

## Influence of Social Factors on Consumer Behaviour: Context of Euro Integration

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*This article highlights the conception of consumer behaviour and its beginning, it analyzes manifestation of social factors in consumer behaviour in the theoretical level and points out the main social factors that influence consumer behaviour. Consumer behaviour and influence of social factors on it was researched by these authors: W. J. Stanton, M. J. Etzel ir B. J. Walker, E. J. McCarthy and W. D. Perreault Jr., E. N. Berkowitz, R. A. Kerin, S. W. Hartley and W. Rudelius, W. G. Zikmund and M. d'Amico, S. Dibb, L. Simkin, W. M. Pride and O. C. Ferrell, Ph. Kotler and F. Bliemel, D. A. Statt, M. Solomon, G. Bamossy, S. Askegaard and others.*

*Theoretical studies on how social factors influence consumer behaviour exhibited that the main social factors, which influence consumer behaviour, are family, influence groups, social class and culture. Determination of separate social factors' influence and fluctuation tendencies helps to ensure the efficiency of marketing programme and to project the perspectives of the company's development in the future. Currently, marketing specialists unanimously agree that consumer behaviour is defined not only by what is going on at the moment when money in the hands of consumer is exchanged for goods or services; consumer behaviour must be treated as a non-stop process. Having summarized different definitions of consumer behaviour, we may state that consumer behaviour is a continuous process that covers individual acts from the origination of the problem, which may be resolved by purchasing a commodity, to the reaction related to the commodity already purchased.*

*The importance of consumer behaviour recognition unfolds in the stage of strategical planning of the company. As practice shows, consumer behaviour research still lacks proper attention from business subjects. When marketing strategies are created, they very often narrow to the main marketing elements. A consumer's attitude towards an item, his motivation to act in one way or another, determine the creation of marketing complex programme. Euro integration processes are closely related to economic, legal, cultural and social changes of the environment and open new opportunities to business as well as the coming of new foreign companies to Lithuanian market, so when forming the strategy and trying to maintain as well as to increase the competitiveness of Lithuanian business companies, it is necessary to consider the changes related to these processes in consumer*

*behaviour.*

*The analysis of social factors in the context of Euro integration unfolds the changes in family structure and distribution of roles in European households. The conception of a traditional family still exists nowadays, but vis-à-vis time and space, there is a variety of families and households in Europe. Besides traditional families, there are one-person or multi-person households; there are a growing number of re-married families, unmarried couples and a number of single mothers (fathers).*

*A lot of European countries have a typical "diamond" like type distribution of social classes, where the largest part of people is the middle class. The rise of the living standard fortifies economic opportunities of this social class and determines the changes of consumer behaviour. The research showed that it is becoming more and more difficult to understand consumer behaviour of the Europeans. Two tendencies may be noticed here. Firstly, middleclass Europeans tend to save when they purchase daily goods. Secondly, in order to achieve the oneness or to emphasize its social status, the same group of consumers tends to purchase goods- the symbols of the status.*

*Free movement of people, goods and capital in the European Union has also determined the development of influence groups and culture, which in turn forms new nutrition, spending of leisure time and other changes of consumer behaviour.*

Keywords: *consumer behaviour, social factors, family, influence group, social class, culture.*

### Introduction

**Relevance.** New business opportunities unclose when Lithuania's integration into the European Union is concerned. Membership in the EU stimulates a closer economic, political and cultural cooperation of the country with European as well as other countries of the world. The task of Lithuanian companies is to stand competition of global companies in the Lithuanian market and to re-orientate their activities to global markets.

Recognition of consumer behaviour becomes a growing importance in the context of market globalization thus becoming a foundation-stone, when companies must stand competitive abilities in local markets and to strengthen their positions in foreign markets. Under-

standing consumer behaviour is one of the most important tasks of modern organizations. Business representatives may predict future purchases of consumers as well as sales and profits of their companies only when they understand the reasons and motives of consumer behaviour.

**Problem.** Lack of knowledge on consumer behaviour is felt among business subjects. Two aspects of the problem show up here. Firstly, despite the fact that there are a lot of studies on consumer behaviour abroad, improper attention is paid to consumer behaviour in Lithuania. Secondly, a lot of studies on consumer behaviour centre on the research of consumer behaviour in the process of purchasing. But it has never been researched how consumer behaviour changes due to the influence of separate social factors in Lithuania.

**Scientific novelty.** Studies of social factors manifestation in the theory of consumer behaviour made in the theoretical level.

**Work goal** – to highlight the importance of social factors influence on consumer behaviour in the context of euro integration.

**Work object** – peculiarities of social factors manifestation in consumer behaviour.

**Work tasks:**

1. To exhibit the conception and the beginning of consumer behaviour.
2. To research manifestation of social factors in the theory of consumer behaviour.
3. To exhibit the tendencies of social factors changes in the EU.
4. To present conclusions and recommendatory proposals so that companies may sustain competitive advantages due to constantly increasing conditions of the competition.

**Work methodology** – a comparative analysis and summing-up of scientific literature.

### **Conception and beginning of consumer behaviour**

In the process of market research, consumers are examined in large groups. Firstly, the entire market is researched, then separate segments of the market are researched and their qualities are sorted out. A different logic of the research is also possible: the behaviour of separate individuals is researched first and the research results are summed up afterwards. Consumer behaviour research is based on the latter.

Market research as well as consumer behaviour research is trying to find answers to the questions asked. But in the process of market research, more knowledge is accumulated on consumer external qualities that determine consumer behaviour. The goal of consumer behaviour research is to find out typical nuances of individual behaviour, the consistency of decision-making, influential factors in different situations.

Knowledge on how external factors influence consumer behaviour is accumulated during sociological market research. This knowledge is supplemented by psychological

knowledge on internal factors of consumer behaviour.

