

CONSPICUOUS CONSUMPTION OF TODAY'S YOUTH: RATIONAL OR IRRATIONAL BEHAVIOUR?

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Abstract

In questo articolo vengono considerate le principali caratteristiche del comportamento dimostrativo del consumatore moderno, in funzione della trasformazione delle condizioni socioculturali ed economiche in atto. Secondo una ricerca di mercato eseguita in Italia e in Ucraina, per quanto concerne i prodotti di alta tecnologia, le tipologie di comportamento dimostrativo dei giovani consumatori sono determinate. La ricerca rivela dei gruppi di bisogni appartenenti ai consumatori target che li portano ad assumere particolari tipologie di comportamento dimostrativo nel mercato. Secondo i risultati della ricerca, il comportamento dimostrativo dei giovani ucraini è più razionale rispetto a quello dei giovani italiani. Il comportamento razionale dei consumatori ucraini è basato sul desiderio di mostrare il proprio status sociale, evidenziando il proprio benessere e la propria unicità rispetto agli altri. Il comportamento irrazionale dei consumatori italiani è basato sull'autosoddisfazione, crescita personale e sviluppo, autoaffermazione.

In the article the main features of modern demonstrative consumer behavior under conditions of contemporary sociocultural and economic transformations is considered. According to the marketing research of the Ukrainian and Italian markets of high-tech goods, the types of demonstrative behavior of youth consumers are determined. The survey reveals groups of target consumers' needs that drive them to a particular type of demonstrative behavior in the market. According to the results of the study, demonstrative behavior of the Ukrainian youth is more rational comparing to the behavior of the Italians' one. Rational behavior of the Ukrainian consumers is based on the desire to show own social status, highlight welfare and own uniqueness compared to others. Irrational behavior of the Italian consumers is based on self-satisfaction from the personal growth and development, self-affirmation.

Keywords: conspicuous consumption, demonstrative consumer behavior, high-tech product, consumer motivation.

1. Introduction

The dynamics being inherent to economic conditions of the contemporary life of the society, the expansion of cross-cultural communications owing to activating a process of cultural integration, and social disruptions raise an issue of researching peculiarities of market behaviour of consumers, as well as determining social and psychological factors of influence on its market activity and consumption. The unlimited choice of a consumer under the highly competitive market and

the high level of differentiation of market supply, changes in its value orientations and reference points affected by the consumer society lead to forming new behavioural models and life styles. Contemporary socio-psychological peculiarities of the style of consuming material goods by customers to some extent express the content and way of its identification in the society and inner cycle. Paradoxically, economists observe the emergence of two opposite trends. On the one hand, a consumer desires to keep pace with the inner cycle and buys the same commodities others buy. On the other hand, a consumer seeks to achieve personalization and self-identification, using certain commodities and famous brands.

Many foreign scientists in different fields have examined theoretical and applied aspects of forming conspicuous behaviour of consumers. More than a century ago, American economist and sociologist Th. Veblen, known as a founder of the theory of conspicuous consumption, has first proposed a notion of conspicuous consumption and researched peculiarities of market behaviour of upper-class representatives, which used wealth to demonstrate their social position and power, in his book *The Theory of the Leisure Class*. The scholar has highlighted that conspicuous consumption is «the use of consumption for proving the possession of wealth» and «conspicuous consumption of material goods is a means for gaining respect and maintaining the reputation in a society»¹. To gain respect of others, it is not enough to possess considerable material values and power – it is important to demonstrate wasteful consumption. The scholar perceives consumption as competition while consumer consumption is a result of the envious comparison of oneself with others. Scientific papers of G. Simmel, J. Baudrillard, P. Bourdieu, W. Sombart, T. Parsons, J. Bentham, E. Goffman, V. Ilin feature prominently among papers of other scientists studying the phenomenon of conspicuous consumption. The aforementioned scientists have considered this issue from the standpoint of sociology. Some of them have criticized the society, which fosters the emergence and the strengthening of significance of this phenomenon. Well-known French sociologist J. Baudrillard, an author of the concept of consumer society, analyses the society as a system of items, which standardizes a consumer, who turns into an item. The scientists accentuate that modern consumption «is the activity aimed at the systematic manipulation of signs» (i.e. items becoming objects of consumption). In the consumer society, a customer's choice is not free because

