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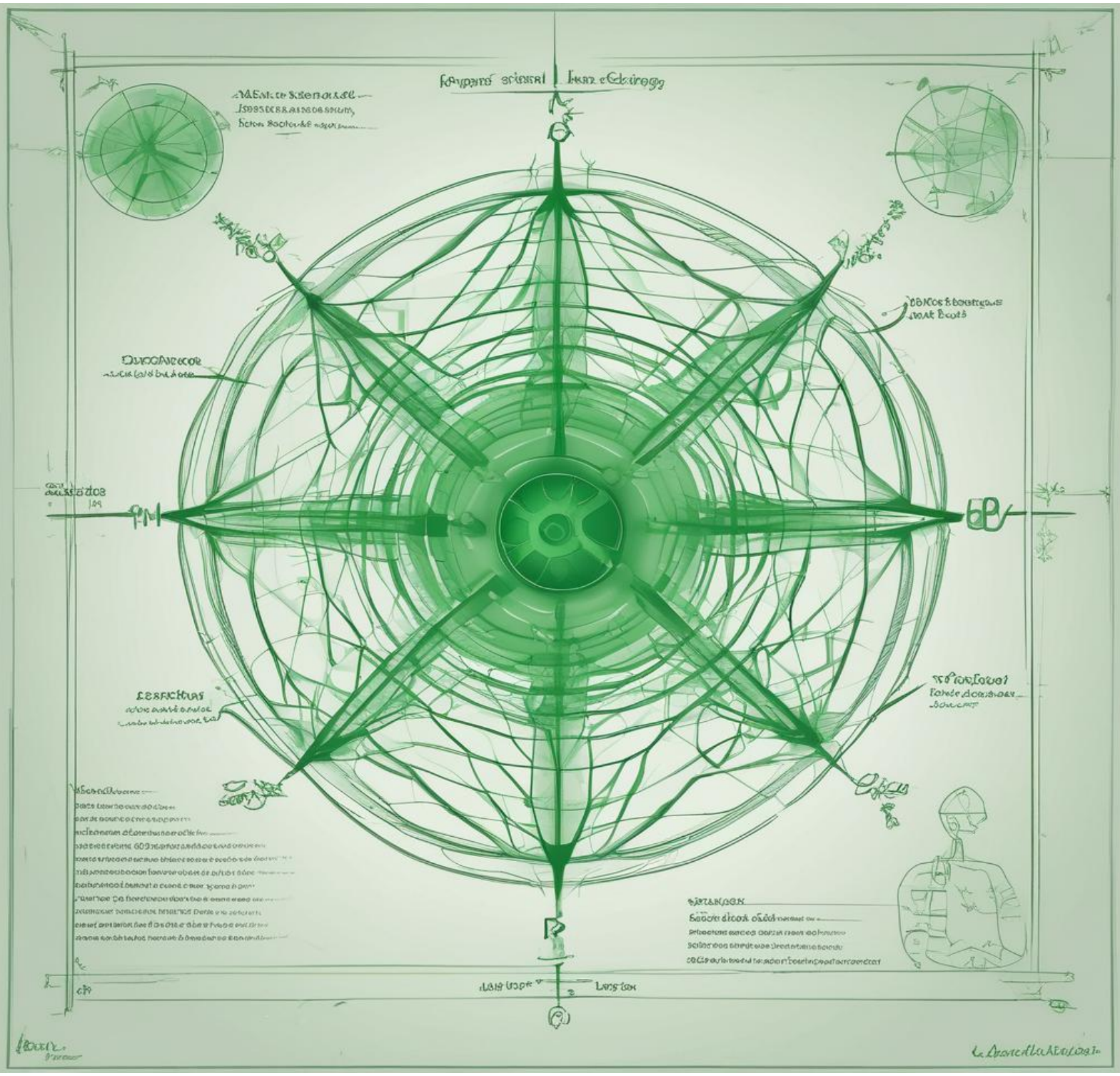

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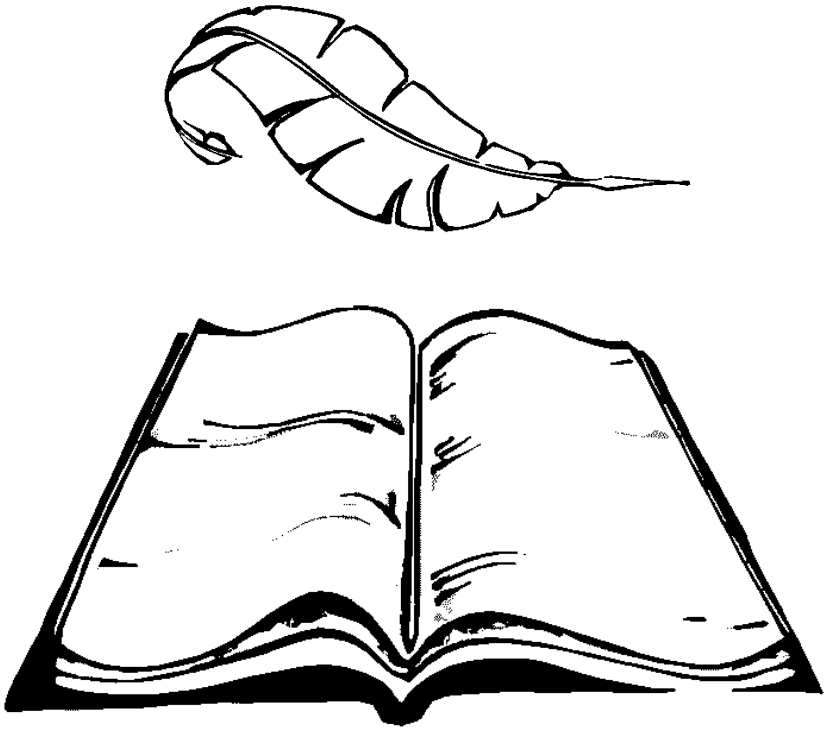

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MOTIVATING EMPLOYEES OF A LOGISTICS COMPANY TO FOSTER LOYALTY

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Annotation

The article examines the relationship between employee motivation and loyalty in a logistics company. The aim of the study is to investigate how various motivational tools applied within the organization influence employee loyalty levels. The theoretical part presents the concepts of motivation, motivational strategies, and loyalty, while the empirical research evaluates the current practices of motivation and their perceived effectiveness. Survey results show that financial incentives are the dominant motivators among employees, while loyalty is more strongly linked to personal values and job meaning than to organizational identity. Although most respondents demonstrate a rational attachment to the company, emotional commitment remains relatively low. The findings suggest that a balanced combination of financial incentives and intrinsic motivational factors, along with improved internal communication, could enhance both employee engagement and loyalty.

Key words: employee motivation, motivational tools, loyalty, logistics company, organizational commitment.

INTRODUCTION

Research topicality and problem. Employee motivation and loyalty are among the key factors determining an organization's competitiveness, stability, and ability to retain a competent workforce in an increasingly dynamic business environment. The logistics sector, characterized by high employee mobility, staff turnover, and a growing demand for human resources, has become particularly dependent on internal organizational mechanisms that foster employee engagement and long-term commitment (Žiogelytė & Kšivickaitė, 2014; Armstrong, 2014).

In recent years, it has become increasingly evident that traditional motivation practices based solely on financial compensation no longer ensure employee loyalty. As noted by Deci and Ryan (2008), long-term commitment is primarily driven by intrinsic motivation – that is, employees' identification with the meaning of their work, opportunities for self-fulfillment, and alignment with the employer's value orientation. While extrinsic motivators remain relevant, their impact tends to be short-lived, particularly among younger employees who place greater emphasis on flexibility, personal development, and cultural fit within the organization (Ruškienė, 2022).

The academic literature increasingly acknowledges that organizations capable of implementing hybrid motivation models, tailored to meet employees' diverse needs, achieve higher levels of job satisfaction and reduced loyalty deficits (Saks, 2006; Kuvaas, 2009). In the context of logistics companies, which often employ staff from diverse age groups and socio-cultural backgrounds, a flexible and adaptive motivational approach is essential. This is not only a human resource management challenge but also a strategic imperative, directly linked to operational quality and the attainment of long-term competitive advantage.

Given these considerations, the subject of this article holds both theoretical and practical relevance. It offers an opportunity to examine the impact of motivational tools on employee loyalty within the logistics sector and to substantiate the importance of an effective motivational system in fostering a sustainable organizational model.

Employee motivation and loyalty are among the most critical factors influencing organizational stability, productivity, and long-term competitiveness. Despite the widespread implementation of various motivational models, both public and private sector organizations continue to face high employee turnover, resulting in significant losses in quality and increased operational costs (Jacobson & Sowa, 2015). One of the key reasons behind this trend is the

insufficient emphasis placed on cultivating organizational culture—particularly the reinforcement of values related to employee loyalty.

Moreover, many organizations still tend to equate motivation exclusively with financial compensation, overlooking the evolving expectations of today's workforce. Younger generations increasingly seek meaningful work, opportunities for professional development, and a sense of inclusion and support within the organization (Vilkaitė-Vaitonė & Sologubas, 2019). These unmet needs contribute to declining job satisfaction and a weakened emotional connection between employees and their organizations, which in turn negatively impacts performance quality and the internal working climate.

Contemporary human resource management models emphasize the need for a holistic motivation strategy that integrates both intrinsic and extrinsic factors and addresses the diverse forms of employee loyalty (Deci & Ryan, 2008). However, such a balanced approach is still rarely implemented in practice. Therefore, it is highly relevant to investigate how different motivational tools influence employee loyalty and engagement, particularly within dynamic sectors such as logistics, where workforce retention is both a challenge and a strategic necessity.

Research aim is to analyze the impact of employee motivation practices on organizational loyalty within a logistics company.

Research objectives:

1. To analyze the theoretical concepts of employee motivation, motivational strategies, and organizational loyalty.
2. To evaluate the theoretical impact of motivational tools on employee loyalty.
3. To investigate the practical application of employee motivation methods and the level of loyalty among employees in a logistics company.
4. To reveal the relationship between implemented motivational strategies and employee loyalty in the context of a logistics company.

The research methodology. This study employed a mixed-method research design, combining analytical-descriptive and quantitative approaches. Theoretical analysis of the problem was conducted using methods of literature review, comparison, and synthesis, which enabled the conceptualization of the relationship between employee motivation and loyalty in the logistics sector.

For the empirical part, a quantitative research method was applied—namely, a structured questionnaire survey. The sample consisted of 64 employees from a single logistics company. A purposive sampling strategy was used, without classifying respondents by position or management level, to capture the overall perspective of employees regarding motivational practices and expressions of loyalty. Data collection was conducted online via the "apklausa.lt" platform. Respondents were informed about the purpose of the study, the anonymity of the data, and that the collected data would be used solely for aggregated analysis. The research was carried out in accordance with core ethical principles, including informed consent, voluntary participation, and confidentiality. Due to ethical considerations, the name of the logistics company is not disclosed in the article.

The research results. The findings revealed that financial incentives—such as salary, bonuses, and additional benefits—remain the most important motivators for employees in the logistics sector. However, when analyzing long-term loyalty, the significance of non-financial motivators became evident: employees highly value recognition, opportunities for professional development, and respectful relationships with management.

It was also observed that intrinsic motivation is closely linked to the employee's emotional connection with the organization, which plays a critical role in fostering loyalty. Furthermore, the study identified internal communication gaps—some employees reported not being fully informed about the motivational tools implemented in the organization. This lack of awareness undermines trust and reduces engagement.

For many respondents, loyalty appears to be driven more by rational factors—such as job security, working conditions, or personal benefits—than by emotional identification with the organization's values. These results support the theoretical notion that a long-term loyalty strategy must rely on a comprehensive approach, combining both material and psychological incentives. The research further demonstrated that the effectiveness of motivational tools depends on their alignment with employee needs, the organizational climate, and the presence of a clear feedback system.

Restrictions of the research. The study faced certain limitations that may affect the interpretation and generalizability of the findings. First, the research was conducted within a single logistics company, meaning the data reflect a specific organizational context that may not correspond to conditions in other organizations or sectors. This limits the potential for generalizing the results on a national or international scale.

Another notable limitation is the lack of respondent differentiation by job roles, management levels, or length of service. This approach prevented the identification of potential variations in motivation and loyalty expressions across employee subgroups, despite existing literature highlighting the importance of these variables.

Moreover, the study relied solely on quantitative data collected through a structured questionnaire, which restricted deeper exploration of employees' subjective experiences and perceptions. No qualitative methods—such as in-depth interviews or focus groups—were employed, which could have provided richer contextual insights and revealed underlying value-based attitudes.

Additionally, the results were based on self-reported data, which may be influenced by subjectivity, social desirability bias, or temporary emotional states. This necessitates caution when interpreting the data as objective indicators of motivation or loyalty.

These limitations indicate the need for future research to broaden the sample size, include multiple organizations, differentiate respondents by demographic and professional criteria, and employ mixed methods to capture both quantitative and qualitative insights.

Originality/Value of the article. The value of this study lies in its relevance and practical applicability for analyzing the relationship between employee motivation and loyalty in the logistics sector, where high turnover and limited employee engagement remain significant management challenges. While theoretical models widely address the concepts of motivation and loyalty, this study emphasizes the need to evaluate their interrelationship within a specific sector, taking into account the effectiveness of both intrinsic and extrinsic motivators in an organizational context.

The originality of the research is reflected in its integrated approach, analyzing the interaction between motivational tools and forms of loyalty in the practical setting of a logistics company, going beyond financial aspects alone. The study offers insights indicating that long-term employee loyalty is more often influenced by non-financial factors—such as recognition, development opportunities, and organizational climate—rather than solely by material rewards.

Moreover, the study contributes to the practice of human resource management by highlighting the importance of individualized and value-based motivational strategies in enhancing employee engagement and long-term loyalty. The insights gained are valuable not only for theoretical discourse on motivation–loyalty linkages but also for practical decision-making by managers in shaping effective motivational systems.

THEORETICAL ANALYSIS

Employee Motivation and Loyalty: Core Concepts. Employee motivation and loyalty are among the most important aspects of modern human resource management, with direct implications for work productivity, organizational culture, service quality, and long-term competitiveness. Over the past decade, a paradigm shift has become evident: motivation can no

longer be viewed solely through the lens of salaries and bonuses. Employees increasingly value meaning in their work, autonomy, opportunities for development, and emotional security (Deci & Ryan, 2017; Bakker & Albrecht, 2018).

Motivation, as a multidimensional concept, is defined as an internal stimulus or force that drives an individual to pursue specific goals. A motivated employee actively engages in the organization's activities, assumes responsibility for outcomes, and strives for high-quality performance. Intrinsic motivation is linked to job satisfaction, self-development, and a sense of meaning, while extrinsic motivation is associated with financial incentives, social status, or fear-based drivers (Kuvaas et al., 2016). Research indicates that, in the long term, intrinsic motivation is more sustainable and exerts a stronger influence on employee engagement and organizational loyalty (Newman et al., 2017).

Motivational practices refer to an organization's deliberate efforts to encourage employee behavior that aligns with its goals and values. Unlike motivation, which is an internal impulse to act, motivation management is an external managerial function involving the implementation of tools and mechanisms to influence, encourage, and maintain employee work behavior (Armstrong, 2014). These concepts align with Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), which highlights intrinsic motivation and the fulfilment of psychological needs as key drivers of human behavior.

Developing an effective motivational system requires attention to the diverse needs and values of employees. Contemporary organizations aiming to retain talent are increasingly implementing non-financial motivational strategies, including flexible work schedules, learning and development opportunities, internal career progression, participation in decision-making, and a positive psychological climate (Bakker & Albrecht, 2018). When applied appropriately, these measures contribute not only to improved performance but also to reduced employee turnover.

A critical component of any motivational system is psychological safety, which Edmondson and Lei (2014) define as the employee's belief that they can express themselves without fear of negative consequences. Such an environment fosters innovation, creativity, and collaboration, and is closely linked to employee loyalty by enhancing emotional attachment to the organization.

Employee loyalty is understood as a long-term commitment to the organization, rooted in identification with its mission, values, and culture (Dutta & Dhir, 2021). Recent studies view loyalty not merely as an outcome, but also as a manifestation of organizational citizenship behavior—a loyal employee not only remains with the organization but also actively contributes to its development (Tian et al., 2020).

Fostering loyalty requires consistent organizational effort. It goes beyond applying motivational tools to cultivating a culture of trust. According to Gashti et al. (2015), key indicators of loyalty include responsibility, honesty, dedication, and compliance, all of which are strongly linked to the organization's ability to provide value alignment and emotional security. This suggests that loyalty is not just a trait of the employee, but also a reflection of the organization's reputation, culture, and behavior.

Organizations that promote autonomy, empower decision-making, communicate core values, and operate ethically are more likely to foster loyalty based on trust and commitment—rather than fear or financial dependence (Deci & Ryan, 2017; Dutta & Dhir, 2021). This form of loyalty is more resilient and contributes to organizational stability even during times of crisis.

Employee Motivation Tools. Employee motivation remains one of the most relevant elements of human resource management, as it directly influences employee engagement, productivity, organizational loyalty, and the ability to adapt to rapidly changing labor market conditions. In the past decade, motivation strategies have undergone significant

transformations—shifting from a narrow focus on financial rewards to approaches grounded in self-fulfilment, emotional well-being, and organizational culture (Kehoe & Wright, 2013).

The effectiveness of motivational tools depends on their differentiation, contextual relevance, and alignment with the employee's hierarchy of needs. Organizations that apply a universal, one-size-fits-all motivational model often face limited effectiveness and reduced employee engagement. As a result, there is a growing emphasis on hybrid motivation systems, where material and non-material incentives operate in synergy (Bakker & Albrecht, 2018).