Consumer behaviour research allows company managers to understand consumer actions, to envisage their behaviour in the future. In order to foresee which item consumer is going to accept and purchase, it is necessary to research consumer behaviour in the market.

**Consumer behaviour** – individual actions related to acquisition of items and their usage that cover his actions from the origin of the problem, which may be resolved by having purchased the item in question to the reaction to the item already purchased (Virvilaitė, 2000).

According to M. Solomon, G. Bamossy and S. Askegaard (1999), “the current conception of consumer behaviour has expanded a lot“. Meanwhile, during earlier researches of consumer behaviour, a buyer’s or purchasing related behaviour was emphasized more frequently and particular weight was given to buyer’s and producer’s interaction at the moment of items purchasing. *S. Dibb, L. Simkin, W. M. Pride and O. C. Ferrell (1997)* research the behaviour of final consumers in the purchasing process, when acquisition of articles for personal use or household articles is concerned. *W. G. Zikmund and M. d’Amico (1992)* analyze consumer behaviour and define it as human activities consisting from selection of goods, acquisition of goods and their usage in order to satisfy human needs and desires.

Interest in consumer behaviour was first shown in the 19th century. During two centuries there were several consumer behaviour theories developed, their originators were economists. The development of consumer behaviour research may be conditionally grouped into four stages, i.e.:

- predisciplinary stage (till 1960);
- evolutionary stage (1960-1974);
- cognitive stage (1975-1981);
- modern stage (since 1981 up till now).

**Predisciplinary stage.** Economists – the first researchers of consumer behaviour – tried to find out the factors that influence product needs and demand. They thought that consumer is satisfied when he purchases the cheapest item at a shop of bottom prices. But actually, maximum satisfaction was far away. Different empirical studies were used for the research of consumer behaviour and its characterization; they used theories and conceptions of other sciences.

In 1940-1950, the first desultory research was carried out with the aim to find out why people purchase particular products, in other words, motives were researched“. In 1950, G. Catona and his co-workers wrote a work on consumerism economy, where they proved that the knowing of consumer’s attitudes and needs does influence consumer purchasing model. *G. Catona* was the first to evaluate the influence of psychological factors on consumer behaviour. According to him, “Not economic, but psychological factors influence consumer behaviour most of all“. *G. Catona’s* theory states that consumer behaviour in the process of purchasing, apart from economic factors, is under the influence of psychological factors: motivation, knowledge, attitudes, viewpoints and consumer expectations about the future (Urbanskienė, 2000).

*J. P. Ewans* carried out the first formal research on consumer behaviour in 1957. He researched the qualities of Ford and General Motors vehicles – Ford and Chevrolet – users.

**Evolutionary stage.** Consumer behaviour research separated from other similar research and formed a separate branch thanks to such scientists as Catona, Ferber, Goward in 1960. Specialists absorbed all knowledge on consumer behaviour from marketing, social psychology, sociology, anthropology and other fields.

Two stages show up in the evolutionary stage. Consumer behaviour was behaviourism based and was characterized by behaviorism based research till 1965.

Behaviorism – is one of the most important trends of American psychology of the 20th century, which is based on the proposition that states that psychology must research human behaviour and not human mind. Behaviour is treated like human reaction to different changes of the external environment. Edward Thorndike is considered to be a founding father of behaviorism; John Watson was an „inventor” of this term and also an organizer of the first programmes of this new psychology trend. Theories on the foundation of human attitude and its changes were borrowed from social philosophy and efforts were made to apply them for the creation of behavioral models.

During the second stage, starting from 1965, consumer behaviour research that started from narrow and borrowed theories of other areas, started a more comprehensive research, there were a lot of behaviour models prepared that broadened the limits of consumer behaviour theory. In 1968, the first edition of the book „Consumer behaviour” in America invoked a lot of discussions. In 1971, the Journal of Consumer Research was published. It consolidated consumer behaviour research as separate and independent research and the area of applied science.

**Cognitive stage** recognized consumer and different functions related to consumption process. During 1975-1981, the research trends expanded and they covered three areas:

- research on consumer information conception, experience, attention and memory influence when selecting goods or services;
- research on formation of consumer opinion and its change;
- research on consumer decision-making process, etc.

Consumer behaviour steps in the process of goods purchasing were well researched. Consumer was regarded as a rational being which is trying to resolve his problems in a logical way.

**Modern stage** is interesting, because the established association of consumer research prepared conferences, continued research of economic influence and dealt with the influence of emotions and fashions on consumer behaviour. One could notice manipulation of psychological theories and the results of separate psychological research, it was tried to better recognize consumer thoughts, objectives and needs. The main researchers consolidated together in 1981 at the conference of con-

sumer research association in order to improve further research. New topics were discussed and new ideas were suggested – importance of consumer emotions and information; economic effect was analyzed too. It was noticed that improper attention is paid to fashion and consumer sociology.

The opinion of what influences the success of the market changed in 1990. It was noticed that consumer motivation changed, consumers started to look at the goods the price of which did not suit the quality, the external view or impression, taste, etc. with distrust. According to R. Urbanskienė and others (2000), a new slogan was raised “closer to consumer”. T. Piters urged that marketing specialists should spare at least 25 % of their time for better recognition and research of their consumers.

Consumer behaviour research allows company managers to understand different behaviour of consumers, to envisage their behaviour in the future. Marketing specialists must:

- know consumer needs and their purchasing habits;
- be able to influence consumers so that they purchase their goods and purchase even more.

Currently, marketing specialists acknowledge that **consumer behaviour is a nonstop process** and this is not the moment when money in the hands of consumers is exchanged into goods or services (Solomon, 1999).

Very closely associated disciplines such as experimental psychology, clinical psychology, clinical psychology, microeconomics, social psychology, sociology, macroeconomics, semiotics, demography, history and cultural anthropology help in current consumer behaviour research.

