PRACTICAL ASPECTS
OF SOCIO-CULTURAL MANAGEMENT

Original Research Article

Yuliia Tymchenko

Kyiv University of Culture, Kyiv, Ukraine

Assessment of a Socio-Cultural Product Quality

Abstract: *Introduction.* Every day, the vast majority of society members are active consumers of various types of socio-cultural products. This gives a significant impetus to the more progressive development of the socio-cultural sphere and the need to improve the quality of its products. The question of how exactly to measure and analyze the consumer's perception of the quality of a certain socio-cultural product is relevant. To understand how a consumer evaluates the quality of a certain socio-cultural product, first of all, it is necessary to discover how he builds his own logical judgments about this product. *Purpose and methods.* The purpose of the article is to study the characteristics that determine consumers' conclusions about the quality of a socio-cultural product, regardless of whether they do it directly or indirectly. The research methodology consists of the application of system-functional and system-structural analysis as the theoretical basis of this study, which precisely allows the revealing of the relationship between these characteristics. *Results.* Determining the causal structure of the conceptual representation of a socio-cultural product – a park of culture and recreation, making it possible to reveal a clear relationship between the nature of the property, its causal status, accessibility for understanding, and its significance. The nature of the property determines its place in the system of relationships. Structural properties have the obvious status of a cause, procedural properties determine the obvious status of an effect, and an impression is an impression and a point of convergence of several relationships. *Conclusions.* The presented research results convincingly prove the applicability of theoretically grounded casual models of socio-cultural analysis both at the level of fundamental research and in applied fields.

Keywords: institution, socio-cultural product, quality assessment, consumer behavior, conceptual ideas, causal structure of the object.

1. Introduction

The problem formulation. An important problem today is the problem of quality, particularly in the socio-cultural sphere. Quality is present in a variety of situations when it is necessary to evaluate the customer satisfaction degree to optimize services and commercialize the product, to identify optimal ways of responding to potential consumers' wishes.

With this in mind, quality is one of the most important indicators of creating any product. Quality is determined by a set of product characteristics that determine its ability to satisfy certain consumer needs under its purpose. There is always a demand for a quality product. Such a product is sold at a higher price, and makes it possible to get a bigger profit. Product quality improvement becomes a priority task of any company in market conditions.

To ensure the proper quality of the product in the market, it is necessary to constantly assess product quality level. The quality level shows the suitability degree of a certain type of product to meet consumers' needs. Product quality assessment involves determining its absolute, relative, prospective, and optimal levels.

The absolute level of product quality is determined by calculating certain indicators without comparing them with the corresponding indicators of similar products. The relative level of quality is calculated based on a comparison of the absolute quality indicators of the product with the corresponding indicators of its similar types, which are better in terms of quality. In the conditions of rising living standards of the population and increasing its solvency, the level of product quality must also constantly increase. In this connection, the prospective level of product quality, which will ensure its competitiveness in the future, is determined.

Depending on the sources of information, quality assessment methods are divided into traditional methods, where product quality assessment is carried out in specialized departments, expert methods used to assess aesthetic quality indicators and social methods, which are based on determining product quality based on the study of consumers' opinions about it. A separate group includes statistical methods of product quality assessment, which are based on the use of mathematical statistics methods and have a selective nature.

In this regard, the question of how exactly to measure and analyze the consumer's perception of the quality of a certain socio-cultural product and how this perception is measured, is relevant.

State study of the problem. A sufficient number of scientific works and studies have been devoted to the study of product quality problems, in particular, the works: W.-K. Ahn (1998), M. E. Barton and L. K. Komatsu (1989),

C. Kelemen (1999), F. Cordier and C. Tijus (2001), B. Rehder and R. Hastie (2001). Several authors have focused their attention on relationships in the socio-cultural sphere and casual interdependence, in particular, the works: J. L. McClelland and T. T. Rogers (2003), L. R. Novick and P. W. Cheng (2004), J. Pearl (2000), B. Rehder and R. C. Burnett (2005), B. Rehder and R. Hastie (2004), B. Rehder and G. L. Murphy (2003), L. J. Rips (1989). The attention of other scientists is focused on the issue of scientific substantiation of the definition of product quality, the main characteristics of the product, and their impact on the perception of the product by end consumers. The reviewed studies are mainly focused on conceptual theoretical models, but there is a lack of applied studies with the possibility of their further application in various fields.