Table 1 below presents a classification of motivational tools, distinguishing between tangible and intangible measures, and highlighting their respective influence on employee behavior and loyalty.

Table 1. Classification of Tangible and Intangible Employee Motivation Tools

Motivation Tool	Category	Impact Area
Salary and bonuses	Tangible – Financial	Reflects contribution; satisfies basic needs
Health insurance, vacation compensation	Tangible – Social	Demonstrates care for health and employee well-being
Recognition (individual/public)	Intangible – Psychological	Enhances self-esteem; reinforces sense of purpose and significance
Delegation of responsibility	Intangible – Managerial	Promotes autonomy, trust, and professional growth
Psychological safety	Intangible – Emotional	Fosters an open, collaborative work environment
Hybrid work model	Intangible – Organizational	Provides flexibility; supports work–life balance
Mentorship, coaching	Intangible – Developmental	Encourages learning, knowledge sharing, and career planning
Gamification elements (points, challenges)	Intangible – Motivational	Increases engagement and team collaboration, especially among younger employees
Well-being programs	Intangible – Social	Supports physical and emotional health, stress management
Individualized goals and feedback	Intangible – Managerial	Strengthens accountability and manager–employee connection
Flexible vacation planning	Intangible – Work Environment	Improves work–life balance and fosters mutual trust

Source: compiled based on Armstrong & Taylor (2020), Fayad & Easa (2020), Kehoe & Wright (2013), Edmondson (2019), Paluckaitė (2022).

One of the most relevant aspects of modern employee motivation is involvement in organizational decision-making. Empowered employees feel not only responsible but also integral to the success of the organization. This enhances their self-confidence, loyalty, and reduces internal conflicts (Bailey et al., 2017). This principle is particularly significant in fostering a culture of participative leadership.

In addition, psychological safety, as defined by Edmondson (2019), has emerged as a cornerstone of effective motivation. Employees who are free to express opinions, acknowledge mistakes, and initiate change demonstrate higher levels of engagement. Research has shown that such environments significantly improve team performance and innovation (Newman et al., 2017).

Another growing trend is the enhancement of employee autonomy. The ability to manage one’s own work schedule, choose methods, and prioritize tasks fosters greater job satisfaction and trust in the organization. This practice is increasingly vital in the context of hybrid work models (Viningienė, 2021).

Professional development remains a strategic pillar of motivation. Mentoring programs, internal training, and continuous learning opportunities cultivate long-term employee

commitment and a shared path of growth with the organization (Kehoe & Wright, 2013). At the same time, these practices contribute to the accumulation of organizational knowledge capital.

Motivational feedback is a fundamental element of human resource management. It helps employees understand what they are doing well and where there is room for improvement. Studies indicate that regular, constructive feedback is directly correlated with job satisfaction and performance improvement (Bakker & Albrecht, 2018).

Finally, work–life balance is becoming an increasingly recognized organizational priority. Flexible working hours, the ability to self-manage vacation time, and family support initiatives contribute to employee well-being, reduce burnout risk, and strengthen the emotional bond between employee and organization (Grawitch et al., 2016; Paluckaitė, 2022).

The Importance of Employee Loyalty to the Organization. In today's organizational practice, employee loyalty is becoming an increasingly significant factor, influencing not only the stability of human resources but also the long-term success and competitive resilience of the entire organization. Loyalty is not merely the decision of an employee to remain with the company; it also represents an emotional and value-based connection with the employer, a sense of identification with the organization's mission, vision, and goals. This relationship is complex and multidimensional, encompassing both rational and emotional elements of employee decision-making. Research shows that organizations capable of fostering high levels of employee loyalty experience lower turnover rates, higher productivity, and a stronger organizational culture (Mory, Wirtz & Göttel, 2016; Dhir, Dutta & Ghosh, 2019).

Employee loyalty is often explained through three key dimensions: affective, continuance, and normative commitment, as proposed in Meyer and Allen's Three-Component Model.

- Affective commitment is based on emotional attachment to the organization, alignment with its values, and job satisfaction.
- Continuance commitment relates to the perceived costs—financial or social—of leaving the organization.
- Normative commitment stems from a moral obligation to stay, often shaped by cultural norms or organizational ethics (Allen & Meyer, 2016). Although one dimension may dominate in different contexts, only the combination of all three ensures a sustainable level of loyalty.

Affective loyalty is particularly important for organizations aiming to cultivate an innovative, responsible, and value-driven work environment. Employees who feel a strong emotional connection to their employer are more likely to demonstrate high levels of engagement, deliver better performance, and remain in the organization long term. This is especially relevant in talent retention strategies in sectors marked by high employee turnover or demanding working conditions (Kim, Im & Qu, 2018).

The development of loyalty is closely linked to the internal organizational culture. A positive, value-oriented culture not only shapes desirable behavior but also strengthens employees' internal commitment. Such an environment is characteristic of organizations that promote transparent communication, empathetic leadership, employee participation in decision-making, and genuine opportunities for professional development. Empirical research highlights that managerial behavior has a significant impact on employee loyalty: leadership that is empathetic and responsive to employee needs fosters a climate of trust, which, in turn, strengthens the emotional bond between employees and the organization.

From an economic perspective, strengthening employee loyalty is a cost-effective investment. Employee turnover not only increases recruitment, training, and onboarding costs but also disrupts the continuity of organizational knowledge and team cohesion. Loyal employees, who possess a deep understanding of the organization's operations, create greater value for clients, enhance service quality, and reduce the likelihood of errors. Moreover, they

are more likely to recommend the organization as an attractive workplace, contributing to the development of a positive employer brand (Saks, 2022).

An essential dimension of loyalty formation is employee engagement, which is closely tied to psychological safety, a culture of trust, and personal autonomy in the workplace. Employees who are given the opportunity to participate in decision-making, plan their own tasks, and apply their competencies feel valued and integral to the life of the organization. This not only promotes loyalty but also fosters innovation and accountability. Furthermore, recent studies emphasize the importance of employee well-being—investments in psychological resilience, work–life balance, and flexible work arrangements directly support the strengthening of employee loyalty (Jung & Takeuchi, 2018).

The Impact of Motivational Tools on Employee Loyalty. Employee motivation is one of the key drivers of organizational success, as it directly influences not only productivity and job satisfaction, but also employee loyalty. Properly implemented motivation tools contribute to higher employee commitment, reduced turnover, and increased employer attractiveness in the labor market (Gavėnaitė, 2020).

In academic literature, motivation is commonly defined as a psychological process that directs individual behavior toward specific goals. According to Deci and Ryan (2018), motivation should be viewed through the lens of intrinsic and extrinsic factors—where intrinsic motivation is driven by a desire for self-development and personal fulfilment, and extrinsic motivation arises from rewards or external incentives. Herzberg's two-factor theory further emphasizes that *hygiene factors* (e.g., salary, working conditions) are essential for preventing dissatisfaction, but only *motivators* (e.g., recognition, responsibility, growth opportunities) ensure long-term motivation and loyalty (Adomaitienė & Zubrickienė, 2015).

Motivated employees tend to be more engaged in organizational life, show greater initiative, and contribute actively to the achievement of common goals. These individuals often demonstrate a stronger emotional connection to the organization, which is the foundation of loyalty. Loyalty formation is a complex process that involves not only emotional attachment but also a rational evaluation of the benefits of staying and a sense of obligation (Vasiliauskas, 2021). Contemporary research highlights that organizational culture, leadership style, and employee participation in decision-making are critical elements in shaping loyalty (Viningienė, 2021).

Employee motivation is strengthened not only by financial incentives but also by non-financial tools—such as improved working conditions, flexible schedules, psychological safety, opportunities for professional development, and a clear career trajectory. According to Fayad and Easa (2020), such factors foster long-term employee engagement and help create a strong emotional bond with the organization. Empirical studies confirm that organizations offering opportunities for involvement in decision-making processes are more likely to have highly loyal employees (Gecti & Zengin, 2013).

Leadership plays a significant role in the context of motivation and loyalty. Romerytė-Šereikienė (2017) emphasizes that a manager's ability to recognize individual employee needs, provide meaningful feedback, and build respectful relationships is essential for fostering loyalty. Leaders who practice empathy and support contribute to greater employee engagement and reduce the intention to leave the organization.

Strengthening loyalty requires a dynamic, consistent, and strategic organizational approach that integrates both high-level decision-making and day-to-day management actions. Employee inclusion, the analysis of personal and professional needs, and the creation of a motivational environment are all prerequisites for long-term employee commitment (Okunevičiūtė Neverauskienė et al., 2021).

In summary, employee motivation and loyalty are closely related, multidimensional, and dynamic processes that play a fundamental role in organizational sustainability and

competitiveness. These processes depend on internal psychological factors, external incentives, employee expectations, generational value differences, and the uniqueness of organizational culture. Ensuring alignment among these factors requires a comprehensive approach to human resource management, the application of differentiated motivational tools, and the development of a values-based work environment.

A successful motivation system is grounded in a balanced use of material and non-material incentives—ranging from salary and social security to psychological safety, recognition, self-realization, and professional growth. Only such a multi-layered strategy can foster employee engagement, job satisfaction, and a strong emotional connection to the organization.

Employee loyalty, as a form of long-term commitment, is inseparable from the quality of leadership, transparency of communication, and opportunities for employees to meaningfully participate in organizational life. Organizations that cultivate an inclusive, value-driven culture not only reduce turnover but also enhance innovation, responsibility, and collaboration.

Therefore, an effective motivation and loyalty strategy is not only a challenge for human resource management but also a long-term investment in organizational cohesion, growth, and resilience in the face of a constantly changing environment.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Methods. This study applied a mixed-method approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative analytical perspectives.

In the theoretical part, an analytical-descriptive method was used, which included the analysis, systematization, comparison, and synthesis of scientific literature and theoretical concepts. This analysis served as the basis for formulating the study's assumptions regarding the impact of employee motivation tools on organizational loyalty.

In the empirical part, a quantitative research method was employed, specifically a standardized questionnaire survey. The survey was administered electronically using the *Microsoft Forms* platform. The research instrument—a structured questionnaire—was developed based on the motivational and loyalty dimensions discussed in the theoretical framework, such as intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, job satisfaction, psychological safety, and organizational commitment.

The questionnaire included both closed-ended questions assessed using Likert scales and open-ended questions designed to capture deeper respondent insights. The use of a standardized survey method allowed for systematic and efficient data collection on employees' perceptions of motivation tools and their loyalty to the organization.

Given the study's aim—to examine how motivational tools affect employee loyalty—a quantitative approach was appropriate for analyzing individual experiences, opinions, and subjective evaluations. The survey method provided a structured format for presenting questions and enabled objective comparison of the responses. Since motivation and loyalty are multidimensional and subjective constructs, quantitative assessment allowed for the generalization of data as well as the statistical analysis of correlations between different variables.

The survey was distributed electronically, ensuring quick and convenient access to respondents and enabling a larger sample size. This method is particularly suitable for organizational research aimed at capturing the collective experiences of a workforce. Furthermore, the questionnaire format ensured anonymity and confidentiality, which is crucial when examining sensitive topics such as employee emotions, relationships with management, or job satisfaction. Anonymity helps reduce social desirability bias and encourages more honest responses, thereby increasing the reliability of the data.

The survey method not only helped evaluate the current situation within the logistics company but also provided practical insights into improving motivation systems and increasing employee engagement (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2019).

Statistical Data Analysis Methods. The research data were processed using Microsoft Excel. The collected responses were entered into spreadsheets, and tables and charts were created to summarize and visually present the results. Descriptive analysis was performed to interpret the data in a clear and structured manner.

Characteristics of the Research Sample. The target population of this study consisted of administrative employees of a logistics company, totalling 130 individuals. The sample size was calculated using Panerio's formula, which is designed to determine the required number of respondents when the total population size and acceptable margin of error are known. With a selected margin of error of 10%, the minimum sample size was determined to be 57 participants. To ensure the reliability of the results and account for potential non-responsiveness, 64 employees participated in the survey, thereby exceeding the minimum required sample size.

This sample size met the representativeness and reliability criteria typically applied to small populations. As such, the findings are considered valid for making generalizable conclusions about the broader employee group within the organization. Respondents were selected regardless of job position or hierarchical level, in order to capture a wide range of employee perspectives. This approach enabled a more holistic understanding of the motivational practices applied within the organization and their relationship with employee loyalty.

Research Organization. The research process was carried out systematically to ensure methodological consistency and data reliability.

In the first stage (January 2025), the research topic, aim, and objectives were formulated, forming the basis for the entire research design.

The second stage (October 2024 – April 2025) involved a comprehensive literature review, which helped to identify theoretical aspects of employee motivation and loyalty and to justify the relevance of the research problem.

During the third stage (March 2025), the research methodology was developed, including the selection of the research approach, calculation of the sample size, and the design of the research instrument—a structured questionnaire.

The fourth stage involved empirical data collection through a quantitative survey, conducted via a self-administered questionnaire distributed electronically to employees of the logistics company (March–April 2025). The questionnaire was developed based on academic sources and included both closed-ended questions and one open-ended question to capture in-depth insights.

In the fifth and final stage (May 2025), the collected data were analyzed, and research findings were interpreted.

Research Ethics. The research was conducted in strict compliance with ethical principles of academic research, ensuring the protection of participants' rights, dignity, data privacy, and research transparency. Participants were fully informed in advance about the purpose, nature, and intended use of the data, as well as the measures taken to ensure anonymity.

Participation in the study was entirely voluntary, with no pressure placed on individuals to take part. Respondents retained the right to withdraw at any point during the research process. The research adhered to the core principles outlined in ethical codes of conduct, including respect for persons, beneficence, justice, and confidentiality.

Participants were assured that their responses would not be interpreted in a judgmental manner, and that all conclusions would be based solely on aggregated data, ensuring neutrality and objectivity in analysis.

RESEARCH RESULTS AND DATA ANALYSIS

Demographic Profile of Respondents. The survey included a total of 64 respondents. In terms of gender distribution, 61% of participants identified as male, 36% as female, and 3% selected another gender category.

Regarding educational background, 47% of respondents held a university-level degree, while 38% had a non-university higher education qualification. The remaining 16% were evenly split between vocational education and secondary education, with each category accounting for 8% of the sample.

Age distribution revealed that the largest group of respondents (48%) fell within the 26–35 age range. Respondents under the age of 25 made up 20% of the sample, 36–45-year-olds accounted for 19%, and 11% were aged between 46–55. The smallest age group, comprising respondents over the age of 56, represented just 2% of the total.

In terms of length of employment, 41% of employees had worked at the company for 4 to 10 years, while 31% had been employed for 1 to 3 years. Only 7% had been with the company for more than a decade. These findings suggest a moderate level of workforce stability, with a notable potential for turnover among newer employees.

An analysis of job roles showed a predominance of specialists such as managers, accountants, and human resource personnel. However, 81% of respondents did not hold managerial positions, indicating that the study primarily reflects the perspectives of non-managerial staff.

Further analysis of education levels by position revealed notable differences. Among those in managerial roles, the majority held either non-university higher education degrees (50%) or university degrees (41.7%), and none reported vocational education. In contrast, non-managerial employees were also primarily university-educated, but 9.6% held vocational qualifications. These results suggest that education plays a significant role in career progression within this sector, and that practice-oriented higher education is particularly valued in managerial contexts.

Analysis of the Importance of Employee Motivation and Loyalty in a Logistics Company. Respondents were asked to evaluate the perceived importance of various motivational tools. The data presented in Table 2 clearly indicate that financial incentives have the strongest impact on employee motivation within the logistics company.

Table 2. Importance of Employee Motivation Tools (in %)

Criterion	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Higher salary increases my motivation.	4.7	1.6	7.8	21.9	64.1
Bonuses and financial incentives encourage me to strive for better results.	1.6	4.7	6.2	28.1	59.4
Material benefits (e.g., car, phone) influence my job satisfaction.	4.7	4.7	12.5	26.6	51.6
Health insurance or other financial perks increase my loyalty to the company.	1.6	7.8	10.9	32.8	46.9
Long-term financial stability encourages me to stay in the organization.	1.6	4.7	10.9	31.2	51.6

Source: compiled by the author based on the research data, 2025.

The data shows that financial incentives play a crucial role in employee motivation and loyalty. Specifically, 64.1% of respondents strongly agreed and 21.9% agreed that a higher salary increases their motivation, indicating that nearly 86% see pay as a central motivator.

Similarly, 87.5% agreed that bonuses and financial rewards encourage them to perform better, confirming the effectiveness of short-term financial incentives. Material benefits—like company cars or phones—also had a positive impact, with 78.2% of respondents acknowledging they contribute to job satisfaction. Though these may not affect the core job tasks, they enhance the overall work experience. Health insurance and similar financial perks were strongly associated with employee loyalty: 79.7% of respondents agreed they increase their commitment to the company. Finally, long-term financial stability was valued by 82.8% of employees, emphasizing the importance of security and future assurance. Overall, the results underline that financial and material motivators are not only essential for satisfaction but also for retaining employees. Organizations should focus on maintaining competitive salaries, performance-based bonuses, and comprehensive benefit packages to strengthen both motivation and long-term loyalty.

The next objective of the study was to assess employees' understanding of motivation and loyalty (3 table).

