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## Consumer Behavior in the Context of Global Economic Transformations

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**Abstract:**

*Transition to alternative methods of service and omnichannelity allows the buyer to be more demanding and discerning. The current trends in the development of retail trade caused by globalization forcing the redistribution of consumer budget from a high-margin offline cart to a low-margin online cart that instigate not only the necessity of transformations in management, but also the study of consumer behavior.*

*Dynamical development of trading innovative technologies allows the buyers not only to expand the range of their aspiration, but also to become participants in the cognitive and learning processes, where the acquirement of the new experience and emotions influences the traditional ways of making purchases on offline trading.*

*To remain competitive, retailers should not only provide high-quality goods and services at the best prices, but also to contribute to their high-quality and get-to-able supply. Most purchasing decisions are made "by feel", that contradict to the theories of rational choice and theories using marketing concepts.*

*The article gives views on the factors and criteria that determine consumers behavior in online and offline trade.*

**Keywords:** Online trade, retail trade, purchasing behavior.

**JEL Classification:** D11, E21, P46.

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## 1. Introduction

The economic science has begun paying attention to the motives of consumer behavior at the end of the 19th century, when the utility approach of ordinal and cardinal concepts to the theory of consumer behavior had appeared. The opposite view to utility approach was given by A. Marshall who gave the main notice for the influence of market parameters, such as price and income, on the consumers' motives and reactions.

Special attention to the consumer behavior in Western countries was paid in the 50s of the 20th century, which was connected with the crisis and the economic recovery. Manufacturers began to wonder what "new consumer" guided by, which characteristics of the goods they paid attention to before they buy. The research of Galbraith has given the "consumer society" directions for a series of studies.

Issues of reasonable behavior were raised in a number of the institutionalists' researches, however, only a rational or emotional approach to human behavior was criticized. Smith's "homo economicus" was criticized as impossible. Manufacturers have been interested not only in the consumers motives, but in the reasons forming them, in the buying process. The earliest theories of customer behavior were developed by Engel *et al.* (1968), Howard and Sheth (2001), Howard and Sheth (2001) and Gnezdova *et al.* (2017)

The Engel-Kollat-Blackwell model is widely known all over the world and is considered as one of the most successful and completed of the theory of consumer behavior (Engel *et al.*, 1968; Dubovik *et al.*, 2017). It had given a broad view to consumer behavior while buying, including such variables as perception and learning, while it distinguishes strong and weak involvement in the buying process.

Previously, most theories of consumer behavior were reduced considering a person from the rational point of view, where the main goal was to maximize utility with the minimum cost. However, Adam Smith noted that the human behavior is determined not only by the material values, but also by the feelings and the emotions.

Belk (2001) proved that such situational variables as physical and social environment, the mood of a person, the time of making a purchase and the purpose of buying goods had significant influence on the consumer behavior.

Holbrook and Hirschman (2001) developed the concept of "information processing", according to which one should not be limited to consider unique purchases and consumption. They considered consumer behavior as the experiment, in which users of products found interest and expressed their feelings of joy and fun (Holbrook and Hirschman, 2001).

Bridges from the doctrines of psychology and sociology to economics began to appear at the end of the 20th century, when the behavioral economy was born. The movement for the cooperation between the economic theory and behavioral sciences was led by Katona (2001) who was the founder of such analytic approach as psychological economics.

Principles of reasonableness were first mentioned in the papers of J. Commons (Institutional Economics) in the early 20th century. The author introduced the concept of a "collective action society" based on the principles of reasonableness, having compared it with the societies of advanced countries of the 18th and 19th centuries. Commons (XXXX) saw the main basis of this principle as actions of a particular individual who would not contradict his nature and was accepted by all members of society.

## **2. Methods**

Methods of collecting and processing secondary information were used in the course of this study, such as grouping, generalization, classification, systematization and modeling. To collect information regarding the impact of visual merchandising tools on the buyer activity in the process of making a purchasing decision, questionnaires were developed to gather information. The data from the questionnaires allowed to identify the criteria that influenced the process of making a purchasing decision.