In the concept proposed in this article, based on the system-functional approach and system-structural analysis, we assume that the consumer possesses certain fundamental knowledge, which is considered as a certain functional and causal (cause-and-effect) relationship between a set of concepts in the socio-cultural sphere. We analyze the perception of the product as a relationship and causal interdependence of characteristics. The number of interrelated characteristics is very important for product analysis. Thus, W.-K. Ahn, J. Marsh, C. Luhmann and K. Lee (2002), L. Chapman and J. Chapman (1967) believe that an individual traces an explicit relationship between those characteristics that formed basic, hidden, "naive" theories.

First of all, our attention was drawn to works that present the concept of connections between product characteristics and their impact on the logical conclusions of the end user. According to D. Medin, J. Coley, G. Storms, and B. Hayes (2003), in inductive reasoning, a person uses causal scenarios (scenarios where there is a causal link). For example, if you offer a person a baseline condition that he knows about the relationship, he will accept the logical conclusion. The point is that the person knows what it is about, and this knowledge allows us to summarise that there is indeed a relationship. Thus, the logical conclusion increases conceptual coherence (validity). This study has made it possible to understand not only the process of link building itself but also to assess the direction of the consumer's logical thinking about a particular product.

An interesting study from the point of view of subsuming logical conclusions is that of B. Rehder and R. Burnett (2005). Researchers question how exactly the consumer applies knowledge about causality to form logical conclusions about new properties and features. B. Rehder and R. Burnett (2005) have conducted many studies using learning tasks and induction tasks (drawing logical conclusions). According to the obtained results, a person forms a logical conclusion that implies the presence of a cause under the influence of other causes, even if there is no general effect. These data confirm the theory of causal influence, which is presented in the works of L. Novick and P. Cheng (2004).

Many researchers recognise that the key role in the formation of logical conclusions and categorical interpretation is played by the function of the product (Barton & Komatsu, 1989; Bloom, 1996, 1998; Chaigneau et al., 2004; Keil, 1989; Malt & Johnson, 1992). For example, does knowing the product's function allow us to draw logical conclusions about its structure? S. Chaigneau, L. Barsalou, and S. Sloman (2004) put forward a hypothesis according to which a function is a complex system of relationships that unites, in each specific situation, the physical structure of the product, the way it is used and the history of development (design). Thus, the function reflects the methods of the product application, which take into account its physical structure, as well as the physical characteristics of the agent that interacts with it. Thus, W.-K. Ahn, J. Marsh, C. Luhmann, and K. Lee (2002), L. Chapman, and J. Chapman (1967) believe that a person follows an explicit relationship between those characteristics about which he has formed basic, hidden, "naive" theories.

Causal relationships are of great interest because of the subject of our research. The theoretical basis of their construction and research, in general, is presented in some foreign researchers' works. In particular, in a number of studies (Ahn et al., 1995; Ahn & Kim, 2000; Barton & Komatsu, 1989; Keil, 1989; Malt & Johnson, 1992; Medin & Ortony, 1989; Pearl, 2000; Rehder & Hastie, 2001, 2004; Rips, 1989, etc.) attempts were made to explain the causal relationship between the characteristics and their influence on the assignment of the product to a certain category. Thus, ideas about concepts are formed to a greater extent from causal relationships, and causal connections (Ahn et al., 2002). The research data became a valuable theoretical basis for revealing the specifics and applying the concept of casual connections in the evaluation of a socio-cultural product.

In addition, an interesting hypothesis about the casual status of each individual characteristic was put forward by W.-K. Ahn (2000) in his work "The causal status effect in categorization: An overview". The author emphasized: to show the importance of causality (cause-and-effect relationship) between properties (individual characteristics) of the product, the author linked the value of the property with its causal potential. The works of B. Rehder, R. Hastie (2001) and B. Rehder, S. Kim (2006) focus on the properties of products, as well as the concept of causal relationships. The authors consider any property important if it occupies a central position in a network of causal relationships, regardless of whether it is a cause or an effect.

As we can see, many scientific works of various directions are devoted to the chosen topic of research, but the considered works are more inclined to theoretical concepts, while our research is applied in nature and aims to apply already known concepts to a specific field of application. It is quite clear that the theoretical and conceptual basis can be improved during the research.

