

## CORRELATION BETWEEN HUMAN NEEDS SYSTEM - PERSONALITY - HUMAN MOTIVATION

Mirela MINICA

Eftimie Murgu University of Reșița, Romania

[m.minica@uem.ro](mailto:m.minica@uem.ro)

### Abstract

*The article highlights the main attributes of an economic approach of needs and preferences, with detailed focus on the correlation between meta-needs and personality, by correlating the principle of hierarchy established by Maslow with the balance theory.*

*Adopting an integrated system of human capital motivation, which takes into account the complex aspects involved in the knowledge society, represents a managerial requirement for any organisation.*

**Key words:** *human needs, preferences, meta-needs, personality, human capital.*

**JEL Classification:** *D01, M54*

### I. INTRODUCTION

In the study of human needs one usually starts from the current level of conceptualisation from the economic theory which cumulates the outcomes of the research endeavours so far.

The human resource in its educated and professionally trained form, the human capital, is motivated by the necessity of satisfying their needs, to execute a useful economic activity, whose results be represented by the production of goods and services, and at the same time human spiritual development and evolution.

The theories of human motivation, in direct connection with the system of needs, were divided into:

- *Content theories* – they attempt to identify and highlight *WHAT* motivates people and *WHY* they behave in a certain manner. The motivation would consequently be the force resulting from the individuals' desire to satisfy their physical and psychic needs. Among these theories we may include Maslow's model of needs hierarchy, Alderfer's ERD model, McClelland's theory of achievement motivation;
- *Process theories* – they try to answer the question „*HOW* does motivation appear?”. We include here Vroom's expectations model and the theory of equity forwarded by Adams (Bogathy, 2004) .

### II. ECONOMIC APPROACH OF HUMAN NEEDS

**Social needs** represent the set of requirements or needs for productive and non-productive consumption of economic units, institutions and population, regarded at the scale of the entire society. (Minică, 2005: 18)

The needs are characterised by a *marked dynamism*, permanently situated a step ahead the economy's capacity to satisfy them. They are characterised by unlimited extension; their expansion and diversification takes place under the influence of scientific and technical progress and of the degree of knowledge and civilisation among society's members. They also have an *objective character*, historically determined, the causes of their apparition, formation and development lying in the conditions of material and spiritual life of man and society, in its production and reproduction. (Florescu, 1992: 146-166).

Human needs are *elastic*. The degree of elasticity is however not the same for all the needs and is not constant in time for the same need, the stringency with which it manifests itself decrease as it gets satisfied..

Another important feature of these needs is *reproducibility*: the satisfaction of one gives birth to other and other categories of needs, ensuring thus the unlimited manifestation of the development process.

The knowledge of these main traits of needs allows a better understanding of the mechanisms of formation and transformation they undergo during the process of manifestation on the market under the form of demand for merchandise.

For the economic activity it is important to know certain aspects related to consumption needs, such as: structure, hierarchy and domains of needs, relations between different categories of needs, between these and consumption.

The sphere of needs is wide and heterogeneous in content, comprising not only material, financial or labour force needs of production, but also the material and spiritual needs of each individual, the latter, when

they have a correspondent for their satisfaction in material goods and services, constitute the category of consumption needs. They may be classified, in their turn, into individual specific needs, characterising the needs of each person taken separately, regarded as unit-entity of society (for instance: the needs for food, clothes, training) and social specific needs, referring to the necessities of certain social groups, whose size depends on the degree of society's organisation (for example: the need for defending the country's sovereignty and independence, for environment protection, for social protection). (Dubois , Jolibert , 1992: 54-58)

Everybody agrees that the economic approach assumes the maximising behaviour in a more explicit and extensive manner than other ways of approach, if we speak either of the maximisation of utilities or good functioning of a family, firm, unions or governmental offices. Moreover, the economic approach supposes the existence of the market, which, by diverse degrees of efficiency, coordinates the actions of different participants – individuals, firms and even nations, - so that their behaviour becomes mutually comparable. As economists in general have had few contributions, especially in the last period, to the comprehension of the way in which preferences are formed, and start from the hypothesis that preferences do not change substantially in time, and they are not much different either among the rich compared to the poor, or even among persons from different societies and cultures.