The research hypothesis has set various criteria to underlie the process of making a purchasing decision and buying behavior when choosing goods and services in offline and online trade. Criteria such as the atmosphere and merchandising technologies play a role for the online trade. However, in some situations, if a buyer faces a reasonable need to buy something, he will make this purchase regardless of all the experiential components. Information and communication technology, impact of experiential components and visual merchandising on consumer behavior are present in both channels. They are aimed at forming an emotional response and a purposeful increase in consumer activity, which is a consequence of the sales efficiency.

## **3. Results**

Most of the theories that were developed from the mid-50s of the XXth century explored the concept of the rational choice. Rational choice has been understood as the consumers' examination of all possible alternatives, when they know all their needs and correlate them with their financial opportunities. However, the rise of the institutional theory that criticizes such approach – a person is not able to make a completely rational choice, he is mostly guided by the routines, traditions and other behavioral patterns determined by society, family and other institutions – has determined new directions for the theory of consumer behavior. It is also noted that there is such concept as a reasonable choice, i.e. the one not contradicted with the

natural needs of a person. Times of economic recessions proved the desire of the consumers to save, and the era of globalization with involving of a wide choice of goods had made consumers choice competent and reasonable (Tcvetkova and Chkalova 2015; Salimova and Makolov 2016).

In the 70s of the XXth century, the importance of criteria for the choice of goods – such as price, quality, assortment range, appearance, trust in the brand and functional properties – are obvious. However, the influence of the service quality and culture, atmosphere of the store's shop floor (design of the shop floor, merchandising technologies, smells) on tarehe degree of completeness of the purchase are significant. The seller's smile and neat packaging often determine the consumer' choice. Theories of the experiential marketing and neuromarketing defined the role of visual merchandising as a technology that promoted efficient sales in retail trade. Visual merchandising, which is considered as technological process of optimization in trade through the design of the shop space and the goods' layout, is an experiential component of the integrated marketing communications' complex at the point of sale, which provides information to shoppers.

The development of ICT and STP provides the new ways of giving information about the goods to the consumer. The usual goods' layout in the store, which allows the consumer to independently assess the goods, is replaced by detailed description on the Internet page.

The online trade development leaves behind the development of offline trade, while the information space remains too congested. According to researches, the following factors determine the desire to purchase goods and services online, giving to the consumers freedom, speed, proximity, efficiency. At the same time, there are plenty of companies emphasizing for the X- and Y-generation segments. These categories of consumers are mobile and enterprising, for them it is important for the product to be socially approved and easy to buy. They are interested not only in the fact of purchase, but mostly in the process of making a choice, being inside a trading enterprise.

Many theories review the process of making a purchase and the buyers' motives. These include both theories of emotions and experimental experience. There is also an institutional approach to the consumer motives. In particular, a principle of reasonableness introduced by J. Commons allows to consider an individual as a participant in collective actions, and hence his/her needs and attitude towards utility are formed not by short-term motives, but rather by a complex of factors over a certain period of time. This understanding has determined a number of studies in economic disciplines, forcing companies with the importance of a set of factors that influence on consumers' needs, and as a consequence, their purchasing decision.

The theories of the emotional component in the consumers' behavior, which appeared in the early XXIst century, reviewed the visual component for buyers

coming to stores and described how the visual presentation of goods and the atmosphere associate with the increase of the sales. However, they never mentioned the Internet as a method of trade.

Experimental customer experience and behavior assessment were first considered by B. Schmitt in the book "Experiential Marketing. How to get Customers to Sense, Feel, Think, Act, and Relate to Your Company and Brands". The term comes from the word "*experientialism*" (from the Greek "experience"), which recognizes sense experience as a source of knowledge. The author introduces such a notion as "strategic experiential modules" (SEMs): sensations, feelings, thoughts, actions, relations that are the stages of decision-making process (Schmitt, 2001). Comparative characteristics of traditional and experiential marketing are provided in Table 1.