Unresolved issues. The analysis of scientific sources showed that there are currently enough scientific studies devoted to product quality and the concept of causal relationships. Scientists did not ignore the problem of product quality assessment. However, despite the wide range of scientific developments, some problems require further resolution. In particular, we believe that at least in the theoretical direction there are enough works, developed approaches, and concepts. However, no theory or concept should be considered true if it is not supported by practical results or experiments. That is why we believe that the actual practical application of the concept of causal relations in the aspect of the application to the evaluation of a socio-cultural product requires further study and research. Applied research on the selected issue is not enough to support the proposed theoretical concepts regarding the formation of consumer conclusions about the quality of a socio-cultural product. In addition, we believe that the narrower the subject of research or experiment (for example, the study of a separate product), the more valuable the conclusions will be. In addition, in our opinion, it is expedient to carry out such research in several socio-economic spheres to identify common and different trends, which will increase the value of the results.

2. Purpose and methods

The purpose and research tasks. This study aims to identify which characteristics determine consumers' conclusions about quality, whether they do so directly or indirectly. Therefore, the purpose of the study is to find a more effective way to assess the quality of the socio-cultural product, which will allow a more competent and comprehensive analysis of the activities and forecast the development of the socio-cultural sphere of society. Also, the study aims to prove that the conceptual understanding of socio-cultural products can be characterized by the structure of causal relationships.

Based on the research purpose, we specify the following tasks:
– to identify the features of consumer status causal structure;
– to determine the peculiarities of the consumer's formation towards the socio-cultural product and its assessment;
– to describe the stages of decision-making about the properties of the studied socio-cultural product – the park and its components.

The result of solving the set tasks is compiling a list of properties of the socio-cultural product in the example of the park, as well as evaluating their significance and logical conclusions.

Methodology and methods. The methodological basis of the study consists of the application of elements of the functional approach to system-structural data analysis. At the same time, the functional component remains not in the focus of research (in our opinion, the functional aspect is worth a separate study).

The main principles on which the system-structural approach implemented in the course of the study is based are as follows:

– a holistic approach to the phenomenon under study, the impossibility of its dissection and isolation of individual parts;

– representation of the environment as a close interconnection of its elements and the impossibility of their artificial separation;

– stable connections that structurally form the system and form its content;

– a structure that can be represented both horizontally (stable links between related aspects) and vertically (cause and effect relationships, subordination, etc.);

– controllability of the analyzed system, the possibility of its logical construction;

– traceable logic of structuring the studied socio-cultural product.

We note that the systematic approach is methodologically corrected precisely because of the research strategy in the conditions of such a dynamic phenomenon as a socio-cultural product.

Methodologically, within the system-functional approach, we rely on: the system analysis method, as well as the methods of cause-and-effect analysis; tabular and graphical research methods, are also used.

These scientific methods are inductive, which makes it possible to implement them as a means of reconstructing the probable causes of the studied phenomena, based on which it seems possible to formulate causal conclusions. In logical justification, this means, first of all, that the hypothetical premise of the obtained result regarding the socio-cultural product, which is the subject of study, can act as one of its probable grounds, as well as that the direct conditioned connection between the proposed assumption and the recorded consequence is not reliably available and obvious, and in some cases is variably random. Thus, the postulated approach gives grounds to rely on the fact that the validity of the put-forward hypothesis about the presence of a causal relationship can be verified only if the dependence between the analyzed object and the relevant facts that are explained is established. In this case, there must be sufficient grounds for eliminating or rejecting other alternative interpretations.

Information base. The information base of the research consists of scientific works of famous world scientists in the fields of economics, psychology, and cultural studies, devoted to the study of product properties and their impact on product quality assessment.

In developing the study structure, we rely on the postulate common to all the concepts presented in the authors' discussion that the properties (characteristics) of the product are analyzed according to their nature. According to F. Cordier and C. Tijus (2001), they can be divided into six categories:

– perceptual (for example, shape and color);

– structural (properties that allow you to describe the parts of the product and the way they are combined into a single whole);

– procedural (properties that allow the product to implement its functions);

– behavioral (characteristics of human behavior);

– procedural (various states or events characterizing the evolution of products, in our case socio-cultural);

– personal (related to biological categories that are characterized by a certain psychological state).

