

CONSUMER BEHAVIOR AS A MODUS OF ECONOMIC BEHAVIOR: CONCEPTUALIZATION AND MANIFESTATION PECULIARITIES

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The article presents theoretical and methodological aspects of the study of economic behavior, as well as outlines its markers. It has been substantiated that consumer behavior is one of the moduses of economic behavior. The article also provides the definitions of consumer behavior. In addition, it has been noted that the analysis of the problems of consumer behavior determination can be traced in two vectors represented by positivist and interpretation approaches. The supporters of the first approach emphasize the rationality of the consumer whereas the supporters of the second approach limit the rationality of consumers to the socio-cultural conditions of society's life, the spontaneity and unpredictability of certain actions of individual subjects. It has also been ascertained that consumer behavior as a modus of economic behavior involves a certain algorithm of acts and actions in the sphere of consumption, which is determined by economic interest and has a generalizing character for a certain category of consumers.

Key words: actions, behavior, economic behavior, consumer behavior

Modern society is quite dynamic and is characterized by a number of cardinal socio-economic changes, the consequence of which is the transformation of social relations' matrix in various spheres of society's life. Correspondingly, a new socio-economic environment is formed, which is characterized by changing needs, interests, value orientations of different segments of the population, and which in a certain way are reflected on economic behavior. Therefore, the deepening of the scientific understanding of economic behavior modes is actualized.

The basics of the behavioral paradigm were innate in the works of M. Weber, V. Pareto, T. Parsons and others. The sociological discourse of scientific interest in economic behavior,

its theoretical and methodological understanding are represented in the works of H. Belehova, V. Verkhovin, Ye. Suimenko, V. Pylypenko, V. Radaiev, A. Shabunova and others. Both foreign and domestic scholars were engaged in the study of certain types of economic behavior, and consumer behavior in particular, the mechanisms of its formation and reproduction in this or that historical period. Th. Veblen and G. Simmel were among the first to pay attention to the phenomenon of “consumption”. Specifically, Th. Veblen examines consumption in terms of social stratification and suggests the theory of conspicuous consumption. G. Simmel paid attention to the influence of culture and fashion on consumer practices. V. Sombart considered consumption through the prism of luxury. Various aspects of consumption and consumer behavior are among the scientific interests of Ya. Zoska (models of social consumption practices); A. Maksymenko (consumer behavior of households); M. Mastynets (systematic analysis of social determinants of consumer behavior in modern society); Yu. Pachkovskiy (consumption features in the conditions of the information society); R. Savchynskiy (basic dimensions of consumer behavior); O. Tkachenko (social risks in consumer behavior) etc. However, the level of scientific and theoretical substantiation of consumer behavior as an economic modus is rather fragmentary, which prompts researchers to work in this direction.

The research purpose is theoretical and methodological comprehension of consumer behavior as a modus of economic behavior, which will promote comprehensive, systematic understanding of this phenomenon in sociological discourse.

It is believed that behavior is something that is exposed to observation and fixation; activities and actions that can be described and traced in development, the external aspect of the activity. As for economic behavior, it is worth noting that this concept is multifaceted and not limited to a set of individual behavioral acts. Such behavior falls within the derating effect of a number of factors associated with the social environment, situational changes, personal subjects' characteristics [7, p. 62].

The founder of the behavioral concept in economic sociology is M. Weber. His theory of social action focuses on the fact that any human action acquires the character of social action, when it contains the subjective motivation of the individual, his orientation to others (correlation of goals, motives and expectations of some with the behavior of others). As a main characteristic of the people's interaction, the scientist considered the rationality of economic choice, which, in turn, is determined by a system of values. The correctness of this choice directly affects the success of human economic activity, since decision-making is part of his or her everyday life. The researcher considered economic behavior as one of the varieties of rational action; as a priori-typological construct of rational choice, representative to all models of social action, implemented in the economic sphere [19]. According to M. Weber, determination basis of human rationality is the need to meet the demands of people with limited resources and opportunities.

In compliance with M. Weber, economic action is a civilized way to control resources on the part of the subject that is consciously oriented to a certain benefit.

The problem of studying economic behavior as a rational one is contained in the plane of its sociological interpretation, which was structurally outlined by V. Verkhovin [3, p. 218]:

Firstly, economic actions are matched with a certain social standard of rationality (provided that it does not conform, these actions are considered to be unclear).