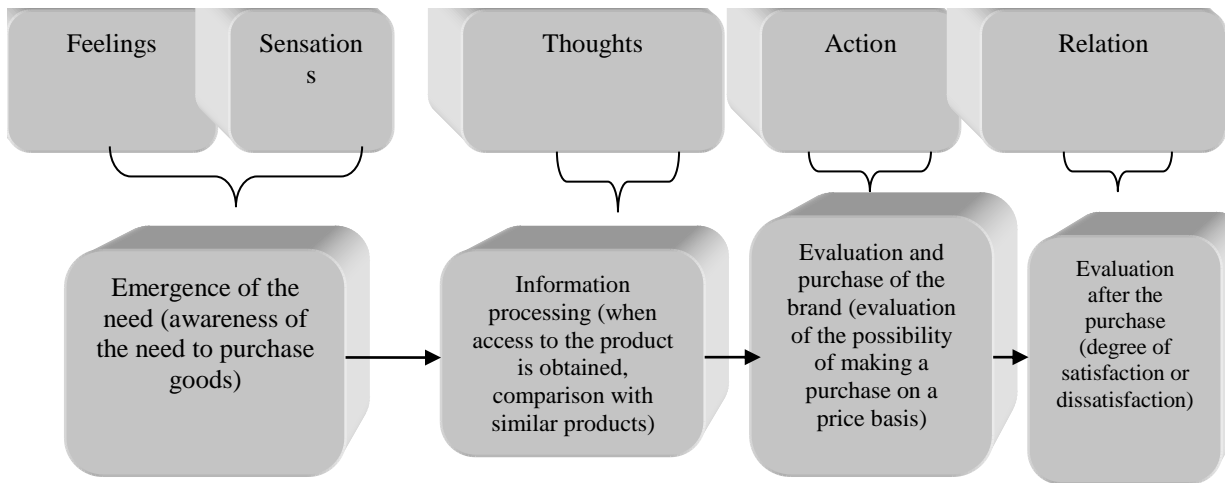
**Table 1.** Comparative characteristics of purchasing behavior from the positions of traditional and experiential marketing

<b>Characteristics of purchasing behavior from the position of traditional marketing</b>	<b>Characteristics of purchasing behavior from the position of experiential marketing</b>
Certain properties are important for buyers in the goods' selection	Buyers are looking for entertainment, incentives and good impressions from the shopping process.
Buyers measure functional properties in their comparative value.	Emotional experiences are more important during the process of choosing product
They choose a product with the maximum utility.	They choose a product that presented which is presented more expressively and emotionally.
The buyer is rational in the decision-making process when he chooses the goods.	The buyer is driven not only by rational motives, but also by the emotional one.
Research methods; qualitative and quantitative.	Analytical and quantitative research methods, as well as intuitive, visual, laboratory and field studies are used.
Operating with the categories and properties of the goods.	Determining which goods fit into the consumption situation, how packaging and advertising can induce the buyer to "experience" the product consumption.
Assigning the goods with a material status.	Assigning a "spiritual" status to the goods.

The process of making a purchasing decision traditionally includes the following stages: "appearing of a need – information processing – measuring and purchase of a brand – evaluation after the purchase." "Strategic experiential modules" or stages of making a purchasing decision in the experiential marketing theory are the same. Sensations are reflections of the features of objective reality through the sense organs of the person (buyer). Feelings are a kind of emotional experience, which is clearly object-focused. Information processing takes place through thoughts. Actions

are expressed in the evaluation and purchase of the goods in particular brand. Relation determines the correctness of the buyer's purchase. Stages of the process of making a purchasing decision in accordance with both models are presented in Figure 1.

**Figure 1.** Comparison of the stages of making the purchasing decision from the standpoint of traditional and experiential types of marketing



Arndt Traindl, the CEO of the Austrian company Retail Branding AG, having studied the whole range of people's experiences, notes that the layout of goods, the search for a way to turn the usual purchasing process into a more positive and pleasant could promote either efficient sales or the contrary the buyer's unwillingness to return. A. Traindl notes that the retail organizations needs to improve the quality of customer perception of goods, which guarantees success.