¹ T. VEBLER, *The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study of Institutions*. Introduction John Kenneth Galbraith. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1973.

it is under social pressure². Ideas of status consumption have been enhanced in scientific papers of G. Simmel, who explains that status consumption performs the regulatory social function as a 'socio-symbolic' barrier between upper and lower social classes³.

According to Ukrainian sociologist O.A. Rakhmanov, who has examined life styles of Ukrainian capitalists, conspicuous consumption is wasteful expenses for goods and services in order to show own wealth. From the point of view of an ostentatious consumer, such behaviour operates as a means for achieving or maintaining a certain social status and strengthening the social value⁴. It is worth mentioning the dramaturgical theory of American sociologist E. Goffman, who has considered the social life from the standpoint of the dramaturgical perspective, when people play particular social roles to control the impression they have of each other. The scientist highlights that, in the process of social interaction, a human is able to change own behaviour in compliance with anticipations of others to make favourable impression and to achieve the greatest benefit⁵. There is a need to indicate that Western researchers, known as Th. Veblen's successors, have enhanced the vision of conspicuous consumption and ascertained that this behavioural trait is inherent not only to representatives of an upper stratum of the society⁶. Humans with the low level of welfare are also prone to conspicuous behaviour⁷. They seek to elevate own social status at least 'visually', demonstrating the ability to purchase expensive goods⁸. Richer social groups play the role of so-called referent groups in relation to those with a low social status. According to studies of Ukrainian scientists, the consumption style of poor people may be characterized as stable, conservative, and monotonous. Simultaneously, poor people are prone to conspicuous behaviour contemplating the orientation towards richer referent groups and to demonstration of a higher social and economic status than it is.

² J. BAUDRILLARD, *The Consumer Society: Myths and Structures*, SAGE Publications, Published in association with Theory, Culture & Society, 2017.

³ G. SIMMEL, *The Sociology of Secrecy and of Secret Societies*, in *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 11 (4), pp. 441-498.

⁴ O.A. RAKHMANOV, *Lifestyles of Ukrainian capitalists as a demonstration of social subjectivity in society*, in *Ukrainian Society*, 2012, vol. 3 (42), pp. 63-76 (<https://doi.org/10.15407/socium2012.03.063>).

⁵ E. GOFFMAN, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, University of Edinburgh, Social Sciences Research Centre, 1956 (https://monoskop.org/images/1/19/Goffman_Erving_The_Presentation_of_Self_in_Everyday_Life.pdf).

⁶ D. BERNHEIM, L. SIMON BAGWELL, *Veblen Effects in a Theory of Conspicuous Consumption*, in *American Economic Review*, 1996, vol. 86 (3), pp. 349-373.

⁷ N. ORDABAYEVA, P. CHANDON, *Getting Ahead of the Joneses: When Equality Increases Conspicuous Consumption among Bottom-Tier Consumers*, in *Journal of Consumer Research*, 2011, vol. 38 (1), pp. 27-41.

⁸ B. HESS, *New faces of poverty*, in *American demographics*, 1983, vol. 5, pp. 26-31; D.L. HICKS, J.H. HICKS, *Jealous of the Joneses; Conspicuous Consumption, Inequality and Crime*, 2012.

Despite the existence of the considerable number of scientific conceptions and theories in the researched field, issues related to ascertaining the main incentives inducing a today's customer to behave conspicuously are controversial. This raises question of what incentives are dominant in conspicuous consumption – rational or irrational. These theories and conceptions focus on issues of examining the cause-and-effect relationship between changes in self-perception and social self-identification of a contemporary customer and his or her market activity. The article's author suggests a hypothesis that contemporary conspicuous consumption being affected by transformations in a cultural environment of a majority of countries, particularly in Ukraine, influenced by the emergence and development of new behavioural models of consumption, and impacted by socio-economic factors is assuming new features and changing compared to the traditional view.