Secondly, economic actions to a certain extent correspond to those social norms and values that determine the institutional order of economic behavior.

Thirdly, various models of economic behavior differ in terms of rationality level.

Finally, people, who are guided by certain interests and opportunities, choose alternative behaviors, are responsible for the result achieved, and therefore should be competent.

Each social subject, regardless of status, constantly (directly or indirectly) is included in various spheres of society, is a participant (active or passive) of the processes of movement and transformation of economic values. The latter he or she creates (produces), consumes, exchanges, assigns, etc., receiving certain benefits in accordance with their representations, preferences, abilities and interests. Implementing a lot of rational (or those which seem to be rational) social actions, the subject consciously or unconsciously, professionally or unprofessionally defines and assesses his participation in the turnover of economic values, with varying degrees of success and rationality, calculating his expenses and reimbursement. The expected result of economic behavior is the benefits (rewards) for those or other actions related to the use and recombination of economic resources [16, p. 120-121].

A. Smith put forward the idea of “economic man,” suggesting that the main motive of the individual’s activity is his own selfish interest. In an effort to maximize their own welfare, microeconomic subjects make decisions based on the “cost-benefit” criterion and implement them if the benefits outweigh the costs [15].

In other words, it is obvious that every rationally thinking person focuses not only on the benefits but also on the minimum costs. According to H. Dvoretzka, the focus on the result always correlates with the quantity and quality of expenses [2, p. 131]. “The more unbalanced are the human needs and possibilities of satisfying them, the more tense social field of human interaction is. It is the tension of this style that causes the appearance and serves as an incentive for the development of rationality” [12, p. 179].

It is worth noting that today in scientific discourse there is no unambiguous interpretation of economic behavior, which can be explained by the wide diffusion of paradigm installations. Most authors consider economic behavior as a goal-oriented, optimizing or maximizing one. Ye. Suimenko, in particular, defines economic behavior as “a set of social and communicative actions aimed at the rational use of resources in order to profit and harmonize economic practices with the value-normative guidelines of society through an equivalent mutual remuneration in the exchange process” [12, p. 182–183]. His opinion in this context is shared by V. Verkhovin. He notes that economic behavior is a system of specialized social actions, which, firstly, involve the use of various functions and the appointment of economic values (resources), and, secondly, are oriented towards the benefits (interests, rewards, profits) from their circulation [3, p. 324]. The expected result of economic behavior is the benefits (rewards) for those or other actions related to the use and recombination of economic resources.

Economic behavior includes the following markers: awareness of economic needs and the formulation of ambitions that are determined by these needs; the choice of means and methods to achieve the goal; actions aimed at achieving objectives. The latter (objectives) serve as a kind of motivators to act. They also determine the modus of behavior. Economic behavior implies that people not only compare potential costs and probable rewards, pursuing their own goals, but also try to adjust to the behavior of others, adhering to certain “rules of

the game”, which society dictates (legislative acts, social traditions and customs, cultural norms and values) [9, p. 22]. Taking this into consideration, the definition of economic behavior, in our opinion, accumulates two aspects: functional or structural quality and its system modification, since any phenomenon develops depending on the conditions of the system to which it belongs, as well as on the relationship with others phenomena.

One of the moduses of economic behavior, as V. Verkhovin observes, is also consumer behavior, since for most subjects that use those or other resources for their own needs, a phase of consumption is indicative [16, p. 120–121]. It is an integral part of everyday life, although for each of us it is implemented in different ways and leads us to a constant choice. Regardless of whether we decide what to eat, what clothes to buy, what television show to watch or which website to visit, or how to build a career, all these actions are components of consumer behavior. The direct process of consumption is associated with the appropriation of consumer values of different order, which ensure the physiological and social reproduction of people in accordance with the level and standards of life.

In the scientific discourse, there are a number of definitions of consumer behavior. It is interpreted as a variety of relatively complex, constantly repeating processes of using different items of consumption to meet diverse demands (A. Moskvina) [6, p. 7]; as the activity of the consumer, in the process of which the purposeful use of objects for the satisfaction of human needs, takes place (V. Voronovich) [18]; as a series of consecutive acts carried out by the subject in order to achieve, acquire and use means to meet his demands [10, p. 111]. It is a matter of the fact that consumer behavior is determined by a coordinated system of human actions aimed at satisfying a wide range of needs, benefits and comfort.