The empirical basis of this paper is the results of the author's research in an open survey to identify the properties that are important for assessing the quality of a socio-cultural product. At the same time, our research is based on the fact that such product characteristics as "quality" or "comfort" cannot replace other categories. We rely on the idea that the perception of a product is the impression it makes (Rehder & Hastie, 2004). These characteristics are attributed to a product based on logical conclusions and based on other properties it possesses. However, mostly people attribute these characteristics to a product based on what they know about it.

3. Results and discussion

3.1. The essence of the socio-cultural product and its quality indicators

The existence of a socio-cultural product is conditioned by the involvement of a certain resource, the subject-producer, and value, as a result of the two previous elements' combination. These criteria determine the specifics of the socio-cultural product, namely: the presence of cultural enterprises or even entire industries that produce it; the creation of cultural value. In addition, the socio-cultural product is not subject to mass production, and, therefore, must be exclusive and unique. Taking into account the socio-cultural product specifics, it is proposed to define it as a physical or intellectual result of the activity of subjects, with the involvement of the necessary resources to create a unique cultural value contained in the product, and is valuable for society as a whole or its individual layers.

In modern society, a socio-cultural product is sold on the market like any other. However, not all socio-cultural products have the features of market goods. Types of socio-cultural products are defined following the spheres of socio-cultural activities: products in the field of art (music, fine arts, literature, theater, cinema, folk art, and crafts), mass media products (radio, television, periodicals, printed and online publications), cultural heritage (as a separate cultural product), tourism, parks of culture and recreation, etc. The properties of the socio-cultural product are that it is hyper-dynamic, constantly changing, reflecting the historical stage, the socio-economic development level of the coun-

try as a whole, scientific and technological progress, the needs of society, the existing potential and prospects for future development, the influence of cultures of other societies, transplantation, and transformation of cultural institutions.

The high quality of a product determines its competitiveness and the competitive advantages of the manufacturer in general. In a more general sense, a quality product must be suitable for use, meet the purpose of its production, meet the needs of the end user, and meet the requirements of the industry to which this product belongs. There are many different methods for assessing the quality of the product, in particular: experimental, calculated, expert, socio-logical, organoleptic, etc. For the scientific analysis of a socio-cultural product, the most applicable is the socio-cultural approach, which is the methological basis for building quality assessment methods. Assessment of the quality of a socio-cultural product consists in determining the integrative characteristics and their evaluation by applying the methods of quantitative and qualitative analysis. The meanings of evaluation arise through the expression of their own judgments, through which the subject allows to identify the criteria by which this socio-cultural product is evaluated. For the researcher, this is the main basis for analyzing and evaluating the quality of the socio-cultural product.

For the applied study of the socio-cultural product, parks were chosen as socially significant recreational areas, the main characteristic of which in terms of functionality is comfort. It is known that comfort is generally understood as physical or material well-being provided by certain conditions, circumstances, or objects. Comfort can be offered thanks to some objects, or thanks to environmental circumstances, such as the right temperature, a certain level of silence, or a feeling of security. There are certain standards of comfort, the general features of which we try to have in our home, in the work environment, and in other places we frequent. These include:

– hygrothermal comfort, which we experience on a thermal level when we are comfortable indoors or in some specific weather. This occurs when the body's thermoregulatory mechanisms do not need to intervene to warm or cool us to protect our vital functions. Hygrothermal comfort is the main parameter for determining the living conditions of a space, which is responsible for bioclimatic architecture;

– acoustic comfort is one in which the noises caused by human activities are not annoying or harmful to people's rest, communication, or health. As such, acoustic comfort is a term related to the concept of noise pollution;

– visual comfort – implies ideal levels of natural or artificial lighting that are necessary for various human activities: productive, professional, leisure, pleasure or recreation, etc. Thus, to achieve visual comfort, it is necessary to have the correct design of the lighting system of the space. Visual comfort translates into the psychophysiological well-being of a person.

If we are talking about the comfort of parks, we define this property by a list of certain special specific qualities inherent in this particular socio-cultural product: the presence of a sufficient amount of landscaping in the park, the presence of rare ornamental plants, landscape design, the presence of ponds, fountains, decorative waterfalls, the opportunity to see some animals and birds, the opportunity to visit catering establishments, the presence of entertainment areas, etc. The choice of the park as a socio-cultural product is aimed at applying the simplest and most accessible type of socio-cultural product for everyday analysis, which makes it possible to visualize the elements of the trend of socio-cultural causal relations, on which the main focus of the study is made.