2. Method: survey

Market behavior of customers and effective marketing tools for managing such behaviour are areas of scientific interest of the article's author. The article's author has conducted a number of marketing surveys in the Ukrainian market to determine consumer motivations in different types of markets, namely in markets of necessity goods, luxury goods, and innovative, high-tech goods. Results of sample surveys have enabled to conclude that a youth segment is most prone to conspicuous consumption of certain types of goods, mainly innovative and technologically complicated ones. In general, this fact is anticipated since the aforementioned age segment illustrates conspicuous consumption with regard to numerous commodity groups because of their age peculiarities. Today's youth aims at the career and achieving a higher social status, as well as seeks to follow representatives of that social group they want to belong to. Hence, youth actively uses elements of the sign system, behaving conspicuously.

The article's purpose is to determine the nature of conspicuous behaviour of consumers aged 18 to 30 under the rapid transformation of socio-economic and cultural environments in Ukraine and to indicate types of conspicuous behaviour, drawing on a classification of incentives and needs of the target audience (in the process of purchasing and consuming high technology goods). Taking into account the established purpose, the article's author has formulated the following goals:

- to disclose socio-psychological peculiarities of conspicuous behaviour of the target audience; to ascertain types of conspicuous behaviour being inherent to Ukrainian and Italian customers of high technology commodities (in the 18-30 age segment);
- to reveal the nature of customers' incentives and needs encouraging them to consume conspicuously.

To achieve the goal we set, two-sample observations were conducted – one in Ukraine and another in Italy. The time of the research was the period from August to December 2019. Stratified samples were compiled based on age, higher education (already obtained or pursuing at the time of the survey), regular purchase and active use of high-tech goods in everyday life (purchasing at least 2 new products per year). The sample size in Ukraine was 126 people, in Italy 83 respondents took part in the survey (Table 1).

Table 1 – Sample characteristics for Ukraine and Italy

	Ukraine	Italy
Sample	N=126	N=83
Gender, %		
Female	58.0	67.4
Male	42.0	32.6
Marital status, %		
Single	60,3	64.8
Living together or married	39,7	35.2
Education, %		
University degree (bachelor and higher)	20,0	8,0
University student	80,0	92,0
Occupation, %		
Full-time job	38,0	16,8
Freelance	0,1	0,4
Unemployed	27,7	44,4
Other	34,2	38,4

Source: results of the survey

3. Results of the survey: Ukraine and Italy

As indicated above, a phenomenon of conspicuous consumption has a long history of researching and is subject to scientific interests of numerous scientists in the fields of economics,

sociology, psychology, etc. In the past century, Western researchers have explained that conspicuous behaviour of a human is stipulated by incentives to take pleasure in possessing wealth, by vanity, by a desire for prevalence, and by carving for sensual pleasures. Nearly all the scientists have underlined the domination of the irrational nature in such behaviour. At first glance, conspicuous behaviour of a customer is an example of the absolutely irrational use of resources, i.e. 'superfluous' consumption. However, as outlined above, such behaviour implies the symbolic activity, which helps a human to communicate with a society, using certain signs and symbols (commodities and brands)⁹. It is worth mentioning that in the Ukrainian society conspicuous consumption usually causes the negative reaction: the irritation, misunderstanding, condemnation, envy, or, at least, indifference. To a certain extent, it is related to the Soviet past of the country and is expressed in the national mentality. Attempts to stand out and to highlight own uniqueness or originality are not always adequately perceived by the elder generation, who has been accustomed to the idea that everybody is equal and everybody should live under the same conditions. A particular part of the population holds persistent beliefs that people should not draw excessive attention to themselves. Nevertheless, the article's author cannot but agree with a fact of the vision formed in the Ukrainian society, which implies that money is a single way for achieving success in life. Scientists point out that the demonstration of unlimited financial resources in the form of luxury consumption is peculiar to societies where there is the development of the market economy and a new legislative system regulating social stratification and social mobility. Such behaviour is peculiar to rich people seeking to assert themselves and to elevate own social status.