Table 3. Employees' Understanding of Motivation and Loyalty (in %)

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Partially Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I understand how motivation affects my job performance.	1.6	9.4	7.8	29.7	51.6
I know the difference between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.	1.6	3.1	25.0	43.8	26.6
My motivation to work depends on meaning and personal satisfaction.	1.6	3.1	20.3	46.9	28.7
I am aware of the motivational tools most commonly used in our company.	12.5	10.9	31.2	31.2	14.1
I can identify which motivational tools most effectively encourage me.	4.7	6.2	18.8	28.1	42.2
I believe that the motivational tools applied by my manager affect my work attitude.	7.8	7.8	18.8	39.1	26.6
I believe that employee loyalty depends not only on salary but also on the work environment.	4.7	3.1	12.5	29.7	50.0
Loyalty to the employer means long-term commitment to the company.	6.2	7.8	12.5	43.8	29.7
Motivation and loyalty are closely related.	3.1	4.7	10.9	43.8	37.5

Source: compiled by the author based on the research data, 2025.

The data reveals that most employees understand how motivation impacts their performance (81.3%) and value intrinsic drivers like meaning and satisfaction (70.4%). However, only 14.1% strongly agree they know the motivational tools used in the company, pointing to weak internal communication. While 70.3% can identify what motivates them personally, just 65.7% feel that managerial efforts influence their attitude. On loyalty, 79.7% believe it depends on both salary and work environment, and 81.3% agree motivation and loyalty are closely linked. Overall, employees are aware of motivation's role, but the organization should improve communication and align motivation strategies with employee expectations.

The study also aimed to determine the current level of employee motivation and its correlation with length of service. The majority of respondents (approximately 63%) reported having a moderate level of motivation. Meanwhile, as many as one-third of employees indicated a low level of motivation, and only 8% assessed their motivation as high. This trend reflects a generally weak motivational climate within the organization. Such a situation can directly impact employee productivity, engagement, and job satisfaction. The low proportion of highly

motivated employees suggests that the organization is not fully utilizing the potential of its workforce and may face challenges such as high turnover, demotivation, or emotional disengagement. When analyzing differences in motivation by length of service, it becomes evident that the lowest levels of motivation are observed among mid-tenure employees (4–10 years), with 57.9% of them reporting low motivation. A similar situation is seen among those with 1–3 years of experience (26.3% reporting low motivation). In contrast, newly hired employees (less than 1 year) and long-term employees (more than 10 years) report higher levels of motivation – 60%. This may be linked to initial enthusiasm, belief in new career opportunities, or strategic onboarding processes. Long-term employees, on the other hand, may experience professional stability, a strong sense of belonging to the organization, and greater autonomy, all of which can positively influence motivation. However, the low motivation among mid-tenure employees is concerning. This may stem from a sense of professional stagnation, repetitive tasks, lack of career advancement opportunities, or an ineffective motivational system. This employee segment is often considered critical to organizational stability, meaning a decline in their motivation may result in long-term negative consequences. In summary, the findings emphasize the need for targeted actions—enhancing engagement among mid-tenure employees through career planning, recognition, individualized incentives**,** and effective internal communication. At the same time, it's important to maintain the initial motivational mindset of new hires and foster long-term loyalty through professional development opportunities.

It was also important during the research to determine employees' attitudes toward loyalty (Table 4)

Table 4. Employees' Attitudes Toward Loyalty (in %)

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Partly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I feel a duty to stay in this organization due to its importance to society.	12.5%	28.1%	26.6%	17.2%	15.6%
Working in this company, I feel I contribute to meaningful work.	3.1%	12.5%	40.6%	31.2%	12.5%
I believe that leaving this organization would mean betraying my commitments to it.	9.4%	26.6%	39.1%	18.8%	6.2%
I am loyal to this organization because it aligns with my personal values and beliefs.	9.4%	15.6%	32.8%	26.6%	15.6%
Even when facing difficulties at work, my inner values prevent me from easily deciding to leave.	6.2%	12.5%	37.5%	25.0%	18.8%

Source: compiled by the author based on the research data, 2025.

The data presented in Table 4 indicates that employee loyalty in the organization is more rooted in personal values and a sense of meaningful contribution than in societal impact or moral obligation. Only 32.8% of respondents agree or strongly agree that they feel a duty to stay due to the organization's societal importance, while 40.6% disagree. However, a stronger connection emerges in statements related to personal alignment: 42.2% agree or strongly agree that the company matches their values, and 43.8% state their inner values discourage them from leaving during challenges. Additionally, 43.7% feel they contribute to meaningful work, suggesting that emotional and value-based factors do influence loyalty, but are not dominant across the board. In sum, loyalty here is moderately affective and value-driven, with potential to be strengthened by reinforcing alignment with employee beliefs and emphasizing meaningful contributions.

Interaction Between Employee Loyalty and Motivation in a Logistics Company. The data from Table 5 confirms that employee loyalty in this logistics company is primarily conditional and based on personal gain, rather than rooted in emotional attachment or shared values. As

many as 64.1% of employees indicated they would consider leaving the organization if offered greater financial security elsewhere. Moreover, over half of the respondents view remaining in the company as an economically beneficial decision.

Table 5. Respondents' Evaluation of Their Situation in the Current Workplace (in %)

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Partially Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I remain with this organization because it is the most economically beneficial option.	4.7	10.9	29.7	31.2	23.4
If I received a better offer that ensured greater financial security, I would consider leaving.	3.1	7.8	25.0	39.1	25.0
By staying with this organization, I gain more than I would lose by leaving.	4.7	15.6	35.9	32.8	10.9
My loyalty to this organization depends on opportunities for professional growth and income increase.	4.7	15.6	21.9	35.9	21.9
I would remain in the organization as long as my job offers better conditions than alternatives.	6.2	9.4	25.0	31.2	28.1

Source: compiled by the author based on the research data, 2025.

Opportunities for professional growth and improved working conditions are key factors in maintaining employee loyalty. In order to retain its workforce, the company must not only offer a competitive financial compensation package but also provide clear long-term development prospects, enhance communication regarding employee benefits, and actively monitor and respond to employee expectations.

The study also examined respondents' views on why it is important to remain part of the organization for a long time (Table 6).

Table 6. Respondents' Opinions on Why It Is Important to Remain Part of the Organization Long-Term (%)

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
The material benefits provided by the company (e.g., bonuses, health insurance, transportation compensation) are an important factor in my decision to stay.	15.6%	7.8%	25.0%	18.8%	32.8%
I feel that my work experience in this organization is important for my professional future.	6.2%	7.8%	20.3%	42.2%	23.4%
Long-term employment prospects in this organization are important to me because of stability and financial security.	3.1%	4.7%	26.6%	42.2%	23.4%
I would stay in this organization because I might lose current privileges and financial security elsewhere.	10.9%	14.1%	34.4%	18.8%	21.9%

Source: compiled by the author based on the research data, 2025.

The data from Table 6 reveals a unified respondent perspective regarding the importance of employee motivation — more than 90% agree with statements emphasizing its relevance to organizational success, productivity, goal achievement, and loyalty. This indicates a high level of organizational awareness and opens the door for developing targeted motivation strategies aligned with employee expectations. Companies aiming for operational effectiveness should view these results as a foundation for strengthening their motivation systems and actively communicating them across the workforce.

The study was important to determine what drives employee loyalty (Table 7).

Table 7. Distribution of Respondents by What Encourages Their Loyalty (%)

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I feel a strong emotional connection with my workplace.	7.8%	12.5%	26.6%	26.6%	20.3%
I feel valued as an employee in this organization.	6.2%	9.4%	39.1%	39.1%	12.5%
I am proud to be part of this organization.	3.1%	12.5%	39.1%	39.1%	9.4%
I feel safe and secure about my future in this workplace.	6.2%	7.8%	45.3%	45.3%	12.5%
Even if I received a better job offer, I would consider staying because of the team and organizational culture.	10.9%	14.1%	34.4%	34.4%	17.2%
I value the company's goals and values because they align with my personal beliefs.	4.7%	14.1%	25.0%	25.0%	18.8%
I feel that my work contributes to the success of the organization, and that motivates me.	6.2%	9.4%	29.7%	29.7%	18.8%

Source: compiled by the author based on the research data, 2025.

Table 7 supports the conclusion that the work environment is a crucial factor influencing employee motivation and loyalty. More than 80% of respondents identified the work environment as important or very important, highlighting its role not only in productivity but also in fostering long-term employee commitment. These findings align with contemporary organizational behavior theories, which view the work environment as a key element in promoting emotional well-being and employee engagement.

Scientific Discussion. Based on Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan), the core components of the theory can be linked to the findings of this study on employee motivation and loyalty. The table 8 below summarizes how the survey results reflect the key elements of the theory: autonomy, competence, and relatedness.

Table 8. Expression of Self-Determination Theory Components in the Logistics Company Employee Survey

Theory Component	Survey Indicator	Key Results (%)	Interpretation
Autonomy	"I can identify which motivational tools most effectively encourage me to perform better"	42.2% strongly agree, 28.1% agree	A significant portion of employees feel in control and capable of recognizing what motivates them — indicating a partial sense of autonomy.
	"Motivational tools used by my manager influence my attitude toward work"	26.6% strongly agree, 39.1% agree	While managerial influence is strong, increased support from managers could further foster independent thinking and initiative among employees.
Competence	"I understand how motivation affects my work performance"	51.6% strongly agree, 29.7% agree	Employees perceive a clear link between motivation and performance, indicating confidence in their own abilities.
	"My motivation depends on the meaning and satisfaction I get from work"	28.7% strongly agree, 46.9% agree	Intrinsic motivation is tied to a sense of competence, which is reinforced by meaningful work.
Relatedness	"Loyalty to the employer means a long-term commitment to the company"	29.7% strongly agree, 43.8% agree	Reflects emotional connection, loyalty, and psychological attachment to the organization.

Theory Component	Survey Indicator	Key Results (%)	Interpretation
	"Even when facing difficulties at work, my values prevent me from easily deciding to leave"	18.8% strongly agree, 25% agree	Strong indicators of internal relatedness and moral obligation.

Source: compiled by the author based on the research data, 2025.

The research data reveals that the core components of Self-Determination Theory are partially reflected in the responses of employees from the examined logistics company:

- **Autonomy** is not fully developed — while employees are aware of what motivates them and feel some control over their motivation, the prominent role of the manager suggests that their experience of independence can still be enhanced.
- **Competence** is clearly expressed — the majority of employees understand the impact of motivation on their work performance and recognize the meaningfulness of their tasks, which indicates confidence in their ability to work effectively.
- **Relatedness** to the organization emerges through a sense of long-term commitment and willingness to stay despite challenges. However, this emotional component could be strengthened through clearer communication of the company's values and mission.

The study highlights that employee motivation can be further enhanced by improving their sense of autonomy and deepening their connection to the organization's goals and values — aligning closely with the principles of Self-Determination Theory.

According to Meyer and Allen's model, the research data indicates that continuance commitment is the dominant form of employee loyalty in the organization, as most employees choose to stay due to personal benefit or job stability (table 9).

The affective commitment — emotional attachment to the organization — does exist but is not particularly strong across the entire workforce. Meanwhile, normative commitment — the sense of moral obligation to remain with the company — appears to be the weakest, indicating a low level of value-based or ethical attachment.

Table 9. Employee Loyalty Assessment According to Meyer and Allen's Three-Component Model

Component	Evaluation Criterion	Agreement Rate (%)	Insight
Affective	"By working in this company, I feel that I contribute to meaningful activity."	43.7% agree or strongly agree	A segment of employees feels emotionally connected to their work, but the emotional bond is not dominant.
Continuance	"By staying in this organization, I gain more than I would lose if I left." *(from Table 12)*	43.7% agree or strongly agree	Loyalty is largely based on rational evaluation of benefits and stability.
Normative	"I believe that leaving the organization would be a betrayal of my commitment to it."	Only 25% agree or strongly agree	Moral or value-based loyalty is relatively weak among employees.

Source: compiled by the author based on the research data, 2025.

The affective commitment — emotional attachment to the organization — does exist but is not particularly strong across the entire workforce. Meanwhile, normative commitment — the sense of moral obligation to remain with the company — appears to be the weakest, indicating a low level of value-based or ethical attachment.

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This suggests that to strengthen employee loyalty, the organization should go beyond merely ensuring financial security. It should also focus on fostering emotional connections and aligning organizational values with those of employees, in order to enhance both affective and normative commitment

The study conducted within a logistics sector organization revealed that financial incentives—such as salary, bonuses, and material benefits—are the most significant drivers of employee motivation. This finding aligns closely with Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, which classifies financial compensation as a hygiene factor: essential for satisfaction but insufficient for long-term motivation. Notably, 64.1% of employees fully agreed that a higher salary increases their motivation.

At the same time, intrinsic motivational factors—such as meaningful work and personal fulfilment—are also deemed important: 75.6% of employees indicated that their motivation depends on these elements. This supports the relevance of Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan) in this organizational context. However, the research also highlighted a lack of internal communication regarding motivational tools: only 14.1% of respondents stated they were aware of which motivational measures are being used in their workplace. This signals a communication gap that may adversely affect both motivation and loyalty.

Employee loyalty, according to the findings, appears to be more rational and benefit-oriented than emotional or value-driven—somewhat diverging from the affective commitment described in Meyer & Allen's Three-Component Model. For example, 54.6% of respondents would stay in the organization due to financial advantages, while only 32.8% agree that their personal values align with those of the organization.

This discussion highlights that motivation and loyalty are multifaceted constructs. Strengthening them requires more than just financial incentives—it also demands a focus on internal motivation, shared values, and a positive organizational culture.

CONCLUSIONS

1. The theoretical literature analysis revealed that employee motivation, incentivization, and loyalty are closely related yet distinct in nature. Motivation manifests as an internal or external stimulus to act, while incentivization refers to deliberate organizational measures to stimulate this motivation. Loyalty, meanwhile, is based on both emotional and rational commitment, which is rooted in long-term satisfaction with working conditions and alignment of values. The analysis of theoretical models and their components (e.g., Deci & Ryan’s Self-Determination Theory, Herzberg’s Two-Factor Theory, and Meyer & Allen’s Three-Component Model) supports the conclusion that an effective incentive system is a key factor in strengthening employee loyalty. The theoretical analysis demonstrated that employee loyalty is closely linked to the level of motivation experienced. Effective motivational tools, including financial incentives, recognition, growth opportunities, and a supportive work environment, contribute to long-term organizational commitment. Loyalty is fostered when employees feel their efforts are appreciated, working conditions are fair, and relationships with management and colleagues are constructive. Therefore, a diverse range of motivational strategies tailored to employee expectations is essential for strengthening loyalty.
2. Based on the theoretical analysis, motivational tools directly impact employee loyalty. It is observed that incentives focused not only on financial rewards but also on professional development, self-realization, and improved working conditions create a foundation for

long-term employee engagement. Properly selected and individually tailored incentives enhance job satisfaction and organizational commitment, making them a crucial factor in developing loyalty.

3. The empirical data revealed that the level of employee loyalty in the logistics company is moderate. Financial incentives dominate the motivation system—most employees view higher salaries, bonuses, and material benefits as the main motivators. However, a lack of information about the incentive tools used within the organization was also identified, which limits their effectiveness. The level of loyalty among employees is not uniform—it is more often driven by professional stability, value alignment, and a sense of purpose at work than by emotional attachment to the company. This indicates that while incentive tools are in place, their impact on loyalty can be strengthened through more targeted communication and the development of intrinsic motivational factors.
4. The study results revealed clear links between the applied incentive tools and employee loyalty within the logistics company. Findings show that employees who value financial incentives—such as salary, bonuses, and material/social benefits—are more likely to express a desire to stay with the organization and perceive it as a reliable employer. It was also observed that loyalty levels are higher among employees who experience professional growth opportunities and personal job satisfaction. However, this relationship is not one-directional—employees whose motivation is based solely on financial factors tend to be less emotionally committed, suggesting that ensuring long-term loyalty requires both material and intrinsic motivational strategies.

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THE EXPRESSION OF LEADERSHIP AMONG NURSES PROVIDING OUTPATIENT NURSING SERVICES

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Annotation

Meeting the healthcare needs of older adults is closely linked to health policy and the development of health strategies. The scientific literature provides ample information on population aging, associated health issues, and the formation and assurance of nursing leadership. However, there's a lack of data on ensuring nursing leadership in the delivery of outpatient home nursing services, which are provided by multidisciplinary teams and require leadership to guarantee the quality of personal healthcare services delivered.

A nursing leader is defined as a person capable of timely and coordinated management of actions by a team with the goal of delivering effective outpatient home nursing services. Every general practice nurse must possess nursing leadership competencies, as every area of general and specialized nursing practice demands the ability to make rapid, coordinated, and effective decisions. The study's findings revealed that outpatient nursing teams in the organization studied were formed not only based on legal regulations but also in accordance with institutional policy and patient needs. Although each team's composition complies with legal requirements, not all patients require all the specialists specified on the team—specialist needs vary depending on the patient's condition, needs, and/or preferences. It was found that study participants place significant emphasis on team formation, leadership, and ensuring service quality.

Keywords: leadership, nurses, home nursing, expression.

INTRODUCTION

Relevance and problem of the study. The issue of an aging population has been highlighted for quite some time in scientific literature, both in Lithuania and worldwide. Stumbrys (2021) notes that, according to United Nations data, Lithuania is among countries that have lost a significant portion of its population, attributing this to low birth rates and high mortality. Klugea et al. (2019), discussing the challenges of an aging European population, report that while the EU has expanded and regional cooperation has intensified over recent decades, both the EU and its member states face the challenges of integration processes. The authors identify demographic aging—population aging—as a primary issue, which will have serious consequences for the stability of the EU's economy and healthcare systems.