It should be emphasized that the quality of a socio-cultural product is a generalized characteristic of any type of socio-cultural product, which in each specific type of product has its own dominant manifestation, which is used to determine the essence of the socio-cultural product. For a socio-cultural product – a park, comfort is the main basis for analysis. We apply the quality parameter for the possibility of general theoretical extrapolation of the partial data we received to any socio-cultural product (theatre, museum, gallery, etc.) as a manifestation tendency. The main emphasis in this article is on the quality parameter precisely for the reasons indicated.

3.2. Causal links in the system of socio-cultural product quality assessment and their structure

During the open survey, we analyzed the results and grouped them according to the relevant semantic generalizations. Since the qualitative data processing process is usually complicated by versatile formulations, and quantitative data analysis in this study is not possible, we have detailed the criteria named by the survey participants and traced the internal relationships that participants build. The generalization of these data made it possible to visualize these criteria, which allowed us to build a conditionally generalized basic model of the phenomenon under study. The results obtained do not claim to be fundamental solutions but allow us to trace the current trend and illustrate the theoretical concepts described in the article.

To formulate the concept of the essence of causal relationships between the properties of a socio-cultural product that determine the assessment of its quality, we conducted two survey experimental studies, and identified the properties that can influence the assessment of the quality of the studied socio-cultural product. The method of extended survey (open questions), as well as methods of text content analysis, were applied. At the first stage of the study, the participants had to compile a list of properties or dextrators (attributes) of the assessed socio-cultural product – the park – in a limited time period. The

subjects (a random sample of park visitors, 40 people) were asked to list words or formulate short sentences, thus focusing on what the quality of the socio-cultural product – the park – means to them. The time allotted for this task was 3 minutes. We recorded in writing those properties that were mentioned by at least 4 participants and categorized them as verbalized properties.

At the second stage (the second wave of the study, a repeated survey of another sample), the study participants were asked to assess the importance of the properties included in the general list when assessing the quality of the socio-cultural product – the park. A sample of 77 people was offered a list of landscape design features of the park. Participants had to evaluate the importance of each quality for assessing the quality of the socio-cultural product on a 7-point scale, in which 1 – the property has no importance for assessing the quality, and 7 – this property is of fundamental importance for the assessment.

Based on the results of the two stages of the study, a list of attributes relevant to assessing the quality of a socio-cultural product was compiled, based on the type of attribute, its importance, and whether it was mentioned by the participants.

The first phase of the study aimed to identify properties and relationships between property types, salience, verbalization (spontaneous or purposeful), and causal status. In this study, the participants' task was to determine whether there was a causal relationship between the properties presented in pairs. If the participant believed that there was such a connection, they connected the properties with arrows.

The purpose of the second stage is to determine the importance (value) of each group of properties, as well as to identify how the change in the importance of the cause property affects the effect property. Each group of properties was composed of causally interrelated or unrelated properties. In this stage of the study, the task of the participants was to establish the existence of a relationship between the values of two properties. Participants were presented with pairs of properties, and if, in their opinion, the two properties were interrelated, they had to choose a value for the property presented on the one hand that corresponded to the value of the property presented on the other hand.

It should be emphasized that the sample of respondents was formed randomly, without taking into account parametric criteria, since the main purpose of the study was to identify the general research trend and outline the possible structure of relationships. The choice of a survey as the main method of data collection emphasizes the generalized nature of the study, which is aimed mainly at establishing a trend as a basis for further in-depth scientific research.

During this open survey, we analyzed the results and grouped them according to the relevant semantic generalizations. Since the process of qualitative data processing is usually complicated by versatile formulations, and quanti-

tative data analysis in this study is not possible, we have detailed the criteria named by the survey participants and traced the internal relationships that participants build. The generalization of these data made it possible to visualize these criteria, which allowed us to build a conditionally generalized basic model of the phenomenon under study. The results obtained do not claim to be fundamental solutions but allow us to trace the current trend and illustrate the theoretical concepts described in the article.

The participants' answers about the presence/absence of a causal relationship between the properties underlying the assessment of a socio-cultural object – its comfort are analyzed and presented in *Table 1*.