In economically developed countries, particularly countries of Western Europe, rich people mainly demonstrate an ascetic lifestyle and frugality. They continue to accumulate capital and significantly differ from representatives of Eastern Europe by the consumption style. Comparing behaviour of Ukrainian and Italian rich people, the Ukrainian researcher states that in Italy wealthy people wear normal high-quality clothes. They do not boast and waste money on every occasion since they have no reasons to do this: their objective is to preserve and increase capital for future generations. Such behaviour is absolutely opposite of that of Ukrainian representatives of large business¹⁰.

⁹ D. ARIELY, *Predictably irrational*, Harper Collins, 2008.

¹⁰ O.A. RAKHMANOV, *Lifestyles of Ukrainian capitalists as a demonstration of social subjectivity in society*, in *Ukrainian Society*, 2012, vol. 3 (42), pp. 63-76 (<https://doi.org/10.15407/socium2012.03.063>).

Simultaneously, each person is prone to one or another type of conspicuous consumption. Demonstrating own consumption, a customer consciously and rationally takes an opportunity of self-identification in a society and accentuation of belonging to a certain social group, as well as emphasizes own achievements, skills, and career success. Conspicuous consumption is a form of self-presentation of a human in a society and is used as a method of the conscious formation of distinctions at the individual and social levels. Obviously, there are some features differing from conspicuous 'vanity consumption' and dominant rational traits.

Let's take a closer look at the data obtained during the survey and compare the results between Ukrainian and Italian consumers. The methodology of the study involved compiling a questionnaire. The methodology is based on the works of the Russian scientist Posypanova O.S.¹¹. The main block of questions (22 questions) took the form of statements that respondents had to confirm or refute within the gradation scale, depending on their attitude to a particular purchasing situation. The aim of questions was to reveal the tendency of respondents to the following types of conspicuous consumption: 'status', 'self-affirmation', 'prestige', 'perfectionism', 'individuality', 'egocentrism', 'following fashion', 'creativity', 'to be not worse than others' / 'escape from poverty'. Examples of questions, its compliance with certain types of demonstrative behavior, and the percentage breakdown of respondents' responses (who agreed with the proposed statement) are given in Table 2.

Table 2 – Percentages of respondents, who have determined a certain type of conspicuous behaviour, Ukraine and Italy

Type of Demonstrative Behavior	Question in the questionnaire	Ukrainian respondents, %	Italian respondents, %
Individuality	Innovative technologies widen the opportunities of the people who use them significantly	50	82
Egocentrism	I think that the best way to express your personality in a modern world is to buy the newest models of high-tech goods	32	27
Perfectionism	Before buying any product I always examine it meticulously, pay attention to	64	58

¹¹ O.S. POSYPANOVA, *Conspicuous Consumption in Provincial Youth: Features of Motivation*, in *Social Psychology and Society*, 2013, vol. 4, n. 3, pp. 116-129.

	the very details as it's important for me that it's perfect		
Prestige	I feel satisfied when people pay attention to the phone/tablet/laptop I've just bought	41	37
Status	Some models of high-tech goods can be considered the status ware and using them underlines that you belong to a particular social group	69	60
Self-affirmation	Using high-tech goods helps me get new knowledge and acquire some experience	52	82
Following fashion	I like to be a modern person, thus I try to keep up-to-date with new technologies	28	64
Creativity	I always perceive tech-novelities with interest and keep with the idea that they contribute to the development of creativity that can be appreciated by others	16	80
"To be not worse than others"	I have to buy a new model, although it is not cheap, I am no worse than others - I can afford it	9	12

Source: compiled by the author on the basis of the results of sample observations

Thus, according to the survey results, Ukrainian youth are more likely to demonstrate status (69% of respondents) and perfectionism (64% of respondents) while buying technologically innovative goods. In contrast, Italian respondents showed a tendency to such types of demonstrative behavior as 'individuality' (82% of respondents), 'self-affirmation' (82% of respondents), and "creativity" (80% of respondents).