Scientific literature presents abundant data on population aging and its related health problems, as well as on the formation and assurance of nursing leadership. However, there is insufficient data on ensuring nursing leadership in the provision of outpatient home nursing services delivered by specialist teams, where leadership is necessary to guarantee the quality of personal healthcare services.

The official statistics portal (2023) indicates that across Lithuania, from 2019 onwards, there has been a steady increase in the proportion of older persons and the demographic aging coefficient. In the agenda of Lithuanian health policy makers, the provision of outpatient home nursing services is frequently discussed, with improvements in accessibility and adjustments in legal regulation. Legislation governing the accessibility of outpatient nursing services states that the nurse leads the team of specialists providing the service. However, the law does not define the concept of nursing leadership, nor specify requirements, competencies, or other related details. It should be noted that in providing outpatient home nursing services, responsibility and decision-making concerning patient care are shifted to the nurse. This creates a controversial situation—regardless of the nurse's experience or knowledge, leadership abilities are not evaluated, yet the nurse is entrusted with critical areas: coordinating home nursing services and making decisions that largely determine the patient's primary-level care. Thus, without a study on the expression of nurse leadership, it is impossible to assess the expectations and qualities required of a nursing leader.

Research objective. To analyze the expression of leadership among nurses providing outpatient nursing services.

Methodology. This study used a qualitative approach, specifically semi-structured interviews. Interviews, based on pre-prepared questions (informed by scientific literature), were conducted with 11 general practice nurses providing outpatient home nursing services.

Results. Outpatient nursing teams are formed considering legal regulations, institutional policy, and patient needs. Although each team aligns with legal requirements, not all patients need every specialist; specialist needs vary based on the patient's condition and requirements. Participants emphasized team formation, leadership, and service quality assurance. Only general practice nurses with the expected qualifications, experience, communication, and organizational skills are appointed as team leaders. Team leaders employ various motivational tools to achieve the best performance, resulting in better patient satisfaction, accessibility, and quality of services.

Originality/value of the study. These findings highlight the importance of nursing leadership in providing outpatient home nursing services. Healthcare institutions that deliver such services can use these results as a basis for shaping service quality.

METHODOLOGY

The study "Expression of Leadership Among Nurses Providing Outpatient Nursing Services" employed a qualitative research method. Qualitative research is used when it is important to analyze long-term individual or group behavior, aiming to understand actions, sensations, and the influence of physical, social, and psychological environments on individuals or groups (Kardelis, 2002). According to Rupšienė (2007), qualitative research is frequently chosen in health sciences because it helps to analyze individual behavior in specific environments and determine the exact causes of such behavior.

One of the most commonly used qualitative research methods is the semi-structured interview. As Gaižauskaitė and Valavičienė (2016) note, the interview is a well-known form of communication used to gather knowledge about various phenomena or to learn about personal experiences. In this study, it was important to determine nurses' opinions about outpatient nursing services as a phenomenon and to evaluate their personal experience in providing these services. For this reason, the semi-structured interview method was considered the most appropriate for this research. Each interview, with the participant's consent, was recorded and later transcribed. The transcribed data were categorized into themes and subthemes, allowing for analytical insights and the formulation of assumptions and conclusions.

A list of questions was prepared to conduct the semi-structured interviews, designed to reveal the processes of leadership expression among nurses providing outpatient nursing services. The interview questions were based on research by Jomaa et al., 2021; Costello et al., 2021; Kuosmanen et al., 2021; Martina et al., 2020; Gupta et al., 2020; Evert et al., 2019; Kaiser and Westers, 2018; Beatrice and Rochman, 2018; Ervin et al., 2018; Smith et al., 2018; Massimi et al., 2017; Durrani, 2016; Cooper et al., 2016; Salem et al., 2016; Catalyst, 2015; Robson, 2015; Burman and Robinson, 2013; Andersen et al., 2010; Jha and Epstein, 2010; Tregunno et al., 2009; Sargeant et al., 2008; Salas et al., 2008; Cummings et al., 2008; White and Latif, 2006; Leonard et al., 2004. A total of 25 questions were developed and grouped into blocks: sociodemographic questions, questions about team organization, team members' competencies, leadership, and meeting patients' needs.

The study was conducted in a licensed primary health care institution that has received a license from the State Health Care Accreditation Agency under the Ministry of Health (SAM), granting the right to provide outpatient nursing services at home. For convenience and timely implementation of interviews, the selected health care institution was one that provides outpatient nursing services in Klaipėda city and district. It is important to note that the

geographical location of the institution has no significant impact on the information obtained, as the legal requirements for providing personal health care services are uniform across all healthcare institutions operating in Lithuania.

The researcher submitted a written request to the selected health care institution where outpatient personal health care services are provided. The request included the study's objective, ensured the confidentiality of the study results and participants, and asked for permission to conduct interviews with nurses providing outpatient services. The institution responded positively and granted permission to conduct the research. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 11 nurses.

In conducting the interviews, ethical principles defined by Cook (2018) and Knolt (2020) were followed: to recognize and respect the autonomy of the individual, their freedom to participate or refuse participation (participants were informed about the purpose of the study and how the empirical data would be used; all agreed to participate voluntarily based on comprehensive information); to sufficiently inform the (potential) participant about the study (participants were clearly informed about the research purpose, methods, and their role in the study); to protect participant anonymity, confidentiality, and privacy (no identifying demographic data were collected; data coding ensured confidentiality; no sensitive information was disclosed; data in the dissertation are presented in a way that does not allow linking interviews to specific individuals or institutions); and to ensure participant safety and avoid or minimize any potential moral harm (participants were given the opportunity to be interviewed in a safe, comfortable location of their choice).

RESEARCH RESULTS AND DATA ANALYSIS

The information provided by the study participants indicates that the team in the studied organization consists of nurses, nursing assistants, physiotherapists, and occupational therapists. When necessary, a medical psychologist is included in the team. The analysis of the study data revealed that members of the studied organization receive information about the required team composition through staff meetings, mobile applications, or directly from managers.

Although the composition of outpatient home nursing teams is strictly regulated by law, the study participants identified additional internal and external organizational factors influencing team formation—such as the request for a specific specialist, patient preferences, and competencies. The composition of each team formed in the studied organization varies depending on the patient's health condition and assessed needs. According to the study participants, severely ill patients do not always require all the specialists mandated by law.

Analysis of team member functions and task distribution revealed that these are influenced by the legal framework, the decisions of the organization's manager, and the team leader—usually a nurse.

The study found that in the organization under study, the role of team leader is always assigned by the director to a nurse with the required competencies, and each nurse is typically responsible for 15–20 patients. According to the participants, successful team organization depends on factors such as the leader's ability to delegate tasks, the quality of communication between staff members, and conflict resolution.

Additional questions about conflicts within teams revealed that conflicts are most often related to differing perspectives among specialists of various qualifications (each specialist sees and evaluates the patient differently), and the infrequency of meetings intended to discuss the patient's condition also contributes to conflicts.

The study also found that team meetings to discuss patients' conditions are not only legally required but also essential for assessing the progression of the patient's health and making adjustments if needed. The results allowed the structuring of team organization into key

stages: assessment of patient needs and corresponding selection of team members, evaluation of results achieved by team members, discussion of results in case meetings, analysis of records in the electronic system, and final review of the outcomes.

It was found that all patient data are documented in electronic systems rather than on paper, which, according to the participants, complicates the tracking of nursing plan implementation and changes in the patient's condition. When discussing team members' competencies and their documentation in electronic systems, it was established that individual competencies and abilities become evident through the provision of services—especially in cases of severe patient conditions requiring specific knowledge. Furthermore, staff with longer work experience tend to have better-developed competencies, and the time devoted to competency development also has an impact.

The analysis of the competencies of outpatient home nursing teams revealed that the primary forms of competence development are independent learning, mandatory training, and online courses.

Nevertheless, the participants emphasized the importance of independent professional development and continuous knowledge enhancement:

"In our work, it is very important to independently keep up with innovations in nursing science." (Participant 4)
"When I receive a patient in a severe condition, it's logical that I can't know everything – in such cases, I need to analyze literature or review educational materials." (Participant 9)
"I believe that each of us must continuously improve ourselves and deepen our knowledge in specific areas, because there won't be time once we get a patient with special needs." (Participant 10)

During the analysis of the research results, considerable attention was given to the nursing leader – the team leader. The data obtained revealed that the study participants perceive the team leader as a qualified, communicative, dedicated professional, capable of coordinating tasks and demonstrating responsibility for the team members as individuals (see Table 1).

Table 1. Essential Qualities of a Team Leader

Category	Subcategory	Justification
Qualities of a Nursing Team Leader	Qualified	"<...> having sufficient knowledge in our work." (1)
		"With adequate experience and knowledge." (2)
	Communicative	"<...> communication means a lot, so it's essential for a leader." (4)
		"<...> must be able to communicate with both patients and colleagues <...>" (5)
	Dedicated to work	"Only someone who loves their work <...>" (6)
		"<...> dedication is important <...>" (8)
	Able to coordinate tasks	"Coordinated, distributes tasks properly <...>" (10)
		"<...> evaluates in time and points out what's wrong and what needs to be done differently <...>" (11)
	Responsible for team members	"It's important that they feel responsible for the decisions made, for themselves, and for us." (4)
		"<...> it's a responsible field, so every step must be well thought out <...>" (10)

Source: compiled by the authors, 2025

An important phase in team dynamics and successful teamwork depends on the motivation strategies applied. According to the study participants, the main motivational tools in their teams include verbal encouragement, financial bonuses, and informal gatherings.

An analysis of the measures ensuring and improving the accessibility of outpatient nursing services in the studied organization revealed that the main strategies, as mentioned by participants, include the implementation of legal regulations, execution of nursing care plans, and meeting patients' needs (see Table 2).

Table 2. Measures to Ensure Service Accessibility

Category	Subcategory	Justification
Ensuring Service Accessibility	Implementation of legal regulations	"<...> all services outlined in the nursing service provision description must be delivered <...>" (1)
		"<...> the necessary services are outlined in the minister's order <...>" (3)
	Implementation of nursing plans	"<...> many things must be planned in the nursing care plans and followed accordingly <...>" (7)
		"<...> we create a nursing plan and ensure the patient receives all essential services." (8)
	Meeting patient needs	"A set timeframe is defined in which services must be provided, but in practice, they usually start earlier <...>" (10)
		"Each patient has their own needs, so we must navigate between possibilities and expectations <...>" (11)

Source: compiled by the authors, 2025

When discussing quality assurance, participants emphasized the following elements: evaluating patient feedback, tracking the number of patients who discontinued services, conducting periodic assessments of service quality, and actual implementation of nursing care plans.

The analysis of research findings revealed that participants place great emphasis on team formation, leadership, and quality assurance. Leaders of established outpatient nursing teams are exclusively general practice nurses, who are expected by team members to possess qualifications, experience, communication skills, and organizational abilities. To achieve the best outcomes, team leaders implement various motivational strategies, resulting in better satisfaction of patient needs, improved service accessibility, and enhanced quality of care.

CONCLUSIONS

A nursing leader is defined as a person capable of timely and coordinated management of the actions of an assigned group – a team – aimed at delivering effective outpatient nursing services at home. A nursing team leader is considered to be an individual who, in accordance with legal regulations, has obtained the qualification of a general practice nurse and possesses the competencies necessary for organizing and evaluating nursing services for patients.

Nursing leadership competencies are essential in all personal healthcare activities where general and specialized nursing services are provided, regardless of the number of nurses involved in a particular activity. Every general practice nurse must have leadership competencies, as each area of general and specialized nursing requires the ability to make quick, coordinated, and effective decisions.

The study results revealed that outpatient nursing teams in the examined organization are formed not only based on legal regulations but also on institutional policies and patient needs. Although the composition of each team complies with the established legal regulations, not all patients require all of the specialists listed within the team – the need for specific specialists varies depending on the patient's condition, needs, and/or preferences.

The analysis of the research results showed that participants devote significant attention to team formation, leadership, and ensuring the quality of services. Only general practice nurses are appointed as leaders of the formed outpatient nursing teams, and these leaders are expected by team members to have qualifications, experience, communication skills, and the ability to organize work. To achieve the best outcomes in team performance, team leaders apply various motivational strategies, resulting in improved satisfaction of patient needs, accessibility of services, and quality of care.

The level of leadership expression among nurses providing outpatient nursing services includes their ability to ensure the effective functioning of home-based nursing teams. In the case studied, this leadership level meets the needs of the research participants, although team members do note certain shortcomings in practice.

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PREKĖS ŽENKLO AUTENTIŠKUMO BRUOŽŲ POVEIKIS UAB „KONTĖNA“ VARTOTOJŲ ELGSENAI

THE INFLUENCE OF BRAND AUTHENTICITY TRAITS ON CONSUMER BEHAVIOR IN UAB „KONTĖNA“

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Annotation

Brand authenticity is increasingly considered an important factor shaping consumer behavior and future markets. This study analyzes the theoretical aspects of brand authenticity and its impact on consumer behavior, particularly in the context of the UAB "Kontėna" brand. The aim of the research is to determine which authenticity traits influence consumer behavior. The study employs both qualitative and quantitative methods: semi-structured interviews with company employees and surveys with consumers. The key findings show that adherence to tradition, customer connection, handcrafted quality, transparency, values, and brand reputation significantly impact consumer trust, loyalty, and engagement. The study reveals that brand authenticity traits not only increase consumer trust but also encourage consumers to recommend the brand, thereby attracting new customers.

Keywords: brand authenticity, authenticity traits, consumer behavior, impact.

Anotacija

Prekės ženklo autentiškumas vis dažniau laikomas svarbiu faktoriumi, formuojančiu vartotojų elgseną ir ateities rinkas. Šiame tyrime analizuojami teoriniai prekės ženklų autentiškumo aspektai bei jų poveikis vartotojų elgsenai, ypač UAB „Kontėna“ prekės ženklo kontekste. Tyrimo tikslas – išsiaiškinti, kokie autentiškumo bruožai lemia vartotojų elgseną. Tyrimas apima kokybinį ir kiekybinį metodus: pusiau struktūruotą interviu su įmonės darbuotojais ir anketines apklausas su vartotojais. Pagrindiniai rezultatai rodo, kad tradicijų laikymasis, ryšys su vartotoju, rankų darbo kokybė, skaidrumas, vertybės ir prekės ženklo reputacija turi reikšmingą įtaką vartotojų pasitikėjimui, lojalumui ir įsitraukimui. Tyrimas atskleidžia, kad prekės ženklo autentiškumo bruožai ne tik didina vartotojų pasitikėjimą, bet ir skatina juos rekomenduoti prekės ženklą, taip pritraukiant naujus vartotojus.

Raktiniai žodžiai: prekės ženklo autentiškumas, autentiškumo bruožai, vartotojų elgsena, poveikis.

ĮVADAS

Tyrimo aktualumas ir problema. Daugelį metų tyrėjai nagrinėja priežastis, kurios gali lemti vartotojo domėjimąsi prekės ženklu, prisirišimą prie jo ir norą pakartotinai pirkti. Todėl vis daugiau dėmesio yra skiriama prekės ženklo autentiškumo tyrimams. Taigi temos aktualumas yra grindžiamas faktu, kad prekės ženklo autentiškumas vis dažniau yra įvardijamas kaip kryptis, kuri inspiruos vartotojiškumo tendencijas, formuos vartotojų rinkas ateityje.

Zhang, Han (2025) teigia, kad dideli tarptautinės aplinkos pokyčiai, tokie kaip JAV ir Kinijos prekybos karas, COVID-19 pandemija ir „Brexit“ sukėlė didelį iššūkį dideliems, gerai rinkoje įsitvirtinusiems pasauliniams prekių ženklams, nes jie daugiausiai dėmesio skiria vartotojams patrauklių prekių kūrimui. Tuo tarpu vietiniai prekių ženklai pasiekė didelį populiarumą vidaus rinkose. Pasak Gupta ir Wright (2019), šią tendenciją lemia tai, jog vietiniai prekių ženklai, lyginant su pasauliniais, paslaugų ar produktų kokybę grindžia kurdami asmeninius ir pasitikėjimu grįstus santykius su vartotojais, aktyviai transliuodami savo vertybes, kurdami vartotojų emocijas, augindami prieraišumą ir norą vartoti.

Organizacijos Stackla (2021) atlikto tyrimo rezultatai atskleidė, kad autentiškumas tapo esmine prekės ženklo savybe, kuriai net 86% vartotojų teikia pirmenybę, rinkdamiesi prekės ženklą. Todėl šiandien prekės ženklo autentiškumas yra laikomas vienu svarbiausių veiksnių, lemiančių prekės ženklo sėkmę, o V. Arya ir kt. (2019) teigimu, ir darančiu įtaką vartotojų suvokiamai prekės ženklo vertei

Kadangi šiuolaikiniai vartotojai yra labai reiklūs, spręsdami pirkti ar nepirkti, jie taiko savo įsitikinimus ir įžvalgas, todėl prekių ženklai turi pasirūpinti skaidrumu, sąžiningumu, siekiu kurti ryšį su klientu ir sąsajas su tikra istorija. Södergren (2021) teigimu, visi šie veiksniai apibrėžia prekės ženklo autentiškumą, o Xu ir kt. (2022) pabrėžia, kad prekės ženklo

autentiškumo koncepcija vaidina lemiamą vaidmenį didinant prekės ženklo konkurencinį pranašumą.

