

Social-psychological aspects of personality in relations to brands: cross-cultural research

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Modern society lives in the period of consumption which is related to some economical and ethical problems [1]. Russian Federation has a tendency to become a postindustrial society of consumption since 2000 [4]. Because of the deficit of the goods in USSR the culture of consumption begins to form only during last years. The market grows very fast and marketing actions influence on the unprepared consumers. In the light of globalization of the world economics and arrival of the European producers on the Russian market it is necessary to understand the distinguishing characteristics of consumers from different cultural and geographical segments.

We tried to discover the causes of different relations to brands and to explore social-psychological differences of people with different attitudes to brands.

93 persons took part in the present research: 43 Italians (23 men and 20 women) and 50 Russians (24 men and 26 women). There were two parts of the research – pilot and principal ones. During the pilot research we conducted a structured interview. During the principal part of the research we used the sequent techniques:

1) Associations. Respondents have to write one word or a phrase which is associated with the proposed phrases about brands.

2) Questionnaire of Leongard [5]

3) Method “Who I am”. Respondents wrote three answers for the question “Who will I be in the nearest 5 – 10 years?”

4) Author’s questionnaire about consumers’ relations to brands

5) Oriented questionnaire about personality’s directivity [2]

6) Motivation of achievement (A. Mekhrabian) [5]

7) Projective method “Bubbles”. Respondents wrote what one who buys and doesn’t buy brands thinks and tells about himself; and what other people think about them.

Failing the adaptation in Italian, the quantitative methods were not used in the Italian part of the study. The projective techniques were translated into Italian by the method of the “double” translation.

On basis of author’s questionnaire we identified a group of the respondents who believes that brands are symbols of a successful person. They are very emotional people, their mood is prone to extreme reaction and constant changes. We suppose that these people use the purchase of clothing as a way to uplift their mood, as a kind of coping strategy [3]. People with cyclic mood reduce emotional stress through participation in activity related to shopping, communicating with assistants, trying on clothes, buying, etc.

People who believe that brand clothes symbolize the success of a person, tend to achieve a social status, to reach heights in career and in other activities, they represent themselves in the future as prosperous. They have a high level of the motivation of achievement; they orientate only to success in all activities and they don’t think about possible difficulties

or failures. Respondents of this group are characterized by orientation to themselves and obtainment award as a result of their activities, they are authoritative and aggressive in the achieving of a social status.

Seemingly, these people use the brand clothes as a symbol of success. In this case we can speak about the example of symbolic consumption [6]. Clothes are symbols, they “insinuate” some particularities of a consumer. In this case, people pay more for the same things just because these things are the symbols of success and prosperity.

There are cross-cultural differences in consumers’ attitudes to brands. For Russian consumers it is important where they buy their clothes, and they tend to buy brand clothes, in contrast to the Italians. For them brand symbolizes the success of a person, an opportunity to buy brand clothes is considered as a success and a luck. Such relation to brands among the Italians was not found.

Italians and Russians tend to buy brand clothes. Both samples believe that such clothes are beautiful, they gladden consumers’ hearts and even create a sense of happiness and pleasure of owning them. But Italians also have feelings of irritation and sarcasm which are related to such clothes. While Russian buyers consider the purchase of brand clothes as a good investment, because of quality and because they last a long time, Italians suppose that it is rather unreasonable waste of money which they can invest better.

To our opinion people tend to buy brand clothes because the image of these brands corresponds with their needs, values, lifestyle, or qualities and values that they would like to have. If consumer wants to see himself successful, he will buy brand clothes despite his real possibilities, because brand is a symbol of success, as the present study demonstrated. Brands either support or enhance representation of a person about himself. At the expense of buying brands people report their material welfare and superiority over others.

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