Table 1. Network of causal relationships between properties
in the conceptual representation of the socio-cultural product –
park in the category "comfort"

Indicators	Indicators' characteristics
Brightness	Color scheme of components (buildings, cafeterias, seating areas). Lighting (lanterns, backlighting)
Noise	Proximity to the roadway. Availability of vehicles on the territory
Ergonomics	Availability of infrastructure elements – information signs, children's areas, cafes, toilets. The ability to quickly get to different parts of the park
Accessibility	Transport stops. Pedestrian zones. Space ergonomics. Availability of water bodies nearby
Environmental friendliness	Materials from which the park objects are made. Quality of surrounding elements (landscaping). Means of interaction
Visuality	Practicality of distribution of objects in space. Legibility of the logistics structure. Attractiveness of the place
Reliability	The degree of safety for children. Possibility of shelter, in particular from bad weather

Source: own development

Table 1 shows the indicators that most fully characterize comfort. These are the immediate, direct causes of comfort. Indirect, more distant causes, e.g., the colour of the café or benches, are, of course, also related to "comfort" but they are linked to another direct cause, "brightness". These are first-order

indirect causes. The "presence of vehicles" on the territory of the park as a consequence has both immediate, direct causes and first-order indirect causes: "noise" and "degree of safety for children".

The most remote causes are directly related to the characteristic of comfort through logical conclusions drawn from the direct immediate causes. *S. Chaigneau, L. Barsalou*, and *S. Sloman* (2004) have called this phenomenon the principle of causal adjustment: information related, for example, to the attractiveness of a place, allows us to conclude about "comfort" in two stages: through "visuality" and "ergonomics".

Determination of the causal structure of the conceptual representation of the socio-cultural product – the park allowed us to identify a clear relationship between the nature of the property, its causal status, accessibility for understanding, objectified by spontaneous verbalization, and its significance. The nature of a property determines its place in the system of mutual relations. Structural properties have an obvious cause status, procedural properties determine the obvious effect status, and impressions are impressions and the point of convergence of several relationships. Perceptual properties are related in a minor way, they have neither obvious causes nor obvious effects.

The proposed study was not intended to analyze the functions of the socio-cultural product. In the network of interrelations between the socio-cultural product elements, its structural properties are located "at the input". However, the functionality should not be considered the final result that appears "at the output". This is more of a preliminary stage, which allows making logical conclusions to form an impression. The ultimate goal is to assess the quality of the socio-cultural product, in our study – the park.

3.3. Causality properties in assessing a socio-cultural product quality

The nature of a property gives it a certain causal status, and this status, in turn, determines the importance of this property and its comprehensibility for verbalization. According to statistical data, if a property has an apparent causal status, then it is not assessed as significant, and the degree of its comprehensibility is low. However, in our study, we found examples that contradict this. The property "greening", i.e. a structural property, has an evident causal status, but it is not verbalized, although its importance is very high. Nevertheless, summarizing, we can emphasize that properties with high causal status and properties-consequences are more accessible (understandable) and receive a higher rating as substantial.

These findings support hypotheses *B. Rehder*, *R. Hastie* (2001) and *B. Rehder*, *S. Kim* (2006) and questions the assumption of causal status proposed

by *W.-K. Ahn* (1998): the most significant properties are more related to other properties, regardless of whether these properties are cause or effect.

The obtained results confirm the conclusion of *M. Barton* and *L. Komatsu* (1989) that procedural properties are more significant than structural ones. Nevertheless, it can be assumed that properties whose causal status is verbalized play a crucial role in the logical conclusions formation, as they are, to some extent "responsible" for other properties (Ahn, 1998).

Our results also confirm the hypotheses of *B. Malt* and *E. Johnson* (1992) that structural properties have a higher causal status. These groups of results may be complementary: the significance of structural properties is due to their place in the system of interrelations – consumers do not rate them as significant, while procedural properties, on the contrary, receive high ratings of their significance, which is undoubtedly due to their status of consequence and their causal saturation. The closer the property is to the final point in the network of relationships and the greater its causal saturation, the more importance the consumer attaches to it. Accordingly, these properties are important. But they are determined by structural properties, which are also important, but from a different point of view. Changing the value of a structural property leads to a change in the value of the property with the status of "consequence" and the property that the consumer considers important.

The way of constructing ideas can be understood by demonstrating a network of causal relationships as a basis for logical conclusions. In addition, such a demonstration helps to better understand the role of fundamental knowledge in the formation and organization of the network of relationships. Although numerous studies using theoretically based models have emphasized the importance of background knowledge in the categorization process, and in particular, logical inference, this aspect has not been formalized in scientific sources (Cheng, 1997; Griffiths & Tenenbaum, 2005; McClelland & Rogers, 2003; Rehder & Murphy, 2003).