The prices and other market instruments distribute the insufficient resources within a society and in this manner limit the requests of participants and coordinate their action. In the economic approach, these market tools fulfil most, if not all the functions assigned to the structure in sociologic theories (Tănase, 2009:29).

**Preferences**, supposed to be stable, do not refer to the market goods and services such as oranges, cars or medical care, but to the objects at the basis of the goods that are produced by each family by using goods and services from the market, their own time and so on.

These basic preferences are defined beyond the fundamental aspects of life, such as health, prestige, pleasure, kindness or envy, which are not always in a stable relation with the market goods and services. The hypothesis of the existence of stable preferences supply a solid base for the generation of predictions related to the responses to divers changes, and prevent the analyst from becoming the prey of the temptation to merely postulate the preferences changes necessary to „explain” all the apparent contradictions from their predictions (Plăieş, 1997: 39-45).

Education is said to trigger rather the change of preferences for diverse goods and services, political candidates or family size than the real income or relative cost of one choice or another (Kotler, 2000: 234-273).

Businessmen speak about social responsibilities resulting from business rather because their attitudes are influenced by public debates on this mater than because such a discourse is necessary to maximise their profits, given the climate of public intervention. Or advertisers are blamed they take advantage of the fragility of consumers' preference, and there is little explanation why, for instance, advertising is less interesting in some industries compared to others, changes the importance of a given industry in time and is encountered both in competition industries and in monopolist ones. How preferences have become what they are , and their probable evolution in time are obviously relevant questions for understanding behaviour and forwarding predictions about it (Lewin, 1935).

The value of other social sciences is not diminished by an enthusiast and total acceptance of economic approach either. It was found that human behaviour is not divided into compartments, sometimes based on maximising, other times not, sometimes motivated by stable preferences, other times by changing ones, sometimes leading to an optimum accumulation of information, other times not. The entire human behaviour may rather be regarded as a series of participants maximising their utility starting from a stable set of references and accumulating an optimum amount of information and other entries onto a variety of markets (Becker, 1996:5-15).

If this argument is correct, the economic approach provides a unitary frame for the understanding of behaviour, which was extensively researched and described by Bentham, Comte, Marx and others.

Clearly, the economic approach is not limited only to material assets and demands nor to the market sector. Prices, either expressed in monetary terms in the market sector, or as „shadow prices in the sector outside the market, measure the favourable cost for the user of rare resources, and the economic mode of approach provides the same type of response to shadow prices, like the prices from the market sector. If we were to consider for instance a person whose single insufficient resource is the *limited time* at his disposal, this time is used to produce different goods included into its preference function, the purpose being the maximisation of utility. Even in the absence of a market sector, either directly, or indirectly, each asset has a relevant marginal „shadow” price, more precisely the time necessary to produce part of that asset; at balance, the ratio of these prices must be equal with the ratio of marginal utilities (Becker, 1997:15-17).

The most important is the fact that a growth of the relative price of any asset is an increase of the time necessary for the production of a unit of that asset – it will tend to reduce the size of the consumption of that asset.

The economic approach does not start from the assumption that all participants on any market have obligatorily complete information, or that they are involved in advantageous business. The incomplete

information or disadvantageous information should not be mistaken for an irrational or volatile behaviour. The economic approach developed a theory of optimum or rational accumulation of costly information which implies, for example, that when making major decisions one makes a larger investment in information, compared to the case of making minor decisions.

The hypothesis that information is often very incomplete because obtaining it is expensive is used in the economic approach to explain the same type of behaviour that in other debates is codified as irrational behaviour or „non-rational” behaviour.

Consumers can be distinguished from one another depending on the product’s attributes they consider the most relevant or attractive. They will grant the highest attention to the attributes offering the expected advantages. The market of a product may thus be segmented also depending on the attractiveness that different categories of consumers manifest for the product attributes (Bretcu, 2013:42). Nevertheless it is possible that the most relevant attributes might not be also the most important ones.

### III. META-NEEDS AND PERSONALITY

All people are born with physiological needs, which remain along the entire life in a dynamics specific to each human need – the need for food, for instance, appears since the first day of life, being dominant at the beginning and decreasing in intensity in the crepuscule of individual existence.