It is advisable to note that in the process of consumption the following types of behavior can be distinguished: 1) the actual consumer behavior (assessment of consumer properties of various resources); 2) information retrieval behavior (income search); 3) information retrieval activity related to the search for a product; 4) the behavior of the buyer associated with the acquisition of various goods and their substitutes; 5) economic behavior (coordination of all consumer actions) [17, p. 281].

In view of this, as a modus of economic behavior, consumer behavior involves a certain algorithm of acts and actions in the sphere of consumption that is determined by economic interest and has a generalizing character for a certain category of subjects (consumers).

We share the opinion of V. Verkhovin that consumer behavior is a complex symbiosis of a number of factors that define the dynamics and structure of the inclusion and exclusion of economic resources from commodity circulation, in accordance with the ability (or inability) of economic subjects to find the optimal balance with the market environment. They (economic subjects) implement a number of functions and behavioral programs that enable them to perform these actions with various degrees of success. This process is correlated with the level of income, consumption standards and the degree of competence (ability) to calculate their costs and benefits [16].

Consumer behavior, as provided by Alioshyna, is based on such postulates [1, p. 21–22]:

- the starting point of consumer behavior is the life (organizational) style or lifestyle;
- the consumer has a dual nature: on the one hand, a member of several social groups, and therefore falls under the influence of social or external factors; on the

other hand - the consumer is individual, his lifestyle is determined by a number of internal, psychological, factors;

- the desire to preserve or improve their lifestyle shapes the relationship and needs of the consumer (in a certain situation, the consumer is aware of the problem (the need / opportunity to improve or support their lifestyle), thereby the process of purchase decision is “launched”).

Executing consumer behavior, the social actor correlates his actions with the actions of other people, which ascertain his desires, preferences, choices, satisfaction and further actions. Each socio-cultural environment has its own values that affect consumer behavior, and the rules of its institutional regulation are formed. Thus, consumer behavior serves as a form of institutionalized practice [11, p. 43]. The consumer, being a member of various social groups and performing a number of social roles, often chooses goods and services that show his status in society [4, p. 197]. Affiliation to one or another social class affects consumer loyalty to brands, styles, shops, leisure activities. Consumers use the status characteristics of the goods in making a purchase decision. Consequently, consumption, on the one hand, is conditioned by objective individual needs, and on the other hand, the desire to own luxury items, that demonstrate and enhance the social status of the individual in his own eyes and in the eyes of the public.

In general, the implementation of consumer behavior depends on a number of factors: personal representations, estimates of their personal financial situation, employment, price dynamics and general economic prospects for the country as a whole. Consumers are guided by an economic choice that best suits their interests and needs. The decisive moment is the consumers' ability to act in accordance with their intentions [9, p. 97].

The whole set of determinants of consumer behavior M. Mastynets offers to divide into two large groups: 1) individual (status-role position, psychological features, physical potential of the consumer, his experience); 2) subindividual, represented by categories of time, physical and socio-cultural spaces [5]. The first determinant group defines the behavior of the consumer as an individual, while the second group - as a member of society. Although, at first glance, any individual consumption is a personal act (individualized action), but a person, who is constantly in a certain socio-cultural situation, is forced to adjust his or her own behavior within the framework of social structures, as well as the opportunities, chances and resources available to them. Thus, on the one hand, we can speak about the individual level of formation of consumer behavior, and on the other - individual.

Consumer behavior implies rational argumentation. O. Tkachenko, emphasizing the rationality of consumer behavior, distinguishes the following types [13, p. 29-30]:

- selfish rationality (the consumer seeks to maximally satisfy his needs);
- aesthetic rationality (making a choice, the consumer not only focuses on his own selfish intentions, but is also guided by values, norms, rules of conduct, approved by society);
- strategic rationality – (consumer's prudence, depending on what he is oriented on: standard behavior patterns, tested in practice or on his individual consumer experience).

At the same time, it should be mentioned that the presence of a “rational nucleus” is not always traced in consumer behavior. Consumer behavior does not always comply with simple

laws of utility maximization, rational assessments, calculations and choices. As O.Vasylenko notes, there are a number of reasons that indicate a lack of rationality in consumer behavior [14, p. 84–85]. These reasons include: impulsive purchases or consumption under the influence of passions or habits that can harm the health, but which it is difficult to resist, even knowing about their negative impact. The, so-called, impulsive purchase is an unplanned action, committed for a minute whim, caused by a sudden, spontaneous desire to act. Peculiar features of such behavior involve the state of psychological instability (a person may temporarily lose control of himself), a minimum of self-partiality, the predominance of emotions, the absence of thoughts about the consequences. In other words, high emotional involvement and impatience lead to a reduction in the process of justification and prompt to immediate actions.

