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## On the ways of product quality fixation from the perspective of consumption psychology theory

### О СПОСОБАХ ФИКСАЦИИ КАЧЕСТВА ПРОДУКЦИИ СКВОЗЬ ПРИЗМУ ТЕОРИИ ПСИХОЛОГИИ ПОТРЕБЛЕНИЯ

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#### Abstract

The notions of product quality fixation ways are characterized in the given paper. It also contains opinions of different authors on the consumption psychology characteristics and specifies the importance of personal features of consumers and peculiarities of marketing communications for study. The article gives the notion of marketing communications and substantiates that quality management systems (QMS) are marketing communications. It also demonstrates that ISO standards in the sphere of quality management are aimed at developing effective models of business communications.

The author of the paper focuses on the fact that certificates and standards lose importance, to some extent, due to the invention and development of “bypasses” for standardization and certification of both the products themselves and business management systems that results in the formality and inefficiency of such tools, which give only the appearance of the qualitative products.

The conclusions are made that branding, as an alternative market tool, which can comprise both quality standards and conformance certificates, is such a tool of the marketing communication, which is formed based on a consumer’s demand and product market characteristics; branding is competitive and it is attractive from the investment point to more extent.

**Keywords:** product quality, fixation ways, marketing practice, branding, consumer, voluntary certification, disappoint expectations of consumers, certificate.


#### Аннотация

В данной статье охарактеризованы понятия способов фиксации качества продукции; приводятся мнения различных авторов на характеристики психологии потребления; определено значение для изучения личностных особенностей потребителей и особенностей маркетинговых коммуникаций; дано понятие маркетинговых коммуникаций; обосновано, что системы менеджмента качества (СМК) есть маркетинговые коммуникации; показано, что стандарты ISO в сфере системы менеджмента качества направлены на построение эффективных моделей бизнес-коммуникаций.

Автором статьи сделан акцент на том, что сертификаты и стандарты стали в определенной степени обесцениваться в связи с изобретением и разработкой «обходных путей» для стандартизации и сертификации, как самой продукции, так и систем бизнес-управления, что приводит к формальности и неэффективности таких инструментов, которые лишь создают видимость качественной продукции.

Сделаны выводы о том, что брендинг, как альтернативный рыночный инструмент, который может включать в себя и стандарты качества, и сертификаты соответствия, является таким инструментом маркетинговой коммуникации, который формируется непосредственно на основании спроса потребителя и рыночных характеристик продукции; брендинг конкурентоспособен и инвестиционно привлекателен в гораздо большей степени.

**Ключевые слова:** качество продукции, способы фиксации, маркетинговая практика, брендинг, потребитель, добровольная сертификация, разочарование потребителей, сертификат.

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## Introduction

Brand, standard or conformance proof by the quality certificate are the ways of product quality fixation mostly appropriate with the organization strategy pointed out in scientific literature.

The issue of selecting the preference of the abovementioned ways, despite all seeming simplicity and artificiality, is one of the key ones in marketing and management practice and is especially relevant in Russian reality in the light of such circumstance that manufacturers do not understand why they should undergo voluntary certification and pay for the audit of own company if they feel themselves quite comfortably at the market in the current situation.

The issue of branding and its comparison with other quality fixation ways of products is very relevant as brand is a more unique and individual quality fixation tool, therefore, it should be more carefully studied in comparison with standards and certification of product quality conformance. Branding issues are investigated well in the brand as a strategic marketing tool by such authors as E.A. Bubenok (Bubenok, 2013), I.V. Gvozdetskaya (Gvozdetskaya, 2009), I.A. Zakharova (Zakharova, 2007), I.V. Ilyina (Ilyina, 2007), V.V. Fominykh (Fominykh, 2010) and others.

The definition of brand and branding is diverse. There are many approaches to the notion of brand, which touch upon its different aspects and properties.