Let's reveal the characteristics of the conspicuous consumption types. The status consumption is typical for people who strive for a successful career and high status in society. They have a strong belief to obtain certain life attributes that help achieve their goals¹². According to the target audience, these attributes necessarily include technology gadgets. Such people are convinced that the products of certain brands emphasize belonging to a particular social group. The belief of buying the best, highest quality, most reliable high-tech product illustrates the perfectionism type of Ukrainian youth. Respondents are more likely to postpone the purchase to make the right choice

¹² J.D. WISMAN, *Household Saving, Class Identity, and Conspicuous Consumption*, in *Journal of Economic Issues*, 2009, vol. 63 (1), pp. 89-114.

and get the amount of money needed. According to the respondent's belief, such demonstration of perfectionism in consumption is attractive for others and boosting their image in a social circle.

Italian respondents revealed other types of demonstrative behavior. As you can see from the table 2 such types as 'individuality', 'self-affirmation' and 'creativity' received the greatest estimation. For respondents who chosen 'individuality' it is extremely important to demonstrate their uniqueness through consumption behavior. Buying high-tech products, consumers incline to draw others attention with a demonstration of their unique interests, intellectual abilities, professional competence. According to psychology experts claims, the term 'individuality' refers to only positive personality traits perceived with respect and admiration by society. In turn, by emphasizing self-individuality such a person feels delighted of his/her importance and uniqueness¹³.

The 'self-affirmation' type occurs when branded goods become a measure of success for a person, a symbol of achieving a certain strategic goal in life. By flaunting certain belongings, such a person strives for public attention, recognition, and admiration of others. In this case, the purchase and consumption of certain high-tech goods increase the self-esteem and confidence of the target audience, satisfy the need for self-respect.

The last 'creativity' type, which received the largest respondents score is based on consumer desire of creative self-realization through the use of technological innovations. According to consumers, a wide range of high-tech product capabilities provide them with the opportunity to develop creative potential and individual abilities for creative self-realization.

It is worth saying that Ukrainian and Italian respondents are similar in relation to such types of consumption as 'prestige' (41% of Ukrainian respondents and 37% of Italian admitted this type of behavior) and "egocentrism" (29% of Ukrainians and 24% Italians). Experts claims that the main features of a prestige product include: limitedness due to deficit, high price and social symbolism as a demonstration of the social status for its owner¹⁴. According to survey results, the prestigious consumption of high-tech products is primarily associated with the purchasing of leading brands on the market.

¹³ S. FRIESE, *Self-concept and identity in a consumer society: aspects of symbolic product meaning*, Marburg: Tectum, 2000; C. BOZZO, *Connection between self-concept and brand preference and the role of product usage*, in *International IJAS Conference for Academic Disciplines*, 2012.

¹⁴ R.M. NELISSEN, M.H. MEIJERS, *Social benefits of luxury brands as costly signals of wealth and status*, in *Evolution and Human Behavior*, 2011, vol. 32 (5), pp. 343-355.

However, we found differences in perception of 'high-tech brands prestige' between Ukrainian and Italian consumers. Ukrainians are confident that the possession of prestigious brands illustrates belonging to a high position of social ladder and certain social group. This type of conspicuous consumption adheres to successful people who occupy a high social position and can afford expensive brands. In contrast, Italians consider the prestige of a high-tech product brand from the standpoint of innovative achievements of the manufacturing company and leadership in the industry. This proves that the appearance kind of technological brand prestige influences the perception of its product users. According to the results of the survey, the 'egocentrism' type illustrates the desire of the consumer to attract the attention of others with his/her eccentricity and extravagance. Impressing others becomes a central for such consumers enjoying both positive and negative testimonials about their behavior and lifestyle.