The beginning of consumer behaviour research was first discovered in the works of scientists in the 19th century. The entire development of consumer behaviour research may be grouped in 4 stages: predisciplinary, evolutionary, cognitive and modern. Having summarized different interpretations about consumer behaviour, we may state that consumer behaviour is a nonstop process that covers individual actions from the origination of the problem which may be resolved by purchasing item in question and end up with item already purchased.

### **Manifestation of social factors in the theory of consumer behaviour**

The way we think, perceive and act depends a lot upon social factors. These factors were analyzed by a number of scientists such as *W. J. Stanton, M. J. Etzel and B. J. Walker (1991)*. They highlighted five social factors that influence consumer behaviour: culture, subculture, social class, influence groups, family and households (Table 1). According to the authors, “social factors influence consumer behaviour directly and indirectly”. Indirect social factors act through psychological factors. This means that social factors do influence the formation of psychological factors (consumer motivation, perception, attitude, etc) that in turn influence consumer behaviour.

Manifestation of social factors in theoretical studies of consumer behaviour

Social factors	Scientists							
	Solomon-Bamosy-Askegaard (1999)	Stanton-Etzel-Walker (1991)	McCarthy-Perreault (1991)	Berkowitz-Kerin-Hartley-Rudelius (1992)	Zikmund-d'Amico (1993)	Dibb-Simkin-Pride-Ferrell (1997)	Kotler-Bliemel (2001)	Statt (2003)
Family, households	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Influence groups	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Social class	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Culture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Subculture		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Roles					<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Development, socialization								<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Personal influence				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				
Attitudes								<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Income	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
Situational factors					<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			

Differently from other authors, *E. N. Berkowitz, R. A. Kerin, S. W. Hartley and W. Rudelius (1992)* highlight a group of socio-cultural factors and attribute the following factors to it: personal influence, influence group, family, social class, culture, subculture. *Ph. Kotler and F. Bliemel (2001)* present a detailed model of factors that influence consumer behaviour and attribute 3 factors to the group of social factors, i.e.: influence groups, family, roles. *D. A. Statt (2003)* spares most of the attention to consumer psychology research when consumer behaviour research is concerned. This author highlights 6 factors and analyzes their influence on consumer behaviour in the social aspect, i.e.: family, development and socialization, groups, social class, culture, attitudes. *D. A. Statt* regards family education, development and socialization as the most important factors among social factors. By analyzing the influence of small groups on consumer behaviour, this author means direct or indirect dependence of consumers to formal, informal and other groups. According to this author, every person may be attributed to 2 large groups: social class and cultural group. Finally, author studies how opinion towards goods is formed and how it changes in all social groups mentioned.

Table no. 1 presents the summary of social factors manifestation in consumer behaviour analysis.

*The analysis of scientific literature sources has shown that different authors attribute different factors to a group of social factors. When summarizing the analysis results, we may state that main social factors that influence consumer behaviour are family, influence groups, social class and culture.*

### Tendencies of social factors variations in the European Union

Sociology initially tried to reveal the laws of social changes and development. Sociology pioneers O. Kont and H. Spencer made use of numerous historical materials in order to understand why and how communities do change.

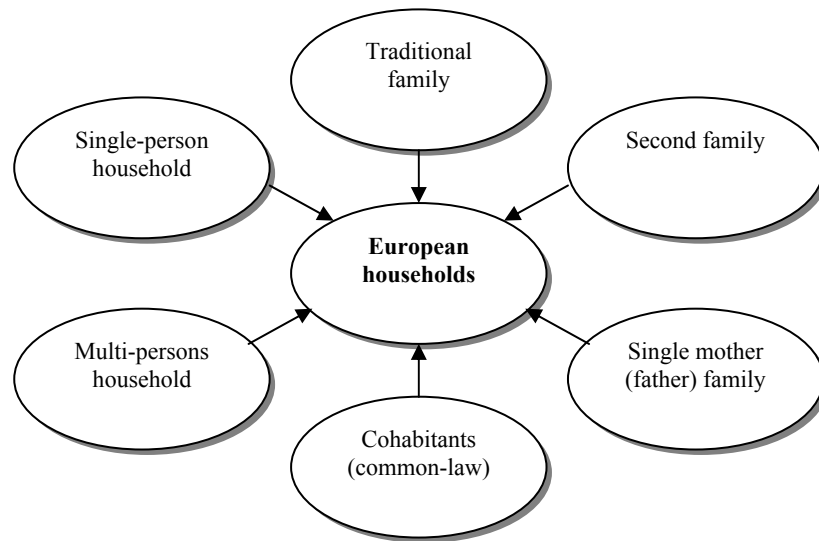
According to V. Pruskus (2004), “*the concept of social variation captures the very fact of social variation in some areas or changes in a broad sense*“. Furthermore, social variations can not be understood as any variations of the community. It is necessary to highlight social variations that are to be attributed to any social sphere – economic, political or spiritual and social variations. So, when speaking about social variations in the sociological sense, only spheres that are a discipline of sociology and not any sphere (economic, political, technological or generally social), are meant. In other words, these are the variations of interaction among social systems, social stratification, social processes, institutes and organizations.

According to V. Pruskus (2004), “*human actions and variations of behaviour and the conscious that are closely related to the human social status, are to be attributed to the sphere of social variations*“. It is clear that human social status is determined by education, activity content and character, income and wealth level. Cultural content varies least (for example, values, standards, habits) and national self-awareness. Variations in economic sphere happen more frequently. So, the definition „social varia-

tions” means different changes happening some time.

**Family variation tendencies in the EU.** According to M. Solomon, G. Bamossy and S. Askegaard (1999), “family conception has changed recognizably during the last decades. “. Despite the fact that conception of traditional

family still exists nowadays, but with regard to time and space, the variety of families and households has formed in Europe. In picture No.1 authors present the components of „modern family” that allow us to form a clear view about modern European households.