We, indeed, are interested in those brand properties, which would connect it with the quality of products presented by it and individualize the manufacturer of such products, i.e. we are interested in the brand as a strategic marketing. Such approach is mentioned in Mc Donald's definition: "Brand is the name or symbol, which identify the product. Successful brand identifies the product, which has the undeniable competitive advantage" (Mc Donald, 1999).

## Literature Review

To sum up the principal concepts of the "brand", we can determine that brand as the the following set of perceptions in consumer's eyes (Feldwick, 2002). A consumer often perceives brand at the psychological and cognitive level when it is enough to hear about the brand and a consumer receives all the information about the goods.

Consumer psychology is also a certain section of psychology and the brand awareness, "capture" by eyes, what is the most important property of the branded product. Therefore, manufacturers and sellers struggle severely for certain places in shop-windows and shelves of supermarkets since this is the competition for "capture", struggle for the coverage of potential consumer audience, and brand, in this sense, surpasses in many times both certificates and standards by marketing properties.

Brand can comprise all those marketing tools, it can be, sort of, "focus" of marketing tools, including all the combination – from QMS to the voluntary certification by ISO. But it can also not contain, and in the competitive struggle the brand not containing such tools can unexpectedly appear more successful and profitable than carefully adjusted and selected standards and certificates. For example, one company can introduce QMS by ISO 9001 standards onto its production, it voluntarily certified all its products, however, it did not develop its personal individual brand. And such company can easily lose in the competitive struggle to the company, which did not introduce QMS into its production, did not receive voluntary certificates but developed and launched a successful visually attractive brand. This is the first type of the marketing strategy.

Primarily, the second marketing strategy will be more advantageous and then the product quality factor will come in. And here the selection of marketing strategy will tackle everything – because the first company could select the long-term strategy of entering the market, and the second one only wanted to cream off the market and leave. We studied also this type of strategy in our work.

Describing the brand psychologism, G. Dowling insists on the use of the marketing tool of promoting the product. Brand is the combination of the name and other symbols used to identify the product and "promise" given to the customer (Dowling, 2006). The customer really wants not only to obtain qualitative products under the notion of brand at present, right now, but expects that the product quality will not get worse in future, to say the least. Probably, in this sense the notion of brand is more psychological and marketing than the certificate, which guarantees the product quality but it is still not unique to the same degree as the brand. The strong marketing side of the brand is the fact that it creates the

name not only for the products themselves but also for their manufacturer.

Some experts, I. Kretov and N. Karyagin repeat the same thesis in their brand definition, saying that «the trademark is, in some way, the promise that the offered product has a set of positive qualities and will not disappoint the customers' expectations» (Kretov & Karyagin, 2005).

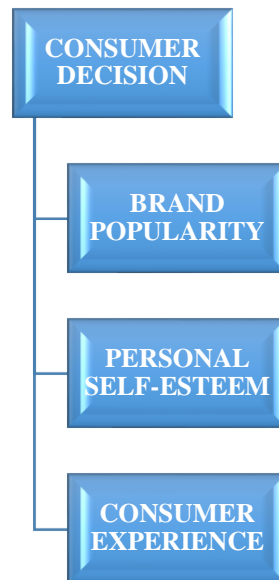
Another important psychological and marketing moment is the moment of motivation, which is one of the key notions in marketing. As it was defined by F. Jones, «Brand is the product meeting the functional needs of some consumers and providing them with some additional value able to satisfy certain psychological needs and induce them to buy» (Jones, 2005).

The incentive to buy one or another product is the most important notion of consumer psychology. Scientists and marketers conduct expensive researches trying to understand what forces a consumer to buy one or another product – a spontaneous desire or such probability can be increased. Obviously, the brand and trademark, together with the qualitative products, will be the

best incentives to buy rather than just All-Union State Standard (GOST) mark on the product. At present, it is impossible to surprise anyone by GOST mark availability since the threshold levels of the market are such that the products manufactured not according to the standards do not practically have chances to hit store shelves.