The buyer's positive attitude towards the goods, the store and the service mostly belongs to the emotional field. In other words, the desire to merchandize goods of high quality and their acceptance by buyers are defined not only by rational motives, but also by emotional ones. Today the situation in retail is described by the same type of product brands. Due to this, it is more difficult to sell and stimulate buying activity. In spite of the fact that the majority of retail organizations intensively implement loyalty programs and develop communication policy, for example, BTL technologies, social networks, their efficiency falls. The overload of information space and with the trade offers' leads to the reduction of the process of making a purchasing decision. Emotional states determine it in a particular situation. So, such paradigmatic directions as neuromarketing and experiential marketing are widely used in the formation of a communicative policy.

Daniel Kahneman, who studied decision-making in a situation of uncertainty, noted that human behavior might not correspond to economic forecasts, since the choice had been often based on emotional impulses. Together with Amos Tversky, they formulated a "theory of perspective," which helped explain why people often made different decisions in similar situations. Kahneman and Tversky argue that *a person selectively works with information, is influenced by the crowd, is inclined to exaggerate his/her own prognostic abilities, poorly understands the relationship between various phenomena*, and his/her preferences can be distorted by simply changing the form of the problem presentation, but not the problem itself. These studies influenced the theory of consumer choice and marketing (Deaton and Muellbauer, 1980).

The founder of IKEA, Ingvar Kamprad, was the first who arranged a commercial space in a light and spacious manner, offering ready-made solutions and ideas focused on a particular lifestyle (marketing of correlation). Layout and demonstration represented each product in a winning light, and the statement "people are attracted to the light" became the motto of designers and merchandisers all over the world. Now the largest trading companies use backlighting of particular goods, color lamps, "cozy" yellow light in the interiors of stores, imitation of "life" scenes. Each store aims to create a unique atmosphere, using designer items in the decor, large posters, photographs, backlit walls as showcases, volume layout and presentation of goods.

Studies on the relative efficiency of verbal and visual information prove the advantage of images over words. Therefore, retail organizations try to represent their concept visually. Moreover, meaningful and specific images are preferred over the abstract one. An experiment made by psychologists from the University of Newcastle showed curious results. The experimenters installed a table at their university, on which there were an electric kettle with boiling water, milk, a bank of instant coffee and a cup. Money for coffee had to be put in a special money box, and how much money the visitors leave (and whether they leave any at all) was a matter of their honesty. The scientists by rotation hung a poster with flowers and an image of an intently staring person in front of the table. After ten weeks, it was found that visitors paid for hot drinks 2.76 times more in the days when "eyes" hung in front of the table, than in others. Obviously, people subliminally behave more honestly when they are sure they are being watched. The man's glance was more efficient than the woman's one.

A qualitative interpretation of the analysis of values and lifestyle of various consumer groups was developed by the SRI Consulting Business Intelligence. It provides methods for analyzing personal values and the lifestyle of various representatives of the consumer market by dividing consumers into eight groups (VALS-value and lifestyle analyses). The approach to the consumer market segmentation was based on three basic assumptions:

- general segmentation is more efficient than product-based segmentation;
- demographic indicators by itself cannot serve as a basis for model segmentation;
- psychographic features are more significant tools than demographic ones, in reason that they allow to see key options that determine the consumer behavior.

At the same time, the growth rates demonstrated by e-commerce and hence the growing of the number of people shopping online require an approach not only for consumer segmentation, but also for the studying of consumer behavior.

Company GfK Rus explored the key trends of online and offline consumer behavior in Russia. It turned out that Russians spent almost 10% of their browsing time more than five hours a month on websites and apps dedicated to shopping. The leaders in online shopping are such apps as Avito, AliExpress, Yula, Yandex, Market and Ozon. Another scientific feature is noticeable growth of the e-commerce audience in Russia. In total, the e-commerce audience has grown from 24% in 2016 to 31% in 2017. According to GfK, today more than 23 mln people aged 16-55 shop online using mobile apps.

As stated in The Global Information Technology Report (2014), *“Today in the United States there are more than 120 million users, in Western Europe - over 50 million, in the Asia-Pacific region - 70 million, Eastern Europe - 12 million, while in Russia only 2 million, it is clear that significant investments are required, especially in the regions of Russia in order to provide the necessary opportunities for work on the Internet. And if today in Russia the Internet is used only by 1.5% of the population, and, for example, in the Nordic countries - 40% in the U.S. - about 30% in the UK - 15%, the investment capacity of the market is virtually limitless”*.