**Figure.** European households’ components (Solomon, 1999)

According to M. Solomon and others (1999), “a number of marriages has decreased and a number of divorces has increased noticeably in the EU since 1960“. Moreover, nowadays people get married one more time than they did up to 1960. It has been established that men get married for the second time more frequently than women do. An average age of a woman which is getting married for the first time in Europe is 25, a man – 28. Portuguese spouses, if compared to the mean in the EU, are the youngest ones and the oldest ones are to be found in Denmark. The biggest age difference among spouses is in Greece, where it is common that a man gets married when aged 35-40. Women in Greece get married when aged 25-28. The tendency of late marriages determined the changes of households. Some time ago, some spouses used to stay at their parents’home after marriage, others would live separately. With the coming of the tendency to get married later, very often mature young people leave their parents’ home and create one-person or multi-person households. Nevertheless, common-law spouses like households are very popular among European youngsters. Some young people live together before their marriage; others remain as common-law spouses their entire life. Such tendencies may be noticed in Lithuania also. The EU countries differ a lot and it is not advisable to follow common tendencies of changes, especially when planning business expansion to one or another European country. For example, the highest number of common-law spouses like is to be found in Scandinavian countries (Denmark and Sweden it is about 73 percent). Traditional families still make up the largest number of families in the southern countries of the EU and a number of common-

law like households reaches only about 10 percent. (Portugal, Italy and Spain).

Noticeable decrease of families and households is observed in the EU too. In 1982, the mean of European household was about 2.8 person. Currently, this figure reaches 2.5 person. According to the data provided by the Governmental Department of Statistics of the Republic of Lithuania, at the beginning of 2003, an average family in Lithuania consisted of 3.06 person. It was determined that modern women in Europe, if compared to their mothers and grand-mothers, do not want to raise a lot of children and to devote themselves only to family. More and more women are engaged at work and look for career opportunities. The mean of children per woman in Europe has fallen down to family regeneration level and was 1.44 in 1993, meanwhile this figure in 1964 was twice as much. Family size changes were determined by different factors such as the rise of an educational level, a woman may control birthrate, etc.

It must be noticed that consumer related behaviour of pensioners in the EU countries differs a lot from the behaviour of Lithuanian pensioners. Nevertheless, life expectancy of westerners is longer than Lithuanians’. This is determined by better living conditions, more provided senility, and other. Senior generation of Western Europe has got enough resources not only for acquisition of medical services or medicine. This consumer segment, which is called according to R. Buber (2002) “50 plus”, is a very attractive one to travel agencies, because senior Europeans travel gladly. Another target of European marketing specialists is one-person or two-person households, the number of which is growing rapidly. Childless couples are also called “dinks”. *Dinks* (double income, no

kids) – is a derivative from the first two letters of the words. These households boast of the highest income per person.

Marketing specialists must carefully observe current changes of family structure and its size, because this will influence goods demand in the future. A number of families, where a married couple lives together with their children is decreasing and a number of one-person or two-person households is constantly increasing. During one decade (1980-1990), a number of traditional households (4-5 persons) decreased from 34 to 25 percent. Meanwhile, a number of one-person or two-person households increased from 22 to 26 percent. A number of deliberately living loners in Europe is constantly growing. New terms describing groups of people have emerged. For example, “*metro sexual* – a metropolitan resident, who spends a lot of time and effort for aesthetical expression of his appearance and his living.” (Sabaliauskaitė, 2004). According to K. Sabaliauskaitė (2004), “a metro sexual has nothing to do with unconventionally sexually orientated people”. According to the author, “a metro sexual is man, who tries to fill emotional gaps in his life by visiting a fashionable barber or a hairdresser, aroma therapy or massage in beauty salon or by looking for the newest miraculous eye cream in town”. Having recognized this group of people as a separate market segment, a service-sector and industry, of course, gain profit from it.

#### ***Tendencies of influence groups change in the EU.***

The biggest influence of influence groups on consumer behaviour was and remains among young people. A lot of present 40-50 year old people remember hippie times, when galligaskins were worn, long hair was grown and all people listened to „The Beatles” and other classical songs. Then, back in 1970, Europe suffered from sexual revolution. Present young people develop in a comparatively democratic society and revolutions usually occur in families during children’s maturation period. Friends, various pop stars and sports stars play the biggest role among young people. Lithuanian young people are not exceptional and the same tendencies may be observed here too. A very strong influence of influence groups among young people is determined by the fact that during this period of life, a personality of a young man is only in the process of formation. A very clear influence of purposeful groups may be observed in the process of personality formation – their behaviour, dressing style and manners are imitated, etc.

***Tendencies of social classes change in the EU.*** According to M. Solomon and others (1999), “a social class not only defines the sum of money a person spends, but also the way he spends it”. According to Ph. Kotler and other (2003), “currently the EU Commission supports a lot of projects that pursue improvement of the quality of socio-economic and other statistical indices in Europe. Lower classes in a lot of Western countries gain height – consumer behaviour is changing and it is becoming similar to the one common to higher classes. All this relates to the rise of educational and living standard”. For example, in 1950, a four-person family in the former GFR, would spend about 50 percent of all income on food. Basing on the data collected in 1998, this figure has de-

creased down to 16 percent. i.e. more than 3 times. This means that people nowadays may spend more money on goods or services.