The need for others’ appreciation, for social esteem, is evident in adolescence and remain high until the end of life. The emergence of high-level needs (for affiliation, social appreciation, self-actualization) accompanies individuals’ psychic development. Not all people however succeed in forming “peak needs” such as self-actualization (Maslow, 1957).

This level of needs was reached by Abraham Lincoln, Thomas Jefferson, Albert Einstein, Albert Schweitzer or B. Spinoza. In our country, Constantin Brâncoveanu, Mihai Eminescu, Nicolae Iorga, or Constantin Brâncuși illustrated the level of meta-needs toward which man can rise. The characteristics of such personalities were revealed by Abraham Maslow as follows: „the few who reach the self-actualization level have a clear and efficient perception of reality. They see beyond the world’s affiliations and distance themselves from the common sense, which remains opaque to the mystery of the world. Those with actualization needs accept themselves and live in harmony with the others and with nature. They manifest themselves spontaneously, with simplicity and naturalness. They do not wear a social mask, they are true to themselves in all circumstances of life. What is dominant for them is the belief that they have a mission to fulfil. They no longer belong to themselves, but to the ideal they serve. As personalities, they manifest themselves in an autonomous and independent way. Their will propels them beyond the daily scene. They live, although not all, a mystic experience, they identify themselves with mankind in its entirety, they do not remain the prisoners of the group, of the small circle of interpersonal relations. The selectivity of interpersonal relations rather than popularity characterises them structurally, their personality is profoundly democratic, focused on an exemplary morality. They are highly-creative personalities that are culturally and spatially transcendent, and rise towards universality” (Grubb, Gratwohl, 1967: 22-27).

The psychological portrait of the persons dominated by meta-needs acquires an unmistakable relief by its shadows or imperfections, if not defects, marking the exceptional lives.

**The meta-need** „is the general satisfaction obtained by an individual from the combination of absolute utility and relative utility. By absolute utility we understand the satisfaction generated by absolute positions, and by relative utility the satisfaction generated by the relative positions”(Fudulu, 1997:9-10).

Without oxygen and proteins, without water and vitamins, no one reaches cognitive, ethic and aesthetic needs. Human dignity is given by meta-needs; only man rises to the level of certain needs that are not necessary to survival. The impossibility to satisfy meta-needs does not endanger life, as it happens in the case of the failure to meet the deficit needs.

The relation between specific needs, development and self-actualization is not confined to the relations of staking and de-phasing of their occurrence. Surely, only after the meeting of basic needs we may raise the question of meta-needs. Obviously, the self-actualization need appears only in time.

Meta-needs are founded on the satisfaction of physical needs, but at the same time they support their exceeding. A philosophic vision on life helps the psychic balance and this contributes to the health condition, the prolongation of life.

In its first version (that of 1943) **Maslow’s pyramid** had five steps starting from the most pressing needs and ending by the less pressing ones.

Needs are, in the sequence of their importance: physiologic needs, needs for safety, social needs, needs for respect and actualization. A person will attempt to get his or her most important needs satisfied first. Once an important need is satisfied, it ceases to be a motivation factor, and the respective person will attempt to meet his or her next need in the order of importance. For instance, a hungry man (need number 1) will not be interested in the recent artistic life events (need number 5) and the way in which he is seen by the others, nor the respect he is

granted (needs number 3 and 4), not even will he be interested if the air he breathes is polluted (need number 2). But as each important need is satisfied, the next need in the order of importance will come to the front plane for him.

The pyramid of needs represents a whole, a unitary structure. There is no life outside it. The satisfaction of high-level needs is productive not only biologically, but also psychologically. The fullness of psychic life cannot be reached only by fulfilling the physiologic needs; social conditions are necessary for the emergence of meta-needs. The freedom of expression, the culture of democracy as total social fact facilitates the self-actualization.

However, the principle of hierarchy established by Maslow was contested, for example, by the psychologists from the balance theory. It appeared in numerous forms in the theory of individual consumer behaviour (Becker, 1997: 134-135).