According to statistics, "online and offline" shopping more often happens with the same frequency, and the majority of the goods' categories that buyers purchase in stores inexorably decrease. For example, such categories of goods as tickets for cultural and entertaining events and organized trips are mostly being bought in online stores. Besides, another trend in recent years is the increasing of the mobile commerce. Due to the massive prevalence of smartphones, consumers prefer to browse and shop from mobile devices rather than from desktop ones. The share of such orders is predicted to grow every year. But computer and laptop still remain the main devices for online shopping. They are less portable, and therefore their share in the total volume of online orders is decreasing. It is noted that almost 80% of purchases from mobile devices were made via mobile apps. One can talk about the systemic formation of consumer loyalty not only to online trade as a form of sales, but also to certain mobile apps.

It is noted that only 21% of Russian families consider savings to be the main criterion for the making a purchase, which accounts 16% of the turnover in Russia. The work was carried out on the basis of the global GfK development, which was adapted for the Russian market. Experts have studied the real data on the already



made purchases, taking into account their frequency, the check amount, the shares of premium goods and the economy segment. They have studied statements of buyers about the convenience of shopping and atmosphere in stores. This resulted in eight conditional consumer segments with different consumer models. "Traditionalists" trust only their own experience when choosing goods and stores. They account for 13% in the country. 10% for each "business" and "routine". The previous usually visit hypermarkets once a week and make all the purchases in one place. At the same time, if the familiar product is out of stock, they will easily take a similar product of another brand.

The last one, mainly people of older age, who chose only the time-tested stores. "Focused" buyers are those who shop often and gradually – they account for 16%. 6% for each "shopping enthusiasts" – they go to the store during a family trip to a major shopping mall – and "comfort lovers" who choose a convenience store. About 18% of buyers are "enthusiasts" – those people for whom to get pleasure from shopping is the most urgent aspect. The last segment is the largest in terms of revenue. According to experts, this category of buyers is the most important and promising, because they are not limited in cash and is ready to expand their cart, have positive attitude to novelties and intensively trying them. The disadvantage of this category of buyers is that they easily switch from one brand to another.

The Internet influenced the purchase processes both by the development of ecommerce and by providing customers with an easy access to information about products. Therefore, apart from online purchases one should also take into consideration the ROPO effect (i.e. Research Online Purchase Offline) (Wójcik and Doligalski, 2011).

According to statistics, "online and offline" shopping increasingly occurs with the same frequency and buyers shop fewer product categories in stores. The purchasing decision for Russian consumers (especially for such categories of goods as clothing and accessories – 41%, electronics – 44%) is more often influenced by the detailed information and demonstration of the goods, i.e. website of the store. Both shopping channels – online and offline – are interdependent: a consumer can first search for information about an interesting product online and then purchase it in the store, or can visually and tactually try it and then make an online order in reason to possibly save money and time.

The e-commerce audience has grown significantly in Russia in 2017; from 25% in 2016 to 30% in 2017. The dynamics of FMCG online commerce is already ahead of the offline stores and, according to AC Nielsen, the gap will widen in the next five years. While the average annual dynamics of FMCG global retail sales is +4%, the projected growth in online sales is 20% (\$2.1 trln by 2020). According to GfK, more than 24 mln people aged 16-55 shop online today. Time resource is considered by the people as one of the most urgent. E-commerce allows to overcome long geographic distances and cut corners.

It is necessary to focus efforts on four main components to develop online trading:

1. *Understanding local features:* Unlike the e-commerce market in general, online trade in FMCG is less influenced by the penetration of smartphones among consumers: this factor accounts for 70% of fluctuation in the former case and 40% in the latter. The parameters of logistic accessibility, ease of shopping and cultural predisposition to trust the channel and buy food online are more important for FMCG online trade.

2. *Flexibility:* The fight against barriers to online shopping should continue. Convenience is the main reason why online trade will develop. Conquest of the food basket. The category of food is often not represented online. However, as soon as the retailer switches the buyer to shopping FMCG on its website and provides high-quality products and services, the buyer remains with him for a long time. According to statistic, on average 35% of buyers today in the world bought a body care product, 18% bought cleaning agents, 14% bought juvenile products, 13% bought pets supplies online at least once in the last six months. Interest in buying fresh categories is still low, but inspires optimism.