So, by choosing a certain high-tech product, such a consumer pays for the impression on others. Therefore, it is quite expected that only a small number of respondents had chosen this type of conspicuous behavior among other options.

Results of the surveys have also indicated different views of respondents from Ukraine and Italy on a type of behaviour called 'following contemporary trends'. This behavioural pattern is inherent to Italian youth, since 64% of respondents have fully agreed with proposed assertions describing such behaviour. The self-identification of a youth representative – 'I am a fashion person' – requires he or she to track the latest tendencies in a market and to adapt fashion novelties to own individual characteristics. Customers think that, nowadays, high technology goods are inevitable attributes of a modern person and try to follow the latest tendencies in selecting and purchasing such goods. At the same time, this type of conspicuous behavior is peculiar to only 28% of interviewees from Ukraine. Ukrainian youth are of the opinion that following the fashion is necessary in consuming traditional goods such as clothing, footwear, and accessories, and in forming the life style and enjoying the leisure time.

The last type of conspicuous behavior – 'not worse than others' – is peculiar to a customer with limited financial resources. It is utterly important for such customer to prove to himself or herself and others that he or she can afford to buy a particular high technology product, which is not truly crucial. The application of this type of buying behavior enables such customer to overcome a feeling of inferiority in the process of purchasing. Therefore, it is predictable that

percentages of Ukrainian and Italian respondents, who have chosen assertions illustrating this type of conspicuous behavior, are small – they equal 9% and 12%, respectively.

Each type of demonstrative consumption is characterized by a certain motivation and, accordingly, by needs that shape it. In each case, the motivational sphere of a consumer can be formed of several motivational components, among which one direction of motivational formation is dominant and has advantages over others. According to the results of conducted surveys, we can identify the main groups of consumer motives that stimulate them to demonstrative consumption. The first group consists of social motives, according to which the purchase of goods reflects the consumer's desire to socialize, demonstrate their achievements, use elements of social prestige and is caused by the formed social position of the product as a status one¹⁵. It is traditionally believed that when a person seeks personal recognition, seeks to be respected, valued and recognized for their importance, wants to be accepted in society¹⁶, person behaves irrationally. However, a survey conducted among Ukrainian respondents showed the prevalence of a rational component in such behavior. Consumers consciously and rationally strive to demonstrate the others their social status, belonging to a certain reference group, to emphasize their own superiority through the use of high-tech product, its brand and its cost. In this situation, the consumer implements the following needs of rational orientation (Fig. 1):

1) the need for recognition: the consumer's desire to prove their own social status through the use of brands-demonstrators;

2) the need for identification: the desire to belong to a certain professional reference group, to emphasize their uniqueness compared to others;

3) the need for social belonging: the consumer's desire not to fall behind the environment, to follow modern trends, to meet the requirements of their time;

4) the need for dominance: the desire to obtain a certain dominant position among others.

Thus, in the process of determining the qualitative feature of the type of behavior of Ukrainian consumers 'status' we can characterize such behavior as 'rational status'. In contrast, the status behavior of Italian respondents is more irrational. Respondents noted that they enjoy

¹⁵ C.M. JOHNSON, A. TARIQ, *Need for Status as a Motive for the Conspicuous Consumption of Cause-Related Goods*, 2016.

¹⁶ W. BELK RUSSELL, *Possessions and the Extended Self*, in *Journal of Consumer Research*, 1988, vol. 15 (2), pp. 139-168.

achieving a status position by creating the image of an educated person and increasing the level of their own competence in various fields of activity.