Scientists of Western Europe actively research how the rise of living standard changes consumer behaviour. It is becoming more and more difficult to understand European consumer behaviour. According to J. M. Gillies (2003), “a weekend of a German couple may be like this: a 19 Euro flight to France with „German Wings” on Saturday, a luxury dinner for 160 Euro at “L’Ape Piera” restaurant, purchase of “Prada” handbag for 590 Euro and a flight back for 19 Euro”. According to the author, “a frequent consumer applies a formula before purchasing goods: “Aldi” and “Armani”, “Lidl” and “Louis Vuitton”, “Plus” and “Prada”. This example proves that a modern European consumer may be at the same time attributed to the high end as well as low end consumer segment. Here we may point out 2 noticeable tendencies. First, a middle social class or a high social class European tends to save when purchasing food and he usually shops at widespread shopping centres throughout all Europe. A typical European is in the constant hunt for daily cheaper goods. On the second hand, the same consumers, in order to become exceptional and to emphasize their social status in the society, seek after famous trademarks. In other words, they purchase clothes or other status symbols with “famous labels”; they budget for leisure, entertainment and pleasure.

Generally speaking, in the West a lot of attention is paid to material values: a house, a vehicle. A higher social human status is also characterized by a possibility to spend his vacation abroad once or 2 times a year. The symbols of social status are different in different countries of course.

High society of the Western Europe usually shops at (including food) only highest-level shops, where goods offered are expensive and of the highest quality. Such are the shops that offer a very high level of service. Similar behaviour is typical to high society in all countries of the EU, therefore famous trademarks “Versace”, “Escada” and other are good sellers among such people.

***Tendencies of cultural change in the EU.*** According to J. Tomlinson (2002), “due to global every-day experience, it is becoming more and more difficult to retain a constant sense of “local” cultural and national identity, because our daily life is becoming more and more penetrated and full of foreign influence and experience. According to the author, “a modern European suffers from de-territorialization”. Raymond Williams described this experience in this western-style living picture: “Once there lived an Englishman, who worked in the USA located office of one international corporation from London. One evening he drove home in his Japanese vehicle. His wife, worked in a firm, which exported German kitchen installation, was already at home. When traffic was heavy, her small Italian vehicle was faster. After good supper – New Zealand lamb, Californian carrots, Mexican honey, French cheese and Spanish wine – they both sat down to watch TV made in Finland. Celebration of anniversary commemoration of war for the Falklands was on. Their patriotic feelings awoke and they felt proud being British when while they were watching the programme.”

(Tomlinson, 2002).

Nowadays all shops in Europe are full of different “foreign” food. Some meals (for example macaroni and pizzas) are not regarded as something special and are supplied in bulk as daily family meal. On the other hand, a lot more of exotic food is sold in Europe: Mexican tacos, Thai curry, Italian polenta, etc. It is quite natural that one may purchase imported fruit and vegetables at any time of the year – common and exotic ones.

These nutrition culture related changes may be explained by the globalization of food industry that started in the XIX century. Canning, mechanization, retail and transportation development in the West has changed nourishment of most people. Traditional dishes of the countries did not disappear of course. But we must consider that a very common nourishment “style” was very popular among people in the sixties. Nowadays everyone may choose from a number of other meals.

According to J. Tomlinson (2002), „the essence of today’s culture is *globalization*“. He says that „globalization defines a very rapidly developing and constantly thickening network of interpersonal relationship and interdependence necessary for modern social life.

McGrew speaks about globalization as “intensification of global interpersonal relationship” and highlights multiple relationships: “Nowadays goods, capital, people, knowledge, images, crimes, pollution, drugs, fashions and beliefs easily flood through territorial boundaries. Trans-national networks, public movements and relationship is spread in almost every sphere – starting from academic and ending up with sexual sphere” (Tomlinson, 2002). According to J. Tomlinson (2002), “sources of scientific literature are full of global proximity metaphors: starting from famous “global village” by Marshall McLuhan and ending up with the saying recently coined by the United Nations “our global neighborhood”.

Current communication and transportation technologies have totally changed the notion of distance. Physical change of location becomes common and it lasts several hours. A modern European measures distance not in kilometers, but in hours or minutes. For example, the Spanish live the same 5500 miles away from the Mexicans the way they lived to. The difference is that in the XVII century, it would take several months to cover this distance, nowadays it is only an 11 hour flight. Perception of real distance is lost, when distances are covered at such high speed and this global proximity influences culture. This is where cultural homo-genetics shows up. International standards are created so that people would suffer less cultural shock and would adapt themselves faster to the environment: all global airports follow the same order; international 5 star hotels provide all necessary means of communication (telephone, fax, etc.), international business press and international cuisine. All this creates global space and interconnecting corridors that facilitate the movement of capital, goods and personnel. We must notice that globalization tendencies may be noticed not only in business, but also in tourism industry. For example, one can travel to Spain, to stay there in a 4 star hotel with conditioning system, to visit several cities and museums during organized tours and come back again. Considerably more intense cultural differences are experi-

enced by less wealthy travelling people (labour migrants or independent tourists with little money).

*The importance of social factors in the context of Lithuania’s euro-integration.* The last decade of the 20th century is often described by historians as the stage of biggest political, economic and social changes, which continues up till now: the fall of Berlin border, liberation of the Soviet block countries and restoration of their independence. The year 2004 was special to Lithuania – Lithuania joined NATO and the EU. All this relates to changes in different areas. Some Europeans were and still remain adversely minded towards new countries in the EU. Old European countries feel frightened of menacing major burden of taxation. But the driving force of capital – Western businessmen and investors – regard newcomers of the EU as potential market for goods as well as implementation of different ideas.

Our business representatives create “conquering” plans of Europe. Recognition of consumer and their behaviour becomes very important, especially when goods are intended for final consumer. According to J. Stankevičienė (2000), “consumer behaviour is one of the most important aspects of marketing, which receives insufficient attention from Lithuanian companies. In the process of marketing strategies creation, they are very often limited by main marketing elements. Consumer attitude towards goods and his motivation to act one way or another determines the creation of marketing complex programme“.

Having summarized the tendencies of social factors changes in the EU, we may state that during the last 5 decades, family institution has suffered from a lot of changes. Some time ago, a major part of families were traditional ones. Nowadays, at least several components of modern European family (household) highlighted: traditional family, second family, one-person households, multi-person households, single mother (father)family, common-law households.