3. *Special attitude to consumers:* Convenience, fair price and quality, assortment range and positive consumer experience are the four key factors that influence on the decision to purchase online.

4. *The Internet as a method of trade has a number of drawbacks:* First, the non-verbal reaction of buyers cannot be estimated. When the seller sees the immediate discontent of the visitor, he can fix the situation by offering an alternative option. The screen of a laptop or tablet cannot do the same. Secondly, being in the society and the opportunity to compare yourself with other people allows to make a choice based on the "outside" clue. Thirdly, tactile sensations play an important role in the choice of goods. Consumers want to take a look at and study the goods before buying. This is especially true of food and clothing. The freshness and quality of the essential goods can only be supplied in offline format. Despite the study of visual, auditory and olfactory communication channels, the tactile channel leaves the freedom for definition.

For the competitive presentation of goods in the store, the main criteria that the buyer use when choosing a product must be identified. The authors have developed a method of presenting the product, taking into account the criteria of consumption view, which allows to calculate the influence of rational and emotional parameters on the buyer behavior, their transformation into purchasing activity and, ultimately, on the increase of the economic efficiency of the retailer.

To determine the importance of each criteria the buyers are guided by when choosing goods and to find the average estimate of each criterion, authors suggested a method consisting of several stages. It can be used for various product groups in case of identifying rational and emotional criteria that correspond to a particular product group.

**Stage 1.** Determination of the criteria for the consumers' evaluation of a product group related to the rational and emotional aspects of consumers' behavior. As the goods have different degrees of emotional perception and are guided for satisfying different needs, the criteria for their selection will be different. What is important for the buyer when choosing business clothing will be secondary for home ones, etc. The subjective aspect at this stage is the criteria assignment to rational or emotional directions, as often they are interrelated or the buyer may not know about the role of emotions. It is proposed to use the table for clarity and speed of presentation, where the criteria for the consumer appraisal of the product (specific for the given group) are listed in the first column, and use the second graph to determine the direction – rational or emotional.

**Stage 2.** Describe up a matrix "buyers – criteria", in which scores are given on a 10-point scale, assigned to each evaluation criterion by the buyer (Table 2). It is required for further calculations of the average arithmetic weighted value. At the same time, it is desirable to avoid "zero" estimate, since the most significant ones are put in the list of criteria, and neglecting any of the criteria may result in an error. It is proposed to take one as the lowest threshold.

**Table 2.** Evaluation of the importance criteria by buyers (by the example of confectionery)

Criteria	Estimate
Flavor of the product	
Calorie	
Health measure	
Appearance, packaging	
Price	
Fame of the manufacturer and its trade mark	
Getting pleasure, enjoying the novelty of buying	
Availability and completeness of the regulatory information data	
Advertising and product positioning	
Opportunity to participate in the promotion, win a prize	

**Stage 3.** Calculation of the average score using the sum of points assigned by all buyers to each criterion. It is recommended to carry out calculations by indicators of descriptive statistics – in particular, weighted arithmetic average.

It is proposed to use the table for calculations in case of necessity to determine the indicators for a particular group of buyers on a specific basis. It includes calculations of the total weighted arithmetic average and average values for specific groups (for example, groups separated by sex, age, social affiliation). In this way, it will be clearer which specific criteria are the most important for which group of buyers.

It is better to carry out segmentation of buyers based on a combination of several characteristics. For more emotionally colored goods and impulse demand goods, it is

advisable to use such factors as behavioral (in particular, search for benefits, attitude to the product) and sociodemographic (sex, age, occupation, etc.). In this way, they will reflect the features of the social and psychological aspects of the product choice.

#### **4. Discussion**

The development and implementation of visual merchandising technologies should account for the key criteria and elements of the process of making a purchasing decision based on the model of interaction between traditional and experiential marketing. A specific list of elements, criteria and means is highlighted to implement each recommendation. For example, the following visual merchandising technologies are offered for most food products with a pronounced emotional context.