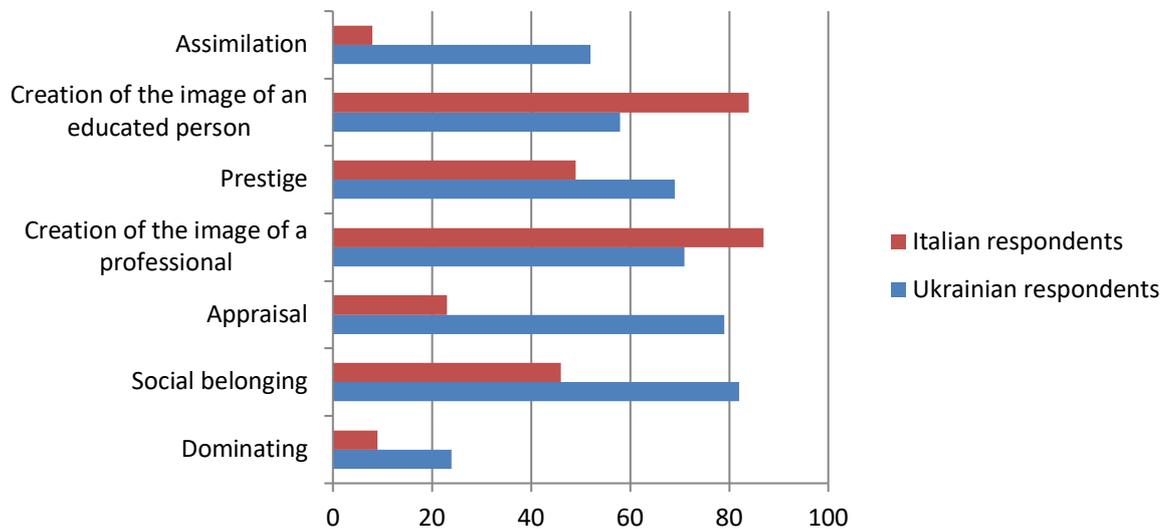


Figure 1. Respondents' answers about the key needs of social motivation, (%)

Source: compiled by the author on the basis of the results of survey

The second group of motives is formed by consumer's ego-motivation, which includes the following key needs of Ukrainian and Italian respondents (Fig. 2):

- 1) self-realization: the consumer's desire to achieve success, personal growth and development, the importance of self-esteem and self-affirmation;
- 2) symbolization: when product or brand embodies the life values of the consumer, it becomes a part of their personality - a thing as a symbol of 'me'¹⁷;
- 3) individuality: the desire to differentiate from other people, not to be similar to others, to stand out among others;
- 4) self-confidence.

¹⁷ K.H. ROMANA, M. KANISHKA, S. VISHAL, *Ideology and Brand Consumption*, in *Psychological Science*, 2013, vol. 24, pp. 326-333 (<http://pss.sagepub.com/content/early/2013/02/04/0956797612457379>).

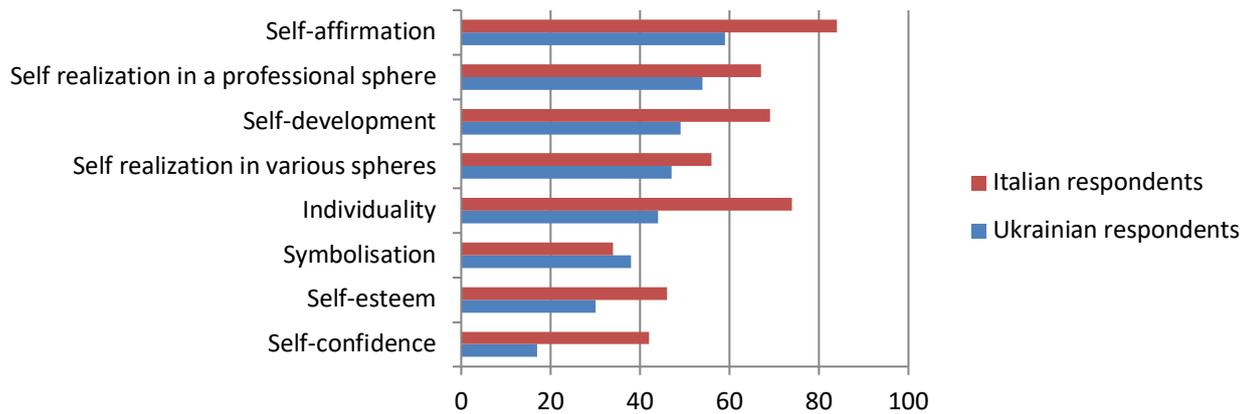


Figure 2. Respondents' answers about the key needs of self-motivation, (%)