Skirtingi autoriai apibrėžia priežastis, dėl kurių su didesniu pasitikėjimu prioritetizuojami vietiniai prekių ženklai. Liu ir kt. (2021), Zeugner-Roth ir kt. (2015) teigimu, dalis vartotojų pirmenybę teikia vietinių prekių ženklų siūlomiems produktams ir paslaugoms dėl jų aukšto etnocentrizmo lygio. He ir Wang (2015) pažymi, kad vietiniai prekių ženklai labiau siejami su pačia šalimi ir jos kultūros reprezentavimu, o Özsomer (2012) atlikto tyrimo rezultatai patvirtina, kad vartotojai dažniau pirmenybę teikia vietiniams prekių ženklams, nes jie yra kultūriškai pažįstami ir artimi. Dėl šių priežasčių vartotojai jaučiasi artimesni vietiniams prekių ženklams, nes jie atspindi šalies ar regiono vertybes, papročius ir kultūrą. Pastarojo autoriaus teigimu, vietiniais prekių ženklais vartotojai labiau pasitiki, o tuo tarpu pasauliniai prekių ženklai vertinami kaip svetimi ir neautentiški.

Morhart ir kt. (2015) pažymi, kad prekės ženklo autentiškumas reiškia produkto savybes tokias kaip unikalumas ir patikimumas. Kadangi kai kurie vartotojai dažnai išreiškia savo tikrąjį „aš“ vartodami autentiškus prekių ženklus (Södergren, 2021), šie vartotojai yra pasirengę pritarti autentiškiems ir tikriems prekių ženklams bei už juos mokėti didesnę kainą (Morhart ir kt., 2015; Södergren, 2021). Kitaip tariant, vartotojai yra linkę didinti pirkimo ketinimus tų prekės ženklų parduodamas paslaugas ar produktus, kurie signalizuoja apie aukštą autentiškumo lygį (Chen ir kt., 2022; Lude ir Prügl, 2018; Mirzaei ir kt., 2022; Södergren, 2021).

Bruce ir kt. (2020) teigimu, susiformuotos asociacijos apie prekės ženklą gali turėti įtakos pardavimams, tačiau jų poveikis prekės ženklo autentiškumui – vienam svarbiausių prekės ženklo bruožų – kelia abejonių, nes jei vietiniai prekių ženklai turi tikslą pasiekti masines vartotojų grupes, gali susidaryti įspūdis, kad prekių ženklai pasiduoda komerciniam spaudimui, vietoj to, kad eitų savo keliu ir kurtų autentišką vartotojo ir prekės ženklo dialogą (Moulard ir kt., 2021; Warren ir kt., 2019).

Apibendrinant skirtingų autorių idėjas, galima teigti, kad autentiškas prekės ženklas tampa būtinybe įmonei, siekiančiai išlikti konkurencinga, išlaikyti teigiamą įvaizdį ir užmegzti ilgalaikius ryšius su vartotojais. Verta paminėti, kad šiuolaikiniai vartotojai yra labai reiklūs, turintys savo įsitikinimus ir įžvalgas. Ankstesniuose tyrimuose buvo analizuojamas prekės ženklo autentiškumo poveikis vartotojų prisirišimui prie prekės ženklo šiuose santykiuose įtraukiant ir nostalgiškumo vaidmenį (Kumar & Kaushik, 2022, Chen ir kt., 2021). Kituose tyrimuose taip pat buvo nagrinėti tokie autentiškumo elementai kaip kokybė, paveldas, nuoširdumas, prisirišimas prie prekės ženklo (Safeer ir kt., 2021) ir lojalumas (So ir kt., 2013). Tačiau pasigendama tyrimų, kuriuose būtų ieškoma atsakymų, kokie prekės ženklo autentiškumo bruožai veikia vartotojų elgseną. Šis tyrimas tampa aktualus įmonei UAB „Kontėna“, nes jos veikla yra vykdoma Lietuvos regione, t.y. Žemaitijoje ir jos gaminama produkcija atliepia šalies regionų vertybes ir kultūrinį tapatumą. Tyrimu identifikavus įmonės autentiškumo bruožus, kurie daro poveikį vartotojų lojalumui, stiprina pasitikėjimą prekės ženklu ir lemia sprendimus pirkti, įmonė galės tikslingiau parinkti ir kryptingai taikyti priemones, kurios padėtų išlaikyti tiek esamus klientus ir tuo pačiu pritraukti naujų.

Tyrimo tikslas – išanalizuoti UAB „Kontėna“ prekės ženklo autentiškumo bruožų poveikį prekės ženklo vartotojų elgsenai.

Tyrimo metodologija. Siekiant nustatyti prekės ženklo UAB „Kontėna“ autentiškumo bruožų poveikį vartotojų elgsenai ir įgyvendinant tyrimo tikslą, buvo pasirinkta mišraus tyrimo metodika, apimanti kokybinius ir kiekybinius duomenų rinkimo metodus. Remiantis Clark (2019), mišrus tyrimo metodas yra pagrįstas tuo, kad apjungia kiekybinio tyrimo objektyvumą su kokybinio tyrimo gilumu, suteikdamas išsamesnį ir patikimesnį tyrimo problemos supratimą, o tai padeda ne tik geriau suprasti reiškinį, bet ir pateikti išsamesnes ir tiksliau pagrįstas išvadas.

Tyrimo instrumento konstravimui buvo pasitelktas mokslinės literatūros šaltinių analizės metodas, kokybiniam tyrimui – pusiau struktūruoto interviu ir content (turinio) analizės metodai, kiekybiniam tyrimui – anketinė apklausa ir matematinė duomenų analizė.

Kokybinio tyrimo imties formavimui buvo pasitelktas netikimybinis, tikslinis atrankos būdas ir vadovautasi imties prisotinamumo principu, kuris, pasak Flick (2015), taikomas tuomet, kai yra būtina susitelkti į tyrimo dalyvius, galinčius suteikti tyrimui reikalingų ir kokybiškų duomenų. Tyrimo metu atlikti 3 pusiau struktūruoti interviu su įmonės „Kontėna“ darbuotojais, kurių funkcijos tiesiogiai susijusios su tiriamu objektu. Duomenų rinkimas buvo sustabdytas, kai buvo pasiektas teminis prisotinamumas. Tai reiškia, kad papildomi interviu nebūtų nustatę naujų temų, o informacija informantų atsakymuose būtų pradėjusi kartotis.

Kiekybinio tyrimo imčiai formuoti buvo taikytas atsitiktinis (tikimybinis) atrankos būdas. Siekiant užtikrinti duomenų reprezentatyvumą ir galimybę apibendrinti rezultatus visai tiriamai populiacijai, buvo pasitelkta automatinė imties nustatymo skaičiuoklė https://www.surveysystem.com/sscalc.htm ir joje pritaikytas 95% pasikliautinumo lygis. Tyrimo populiaciją sudarė 1200 vartotojų, sekusių UAB „Kontėna“ oficialią „Facebook“ paskyrą tyrimo laikotarpiu (2025-01/2025-03) ir remiantis skaičiuoklės duomenimis, iš 1200 sekėjų populiacijos buvo apskaičiuota, kad tyrimui reikalingas apklausos dalyvių skaičius yra 291.

Tyrimo rezultatai. Tyrimo metu gauti rezultatai patvirtino, kad vartotojai, analizuodami prekės ženklo autentiškumo bruožus, juos vertina per savo asmeninių vertybių prizmę ir, esant vertybių ir autentiškumo bruožų sutapčiai, vartotojas pasitiki prekės ženklu, skatina jo lojalumą ir interesą ieškoti ryšio su prekės ženklo identitetu.

Tyrimo originalumas/tyrimo vertė. Prekės ženklo autentiškumo bruožų poveikio UAB „Kontėna“ vartotojų elgsenai tyrimas yra reikšmingas dėl kelių priežasčių.

Pirmiausia, šis tyrimas nukreiptas į lietuviško prekės ženklo UAB „Kontėna“ atvejį. Ši įmonė veikia Žemaitijoje ir buvo įkurta kaip šeimos verslas. Ji užsiima tradicinių žemaitiškų maisto produktų, t. y. žemaitiško kastinio, naminės „Žarėnų“ giros, šakočių, morkų saldinių „cukierkų“, naminių pieno ir obuolių sūrių, gamyba. Visi šie produktai yra sertifikuoti tautinio paveldo ženklu. Įmonės pavadinimas yra kildinamas iš žemaitiško žodžio – „kontėns“ (viskuo patenkintas). Verta paminėti, kad dalyvaujant konkurse „Žemaitija versle: prekių ženklai, pavadinimai, rinkodaros ir turizmo strategijos“, šis įmonės pavadinimas buvo apdovanotas už tarmiškiausio, originaliausio bei meniškiausio Žemaitijos regiono prekės ženklo vystymą. Taigi šis tyrimas sudaro galimybes prekės ženklo UAB „Kontėna“ vertinimui lokaliu ir kultūriniu požiūriais. Toks požiūris išsiskiria tuo, kad mokslinėje literatūroje dažniau yra analizuojamos pasaulinių prekės ženklų autentiškumo tendencijos, o šių tyrimų rezultatai dažniausiai nėra pritaikomi lokaliai veikiantiems ir mažiems prekės ženklams.

Antra, šio tyrimo rezultatai turi praktinę vertę, ypač mažoms ir vidutinėms įmonėms, kurios skiria savo resursus vystomų prekės ženklų stiprinimui. Tyrimo išvados gali būti pritaikomos formuojant prekių ženklų komunikacijos strategijas, pozicionavimą, stiprinant pardavimo strategijas bei kuriant emocinį ryšį su vartotojais.

Trečia, atsiranda galimybė išplėsti tyrimo kryptis ir tyrimo metodus. Mažiems ir vidutiniams prekės ženklams atlikus lyginamąją analizę su kitais prekės ženklais, veikiančiais skirtinguose geografiniuose regionuose ar prekiaujančiais kito tipo produkcija, atsiranda galimybė analizuoti ir vertinti, kaip autentiškumo bruožų svarba keičiasi priklausomai nuo rinkos sąlygų. Įgyvendinant longitudinius tyrimus, galima vertinti autentiškumo strategijų vystymo poveikį vartotojų elgsenai ilguoju laikotarpiu, taip pat atnaujinti komunikacijos ir marketingo strategijas, kurti metodikas, kurių pagrindu įmonės galėtų sistemingai matuoti ir stiprinti savo prekių ženklo autentiškumą.

TYRIMO METODOLOGIJA

Siekiant nustatyti prekės ženklo UAB „Kontėna“ autentiškumo bruožų poveikį vartotojų elgsenai ir įgyvendinant tyrimo tikslą, buvo pasirinkta mišraus tyrimo metodika, apimanti kokybinius ir kiekybinius duomenų rinkimo metodus. Remiantis Clark (2019), mišrus tyrimo metodas yra pagrįstas tuo, kad apjungia kiekybinio tyrimo objektyvumą su kokybinio tyrimo gilumu, suteikdamas išsamesnį ir patikimesnį tyrimo problemos supratimą, o tai padeda ne tik geriau suprasti reiškinį, bet ir pateikti išsamesnes ir tiksliau pagrįstas išvadas.

Tyrimo metodai. Kokybinio tyrimo atlikimui pasirinktas pusiau struktūruoto interviu metodas, kuris buvo pasirinktas remiantis Bitinu (2008), nes, anot autoriaus, pusiau struktūruoto interviu metu išsiaiškinama informantų nuomonė bei asmeninė patirtis, surenkami reikalingi duomenys apie tyrimo objektą. Pusiau struktūruotas interviu vykdomas žodžiu, tyrimo eigą ir klausimus numatant iš anksto. Informantams pateikiami atviro tipo klausimai, kurie parengiami pagal tyrimo temą, iš anksto apibrėžiant interviu kontūrus (Bagdonaitė-Stelmokienė, 2016). Tolimesnei tyrimo rezultatų analizei buvo pasitelkta content (turinio) analizė, kuri buvo atlikta vadovaujantis Sabaliausko (2017) išskirtais keturiais etapais: pakartotinai skaitoma surinkta informacija, išryškinamos kategorijos pagal raktinius žodžius, turinys išskaidomas į subkategorijas, subkategorijos pagrindžiamos surinktais duomenimis-atsakymais. Tolimesnėje tyrimo eigoje naudojama interpretacinė surinktų duomenų analizė, aprašomi gauti duomenys (Valavičienė, 2016).

Siekiant išsiaiškinti vartotojų nuomonę apie prekės ženklo UAB „Kontėna“ autentiškumo bruožų poveikį jų elgsenai, buvo inicijuotas kiekybinis tyrimas, kuris atliktas pasitelkus anketinės apklausos metodą. Tokio tipo tyrimas pasirinktas vadovaujantis Juodeikaite ir Fominiene (2016), kai atliekant tokio pobūdžio tyrimą, yra sukuriama galimybė išsamiai įsigilinti į situaciją, o tyrimo dalyviams užtikrinus anonimiškumą, yra gaunama nuoširdesnis asmeninis tiriamo klausimo vertinimas. Pasak Gaižauskaitės, Mikėnės (2014), anketinė apklausa kaip tyrimo metodas yra viena iš patikimiausių priemonių, leidžiančių iš tyrimo dalyvių surinkti tikslią informaciją, ją susisteminti ir išreikšti matematiškai, procentais. Surinktai informacijai apdoroti, taikytas matematinės analizės metodas. Šio metodo pagalba iš apklausos dalyvių gauti duomenys suskaičiuoti ir sugrupuoti Office Excel programa, o gauti rezultatai pateikiami paveikslais ar lentelėmis Microsoft Office Word (2010) programos pagalba.

Tyrimo instrumentai. Siekiant identifikuoti prekės ženklo UAB „Kontėna“ autentiškumo bruožus ir jų poveikį vartotojų elgsenai, tyrimo autorių buvo parengtas pusiau struktūruoto interviu klausimynas, paremtas mokslinės literatūros analize. Sudarant klausimus, buvo remtasi Harris (2018), Heinrich (2012) atliktais tyrimais bei autorių išskirtais prekės ženklo autentiškumo bruožais, kurie daro poveikį vartotojų elgsenai. Interviu dalyviams buvo pateikta 12 atviro tipo klausimų, kuriais siekiama nustatyti atstovaujamo prekės ženklo autentiškumo bruožus bei jų poveikį vartotojų elgsenai ir komunikacijos priemones ir būdus apie prekės ženklo autentiškumą.

Anot Bagdonaitės-Stelmokienės ir Žydžiūnaitės (2016), anketinė apklausa yra naudojama kiekybiniams tyrimams atlikti, kai tiriamas reiškinys ar įvykis yra taikomas didesnei daugumai. Tyrimui atlikti tyrimo autorių buvo sudaryta 12-os klausimų anketinė apklausa. Anketoje pateikiami įvairių tipų klausimai (atviri, uždari, teiginių įvertinimas nuo 1 iki 5), kurie buvo sudaryti remiantis Gupta (2024), Busser ir Shulga (2019), Chen (2022) mokslinėmis įžvalgomis apie autentiškumo bruožus ir jų poveikį vartotojų elgsenai. Dalimi klausimų buvo siekiama išsiaiškinti tyrimo dalyvių demografinius rodiklius. Kita dalis klausimų buvo skirta siekiui nustatyti, kaip vartotojai identifikuoja autentiško prekės ženklo sampratą, išsiaiškinti prekės ženklo produktų pirkimo įpročius, autentiškumo svarbą sprendimui pirkti ir autentiškumo bruožų sąsajas su prekės ženklu. Anketinės apklausos duomenų rinkimui naudotas elektroninis anketinių apklausų portalas http://manoapklausa.lt.

Tyrimo imtis ir atrankos būdai. Pusiau struktūruoto interviu imtis atrinka netikimybiniu, tiksliniu būdu. Remiantis Flick (2015), vykdant kokybinį tyrimą, būtina susitelkti į tyrimo dalyvius, kurie gali suteikti tyrimui reikalingų ir kokybiškų duomenų. Tokiu būdu buvo pritaikytas imties prisotinamumo principas. Pusiau struktūruoto interviu metu buvo apklausti 3 įmonės darbuotojai, tiesiogiai susiję su įmonės marketingo strategijos įgyvendinimu.

Anketinės apklausos metodo taikymui buvo pasirinktas atsitiktinis (tikimybinis) imties atrankos būdas. Tyrimo laikotarpiu anketos buvo pateiktos įmonės UAB „Kontėna“ socialinio tinklo „Facebook“ paskyrą pamėgusiems vartotojams. Tyrimo imtis buvo apskaičiuota automatinės imties skaičiuoklės https://www.surveysystem.com/sscalc.htm pagalba (95% tikslumu). Tyrimo populiacijos dydis 1200 „Facebook“ paskyrą pamėgusių vartotojų. Apskaičiuota tyrimo dalyvių imtis tyrimui – 291.

Tyrimo etika. Atliekant abu tyrimus – anketinę apklausą ir pusiau struktūruotą interviu, remtasi tyrimo etikos principais. Prieš pradedant tyrimą bei gaunant įmonės leidimą naudoti įmonės vardą, įmonei buvo pristatytas tyrimo tema, tikslas, uždaviniai ir numatomi tyrimo metodai. Gavus įmonės leidimą duomenų rinkimui, susitarta kokiomis priemonėmis ir būdais bus renkama informacija.

Kokybinio tyrimo atlikimo metu buvo remtasi etikos principais pagal Roulston ir Preissle (2018): tyrimo dalyviai tyrime dalyvauja savo noru, tiriamųjų asmeninė informacija yra saugoma, užduodami klausimai neturi daryti nei psichologinės, nei fizinės žalos informantui; surinkti duomenys turi būti konfidencialūs ir neleidžiantys identifikuoti informantų.