Man is in search of harmony, of a certain level of stability we call homeostasis. He tends to avoid brutal changes which trigger a misbalance, a rupture in his beliefs. He is thus in search of an equilibrium, of a balance. Nevertheless, under the empire of instincts, he is in contact with the environment, which is a powerful source of misbalance. In order to reach balance again, man can either change his perception on reality, or reject the information of the environment that are in rupture with his mental structures (Cătoiu, Teodorescu: 1997: 52-70).

This **balance theory** is encountered in different forms (Dubois, Jolibert, 1992: 61-35):

**1. The theory of psychological field** of K. Lewin considers that „the behaviour is a function of the psychological field of the individual in the situation when this behaviour occurs. The diverse beliefs, sentiments and external elements due to the environment, at the place and time of the behaviour, are translated under the form of favourable forces (positive valences) or unfavourable forces (negative valences). The individual decides thus in the favour of forces that defeats him. This theory integrates thus, in defining motivations, the present situation and not the single influence of the past” (Lewin, 1935).

**2. The theory of congruence** (Osgood, 1955:2) postulates „that the individual is in search of a unity, of a concordance between the information perceived; consequently, he will tend to deform, to avoid or to reject the discordant item of information in order to preserve the balance attained”.

**3. In marketing, the balance theory is especially known under the form of the cognitive dissonance theory** forwarded by L. Festinger. „When a person is determined to have behaviour non-conform to his opinions and attitudes, he is in a state of cognitive dissonance; the reduction of this dissonance is expected to engage the individual’s motivation, in search of solving the tension originated from this state. Thus, the individual transforms his opinion and attitudes and justifies his behaviour (convincing himself for instance that he made a good purchase, an *a posteriori* reasoning). Somehow, behaviour creates the attitude and is at the profound origin of „motivation”, which is the reverse of the hypotheses of previous theories” (Festinger, 1957).

Equally important are also the theory of self-concept and the theory of attribution that come to complete the balance theory.

Thus, **the theory of self-concept** postulates that the individual acts depending on the idea he has about himself. This idea develops in each individual starting from the contacts with his environment and comprising: the real self (what is real); the self-image (what I think I am); the ideal self (what I aspire to be); the self-reflection (what I think I am through the eyes of the others).

For example, the individual buys goods depending on the conception he himself has and rejects those which do not correspond to it.

**The theory of attribution** considers that the individuals’ attitude comes from the observation of the act; when we want to know what a person feels, we watch what that person does. He runs, hence he is afraid; he laughs, thus he is happy; he cries, so he is sad or in pain. In the capacity of observer, we use the information supplied by the behaviour of this person and by the social or psychic circumstance where his behaviour is manifested.

In the theory of attribution, the subjects conclude their attitudes starting from the observation of acts and the conditions of their achievement. This theory revisits certain classic bases of the purchasing process is the very idea of the recognition of the problem which is contested here, because the „problem” (tension) is not necessarily at the origin of the behaviour which is here the basis of explanation and which determines the attitude (reverse process).

The hierarchy of needs, as elaborated by Maslow, relies on a general affirmation related to the behaviour on the macro level – that in order to comprehend the individuals’ behaviour, we need a classification scheme more comprehensive than that furnished by the concept of **personality**.

Thus, Ernest Hilgard in 1967 in his work „*Introduction to Psychology*” defines personality as „The manner of configuration of individual traits and behaviour patterns which determine the adaptation of an individual to his environment” (Hilgard, 1967). This definition reflects the concept of personality as a logic, consistent model of the response. Due to this absolute consistency in the pattern behaviour of an individual it is possible to describe dominant features and elaborate a classification scheme of the „types” of personality. In its

turn, this classification constitutes a valuable material for vendors, as it allows them to use personality as factor for the development of marketing strategies and the afferent marketing mixes.

Nevertheless, if we have to use personality as foundation in the attempt to analyse human behaviour, it means we have to reach consensus on the variables that have to be assessed and the manner of evaluating them, for the purpose of individuals' classification.

Although we claimed above that personality constitutes a valuable material for the marketing practitioners, we must admit that the evidence supplied by the analysis of the relation between personality variables and consumer behaviour come in mutual conflict. However, 30 years after Ernest's study, we may adopt a more balanced opinion on personality variables, as prognosis factors of specific behaviour, such as the choice of brand, and one admits that it is only one of the major influences exercised on consumers' decision-making process. Engel, Blackwelle and Miniard consider that „it is improbable that personality proves to be a useful variable for segmentation, as a homogenous personality does not necessarily imply homogeneity in other aspects.”(Engel, Kollat, Blakwelle, 1968: 252).