Source: compiled by the author on the basis of the results of survey

The third group includes cognitive motivation of consumers, which is formed of the needs for knowledge and intellectual development. It is important to note that cognitive motivation is predominating among young people from Italy – it positively characterizes the profile of the target audience and testifies to its curiosity, purposeful, sustained interest in the latest developments in high technology sector and their more active use. Almost 86% of respondents said that they constantly monitor and apperceive information about technological innovations of world-famous high-tech companies, regardless of their sphere of activity. Young people are constantly monitoring the emergence of new models in those product groups that interest them and enjoy the process of cognition.

About 49% of respondents mentioned that they actively discuss technological innovations with members of their reference group and believe that a high level of awareness in this area is a mandatory feature of a modern young person. Emotional fascination with cognitive activity indicates the presence of an emotional component in such basically rational behavior. The fourth group includes the motives of creativity as the need to realize creative potential and get emotional satisfaction from the attainment of new skills and creative abilities is identified. The fifth group of motives is formed of hedonistic motives which illustrate the desire of consumers to get general enjoyment from owning a technologically complex and multifunctional product and get aesthetic pleasure from its appearance, design, etc. Respondents demonstrate hedonistic consumption, which by its nature is not a demonstration but rather a sincere pleasure from using the purchased goods. The last, sixth group of motives, is represented by the motive of freedom, which equally illustrates

the desire of Ukrainian and Italian youth to be mobile, energetic, independent in various spheres of activity and to take an active position in life.

Consequently, contemporary conspicuous behavior is not always wasteful expenses aimed at the demonstration of own welfare, prestige, and belonging to a specific social layer. A contemporary consumer tends to draw attention of the public owing to demonstration of own abilities, uniqueness, individuality and a level of professionalism. Summarizing the obtained results, the article's author may identify the following functions of conspicuous behavior of youth in the context of consuming high technology goods:

- a communicative function aiming at transmission of information about a product's owner to the public. Rational and irrational incentives for consumption equally underpin this function;
- a function of socialization consisting in adaptation of an individual to socially acceptable standards of consumer behavior a function of socialization and forms certain value priorities in consumption. It is stipulated by rational and irrational consumption motivations, just like the previous function;
- a regulatory function, which establishes particular norms and standards of behavior, and forms culture of consumption. The domination of a rational incentive is inherent to such situation;
- a function of personality development, which contemplates personality development through actualization of a mechanism for search of an identity, self-development and self-actualization. Prevailing of an irrational incentive is obvious.

4. Conclusion

Demonstrative consumption is a specific form of human self-presentation in a society. It implies a peculiar communicative and symbolic instrument that informs about belongingness of a consumer to a certain social class, a level of prosperity, a set of interests, desires and preferences. Contemporary conspicuous behavior of a customer implies a way for forming his or her distinctions at the individual, social, and professional levels, as well as at the level of material security. In the market of high-tech goods, a desire of demonstration under lays a tendency of the Ukrainian and Italian youth to purchase and use these goods. The status, perfectionism, individuality, and self-

affirmation are the main benchmarks of consumption for the target segment from Ukraine in the process of conspicuous consumption. Rational incentives prevail in their conspicuous behavior. Showing a brand of a high technology product, customers consciously and rationally seek to demonstrate own social status and belonging to a specific referent group, and to highlight own advantages. Self-affirmation, individuality, and creativity are distinctive types of conspicuous behavior of Italian consumers. The actualization of ego motivation, the quest for meeting needs for cognition and hedonistic needs, as well as a desire to realize their potential and to be independent in various spheres of activities, which are peculiar to Italian youth, form the background for determining types of behavior. Comparing their behavior with behavior of Ukrainian youth, the article's author may emphasize that the former has more characteristics of irrationality mostly grounded in the career satisfaction, realization of creative potential, and self-development.

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