dissonance, etc. The socio-emotional type of needs includes the needs that motivate consumers to the commitment and stimulate relationship exchange with the company or with its brands.

Data provided in Table 1 lead to the following conclusions and generalisations:

TABLE 1. Types of needs which motivate consumers to the commitment

Rational type of motivating needs	Description	Socioemotional type of motivating needs	Description
Perfect sound quality and broad coverage	The entirety of needs reveals a functional perceived value for the consumer seeking better pricing terms, quality of service provision and mobile coverage. Through satisfaction of these needs, consumer commitment is created in respect of the product price and functional characteristics of the product or of the communications network.	Used by family and friends	The entirety of needs reveal the socio-emotional perceived value for the consumer. These needs are felt when the consumer seeks extra attention, individuality and exclusivity and enable the emphasis on the exclusivity of the person's life and consumption style, to satisfy the sense of security and the need for stability in making decisions, which reduce potential risks associated with the product choice. Social relation between the company staff and the consumer helps to reduce the latter's sense of uncertainty, which occurs with a limited access to the information about the company and its products. The social type of needs enables consumers to identify themselves with a specific social group or family with similar characteristic needs.
Offers valuable campaigns		Friendly staff	
Clear and accurate invoices		Friendly and open company	
Best value for money		Progressive and dynamic company	
		Company with a good name	
		Considers the customer's opinion	
		Fair and reliable company	
		Provides services which meet individual needs.	

- the hypothesis that the *feature of the socio-emotional needs* is characteristic of the consumers in the Lithuanian mobile telecommunications service sector. This fact is based on a number of motivating needs¹⁵ which reveal the socio-emotional features: the need for personal attention, security, individuality of needs, etc.;
- the motivator factors attributed to the socio-emotional type fail to *reveal* specific consumer needs for mobile communications (for instance, the need for a perso-

¹⁵ In the process of the analysis, it was calculated how many selected motivating consumer needs correspond to the rational and how many to the socio-emotional feature. On the basis on the sum total of the different types of motivating needs, the dominating type of needs was identified.

nal communication channel, the need to communicate information, etc.), but rather highlight the *importance of the company's image*, which becomes one of the principle elements affecting the consumer-perceived value;

- the motivator factors attributed to the socio-emotional type reveal consumer needs not for the products of mobile telecommunications companies, but for the *company as such or for its brands*. This means that consumers possess the characteristic commitment-motivating needs that enable consumers to disclose their individuality (“provide services which meet individual needs”, “consider the customer’s opinion”) and ensure the sense of security (“fair and reliable company”, “company with a good name”);
- on the basis of the impact of consumer needs on commitment, it should be noted that the need for “best value for money” is the motivating factor producing the greatest impact. This leads to the conclusion that, despite the features of the dominating socio-emotional motivating consumer needs, the need included into the rational type substantially affects the consumer-perceived value and consumer choice. That is why, it may be argued that a company’s competitive distinction in the market should be developed not only through the satisfaction of the socio-emotional needs, but also by taking into account the rational ‘cost and benefit’ factor. This means that, despite the dominating socio-emotional needs, rational ones remain important and significant for consumer commitment to a company or to its brands.

Therefore, it should be argued that the hypothesis proposed in the theory analysis part turned out *to be true: consumer needs in the Lithuanian mobile telecommunications sector include the socio-emotional feature which dominates consumer needs in the postmodern era*.

Conclusions

The analysis has led to the following generalisations and recommendations:

1. Proceeding from the fact that consumers of the Lithuanian mobile telecommunications sector possess a characteristic *socio-emotional* feature of motivating needs, it should be argued that the basic competitive advantage in the mobile telecommunications market should be formed by meeting the needs of consumers who belong to specific groups (identity of social relation) and of emotional convenience expressed as the need for security, risk minimization, etc.
2. The socio-emotional feature of needs reveals the qualities characteristic of the *relationship exchange* by creating relationships on the socio-emotional grounds. These qualities come to the fore when the consumer-perceived value develops independently of the product’s price, technical functionality, etc., but, in contrast, as a response to the company’s actions that reveal *personal individuality*

and highlight one of the key traits of the postmodern era – personal individuality and unique ego which become some of the crucial consumer motivator factors in the market.

3. The increasing importance of the socio-emotional consumer needs in the market as a response to the growing significance of social values in the postmodern era affects the consumer choice and commitment to a company to a greater extent than the rational model of consumer behaviour, based on the traditional economic reasoning. Dominance of the socio-emotional feature of consumer needs in the Lithuanian mobile telecommunications market justifies the competition by devoting personal attention and ensuring an impact through the symbolic meanings of products. The model of the rational choice no longer matches the features of consumer needs in the postmodern era due to the changing system of personal values. The increasing need to reveal the person's uniqueness and individuality forms new consumer needs in the market with social and emotional features.
4. The analysis enabled a more detailed explanation of consumer-motivating factors in the mobile telecommunications market by determining which of them can serve to create the functional and which the emotionally perceived value for the consumer. The analysis has confirmed that socio-emotional needs are characteristic of consumers in mobile telecommunications, therefore competitive distinction in the contemporary market should be created through replacing transactions by relationship exchange which emphasises the importance of the relation between the company and the consumer, expressed in the customer care actions and / or images and constructs formed by the brands.
5. The needs characteristic of consumers in the postmodern era cannot be examined solely in terms of the *rational viewpoint*: the consumers' commitment depends not only on the satisfaction of their rational needs, but primarily of their *social, emotional* or even *spiritual* needs. Satisfaction of the consumers' rational needs fails to reveal the characteristic traits of personal individuality, fragmentation of needs and hyper-reality, which include the emotional features, whereas identification of socio-emotional and spiritual consumer needs uncovers the consumer as a unique personality. All this shapes a new paradigm of postmodern marketing by highlighting the importance to satisfy people's emotional needs which determine the consumer's behaviour in the market.
6. The analysis could be expanded by examining the type of motivating needs of consumers not only in the Lithuanian, but also in other mobile telecommunications markets. This, apart from the identification of the type of consumer-motivating needs characteristic of a specific country, could offer a possibility to compare them across the different countries and to define their characteristic trends.

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