Siekiant laikytis pastarojo etikos principo, tyrimo respondentams suteikiami tik vienam tyrėjui suprantami kodai (inicialai ar pan.), kurie neleis identifikuoti apklaustojo tapatybės. Tyrimo duomenys analizuojami pateikiant tik patvirtinančius teiginius ir dalyvio kodą.

Atliekant kiekybinį tyrimą ir anonimiškai apklausiant prekės ženklo UAB „Kontėna“ vartotojus, buvo laikomasi etikos principų, kuriuos nurodė McClaren (2015):

1. Anonimiškumas ir konfidencialumas. Anoniminė apklausa niekaip neidentifikuoja vartotojų tapatybės, išlaiko jų pateiktus atsakymus konfidencialiais. Tyrimo metu surinkti duomenys neatskleidžiami tretiesiems asmenims.
2. Savanoriškas apsisprendimas dalyvauti. Tyrimo dalyviams prieš apsisprendžiant dalyvauti tyrime yra pateikiama informacija apie tyrimą bei jo tikslą, dalyvavimo sąlygas (anonimiškumą). Tokiu būdų prekės ženklo vartotojams suteikiama teisė laisvai apsispręsti dalyvauti tyrime, ar ne.
3. Pagarba asmens orumui. Anketinėje apklausoje pateikiami klausimai yra susiję su įmonės x prekinio ženklo poveikį vartotojų elgsenai. Klausimai, kurie gali būti jautrūs (susiję su religija, politiniais įsitikinimais, socialine padėtimi) ar žeminantys žmogaus orumą, nėra įtraukti į anketinę apklausą.
4. Privatumas. Tyrėjas užtikrina, kad surinkti duomenys būtų tvarkomi konfidencialiai ir naudojami tik tyrimo tikslams įgyvendinti.

TYRIMO REZULTATAI IR DUOMENŲ ANALIZĖ

Kokybinio tyrimo rezultatų analizė. Atlikus tyrimą įmonėje UAB „Kontėna“, nustatytas šio prekės ženklo autentiškumo bruožų poveikis vartotojų elgsenai. Vadovaujantis tyrimo etikos principais, tyrimo dalyviai neidentifikuojami, o jų vardai, pavardės ir užimamos pareigos nėra įvardijamos tyrimų rezultatuose. Rezultatų apibendrinime informantai identifikuojami kaip Informantas Nr. 1, Informantas Nr. 2 ir Informantas Nr.3.

Tyrimo pradžioje buvo siekta nustatyti informantų nuomonę apie tai, kaip jie identifikuoja, kas yra autentiškas prekės ženklas. Analizuojant atsakymą į klausimą „**Ką jums reiškia autentiškas prekės ženklas?**“, buvo išskirta viena kokybinė kategorija – autentiškas

prekės ženklas ir subkategorijos – vertybių ir tradicijų puoselėjimas, darbo skaidrumas ir sąžiningumas, kokybė ir unikalumas. Rezultatai pateikiami lentelėje Nr. 1.

1 lentelė. Autentiškas prekės ženklas

Kategorija	Subkategorija	Patvirtinantys teiginiai
Autentiškas prekės ženklas	Vertybių ir tradicijų puoselėjimas	Tai vertybėmis grįstas, <...>, kuris išlaiko savo unikalumą, laikosi tradicijų. [Informantas Nr.1]
		„<...> tradicijų puoselėjimu grįstas verslas.“ [Informantas Nr.2]
		„Autentiškumas mums – tai pagarba tradicijoms,<...>.“ [Informantas Nr.3]
		„<...>,mes ne tik gaminame produktus, bet ir pasakojame jų istoriją, perduodame iš kartos į kartą puoselėtas vertybes bei gaminame taip, kaip buvo gaminama senovėje.“ [Informantas Nr.3]
	Darbo skaidrumas ir sąžiningumas	„Autentiškas prekės ženklas – tai tikrumu, skaidrumu,<...>, grįstas verslas.“ [Informantas Nr.2]
		„<...>,skaidrus verslas<...>.“[Informantas Nr.1]
	Kokybė ir unikalumas	„Mūsų atveju, tai reiškia ištikimybę Žemaitiškam kulinariniam paveldui, kokybiškus, rankų darbo gaminius<...>“ [Informantas Nr.2]

Šaltinis: sudaryta tyrimo autorių, remiantis tyrimo rezultatais, 2025

Visi informantai laikosi panašios nuomonės ir teigia, kad autentiškas prekės ženklas yra grįstas vertybėmis, remiasi tradicijomis, vykdo skaidrią veiklą bei siūlo aukščiausios kokybės produktus. Informantai, kalbėdami apie UAB „Kontėna“ prekės ženklo autentiškumą, jį apibrėžia panašiais kriterijais. Informantas Nr. 1 nurodo, kad autentiškas prekės ženklas yra grįstas vertybėmis, išlaikantis unikalumą, tradicijas ir veikiantis skaidriai. Informantas Nr. 2 ir Informantas Nr. 3 savo atstovaujamo prekės ženklo autentiškumą mato kiek platesniame kontekste ir įvardija, kad UAB „Kontėna“ autentiškumas yra ištikimybė savo produktų istorijai, tradicijoms (žemaitiškam kulinariniam paveldui), rankų darbo kokybei.

Nagrinėjant atsakymus į klausimą „**Kokie požymiai nusako, kad Jūsų atstovaujamas prekės ženklas yra autentiškas?**“, buvo išskirta viena kokybinė kategorija – autentiškumo požymiai ir subkategorijos – vertybes atspindintis logotipas, tradicijos, kokybė, rankų darbo gaminiai, ryšys su klientais. Šios subkategorijos atskleidžia, kaip informantai suvokia UAB „Kontėna“ autentiškumą (žr. lentelę Nr. 2).

2 lentelė. Autentiškumo bruožai

Kategorija	Subkategorija	Patvirtinantys teiginiai
Autentiškumo požymiai	Vertybes atspindintis logotipas	„Spalvinė gama, šriftas bei pats logotipas kuria asociaciją su įmonės vertybėmis.“ [Informantas Nr.1]
	Tradicijos	„Sertifikuoti tautinio paveldo gaminiai; tradiciniai receptai, perduodami iš kartos į kartą.“ [Informantas Nr.2]
		„Visi mūsų gaminiai yra gaminami pagal autentiškus, iš kartos į kartą perduodamus receptus. <...>. Esame sertifikuoti kaip tautinio paveldo produktų gamintojai. “ [Informantas Nr.3]
	Kokybė	„Naudojamos tik natūralios sudedamosios dalys<...> “ [Informantas Nr.2]
		„Naudojame tik natūralius ingredientus, be dirbtinių priedų.“ [Informantas Nr.3]
	Rankų darbo gamyba	„Rankų darbo gamybos procesai.“ [Informantas Nr.2]
		„Mūsų gamybos procesas yra rankų darbas, o ne masinė produkcija.“ [Informantas Nr.3]
	Ryšys su klientais	„Atvirai bendraujame su vartotojais.“ [Informantas Nr.2]

Šaltinis: sudaryta tyrimo autorių, remiantis tyrimo rezultatais, 2025

Analizuojant 2-oje lentelėje pateiktus rezultatus, galima pastebėti, kad informantų nuomonė šiuo klausimu nežymiai išsiskiria. Jų atsakymuose labiausiai išryškėjo šie autentiškumo požymiai: vertybes atspindintis logotipas, tradicijos, kokybė, rankų darbo gamyba ir ryšys su klientais.

Vertybes atspindintį logotipą Informantas Nr. 1 išskyrė kaip elementą, auginantį vartotojų pasitikėjimą ir prekės ženklo vertybių atpažįstamumą. Informantas Nr. 1 pabrėžė, kad vartotojų tapatumo jausmą su prekės ženklu kuria logotipo dizainas ir spalvinė gama ir tai padeda formuoti prekės ženklo įvaizdį. Tradicijų kategoriją Informantai Nr. 2 ir Nr. 3 sieja su tradiciniais produktų gamybos metodais ir sertifikuotais tautinio paveldo gaminiais, kurių pagrindu yra išlaikomas autentiškumo jausmas. Informantų nuomone, šios tradicijos teigiamai veikia įmonės pozicionavimą rinkoje ir vartotojų lojalumą. Kokybės subkategorija siejama su natūraliais ingredientais ir gamybos procesais, kuriuos Informantai Nr. 2 ir Nr. 3 įvardina kaip esminius prekės ženklo vertės ir pasitikėjimo išlaikymui. Šie Informantai įvardina, kad kokybe siekiama ne tik atitikti aukštus gamybos standartus, bet ir pritraukti vartotojus, vertinančius sveiką gyvenimo būdą. Rankų darbo gamyba Informanto Nr. 3 yra siejama su produkto unikalumu, o ne masinės gamybos produktu. Pasak jo, būtent šis bruožas itin skatina vartotojų pasitikėjimą bei kuria vartotojų emocinį ryšį su prekės ženklu. Informanto Nr. 2 paminėtas ryšio su klientais elementas prisideda prie klientų lojalumo skatinimo. Bendravimo su klientais formos apima ne tik tradicinius bendravimo būdus, bet ir komunikaciją socialiniuose tinkluose.

Pirmaisiais klausimais buvo siekiama suprasti, kaip informantai suvokia prekės ženklo autentiškumą bendrąja prasme. Tolimesnis tyrimas buvo nukreiptas į UAB „Kontėna“ autentiškumo bruožų analizę. Analizuojant atsakymus į klausimą „**Kokius prekės ženklo „Kontėna“ autentiškumo bruožus galėtumėte išskirti?**“ buvo išskirta viena kokybinė kategorija ir 5 subkategorijos – tradicijų laikymasis, ryšys su vartotoju, rankų darbo kokybė, skaidrumas, vertybių puoselėjimas. Šios kategorijos ir subkategorijos yra pateikiamos 3-ioje lentelėje.

3 lentelė. UAB „Kontėna“ autentiškumo bruožai

Kategorija	Subkategorija	Patvirtinantys teiginiai
Autentiškumo bruožai	Tradicijų laikymasis	„Žemaitiško kastinio gamyba pagal senąsias technologijas, naminės giros ir kitų tradicinių gaminių autentiškumas.“ [Informantas Nr.2]
	Ryšys su vartotoju	„Dalyvavimas mugėse ir tiesioginis bendravimas su pirkėjais.“ [Informantas Nr.2]
		„Su savo pirkėjais palaikome tiesioginį ryšį, dalyvaujame mugėse bei organizuojame edukacinius renginius.“ [Informantas Nr.3]
	Rankų darbo kokybė	„Rankų darbo gaminiai gaminami pagal tradicinius, lietuviškus receptus.“ [Informantas Nr.3]
	Skaidrumas	„Skaidrus ir atviras gamybos procesas.“ [Informantas Nr.3]
	Vertybių puoselėjimas	„Šeimos verslo modelis skatina kokybę ,vertybių laikymąsi ir palaiko asmeninį santykį su klientais.“ [Informantas Nr.2]
		„<...> tai yra šeimos verslas, kuriame propaguojame ilgalaikes vertybes, turime ilgalaikę patirtį.“ [Informantas Nr.3]

Šaltinis: sudaryta tyrimo autorių, remiantis tyrimo rezultatais, 2025

3-ios lentelės rezultatų analizė išskiria 5 esminius autentiškumo bruožus, kurie sudaro prekės ženklo tapatumą. Informanto Nr. 2 nuomone, tradicijų laikymasis, ryšys su vartotojais ir vertybių puoselėjimas yra pagrindiniai UAB „Kontėna“ autentiškumo požymiai. Jis akcentuoja tradicijų svarbą gamybos procese, ypač pabrėžiant gamybą pagal tradicinius lietuviškus receptus bei žemaitiško kastinio gamybą pagal senąsias technologijas, išskiria ryšio su klientais svarbą per tradicinius komunikacijos būdus, pavyzdžiui, mugės, akcentuojant, kad įmonei išlaikyti ir puoselėti tradicijas padeda šeimos verslo koncepcija. Informanto Nr. 2

nuomone, būtent šie UAB „Kontėna“ autentiškumo bruožai padeda kurti ilgametį santykį su vartotoju, t. y. skatinti jo lojalumą, išlaikyti nuoseklumą savo vertybėse.

Informantas Nr. 3 papildo informanto Nr. 2 išskiriamų UAB „Kontėna“ bruožų sąrašą, į kurį įtraukia tokius autentiškumo požymius kaip rankų darbo kokybė ir skaidrumas. Šio informanto nuomone, rankų darbo kokybė skatina vartotojų pasitikėjimą ir sprendimą pirkti, o skaidrumas prisideda prie autentiško įvaizdžio formavimo.

3-ioje lentelėje pateiktų rezultatų analizė atskleidė, kad tradicijų laikymasis, ryšys su vartotojais, rankų darbo kokybė, skaidrumas ir vertybių puoselėjimas yra pagrindiniai įmonės „Kontėna“ autentiškumą atskleidžiantys bruožai. Pasak informantų, tai, kas pasireiškia kaip autentiškumo bruožai, ilgalaikėje perspektyvoje tampa veiksniais, lemiančiais vartotojų sprendimus ir emocinį ryšį su prekės ženklu.

Toliau analizuojant, kaip minėti autentiškumo bruožai pasireiškia vartotojų elgsenoje, buvo išskirtos 1 kategorija ir 5 subkategorijos, kurios padeda suprasti, kaip šie bruožai inicijuoja vartotojų pasirinkimus, ugdo lojalumą, stiprina pasitikėjimą ir sukuria emocinį ryšį. 4-oje lentelėje pateikiami rezultatai parodo, kaip autentiškumo bruožai prisideda prie vartotojų elgsenos pokyčių ir kaip ilgalaikio ryšio su prekės ženklu formavimo.

4 lentelė. Autentiškumo bruožų poveikis vartotojų elgsenai

Kategorija	Subkategorija	Patvirtinantys teiginiai
Autentiškumo bruožų poveikis vartotojų elgsenai	Inicijuoja rinktis autentiškumą	„<...> skatina vartotojus atsigręžti į tam tikrą produktų segmentą, nes autentiški produktai atrodo patikimesni.“ [Informantas Nr.1]
		„Skatina ieškoti autentiškų, natūralių produktų.“ [Informantas Nr.2]
	Paskatina pirkti ir vartoti	„<...>skatinta sveikų, skanių ir natūralių produktų pirkimą, vartojimą.“ [Informantas Nr.1]
		„Vartotojai dažniau renkasi pirkti mūsų produkciją.“ [Informantas Nr.3]
	Ugdo lojalumą	„Ugdo lojalumą prekės ženklui, rekomenduoja apsilankyti ir savo pažįstamiems.“ [Informantas Nr.2]
		„Vartotojai yra linkę grįžti ir tapti lojalūs mūsų gaminiams.“ [Informantas Nr.3]
	Skatina pasitikėjimą prekės ženklu	„Skatina pasitikėjimą mūsų produktais.“ [Informantas Nr.2]
		„Jie labiau pasitiki mūsų prekės ženklu, nes žino, kad gaus natūralų ir kokybišką produktą.“ [Informantas Nr.3]
	Stiprina emocinį ryšį	„Kuria emocinį ryšį su vartotojais.“ [Informantas Nr.2]
		„Mūsų produktai kelia sentimentalias emocijas.“ [Informantas Nr.3]

Šaltinis: sudaryta tyrimo autorių, remiantis tyrimo rezultatais, 2025

Pagal 4-oje lentelėje pateiktus duomenis galima išskirti keletą autentiškumo bruožų poveikio vartotojų elgsenai sričių. Informantų Nr. 1 ir Nr. 2 nuomone, autentiškumo bruožai inicijuoja rinktis autentiškumą, nes tradiciniai arba pagal senąsias technologijas gaminti produktai yra patikimesni, o toks poveikis skatina sprendimą pirkti (Informantai Nr. 1 ir Nr. 3), ugdo lojalumą (Informantai Nr. 2 ir Nr. 3), nes patikimi ir autentiški produktai skatina klientus grįžti, tapti lojaliais ir ilgalaikiais vartotojais.

Informantas Nr. 3 taip pat pabrėžia, kad autentiškumo bruožai skatina pasitikėjimą prekės ženklu ir stiprina emocinį ryšį, nes pasitikėjimas kokybiškais ir natūraliais produktais gali prisidėti prie sistemingo produktų pirkimo. Lojalumas produktui ir prekės ženklui gali virsti ir rekomendacijomis tiek tradicinėmis reklamos formomis (žodinė reklama), tiek socialinėse medijose (atsiliepimai). Rekomendacijos kuria pasitikėjimu grįstą emocinį ryšį, o tai gali skatinti pasitenkinimą bei norą kasdien vartoti prekės ženklo gaminamus produktus. Taip pat rekomendacijų pagalba gali būti kuriamas teigiamas prekės ženklo įvaizdis, kuris sudaro prielaidas konkurenciniam pranašumui formuotis ir prekės ženklo matomumo (atpažįstamumo) didėjimui.

Išanalizavus prekės ženklo „Kontėna“ autentiškumo bruožus ir jų poveikį vartotojų elgsenai, toliau buvo siekta išnagrinėti, kokias priemones įmonė taiko prekės ženklo autentiškumo vartotojų akyse stiprinimui. Informantai išskyrė įvairias prekės ženklo autentiškumą stiprinančias priemones (kategorija) ir subkategorijas: dalyvavimas renginiuose, komunikacija socialiniuose tinkluose, aukštas kokybės standartas, skaidrumo palaikymas, tradicijų puoselėjimas ir bendradarbiavimas.