Most information media and distribution channels of marketing tend to make appeal to other forms of homogeneity. Nevertheless, Engel and his collaborates indicate certain areas where the theory of personality has the power of prediction among marketing applications, especially as moderating variable (in other words, when a personal feature may help explaining the differences of behaviour within certain groups that are homogenous in other respects), or as variable intervening when primary segmentation is based on objective factors, such as the demographic ones, the difference within the group may be best explained in terms of motivations. However, Engel and his collaborators also showed that the study of personality „stimulated the development of more comprehensive behavioural concepts which will probably constitute better target objectives for the market segmentation, more precisely „lifestyles”.

In some situations, the individual attributes or traits may prove sufficient, but in other cases a more general definition of personality could prove useful: Sperling (in Psychology) offers a list of twelve primary dimensions of personality, based on the vast evaluation of some very loosely interconnected features, but whose defining characteristics are very closely interlaced (Sperling, Doshier, 1968: 252).

**The primary dimensions of personality are:**

1. Indolent, generous, benevolent, warm, in opposition with the cold and inflexible individual;
2. Independent, intelligent, reliable, in opposition with the hasty, frivolous, reckless individual;
3. Emotionally stable, realistic, steady, in opposition with the emotionally unstable, evasive, neurotic individual;
4. Dominant, ruling, self-confident, in opposition with the modest, humble, self-despising individual;
5. Friendly, calm, sociable, talkative, in opposition with the agitated, depressive, solitary, melancholic individual;
6. Sensitive, understanding, tender, in opposition with the open and stubborn, balanced, unemotional individual;
7. Educated and smart in opposition with the rude and ignorant individual;
8. Scrupulous, diligent, responsible in opposition with the emotionally dependent, impulsive, irresponsible individual;
9. Adventurous, careless, in opposition with the prudent, inhibited, reserved withdrawn individual;
10. Energetic, persistent, rapid, strong, in opposition with the dreamy, languorous, negligent, overwhelmed individual;
11. Calm and tolerant, in opposition with the nervous, tense, irritable individual;
12. Friendly and confident, in opposition with the suspicious and hostile individual.

#### IV. CONCLUSIONS

The system of human needs, grace to its complexity and continual dynamism, has generated, from the perspective of economic approach, a multitude of opinions complementary with the psychological approach of labour and organisations.

Each person, depending on his or her specific needs and necessities, and the national and organisational context where they carry on their activity, has aspirations and a set of motivational expectations (Andreş, 2012:111).

The comparison of own performances with the performances of the others is an action taking place in all domains of life, but especially in organisational life. From the latter's point of view, people use as comparison criteria the efforts at the place of work and the rewards. If compared to others they sense that the ratio between the own endeavour and rewards and those of others is balanced, then equity is reached, whereas the perception of inequality leads to the apparition of the inequality sentiment.

The use of rewards in the organisational environment as modality to enhance employees' motivation and performance is a topic having generated much controversy. On the other hand, some theories claim that rewards are efficient for mobilising people to perform an activity, but immediately after they are no longer available, the motivation of person to get engaged in that activity could be very low. On the other hand, some

researchers claim that in fact the negative effects of rewards are limited and they may be used to increase motivation and performance.

The perception of inequity in the disfavour of one's own person leads to the adoption of certain behaviour patterns, directed toward the re-establishment of equity. The persons may reduce the input (less effort, less worked hours, absenteeism) or attempt to amplify the output (ask for a raise, improvement of labour conditions or status – all these without making more effort). The employees may resort to the cognitive distortion of efforts and rewards (*sour grapes effect*) or simply give up making these comparisons, and ask for a transfer within the organisation or resign.

Recent researches (Cameron, Galloway, 2005:181-192) have focused on the identification of the factors moderating the effect of rewards, concluding that there are some situations when they may be used to maintain or enhance intrinsic motivation. They are efficient in the tasks that initially enjoy low interest; in those accompanied by a high interest, the positive effect of rewards is reached when the participants are verbally appreciated for their work, when rewards signify the degree of competence in that activity or when they are offered for the reaching of high performance standards.