But brand is also the essence of the product marketability, it is the combination of many characteristics targeted at the consumer's psychological motives. Motivation in consumption psychology is the notion of intellectual, volitional and emotional scope. According to N.P. Ketova, motivation in marketing is the combination of interests, inquiries, considerations, which the consumer is driven by making the decision on the practicability of buying the product and preference of selecting the product among others. In the scientist's opinion, motivation can be influenced by the following factors: consumer's interest, self-esteem.

To sum up the said above, we determined the following factors of the consumer decision to obtain any brand (Design 1).



**Design 1.** The factors of the consumer decision to obtain a brand

As we see, motivation is divided into external and internal. An internal motivation does not require encouragements and incentives for the individual who is driven by internal motives. Such motives can exist both at conscious and unconscious levels.

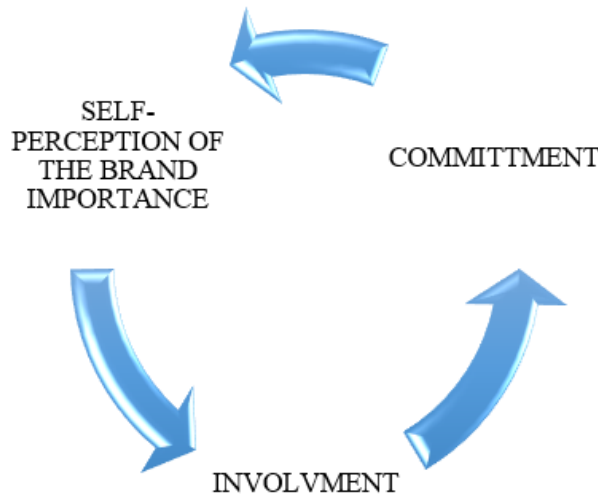
An external motivation requires public recognition and reaction. Motivation is connected with the need to exercise own

personality; however, external motivation can have the opposite expression, especially in the consumption sphere. The consumer can buy products only because all the others buy them. The massiveness of consumption seems to be the best marker of the product quality but it is not always so.

Motivation by N.P. Ketova is initiated by the interest, self-perception, commitment and

possession. Self-perception is a subjective psychological process revealed in marketing in such a way that the consumer is motivated to buy those products, which he or she bought before and the experience indicates that these products are qualitative. In such case, at self-perception the brand importance increases since the brand allows the product not to be lost in the variety of other goods and products.

Interest (involvement) indicates the product significance to the consumer and its importance for a certain consumer. A commitment, by Ketova (2009) is the consumer’s stable and developed attitude to the trademark formed during the consumption process. Commitment is obviously based on self-perception.



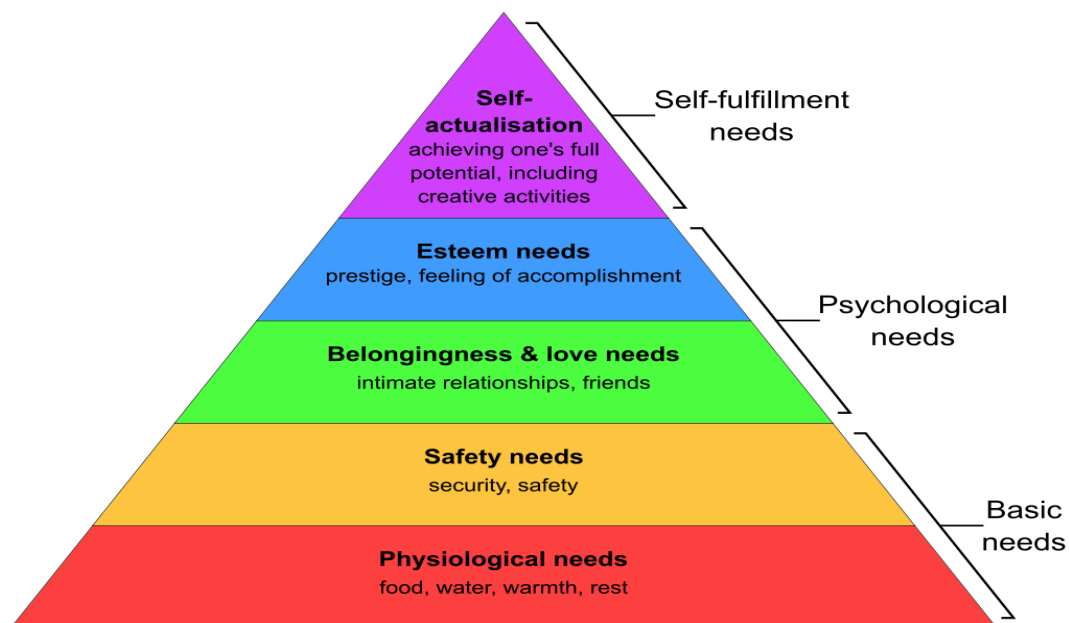
**Design 2.** The factors of the product significance for the consumer