5 lentelė. Prekės ženklo autentiškumo stiprinimo priemonės

Kategorija	Subkategorija	Patvirtinantys teiginiai
Prekės ženklo autentiškumą stiprinančios priemonės	Dalyvavimas renginiuose	„<...>dalyvaujame viešuose renginiuose.“ [Informantas Nr.1]
		„Aktyviai dalyvaujame mugėse ar renginiuose.“ [Informantas Nr.2]
		„Aktyviai dalyvaujame mugėse ir renginiuose, kur žmonės gali tiesiogiai bendrauti su mumis ir ragauti mūsų gaminius.“ [Informantas Nr.3]
	Komunikacija socialiniuose tinkluose	„Palaikome pastovia, nuolatinę komunikaciją socialiniuose tinkluose.“ [Informantas Nr.1]
		„Dalinamės savo gaminiais socialinėse medijose.“ [Informantas Nr.2]
		„Pristatome savo produktus socialiniuose tinkluose ir dalijamės istorijomis apie mūsų gaminius.“ [Informantas Nr.3]
	Aukštas kokybės standartas	„Palaikome aukštą produktų kokybę.“ [Informantas Nr.1]
		„Nuolat išlaikome aukštus kokybės standartus ir nesivaikome pigių kompromisų.“ [Informantas Nr.3]
	Skaidrumo palaikymas	„Palaikome skaidrumą gamybos procesuose ir dalinamės informacija apie produktų sudėtį.“ [Informantas Nr.2]
	Tradicijų puoselėjimas	„Akcentuojame tautinio paveldo sertifikatus.“ [Informantas Nr.2]
		„<...> pristatome savo produkciją, kaip tautinį paveldą, turistams.“ [Informantas Nr.3]
	Bendradarbiavimas	„Bendradarbiaujame su Žemaitijos informacijos turizmo centru.“ [Informantas Nr.3]

Šaltinis: sudaryta tyrimo autorių, remiantis tyrimo rezultatais, 2025

Pagal 5-oje lentelėje pateiktus pusiau struktūruoto interviu rezultatus viena iš svarbiausių visų trijų informantų įvardijama prekės ženklo autentiškumo stiprinimo priemonė yra dalyvavimas renginiuose (pavyzdžiui, mugėse). Informantai akcentuoja, kad ši priemonė sudaro galimybes renginių metu tiesiogiai bendrauti su vartotojais, didinti jų smalsumą tradicijoms ir skoniams. Tai ne tik padeda kurti emocinį ryšį su vartotojais, bet stiprina autentiškumo įspūdį, nes vartotojai renginio metu patys asmeniškai gali patirti produkto kokybę. Komunikaciją socialiniuose tinkluose kaip priemonę padedančią vartotojams pažinti prekės ženklo unikalumą pabrėžia taip pat visi 3 informantai. Ši priemonė padeda įmonei skirtingomis formomis kurti ir pristatyti istorijas apie gaminius, jų gamybos procesus, atskleisti savo kokybės ir skaidraus darbo principus, o tai itin skatina vartotojų pasitikėjimą. Komunikacijos socialiniuose tinkluose priemonė gali būti susieta su informanto Nr. 2 įvardinta skaidrumo palaikymo priemone, nes skaidrumas užtikrina kliento saugumą svarstant įsigyti prekes: žino, ką perka, žino, iš ko ir kaip pagamintas produktas. Aukštą kokybę kaip priemonę Informantai Nr. 1 ir Nr. 3 lygina su nesivaikymu pigių kompromisų (pavyzdžiui, masinės gamybos), o tai, informantų nuomone, yra esminis pasitikėjimo prekės ženklo autentiškumu pagrindas, auginantis ilgametį santykį su vartotoju. Tradicijų puoselėjimą kaip priemonę autentiškumo bruožų stiprinimui išskyrė Informantai Nr. 2 ir Nr. 3, kurie pažymi, kad sertifikatai, patvirtinantys tautinį paveldą, ne tik formuoja prekės ženklo įvaizdį, bet ir išskiria jį iš kitų prekės ženklų, t.y. kuria konkurencinį pranašumą, įtvirtina autentiškumo ir aukštos kokybės normas. Informantas Nr. 3 papildo, kad bendradarbiavimas su kitomis organizacijomis

padeda stiprinti vietos bendruomenės ryšį, kurti rekomendacijų tinklą ir skatinti domėjimąsi tiek prekės ženklu, tiek jo gaminama produkcija.

Tyrimu identifikavus UAB „Kontėna“ autentiškumo bruožus, priemones, stiprinančias autentiškumą ir autentiškumo bruožų poveikį vartotojų elgsenai, tolimesniu tyrimo klausimu buvo siekta išsiaiškinti priežastis, darančias poveikį vartotojų sprendimui pirkti įmonės gaminamą produkciją. Analizuojant gautus rezultatus, buvo išskirta 1 kategorija ir 5 subkategorijos. Rezultatai pateikia lentelėje Nr. 6.

6 lentelė. Priežastys, darančios įtaką vartotojų sprendimui rinktis UAB „Kontėna“

Kategorija	Subkategorija	Patvirtinantys teiginiai
Pasirinkimo priežastys	Kokybė ir skaidrumas	„Vartotojai renkasi mus dėl produktų kokybės.“ [Informantas Nr.1]
		„Vertina mūsų skaidrumą ir kokybę.“ [Informantas Nr.2]
		„ Jie ieško <...> skonių, kurių nėra masinėje gamyboje<...> vartotojai juos perka kaip kokybės garantą.“ [Informantas Nr.3]
	Unikalumas	„<...>,skonio ir išskirtinumo.“ [Informantas Nr.1]
		„<...>ieško autentiškų, natūralių ir rankų darbo produktų.“ [Informantas Nr.2]
	Vertybės	„Žmonės vertina mūsų šeimos verslo vertybes ir asmenišką požiūrį į gamybą.“ [Informantas Nr.3]
	Autentiškumas	„Dėl to, kad mūsų produkcija yra autentiška.“ [Informantas Nr.2]
		„Mūsų gaminiai yra autentiški ir natūralūs.“ [Informantas Nr.3]
	Tradicijos	„<...> mūsų produkcija yra autentiška, sauganti Žemaitišką tradicinį paveldą.“ [Informantas Nr.2]
		„Jie ieško tradicinių lietuviškų skonių, kurių nėra masinėje gamyboje.“ [Informantas Nr.3]

Šaltinis: sudaryta tyrimo autorių, remiantis tyrimo rezultatais, 2025

Apibendrinant šio klausimo rezultatus, galima teigti, kad visų 3 interviu dalyvavusių informantų nuomone, kokybė ir skaidrumas yra svarbiausia priežastis, lemianti vartotojo sprendimą pirkti. Informantų nuomone, UAB „Kontėna“ atvirai komunikuodama apie savo produktų sudėtį ir gamybos procesą, aktyviai prisideda prie klientų pasitikėjimo prekės ženklu ir jo atstovaujamais produktais auginimo. Informantai Nr. 1 ir Nr. 2 svarbiu sprendimui pirkti faktoriumi įvardina unikalumą. Jų nuomone, vartotojai ieško autentiškų, natūralių ir tradiciniais gamybos būdais pagamintų produktų, kurių negali rasti masinėje gamyboje. Būtent ši priežastis išryškina UAB „Kontėna“ produktų išskirtinumą. Informantai Nr. 2 ir Nr. 3 pažymi, kad autentiškumas ir tradicijos atspindi tautinio paveldo koncepciją, pritraukia vartotojų dėmesį, norą patirti ir paskanauti tikrą lietuvišką maistą, kuris, kaip buvo minėta aukščiau, nėra pasiekiamas masinės prekybos vietose. Tuo tarpu Informanto Nr. 3 įvardintos vertybės kaip priežastys, skatinančios vartotojo sprendimą pirkti, apibrėžia šeimos verslo požiūrį į gamybos proceso autentiškumą.

Tolimesniame tyrime informantų buvo teirautasi, kaip jie matuoja/nustato autentiškumo bruožų poveikį vartotojų elgsenai ir kokių veiksmų planuoja imtis ateityje, siekiant stiprinti autentiškumo bruožų poveikį vartotojų elgsenai.

Remiantis 3 informantų atsakymais, buvo išskirta, kad autentiškumo bruožų poveikis vartotojų elgsenai yra matuojamas pasitelkiant šias priemones:

1. Vartotojų grįžtamasis ryšys, atsiliepimai ir rekomendacijos (Informantas Nr. 1, Informantas Nr. 2 ir Informantas Nr. 3). Vartotojai, besidomintys įmonės produkcija, teigiamą atsiliepimą ir rekomendaciją vertina kaip patikimas priemones, kurios sužadina jų smalsumą, palengvina sprendimą pirkti. Taip pat ši priemonė leidžia įmonei suprasti vartotojų lūkesčius ir atitinkamai priimti sprendimus dėl komunikacijos ar produktų pasiūlos.
2. Socialinių tinklų analizė (Informantas Nr. 1 ir Informantas Nr. 2). Analizuojant socialinio tinklo „Facebook“ lankytojų srautus, jų įsitraukimą į įmonės komunikaciją,

galima susikurti prielaidas apie vartotojų lojalumą (kokius atsiliepimus palieka, kaip dažnai reaguoja į įrašus, vizualinius sprendimus (video ir nuotraukas).

3. Pardavimo rezultatų analizė (Informantas Nr. 1, Informantas Nr. 2 ir Informantas Nr. 3) leidžia įmonei įvertinti pardavimo pajamų augimą, priklausomai nuo augančio atsiliepimų skaičiaus ar pasirinktos komunikacijos priemonės ir formos. Ši analizė taip pat nustatyti, kad autentiški, tautinio paveldo ir vertybiškai stiprios įmonės produktai išlaiko lojalių klientų ilgalaikį domėjimąsi įmone ir gaminama produkcija.

Informantų pasiteiravus apie planus stiprinti prekės ženklo autentiškumą ir jo poveikį vartotojų elgsenai, buvo išskirti tokie planų aspektai:

1. Prekės ženklo rebrandingas, kuris apimtų ir naujų produktų pakuočių kūrimą. Informantas Nr. 1 pabrėžia, kad ši plano priemonė padėtų sustiprinti produkto žinomumą, pagerinti įvaizdį ir matomumą rinkoje bei pritraukti daugiau naujų klientų.
2. Asortimento plėtimą kaip vieną iš plano priemonių įvardino Informantas Nr. 2. Tačiau, jo nuomone, yra svarbu išlaikyti tradicinius gamybos būdus, vadovautis autentiškumo principu, todėl nauji produktai taip pat turėtų būti gaminami pagal tradicinius lietuviškus ir/ar žemaitiškus receptus bei naudojant lietuviškus ingredientus.
3. Informantas Nr. 2 išskiria tai, kad siekiant stiprinti prekės ženklo autentiškumą, reikėtų papildyti/ atnaujinti komunikacijos socialiniuose tinkluose formas ir turinį. Šio informanto nuomone, aktyvus dalinimasis gamybos procesu, išsamesnis pasakojimas, pagrįstas istorijomis, apie gamybos technologijas, paveldėtas iš ankstesnių laikų, skatina vartotojų pasitikėjimą produktų autentiškumu ir kokybe. Informantas Nr. 3 pabrėžia, kad būtų itin aktualu į socialinio tinklo „Facebook“ komunikaciją įtraukti daugiau vartotojų įtraukimo iniciatyvų, pavyzdžiui, rengti konkursus, apklausas, sekti komentarų skiltį.
4. Produktų degustacijos ir gamybos edukacinių užsiėmimų organizavimas, Informanto Nr. 2 nuomone, suteiktų vartotojams galimybę išbandyti autentišką, lietuviškos tradicijomis grįstą, tautinio paveldo produkto gamybą ir suteikti vartotojui galimybę asmeniškai patirti gaminamų produktų unikalumą. Tokių veiklų organizavimas pareikalautų papildomų įmonės resursų, tačiau paskatintų vartotojų įsitraukimą, aktyvesnį dalinimąsi patirtimi ir įspūdžiais socialiniuose tinkluose bei formuoti teigiamą įvaizdį apie prekės ženklą.

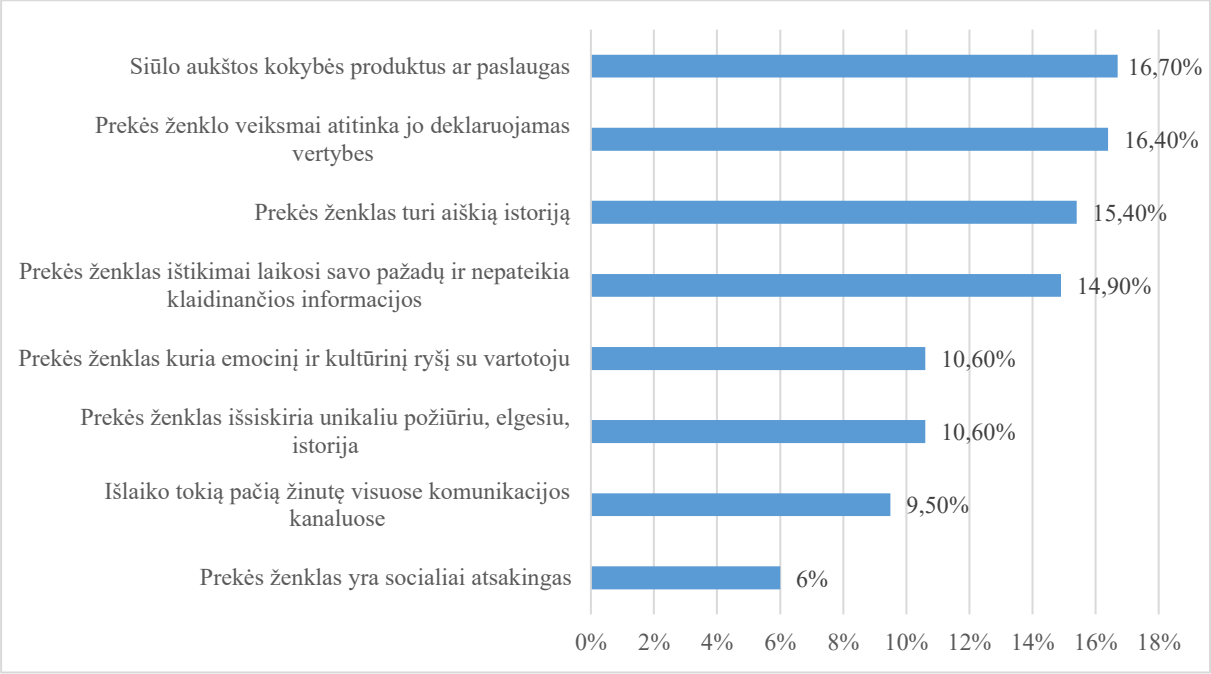
Apibendrinant atliktą kokybinį tyrimą, galima daryti išvadą, kad UAB „Kontėna“ prekės ženklo autentiškumo bruožų poveikis vartotojų elgsenai yra daugialypis. UAB „Kontėna“ autentiškumo bruožai tokie kaip: tradicijų laikymasis, ryšys su vartotoju, rankų darbo kokybė, skaidrumas, vertybių puoselėjimas skatina vartotojų pasitikėjimą ir lojalumą prekės ženklu, suteikia pirkėjams užtikrintumą, kad jie įsigyja kokybišką ir natūralų produktą, todėl jie dažniau renkasi pirkti. Skaidrus gamybos procesas, aiškus vertybių ir autentiškumo komunikavimas bei atvirumas didina vartotojų įsitraukimą, skatina emocinį ryšį su prekės ženklu ir formuoja vartotojų norą rekomenduoti produktus kitiems, skatina lojalumą.

Tyrimo metu taip pat paaiškėjo, kad prekės ženklo autentiškumą vartotojai vertina kaip tikrumą, skaidrumą ir tradicijų puoselėjimą. Informantų nuomone, tradicijų puoselėjimas, natūrali sudėtis, kokybė ir rankų darbas yra vieni svarbiausių autentiškumo bruožų. Informantai taip pat įvardino, kad skaidrus gamybos procesas, atviras bendravimas su vartotojais, kuria tarpusavio ryšį ir skatina vartotojų lojalumą, ko pasekoje, pirkėjai prekę renkasi dažniau.

Kiekybinio tyrimo rezultatai ir jų analizė. Kiekybiniu tyrimu buvo siekiama išsiaiškinti vartotojų nuomonę apie UAB „Kontėna“ autentiškumo bruožų poveikį vartotojų elgsenai. Anketinėje apklausoje dalyvavo 296 dalyviai, kurių atsakymai buvo analizuojami siekiant nustatyti, kaip vartotojai vertina autentiškumo bruožus ir kokį poveikį šie bruožai turi jų sprendimui pirkti įmonės produkciją. Tyrimo klausimai buvo orientuoti į autentiškumo

suvokimą, autentiškumo bruožų svarbą bei jų poveikį vartotojų elgsenai. Šioje analizėje bus apžvelgti svarbiausi kiekybinio tyrimo duomenys. Pabaigoje bus pateiktos išvados apie vartotojų požiūrį į prekės ženklo autentiškumą ir įvertinta, kokie autentiškumo bruožai daro didžiausią poveikį vartotojų sprendimams. Analizėje tyrimo dalyvių atsakymai bus suskirstyti pagal svarbą ir įvertinti bei palyginti su kokybiniame tyrime gautais rezultatais.