Managers should embrace the evaluation needs assessment of employees, who should be offered motivational packages. Stereotype solutions based on the needs of the „typical employee” will lead to the drop of effectiveness of the chosen motivational strategies.

„Opening a typology of evaluation under the new economic/social paradigm expresses, on a social level, the existence of methodological strategies meant to effectively materialise the reorganization and restructuring endeavour of specific competencies. Under these circumstances, the issue of certain educational standards is significant at this level of organization, and the epistemic modality of comprehension consists precisely in the very form of education manifestation” (Eși, Nedelea, 2014: 75).

## V. REFERENCES

- Andreș, S., (2012) *Management. Sinteză, teste, îndrumări*, Editura Eftimie Murgu, Reșița, p.111
- Baker, M., (1997) *Marketing*, Editura Știință și Tehnică, București, p. 134-135
- Becker, G.S., (1997) *Comportamentul uman. O abordare economică*, Editura All, București, p. 5-15
- Becker, G.S., (1996) *Capitalul uman*, Editura All, București, p. 15-17
- Bogathy, Z., (2004) *Manual de psihologia muncii și organizației*, Editura Polirom, Iași
- Bretcu, A., (2013) *Marketing ethics and post-modern era*, Analele Universitatii Eftimie Murgu Resita. Fascicola II. Studii Economice, p. 42
- Cameron, D. D. and Galloway, A., (2005) *Consumer motivations and concerns in online auctions: an exploratory study*, International Journal of Consumer Studies, Volume 29, Issue 3, p. 181–192
- Cătoi, I., Teodorescu, N., (1997) *Comportamentul consumatorului: teorie și practică*, Editura Economică, p. 52-70
- Dubois, P., Jolibert, A., (1992) *Marketing, teorie și practică*, vol. 1, Editura Economică, p. 54-58
- Engel, J.E, Kollat, D.T., Blakwelle, R.D., (1968) *Consumer Behavior*, New York, p. 252
- Eși, M., Nedelea, A.-M., (2014) *Mission of business organisations and the social-economic entrepreneurship*, Ecoforum, vol.3, issue 1(4), p. 75
- Festinger, L., (1957) *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance*, Stanford University Press, California
- Florescu, C. ș.a., (1992) *Marketing*, Editura Marketer, p. 146-166
- Fudulu, P., (1997) *Microeconomie: Postinițial și Master*, Editura Hiroyuke, p. 9-10
- Grubb, E.E., Gratwolv H., (1967) *Consumer Self Concept. Symbolism and Market Behavior*, Journal of Marketing, vol.31, p. 22-27
- Hilgard, E., (1967) *Introduction to Psychology*, New York
- Kaufman, & J. Thomas (Eds.), (1986) *Handbook of perception and human performance: Vol. 1. Sensory processes and perception*. New York: Wiley, p. 2-1 to 2-65.
- Kotler, Ph., (2000) *Managementul marketingului*, Editura Teora, București, p. 234-273
- Kotler, Ph., (1998) *Principiile Marketingului*, Editura Teora, p. 337-387
- Plăieș, I., (1997) *Comportamentul consumatorului*, Editura Intercredo Deva, p. 39-45
- Lewin, K., (1935) *A dynamic theorie of Personality*, Ed. CcGrow-Hill, New York
- Maslow, A.H., (1957) *Motivation and Personality*, New York
- Minică, M., (2005) *Microeconomie. Piața și sistemul de piețe*, Editura Mirton, Timișoara, p. 18
- Osgood, C.E., (1955) *The Principle of cognnity in the Prediction of attitude change*, Psychological Review, Vol 62(1), p. 42
- Sperling, G., & Doshier, B. A. (1967) - *Strategy and optimization in human information processing*. In Grubb, L. Gratwolv, H.L., „Consumer Self Concept. Symbolism and Market Behavior”, Journal of Marketing, vol.3, nr.4, p. 22-27
- Tănase, A., (2009) *Implicațiile prețurilor și veniturilor asupra consumului*, Editura Mirton, Timișoara, p. 29