So, the trademark or brand are extremely important for commitment.

**Methodology**

There are several theories of motivation in marketing, which are worked out by general

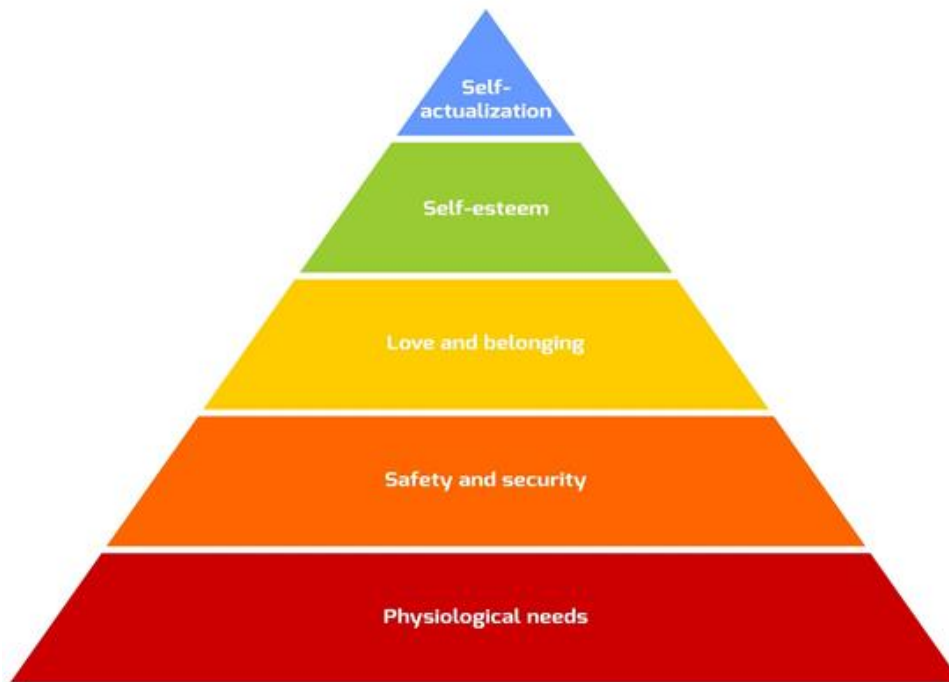
psychology. The same theories are also applied to study the consumer behavior. We have already met one of such motivational theories in the work. This is the theory of motive hierarchy by A. Maslow (Design 3).



**Design 3.** Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Mcleod, 2023)

According to this hierarchy, people successively satisfy the needs most important for them at the

moment and these needs become the incentive for them and motive of behavior (Design 4).



**Design 4.** The process of actualization of needs according the hierarchy of Maslow.

We see that the physiological needs are prevailing meanwhile a self-actualization needs are undergoing.