The scientific understanding of product knowledge thus remains rather vague and not fully understood. Part of the problem is explained by the fact that knowledge is closely dependent on individual experience. Accordingly, there is a need for research that aims to assess the level of knowledge of non-specialists in a particular field, and thus the potential impact of this knowledge on the formation of perceptions of product quality.

C. van Halen and *J. Janssen* (2004) conducted research to identify how fundamental knowledge affects the organization of the conceptual network of relationships. According to their research results, the level of knowledge does not influence it. For example, regardless of our understanding level of the playground design in the park, the color scheme of this playground will affect our

assessment of the degree of comfort of the park as a socio-cultural object. Nevertheless, the level of knowledge determines a certain relationship between the value of the cause and effect properties.

These results are confirmed by our research. For example, our results showed that, if for the consumer such a property as "brightness" has a global meaning for "comfort", then a clear value attributed to brightness, for example, good lighting in a park can be associated with a positive value of comfort for a consumer of a socio-cultural product with a low level of knowledge, and with a negative value for a consumer with high awareness (example: lighting is expensive and ill-conceived, but looks attractive).

Thus, although no influence of knowledge level on the way of interconnections network organizing was found at the level of properties, a certain influence was established at the deeper level of the meaning of these properties.

4. Conclusions

The proposed research was aimed at finding a more effective way to assess the quality of the socio-cultural product, which will allow a more competent and comprehensive analysis of the activities and forecast the development of the socio-cultural sphere of society. As a result, the following conclusions were made:

1. It is proposed to define a socio-cultural product as a physical or intellectual result of the subjects' activity, with the involvement of the necessary resources to create a unique cultural value contained in the product, and is of value to society as a whole or its individual strata. The subject of the study (namely, parks as recreational areas) determined the quality indicator of the socio-cultural product to be evaluated and analyzed, namely comfort as the park's main characteristic in terms of functionality.

2. The conceptual idea of socio-cultural products is proposed to be characterized in terms of the structure of causal relationships. The causal structure of socio-cultural products is formed following the natural properties that determine them. It is essential to understand how all the causes that lead to a definite consequence are interconnected. Determination of the causal structure of the conceptual representation of the socio-cultural product – the park allowed us to identify a clear relationship between the nature of the property, its causal status, accessibility for understanding, objectified by spontaneous verbalization, and its significance. The quality indicators of the property's "comfort" include brightness, noise, ergonomics, accessibility, environmental friendliness, visuality, and reliability.

3. Although at the level of properties there was no influence of the level of knowledge on the way of organizing the network of interconnections, still

its certain influence was established at a deeper level of the meaning of these properties. This statement is supported by the study results. For example, if for a consumer a property such as "brightness" has a global meaning for "comfort", then a clear meaning attributed to brightness, for example, good lighting in a park can be associated with a positive comfort meaning for a socio-cultural product consumer who has a low knowledge level, and with a negative meaning for a consumer who has a high level of knowledge (example: the lighting is expensive and ill-conceived but looks attractive).

The scientific novelty. The novelty of the study lies in the use of tools of causal relationships to deepen the conceptual understanding of complex socio-cultural products. Also, the essence of the socio-cultural product, as well as the procedure for assessing the quality of this product was further developed.

The significance of the study. The significance of the presented study lies in the practical application of the concept of causal relationships to explain the essence and assess the quality of a socio-cultural product through the consumer's impression. In the socio-cultural sphere, building a network of relationships that underlie impression formation allows us to understand the reasons for these impressions. The method of building a network of causal relationships and analyzing the parameters of this structure can be applied to other products or their parts.

Prospects for further research. The application and strengthening of the proposed models are quite useful not only for understanding the essence of the theory but also for understanding consumer behavior and providing them with feedback on the consumption of a particular product. However, the presented research has certain limitations, in particular, due to the subject of the study, so the proposed approach should be tested on several other socio-cultural products to consolidate or refute the results obtained.

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Information about the Author:

Yuliia Tymchenko, Assoc. Professor, PhD, Kyiv University of Culture, 20, Chyhorina St., Kyiv 01042, Ukraine; e-mail: utimchenko@e-franchising.org.ua; orcid id: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2573-322X