The biggest influence of influence groups was and still remains on young people, only fashions, symbols, purposive groups and their leaders change, young people “worship” them and imitate them.

The improvement of socio-economic factors in many countries of the EU determined the rise of living standard that is related to transition of people to a higher social class and changes of consumer behaviour. It has been established that Europeans of average and medium social classes are prone to the 2 extremes: 1) they look for various discounts and try to purchase cheaper goods in the segment of daily goods; 2) they pay a lot of attention to famous trademarks and try to demonstrate belonging or wish to belong to a higher social class in the segment of social status goods.

The cultural factor in Europe as well as in all the world is strongly affected by globalization. Nutrition, leisure pursuits and other changes relate to globalization. The cultural differences of countries remain, but their influence of consumer behaviour is weakening.

Consumer behaviour becomes the most important aspect of marketing in the context of Lithuania’s euro-integration, this is why recognition of consumer behaviour and determination of factors that influence consumer

behaviour as well as its research, becomes the most important task of every company, which is trying to remain competitive in local as well as global market. Consumer behaviour changes are common to the countries of the EU and they are conditioned by social factors changes that will undoubtedly reach Lithuania too. Now one can notice similar tendencies of family changes related to later marriages, distribution of family roles, etc. Recognition of consumer behaviour is the key, when meeting of consumer needs and company competitiveness in markets is concerned. So, that is why basing on the tendencies of social factors changes in the EU countries, it is necessary to emphasize the importance of these factors to Lithuanian business companies and to envisage their influence on consumer behaviour in the future.

## Conclusions

Having analyzed and summarized scientific literature on the importance of social factors on recognition of consumer behaviour, we may conclude that:

1. Studies of scientific literature have shown that manifestation of social factors in the theory of marketing, consumer behaviour and in practice is a more extensive and more important than it is thought. That is why it is necessary to pay a lot of proper attention to the variety of social factors influence and its binding to consumer behaviour.

2. Basing on theoretical studies it has been determined that the beginning of consumer behaviour research started in the 19th century and its pioneers were economists. The development of consumer research may be grouped into four stages: predisciplinary (till 1960), evolutionary (1960-1974), cognitive (1975-1981) and modern (since 1981 m. up till now).

Having summarized the presented explanations of consumer behaviour conception, we may state that consumer behaviour is a nonstop process, which covers individual actions from the origin of the problem, which may be resolved by having purchased the item in question to the reaction to the item already

3. Having performed the analysis of social factors classification, the works of scientists on consumer behaviour conclude that the main social factors that influence consumer behaviour are family, influence groups, social class and culture. Family is recognized as the most important factor among these 4 factors, which especially influences consumer behaviour. The forms of social factors manifestation determine consumer behaviour by influencing consumer perception, attitude and actions.

4. Having summarized the common tendencies of social factors changes in the EU, we may state that during the last 5 decades, family suffered from the biggest changes among main social factors. In regard to time and space, the variety of families and households formed in Europe thus changed the conception of traditional family to the conception of European household or "modern family", the components of which are traditional family, a second family, single mother (father) family, common-law spouses, one-person or multi-person households. The improvement of socio-economic factors in many countries of the EU determined the rise of living standard,

which is related to transition of people to a higher social class and consumer behaviour changes. When assessing the tendencies of a cultural factor, we may state that the most important peculiarities of the current period are the variety of the existing styles and opinions, paradoxical combinations of their elements and disappearance of limits among different styles. It is indicated that the spreading globalization processes influence the changes mentioned a lot, they are determined by expansion of telecommunications means, a growing number of trips and a possibility to purchase different goods and services anywhere in the world.

## Recommendatory proposals:

In order to reason the importance of social factors manifestation in consumer behaviour research, it is necessary to point out that changes determined by globalization influence the changes of social factors. Retention of competitiveness is becoming very important in the process of euro-integration. The predicted increase of global companies' capital flow to Lithuania may weaken the positions of local business subjects. Recognition of consumer and his behaviour is becoming very important and the determination of social factors change tendencies allows predicting consumer behaviour in the future.

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### **Socialinių veiksnių įtaka vartotojų elgsenai: eurointegracijos kontekstas**

#### **Santrauka**

Eurointegracijos procesai Lietuvoje skatina įvairius socialinės, ekonominės, technologinės, politinės ar kitos aplinkos pokyčius ir kelia vis naujų reikalavimų organizacijoms. Siekiant didinti konkurencingumą vietinėje bei globalioje rinkoje, itin svarbiu uždaviniu tampa vartotojų elgsenos bei ją sąlygojančių veiksnių pažinimas.

Vartotojo elgsenos tyrimo tikslas – išsiaiškinti tipiškus individo elgsenos niuansus, sprendimo priėmimo nuoseklumą, vienoje ar kitose situacijose įtakos turinčius veiksniai. Paprastai sociologinių rinkos tyrimų metu kaupiamos žinios apie išorinių veiksnių įtaką vartotojo elgsenai. Jos papildomos ir psichologinėmis žiniomis apie vidinius vartotojo elgsenos veiksniai. Vartotojų elgsenos tyrimai leidžia įmonės vadovams suprasti vienokius ar kitokius vartotojo poelgius, numatyti jų elgseną ateityje. Siekiant nuspėti, kokią prekę vartotojas pripažins ir pirkis, būtina iširti vartotojo elgseną rinkoje. Vartotojų elgseną formuojančių veiksnių išskyrimas bei kiekvieno atskiro veiksnio įtakos vartotojų elgsenai įvertinimas leidžia tiksliau nustatyti galimus vartotojų elgsenos pokyčius.

*Straipsnio objektas* – vartotojų elgsenos socialinių veiksnių raiškos ypatumai.