In general, the analysis of determination problems of consumer behavior can be traced in two vectors, represented by positivist and interpretation approaches (Fig. 1) [8, p. 28].

As we can see, the supporters of the positivist approach emphasize the rationality of the consumer (information awareness on ways to meet requirements, the choice of the most profitable alternatives, taking into account the economic interests of maximizing benefits). Instead, the supporters of another approach to the rationality of consumers restrict the socio-cultural conditions of society’s life, the spontaneity and unpredictability of certain actions of individual subjects.

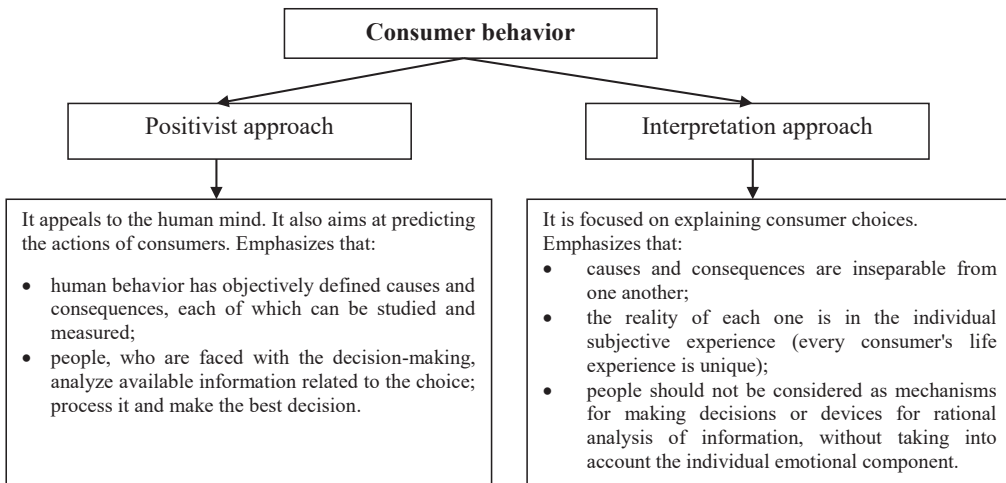


Figure 1. Approaches to the analysis of consumer behavior

Hence, it follows that, on the one hand, the economic component of consumer behavior involves the rationality of the operating subject (information awareness on ways to meet demands, the choice of the most profitable alternatives, taking into account the economic interests of maximizing benefits). On the other hand, the social component of consumer behavior limits its socio-cultural conditions of society’s life, the peculiarities of the functioning of the institutional matrix and the spontaneity and unpredictability of certain actions of individual subjects (narrows the degree of rationality) [9, p. 94–95].

Summarizing the above, it is appropriate to note that the accentuation of this analytical field in the study of consumer behavior as an economic modus contains a significant heuristic potential and thus expands its interpretation boundaries. Therefore, in our opinion, further scientific understanding of this phenomenon remains relevant.

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СПОЖИВЧА ПОВЕДІНКА ЯК МОДУС ЕКОНОМІЧНОЇ ПОВЕДІНКИ: КОНЦЕПТУАЛІЗАЦІЯ ТА ОСОБЛИВОСТІ ПРОЯВУ

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У статті представлено теоретико-методологічні аспекти вивчення економічної поведінки, окреслено її маркери. Обґрунтовано, що одним із модусів економічної поведінки є споживча поведінка. Наведено дефініції споживчої поведінки. Зазначено, що аналіз проблем детермінації споживчої поведінки простежується у двох векторах, що репрезентовані позитивістським та інтерпретаційним підходами. Прихильники першого акцентують на раціональності споживача, натомість прихильники другого вектору раціональність споживачів обмежують соціокультурними умовами життєдіяльності суспільства, спонтанністю й непередбачуваністю певних дій окремих суб'єктів. З'ясовано, що споживча поведінка як модус економічної поведінки передбачає певний алгоритм вчинків і дій у сфері споживання, що детермінований економічним інтересом і має узагальнюючий характер для певної категорії споживачів.

Ключові слова: дії, поведінка, економічна поведінка, споживча поведінка.

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