We see that according the Freudian theory the motivation is based on the unconscious psychological forces, such as hidden desires and motives, shape an individual's behavior, like their purchasing patterns.

The second important for the given work theory is S. Freud's theory, which divides all motives into conscious and unconscious. In marketing the big is bet on unconscious motives of consumption when the person cannot even answer the question why he or she bought this product and what he was driven by in the process of its selection. It is obvious that the unconscious motives of consumption behavior are much more powerful in forming buying capacity of the goods and no standards and certificates can be compared with such motives (Ganti, 2020).

According to the key moments of S. Freud's motivation theory, unconscious psychological forces, such as hidden wishes and motives, form a human's behavior as well as his or her model of purchases. Freud's motivation theory treats the purchasing process as the combination of meeting conscious and unconscious needs of a consumer. That is, the probability of buying the detergent of a certain trademark and certain brand will be much greater, if the consumer was primarily driven by such conscious motive but not came to the store to buy the dog food and suddenly, affected by some spontaneous factors, decided to buy the detergent as well. It is obvious that in the second case no unconscious motives will force the consumer to buy such product even though it is manufactured according to international ISO standards.

It is not important for the consumer what QMS and according to which standard is installed by this manufacturer and how it helped him or her to produce this product. The consumer may not know at first who is the manufacturer but he or she buys the product and seems to do it spontaneously but the unconscious motives consist in it. The concept of brand, product appearance, packing and other external features – all these can contain unconscious motives to buy the product, and exactly such motives to buy the products define such "spontaneous" purchases.

These ideas can help market researchers to find out why the consumer made one or another purchase paying attention to his or her conscious and unconscious motives, as well as to the weight of social expectations (Financial Encyclopedia, 2021).

But, in any case, as applicable to the topic of our research it can be surely said that the factor of availability of conformance signs to quality standards, conformance certificates can be the conscious motive to buy one or another product. The existence of the product brand, its popularity for the consumer, and experience in using this brand can be a stable conscious motive for the purchase.

At present, there are also modern psychological motivation theories in the marketing science. Based on one of them, Kotler's theory, consumers buy not the products but the way to meet their needs. The availability of needs, as the guiding motive of the consumer activity, defines branding and marketing strategies of product promotion (Kotler, 2004).

Another important approach in marketing is the one according to which the orientation should be switched from selling the goods to the consumer's personality. Such approach is rather innovative since the consumer psychology basis, in general, is the massiveness. The consumption ideology is aimed at masses and the total mass of people are the impersonal consumers. However, apparently, this concept reached its limits and, in this regard, marketers together with psychologists focused on the consumer's personality. According to one of the leading management theorists P. Drucker: «Marketing aim is to make useless the efforts of household activities. Its aim is to get to know and understand the client well, that the product or service will definitely suit the latter and sell themselves» (Drucker, 1973). That is, we speak of some existence independency of the model «manufacturer-product-consumer». To the known extent of recognition the manufacturer should perform the marketing strategy to promote own product to the market. After the consumer recognized this product, the model should transfer to the autonomous state and the selling function itself is not required.

It is useful to compare the method proposed by P. Drucker to the method of company existence independence when the number of vertical links in the company decreases and horizontal ones replace them. When the whole production system shifts to the independent mode of existence becoming the closed system, the management should control only the input and output and finally it's complete matching is achieved.

Therefore, we can conclude that the focus on the consumer and his personality is the modern marketing method is prevailing nowadays. This

type of marketing focalization significantly improve competitiveness.

## Results and Discussion

Thus, the formation of personality markets becomes the new direction in marketing when the consumer's personality is studied, his or her needs are examined and the market is formed based on them.

In this case, such social and economic tools as marketing communications acquire significant importance for investigation of such personal peculiarities of consumers.