*Straipsnio tikslas* – išryškinti socialinių veiksnių įtakos svarbą vartotojų elgsenai eurointegracijos kontekste.

Šiame straipsnyje, remiantis rinkodaros specialistų moksliniais darbais, atskleidžiama vartotojų elgsenos pažinimo reikmė, apibrėžiama vartotojų elgsenos samprata ir ištakos, atskleidžiama socialinių veiksnių raiška vartotojų elgsenos teorijoje, pateikiamos socialinių veiksnių kitimo tendencijos eurointegracijos kontekste.

Vartotojų elgsenos tyrimų raidoje sąlygiškai išskiriami keturi laikotarpiai: priešdisciplininis (iki 1960 m.), evoliucinis (1960-1974 m.), kognityvinis, arba pažinimo (1975-1981 m.) ir šiuolaikinis (nuo 1981 m. iki dabar). Pasak M. Solomon, G. Bamossy ir S. Askegaard (1999), dabartinė vartotojų elgsenos samprata labai išsiplėtė. Apibendrinus mokslinės literatūros analizės rezultatus, galima teigti, kad vartotojų elgsena yra nenutrūkstamas procesas, apimantis individo poelgius nuo problemos, kurią gali išspręsti prekės įsigijimas, atsiradimo, iki reakcijos į jau įsigytą prekę.

Straipsnyje plačiai išnagrinėti tokių autorių kaip W. J. Stanton, M. J. Etzel ir B. J. Walker, E. J. McCarthy ir W. D. Perreault Jr., E. N. Berkowitz, R. A. Kerin, S. W. Hartley ir W. Rudelius, W. G. Zikmund ir M. d'Amico, S. Dibb, L. Simkin, W. M. Pride ir O. C. Ferrell, Ph. Kotler ir F. Bliemel, D. A. Statt, M. Solomon, G.

Bamossy ir S. Askegaard ir kt. darbai, analizuojantys socialinių veiksnių įtaką vartotojų elgsenai. Visų minimų autorių veiksnių klasifikacijos kiek skiriasi. Pvz., W. J. Stanton, M. J. Etzel ir B. J. Walker (1991) socialinių veiksnių grupei priskiria kultūrą, subkultūrą, socialinę klasę, įtakos grupes, šeimą bei namų ūkius. Skirtingai negu daugelis kitų autorių, N. Berkowitz, R. A. Kerin, S. W. Hartley ir W. Rudelius (1992) išskiria sociokultūrinių veiksnių grupę, kuriai priskiria šiuos veiksniai: asmeninę įtaką, įtakos grupes, šeimą, socialinę klasę, kultūrą bei subkultūrą. W. G. Zikmund ir M. d'Amico (1993) kaip socialinių veiksnių atskirai analizuoja pajamas, kurios kitų mokslinių autorių darbuose nagrinėjamos kaip socialinę klasę apibūdinantis elementas. D. A. Statt (2003) išskiria šešis veiksniai, kurių įtaką vartotojų elgsenai analizuoja socialiniu aspektu, tai: šeima, išsivystymas ir socializacija, grupės, socialinė klasė, kultūra, požiūriai. Svarbiausią reikšmę tarp socialinių veiksnių D. A. Statt teikia šeimyniniam auklėjimui ir išsivystymui bei socializacijai. Apibendrinus socialinių veiksnių raiškos studijas vartotojų elgsenos teorijoje, buvo išskirti keturi pagrindiniai socialiniai veiksniai, turintys didžiausią įtaką vartotojų elgsenai, tai:

- šeima;
- įtakos grupės;
- socialinė klasė;
- kultūra.

Straipsnyje atskleidžiamos svarbiausios pagrindinių socialinių veiksnių kitimo tendencijos. Europos Sąjungos šalyse. Socialinių veiksnių tyrimas bei jų kitimo tendencijų nustatymas padeda numatyti vartotojų elgsenos pokyčius ateityje. Tai neabejotinai svarbi informacija verslo atstovams, leidžianti priimti tikslesnius sprendimus planuojant rinkodaros veiksmus tiek vietinėje, tiek užsienio rinkose.

M. Solomon, G. Bamossy ir S. Askegaard (1999) teigimu, per pastaruosius kelis dešimtmečius šeimos samprata labai pakito. Nors tradicinės šeimos koncepcija tebeegzistuoja iki šiol, tačiau laiko ir erdvės atžvilgiu Europoje susiformavo šeimų bei namų ūkių įvairovė. Anot autorių, Europos namų ūki arba „šiuolaikinė šeima“ sudaro še komponentai:

- tradicinė šeima;
- pakartotinais sukurta šeima;
- vienišos motinos (tėvo) šeima;
- vieno asmens namų ūkis;
- multi-asmens namų ūkis;
- sugyventiniai (kartu gyvenančios nesusituokusių poros).

M. Solomon ir kt. (1999) akcentuoja, kad nuo 1960 m. Europos Sąjungoje pastebimai sumažėjo santuokų ir išaugo skrybybų skaičius. Be to, šiais laikais žmonės daug dažniau susituokia dar kartą. Vartotojų elgsenos pokyčiams turi įtakos ir vidutinis pirmą kartą besituokiančiųjų amžius. Vėlesnių santuokų tendencija suformavo namų ūkio pokyčius bei naujus vartojimo įpročius. Atsiradus tendencijai vėliau kurti šeimas lėmė tai, kad šalia tradicinės šeimos atsirado vieno asmens ar multi-asmens namų ūkiai. Be to, tarp Europos jaunimo plačiai paplitę sugyventinių namų ūkiai. Šios tendencijos pastebimos ir Lietuvoje. Tačiau planuojant verslo plėtrą, į vieną ar kitą Europos valstybę bendromis pokyčių tendencijomis vadovautis nepatariama, kadangi Europos Sąjungos šalys labai skiriasi. Statistiniai duomenys rodo, kad daugiausia kartu gyvenančių nesusituokusių porų yra Skandinavijos šalyse, tuo tarpu pietinėse Europos Sąjungos šalyse, kaip Portugalija, Italija, Ispanija vis dar didžiausią šeimų skaičių sudaro tradicinės šeimos, o sugyventinių namų ūkių skaičius tesiekia apie 10 proc.