Therefore, a scheme of interaction between traditional and experiential approaches to the process of making a purchasing decision for online and offline trade is offered (Figure 2). A consumer style-focused approach (based on customer segmentation by a psychographic feature) was developed by F. Reynolds and W. Darden. The concept was built on a survey of 101,259 respondents aged 10 and older in 60 cities of Russia (with a population of 100 thousand inhabitants or more). 258 utterances describing the purchasing behavior, attitudes towards oneself, others, work and home, advertising and media, about the frequency of attending various cultural and entertainment activities, about sports, hobbies, consumption of goods and services, reading and viewing preferences, were evaluated on the Likert scale.

A vast experiential base allowed to identify 8 non-overlapping groups of respondents that significantly differed from each other in a lifestyle, consumer behavior and choice of consumed brands, consumption motives, leisure activities and information preferences. The RuLS methodological basis of the typology was the adaptation of well-known psychographic models to the Russian conditions: VALS, VALS-2 (SRIInternational, A. Mitchell, 1983), LOV (University of Michigan, L. Kale, 1984), RISK, Schwartz.

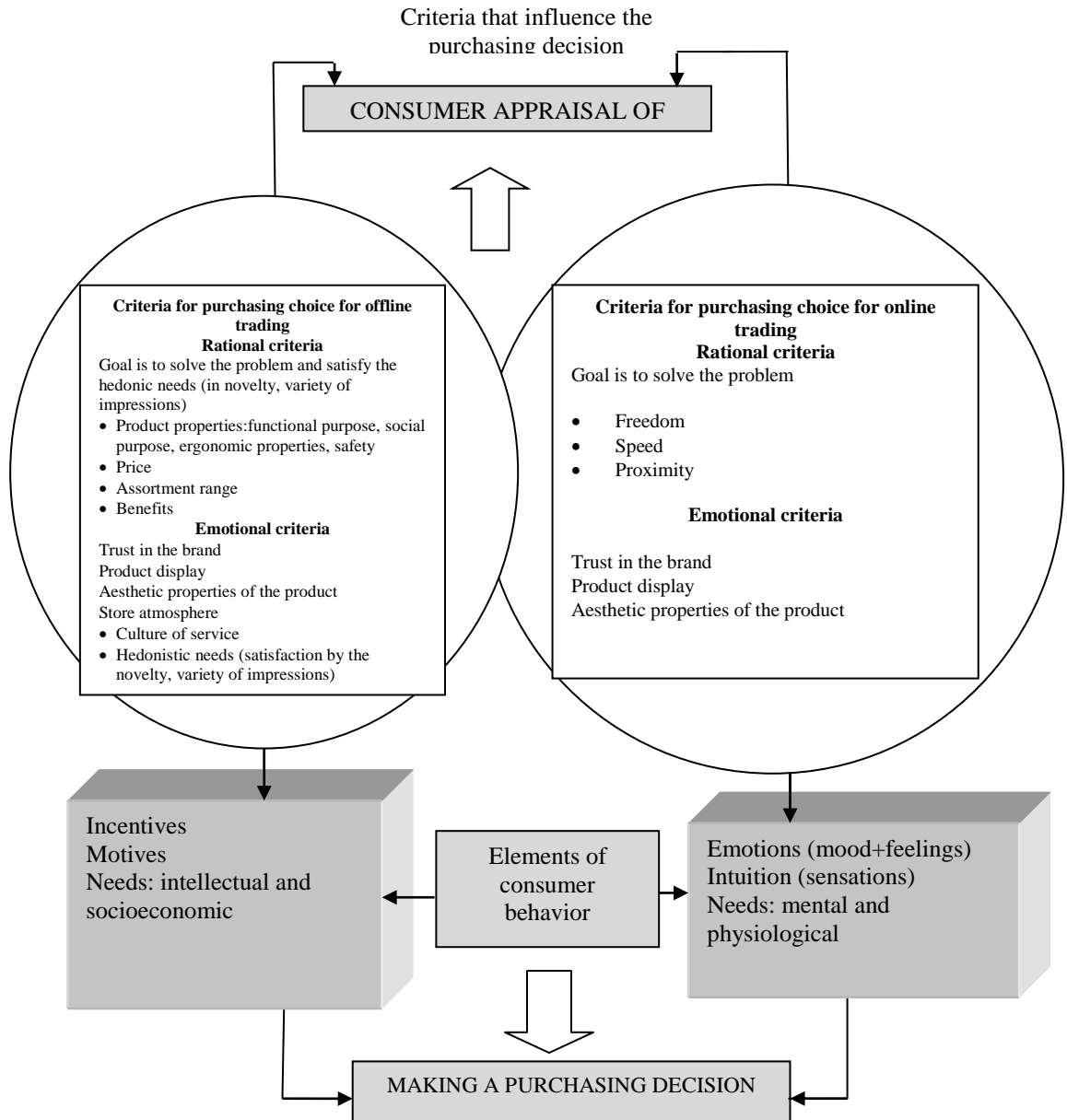
The scheme of interaction between traditional and experiential marketing underlies the presentation of elements of the consumer behavior modeling. Elements of the purchasing behavior modeling are presented in Figure 3.