In general, marketing communications are the process of data transfer from the manufacturer to consumer. This is a crucial marketing tool, which significantly differs from all other types and kinds of communications. At the same time, communications, in the general sense of this notion, are the means of personal interaction and information transfer, which can be transmitted verbally, lexically, graphically by all ways existing for information transfer.

The distinctive feature of marketing communications is the fact that they transfer not ordinary information but economically important and significant one about the properties and characteristics of goods, which allow selling them better. Can the national or international standard refer to marketing communications? Yes, if it is transferred from the manufacturer to the consumer in the form of information accessible for recognition. The same can be also said about any information connected with the quality of products – it can have the designation of marketing communication since it improves the marketability of goods. The information about QMS introduced according to ISO standards, which was transferred from the manufacturer to consumer, will surely be the marketing communication.

Brand is the important marketing communication of integrated value since brand is the means of product promotion and it is also the way of communication between the manufacturer and consumer. The manufacturer forms the brand as the quality mark, as the trademark counting exactly on the fact that the consumer will memorize the brand and will further identify the products of this manufacturer by the brand. And the consumer associates psychological expectations of the qualitative products exactly with the brand and the brand, in many cases, is also the powerful conscious motivation.

Thus, the specific feature of marketing communications is the fact that the consumer and the manufacturer do not only communicate and transfer information through them but do it indirectly. That is, the manufacturer and the consumer do not meet personally each time and do not discuss the properties and quality of the products. At the marketing and economic level all this is done by the brand as an important tool of marketing communication. It is obvious that standards do not have such marketing communication scope as the brand. Standards are the weaker tool of marketing communication; certificates also do not have such marketing communication essence.

The kind and form of psychological and intellectual scope of marketing communication methods are important. This is not just verbal, lexical, graphical and other visual scope as the method of information transfer. This is the form of transferring consumer motivation, consumer's expectations, hopes for qualitative product, on the one hand, but also from the manufacturer's side this is the whole set of marketing wishes and volitional messages – hope for the product purchase, message about qualitative products, appeal to buy exactly this product, form and method of competitive struggle.

Brand as a marketing tool is the most important intellectual, moral-psychological and economic method and form of marketing communication between the manufacturer and consumer; it has the primary marketing, economic, market-oriented, psychological-communicative and simply social information in compact and pre-prepared form. Neither standards for quality conformance certificates can be compared with such marketing tool as brand by its communicative ability.

Thus, both standard and conformance certificates are essentially inferior in marketing and communicative sense to such promotion tool as brand. Brand significantly improves the competitiveness of products.

Marketers also developed many definitions and approaches to the notion of marketing communications. In our opinion, this is defined by the same vast economic and marketing essence of such notion as brand.

A.P. Pankrukhin considers them as the combination of means and certain actions to search, analyze, generate and distribute the information important for the subjects of marketing relations (Pankrukhin, 2006).

J. Burnett and S. Moriarty consider marketing communications as the process of transferring information about the product to the target audience (Burnett, & Moriarty, 2007).

N.D. Eriashvili and A.V. Korotkov explain the notion of marketing communications as the combination of signals send by the companies to different audiences, complex effect of the company on marketing environment to create favorable conditions for successful and profitable activity on the market (Eriashvili, Korotkov, & Sinyayeva, 2017).

E.E. Tarasova and Y.M. Voronin gives the following definition of marketing communications – this is a complex system of market interaction of the company with public circles connected with goods flow, exchange of information, technologies, knowledge, experience. The complex of marketing communications consists in the development and integration of the company actions to achieve its sales goals (Tarasova, & Voronin, 2008).

If we assume that the quality management systems (hereinafter - QMS) according international ISO 9000 standards are the vast accumulated experience, which was transferred through these standards from European and American market community to Russian companies and market, then it turns out that quality management systems are also marketing communications. However, they are not aimed at transferring information on certain good or products. Due to their universal character these systems and standards are the means of transferring the experience in managing business forms to organize effective business communications. That is, ISO standards in QMS sphere are aimed at constructing effective models of business communications, therefore, they can also be acknowledged, to some extent, as the tools of marketing communication, as the tools to exchange the accumulated experience between two or several markets and business management systems.