Europos Sąjungoje pastebimas ir šeimoms bei namų ūkių dydžio sumažėjimas. Šiuos pokyčius sąlygojo įvairūs veiksniai – išsilavinimo lygio kilimas, išaugęs dirbančių moterų skaičius, atsiradusi galimybė moteriai kontroliuoti gimimus ir kt. Rinkodaros specialistų užduotis yra stebėti dabartinius šeimoms struktūras bei dydžio pokyčius, kadangi jie turės įtakos prekių paklausai ateityje.

Žmogaus dalyvavimas įvairiose socialinėse grupėse – tai dar vienas svarbus veiksnys, kuris sužadina vartotojų poreikius ir, žinoma, atitinkamą elgseną. Žmogaus tikslas yra patenkinti įgimtą bendrumo jausmo poreikį. Mums labai svarbu, kad kiti mus vertintų, pripažintų ir kad būtume reikalingi. V. Legkausko (2001) teigimu, žmogus yra

nesuvokiamas ir net neįmanomas be jį palaikančios ir jo palaikomos socialinių santykių sistemos, buvimo ir bendravimo su kitais žmonėmis. Socialinės psichologijos autoriai M. B. Brewer (1991) bei R. F. Baumeister ir M. R. Leary (1995) postuluoja egzistuojant fundamentalią motyvą, skatinantį jungtis į grupes – „priklausymo poreikį“, t.y. norą bendrauti ir palaikyti santykius su kitais žmonėmis. Priklausymas ar siekimas priklausyti vienai ar kitai grupei turi įtakos žmogaus kaip vartotojo elgsenai. Didžiausias įtakos grupių poveikis vartotojų elgsenai buvo ir tebėra tarp jaunimo. Moksliniai tyrimai rodo, kad net iki 80 proc. žmonių yra konformistai. Vadinasi, daugumos vartotojų elgsenai įtakos turi kitų žmonių nuomonė.

M. Solomon ir kt. (1999) teigimu, socialinė klasė ne tik apibrėžia, kiek pinigų žmogus išleidžia, bet ir kaip juos išleidžia. Ph. Kotler ir kt. (2003) akcentuoja, kad pastaruoju metu Europos Komisija remia daugelį projektų, kuriais siekiama pagerinti socioekonominių ir kitų statistikos rodiklių visoje Europoje kokybę. Dauge lyje Vakarų šalių žemesniosios klasės ky la aukštyn – kinta vartotojų elgsena, ji panašėja į aukštesniųjų klasių elgseną. Tai susiję su išsilavinimo bei gyvenimo lygio kilimu. Vakarų Europos mokslininkai aktyviai nagrinėja, kaip gyvenimo lygio kilimas keičia vartotojų elgseną. Suprasti europiečių vartotojišką elgseną darosi vis sudėtingiau. Čia galima išryškinti dvi pastebimas tendencijas. Pirma, vidutinės ir aukštesniosios socialinės klasės europietis pirkdamas kasdienio vartojimo prekes yra linkęs taupyti ir dažniausiai apsiperka visoje Europoje plačiai paplitusiuose prekybos centruose. Antra vertus, siekdami išskirtinumo ir norėdami pabrėžti savo socialinį statusą visuomenėje, tie patys vartotojai vaikosi garsių prekinių ženklų, be

to, daug pinigų skiria laisvalaikiui, pramogoms ir malonumams.

J. Tomlinson (2002) akcentuoja, kad „dėl globalizuojamos kasdienės patirties darosi vis sunkiau išlaikyti pastovų „vietinio“ kultūrinio ir tautinio tapatumo pojūtį, kadangi į kasdienes mūsų gyvenimus vis labiau išsismelkia iš toli atklydusios įtakos bei patirtys. Mechanizacijos, mažmeninės prekybos ir transporto plėtra pakeitė daugumos gyventojų vartojimo įpročius. J. Tomlinson (2002) teigimu, šiuolaikinės kultūros esmė yra *globalizacija*. Anot autoriaus, globalizacija nusako sparčiai besiplėtojančių ir nuolat tankėjančių tarpusavio ryšių bei tarpusavio priklausomybės tinklą, būdingą šiuolaikiniam socialiniam gyvenimui.

Eurointegracijos kontekste vartotojų elgsena tampa svarbiu rinkodaros aspektu. Vartotojų elgsenos pažinimas bei veiksmų, turinčių įtakos vartotojų elgsenai, nustatymas bei tyrimas tampa bene svarbiausiu kiekvienos įmonės, siekiančios išlaikyti konkurencingumą tiek vietinėje, tiek globalioje rinkoje, uždaviniu. Europos Sąjungos šalims būdingas vartotojų elgsenos kitimas, sąlygotas socialinių veiksmų pokyčių neabejotinai turės įtakos Lietuvos vartotojų elgsenos pokyčiams. Jau dabar pastebimos panašios šeimos kitimo tendencijos, susijusios su vėlesniu šeimos kūrimu, vaidmenų pasiskirstymu šeimoje ir pan. Vartotojų elgsenos pažinimas padės patenkinti vartotojų poreikius bei išlaikyti įmonės konkurencingumą rinkose. Todėl būtina akcentuoti šių veiksmų svarbą Lietuvos verslo įmonėms ir numatyti jų įtaką vartotojų elgsenai ateityje.

Raktažodžiai: *vartotojų elgsena, socialiniai veiksniai, šeima, įtakos grupės, socialinė klasė, kultūra.*

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