#### **5. Conclusion**

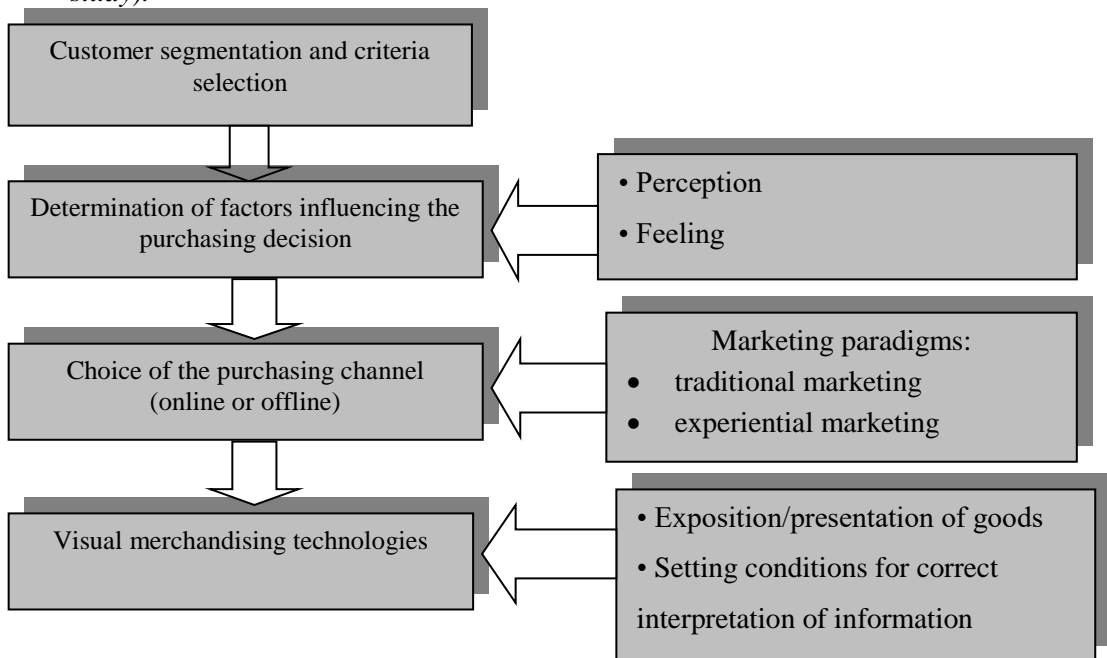
The characteristic features of the market development and consumer demand reviewed in the article are important when trading enterprises perform such important functions as planning, organization and coordination. Given dynamic macrofactors, their changes must be accurately followed. In this case, the methods of research can be both quantitative and qualitative. Economic and mathematical methods that allow to implement the forecast, are an efficient tool for optimizing the

work of the company's resources. However, intuitive and experiential methods that allow to see the moods and changes in consumer behavior are also important.

**Figure 2.** Scheme of interaction between traditional and experiential types of marketing influencing the process of making a purchasing decision



**Figure 3.** Elements of the purchasing behavior modeling (results of the authors' study).



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