ISO standards are aimed at training, therefore, they, by their nature, are the forms of communication, however, their orientation not between the manufacturer and consumer but between one manufacturer or a group of manufacturers having the accumulated experience and inexperienced manufacturers who want to organize their own business management system in the image and likeness of more experienced colleagues.

As D.R. Amirova and A.I. Khramova indicate in their paper, all marketing communications have the same goal – stimulation of buyers to purchase their goods and services (Amirova, & Khramova, 2019). However, in such case, the unavoidable question about individualization arises since marketing communications should answer the question “whose specifically – their”. This means that marketing communications should simply and easily identify certain products with their manufacturer. That is, marketing communications, despite the fact that they are the means of information transfer from the manufacturer to consumer, are definitely more advantageous for the manufacturer; therefore, the manufacturer is the source of origin of marketing communications.

In such case, if we speak about the product competitiveness improvement, the products from the manufacturer as the goods purchased by the consumer have several target designations. They should not only satisfy the buyer’s needs and be qualitative but they should also be the means and method of marketing communication with the consumer, i.e. through his or her products the manufacturer transfers the important marketing information to the consumer. This indicates that modern economic marketing and consumer relations become more and more complicated since the goods or products are not simply the qualitative goods anymore aimed at meeting the consumer’s needs. They also fulfill an important target function of transferring and distributing the marketing information, i.e. the products are the most important means and form of marketing communication. In essence, the manufacturer has the economic and marketing dialog with the buyer through own products.

Branding as the marketing communication is close by its properties, features and designation to standardization and certification. As indicated in Y.S. Menyailo’s work, branding tasks are the competitiveness improvement, improvement of the efficiency of marketing solutions that contributes to the attraction of investments to support the brand (Menyailo, 2019).

Thus, branding is also aimed at improvement of investment attractiveness and competitiveness improvement, consequently, it possesses all marketing features and properties of standard and quality certificate.

As O.A. Kuzmina points out, the market participants in Russia acknowledged the importance of brands for the consumer long ago. The manufacturers of consumer goods are keen

to create brands out of their trademarks guarantying quality, reliability of the products, high status, prestige value of purchase and use to the consumer, and to the manufacturer – additional profit and share of the product market (Kuzmina, 2008).

At the same time, it should be pointed out that certification of product quality conformance, as we indicated in previous paragraphs, is aimed at becoming the quality guarantee and quality conformance necessary for the standard or specified level. One of certification designations is the creation of trustful relations between the manufacturer and consumer at the market, i.e. certification is one of marketing guarantees of product quality. In contrast to the brand, certification is more widespread and is controlled by the state by creating certain vertically integrated system.

## Conclusions

In the given article, the notions of product quality fixation ways were characterized. We have expressed the different opinions on the consumption psychology characteristics. The importance of personal features of consumers and peculiarities of marketing communications were specified. The work gives the notion of marketing communications and substantiates that quality management systems (QMS) are marketing communications. The ISO standards in the sphere of quality management are aimed at developing effective models of business communications.

We focus our research on the fact that certificates and standards lose importance. Due to the invention and development of “bypasses” for standardization and certification of both the products themselves and business management systems that results in the formality and inefficiency of such tools, which give only the appearance of the qualitative products.

Were stated the following thesis:

1. Branding can be substituted an alternative market tool, which can comprise both quality standards and conformance certificates.
2. A tool of the marketing communication is formed on a consumer’s demand and product market characteristics.
3. Branding is a competitive device and it is attractive from the investment point of view.
4. Brand is more beneficial because the consumer focuses on own experience



already and for the manufacturer it is only important to initially interest the buyer for him or her to purchase the product for the first time

- As soon as the experience results in further purchases and the brand starts existing independently, the same happens with QMS.

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