Pirmuoju klausimu buvo siekiama išsiaiškinti, kaip vartotojai suvokia prekės ženklo autentiškumą. Šis klausimas padėjo nustatyti, kokius bruožus vartotojai laiko svarbiais, kalbant apie prekės ženklo tikrumą, kokybę ir vertybes. Analizė atskleis, kokios savybės labiausiai apibrėžia UAB „Kontėna“ prekės ženklo autentiškumą ir kaip šie bruožai veikia vartotojų požiūrį į prekės ženklą (1 pav.).



1 pav. Prekės ženklo autentiškumo suvokimas

Šaltinis: sudaryta autorių, remiantis tyrimo rezultatais, 2025

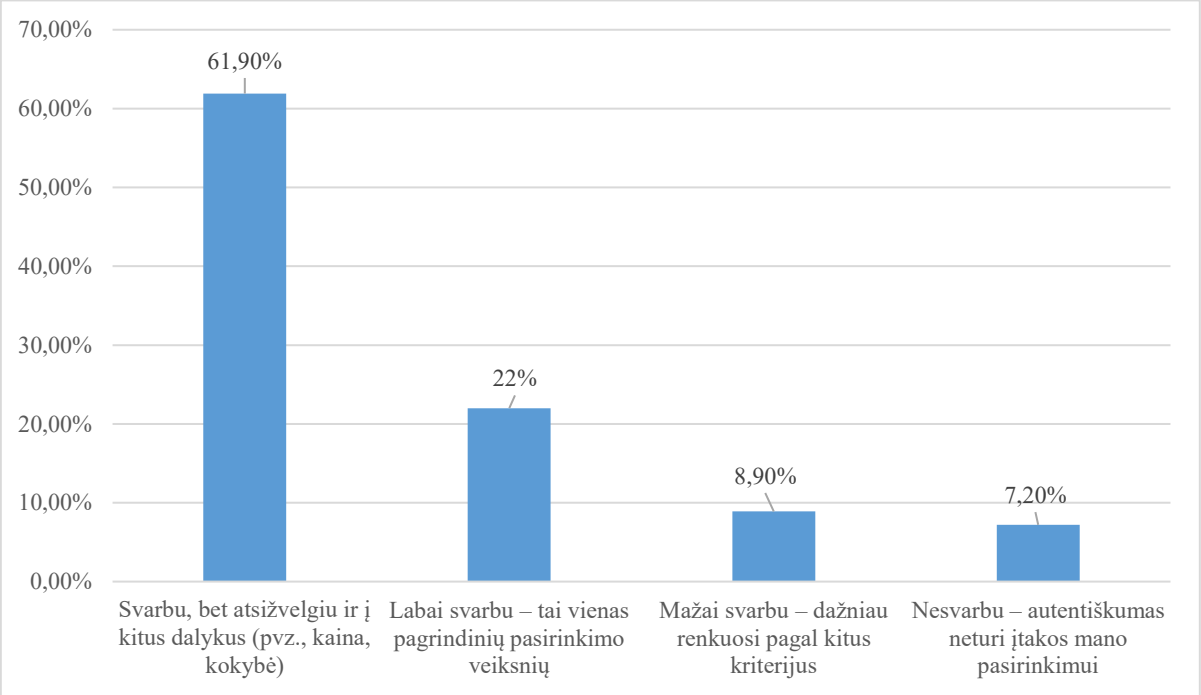
Remiantis 1-o paveikslo duomenimis, galima daryti prielaidą, kad dauguma apklausos dalyvių prekės ženklo autentiškumą identifikuoja per produktų kokybės vertinimą. Taip mano 16,7% tyrimo dalyvių, o 16,4% UAB „Kontėna“ vartotojų, dalyvavusių tyrime, svarbiausia yra tai, kad prekės ženklo veiksmai ir sprendimai atitiktų jo deklaruojamas vertybes. Tai reiškia, kad tiriamiesiems svarbiausia yra prekės ženklo ir jo produkcijos kokybė, sąžiningumas ir veiklos skaidrumas, o šie faktoriai lemia vartotojų pasitikėjimą ir lojalumą bei tokiu būdu yra kuriamas stabilus ir ilgalaikis ryšys su prekės ženklu.

Apklausos dalyvių vertinimu mažiau įtakos prekės ženklo autentiškumo suvokimui turi tokie bruožai kaip istorijos turėjimas, pažadų laikymasis ir skleidžiamos informacijos teisingumas, emocinio ir kultūrinio ryšio su vartotoju kūrimas bei išsiskyrimas unikaliu požiūriu, elgesiu ir istorija. Apklausos dalyvių norą pasitikėti prekės ženklu veikia jo istorija (taip mano 15,4% tiriamųjų) ir jo veiklos skaidrumas (14,9%). Tokie autentiškumo suvokimo elementai kaip emocinis ryšys ir išsiskyrimas unikaliu elgesiu (šiuos atsakymus pasirinko po 10,6% apklausos dalyvių) prisideda prie prekės ženklo autentiškumo vertinimo, tačiau jie nėra tokie paveikūs priimant sprendimą pirkti ir būti lojaliu prekės ženklui bei jo produkcijai.

Socialinį atsakingumą ir nuoseklumą komunikacijoje apklausos dalyviai vertina silpniausiai. Šiuos autentiškumo suvokimo elementus pasirinko atitinkamai 6% ir 9,5% tiriamųjų. Šis vertinimas atspindi tai, kad vartotojai prioritetą teikia labiau matomiems

autentiškumo bruožams, t. y. kokybei ir patikimumui, o socialinė atsakomybė ir komunikacijos nuoseklumas laikomi svarbiais, tačiau ne pagrindiniais bruožais.

Tyrimu buvo siekiama nustatyti, kiek vartotojams svarbus prekės ženklo UAB „Kontėna“ autentiškumas priimant sprendimą pirkti įmonės siūlomus produktus (2 pav.).



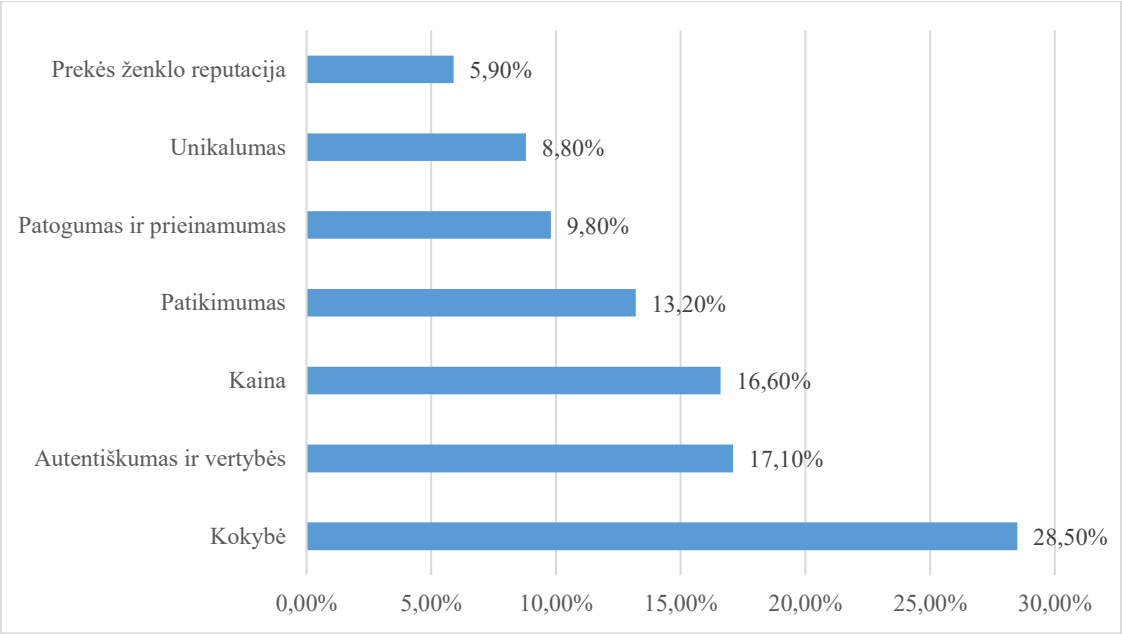
2 pav. UAB „Kontėna“ autentiškumo poveikis sprendimui pirkti

Šaltinis: sudaryta autorių, remiantis tyrimo rezultatais, 2025

Tyrimo metu gauti duomenys atskleidė, kad net 83,9% tiriamųjų prekės ženklo autentiškumas yra svarbus veiksnys, darantis poveikį sprendimui pirkti. Autentiškumą kaip vieną pagrindinių veiksnių, lemiančių sprendimą pirkti, pažymėjo 22% apklausos dalyvių, o net 61,9% išskiria tai, kad šį veiksnį vertina, bet atsižvelgia ir į kitus kriterijus, tokius kaip kaina ir kokybė. Remiantis šiais duomenimis, galima daryti prielaidą, kad autentiškumas savaime nesuteikia pasitikėjimo ir neskatina noro pirkti. Vartotojai, rinkdamiesi UAB „Kontėna“ produkciją nemaža dalimi atsižvelgia ir į kainą bei kokybę. Tai reiškia, kad tyrime dalyvavę rinkos dalyviai tikisi balanso tarp šių dviejų kriterijų.

Mažesnė, bet ne mažiau svarbi apklausos dalyvių grupė autentiškumą pažymi kaip mažai svarbų (8,9%) arba nesvarbų (7,2%) kriterijų, kuris neturi arba mažai turi įtakos sprendimui. Apibendrinant šiuos rezultatus, visgi galima daryti prielaidą, kad UAB „Kontėna“, tiriamųjų vertinimu, sėkmingai atstovauja prekės ženklo autentiškumą.

Vienas svarbiausių tyrimo tikslų buvo identifikuoti pagrindinius veiksnius, kurie lemia vartotojų sprendimą įsigyti prekės ženklo UAB „Kontėna“ produkciją. Atsižvelgiant į tai, tiriamiesiems buvo pateiktas klausimas apie kriterijus, lemiančius vartotojų apsisprendimą. Tyrimo metu gauti rezultatai padės įvertinti vartotojų elgsenos motyvus, atskleisti rinkodaroje paveikius autentiškumo bruožus ir numatyti įmonės komunikacijos stiprinimo veiksmus. Rezultatai pateikiami 3 paveiksle.

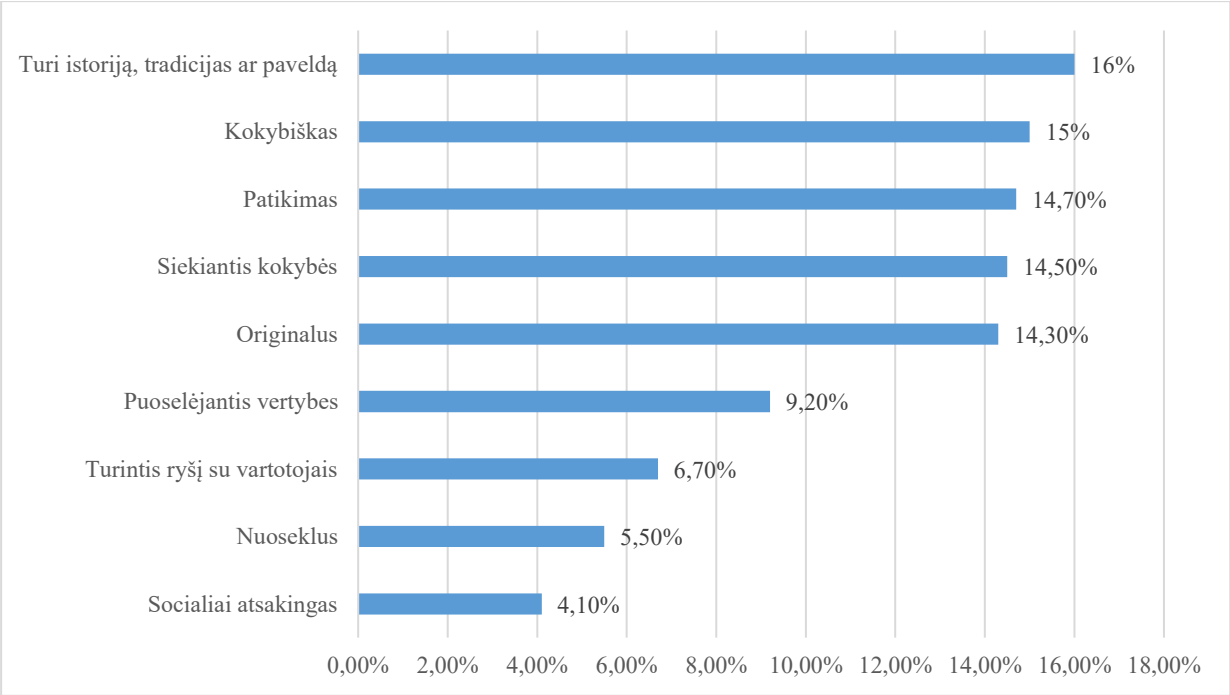


3 pav. Vartotojų sprendimą pirkti lemiantys kriterijai
Šaltinis: sudaryta autorių, remiantis tyrimo rezultatais, 2025

Analizuojant 3 paveiksle pateiktus rezultatus, aiškiai matyti, kad kokybę apklausos dalyviai įvardina kaip svarbiausią sprendimui įtakos turintį kriterijų. Jį pasirinko 28,2% tyrimo dalyvių. Šis rezultatas leidžia daryti prielaidą, kad vartotojai, priimdami sprendimą vadovaujasi ne tik autentiškumo suvokimu, bet planuojamą įsigyti produktą vertina per kokybės prizmę. Tai reiškia, kad jiems patikimumą kelia tokia prekė, kuri yra pagaminta iš kokybiškų, natūralių ingredientų, atitinkančių jų kokybės lūkesčius. Autentiškumo ir vertybių kriterijus, kurį pasirinko 17,1% tiriamųjų, patvirtina, kad vartotojams taip pat svarbus prekės ženklo išskirtinumas, tapatumas su deklaruojamomis vertybėmis. Trečiu svarbiausiu kriterijumi UAB „Kontėna“ vartotojai, dalyvavę apklausoje, įvardina kainą. Šį kriterijų pasirinko 16,6% apklausos dalyvių ir jis patvirtina prielaidas, kad kainos prieinamumas yra vis dar reikšmingas sprendimui pirkti veiksnys.

Tuo tarpu prekės ženklo produkcijos patogumas ir prieinamumas, unikalumas ir reputacija yra vertinami žemiau 10-ies procentų. Atitinkamai šių kriterijų vertinimai yra 9,8%, 8,8% ir 5,9 %. Šie, žemesniais vertinimais išreikšti kriterijai, leidžia daryti prielaidą, kad UAB „Kontėna“ vartotojai prekės ženklą vertina per kokybę ir vertybes, o ne vien tik per prieinamumo ar prekės ženklo žinomumo prizmę.

Vertinant aukščiau aptartus rezultatus, svarbu išanalizuoti UAB „Kontėna“ autentiškumo bruožus vartotojų atžvilgiu. Tolimesniame tyrime apklausos dalyviams buvo pateiktas klausimas, kurio pagalba buvo siekiama nustatyti, su kokiomis savybėmis vartotojai sieja UAB „Kontėna“ Rezultatai atvaizduoti 4-ame paveiksle.



4 pav. Autentiškumo bruožai vartotojų atžvilgiu
Šaltinis: sudaryta autorių, remiantis tyrimo rezultatais, 2025

Analizuojant 4 paveiksle pateiktus rezultatus, galima pastebėti, kad labiausiai vartotojams rezonuojantys prekės ženklo autentiškumo bruožai, kalbant apie įmonę „Kontėna“, siejasi su istorijos, tradicijų ar paveldo turėjimu (16%) ir kokybe (15%). Šie rezultatai leidžia daryti prielaidą, kad vartotojai yra linkę rinktis tą prekės ženklą, kuris kuria identitetą, o ne tik taiko paveikias rinkodaros strategijas. Pastebėtina tai, kad kokybės kriterijus buvo išryškintas ir ankstesnėse analizėse, todėl galima teigti, kad jis formuoja tendenciją ir išlieka vienu svarbiausių sprendimo motyvų.

Taip pat, remiantis tyrimo rezultatais, galima patvirtinti, kad įmonės „Kontėna“ vartotojai ją vertina kaip patikimą (14,7%), siekiančią kokybės (14,5%) ir originalią (14,3%). Vadinasi, šie kriterijai taip pat aktyviai prisideda prie įmonės, nesekančios masinės gamybos tendencijomis, įvaizdžio stiprinimo.

9,2% apklausos dalyvių įmonę įvardina kaip puoselėjančią vertybes. Tai reiškia, kad šis bruožas UAB „Kontėna“ daliai vartotojų yra svarbus ir jie tikisi, kad tiek įmonės komunikacijoje, tiek gaminamoje produkcijoje atsispindės jų vertybinė linija.

Svarbu atkreipti dėmesį į tokių kriterijų kaip turintis ryšį su vartotojais, nuoseklus ir socialiai atsakingas žemesnius vertinimus. Šias savybes apklausos dalyviai įvertino atitinkamai 6,7%, 5,5% ir 4,1%. Norint plėsti auditoriją, skatinti jos įsitraukimą ir gilinti emocinį ryšį, būtų svarbu atsižvelgti į šiuos rezultatus ir stiprinti įmonės komunikacijos vientisumą, socialinį įvaizdį.

Tęsiant tyrimą, buvo siekiama išsiaiškinti, kokį poveikį UAB „Kontėna“ autentiškumo bruožai daro vartotojams. Tyrimo dalyviams buvo pateikti teiginiai, kurių pagalba galima atspindėti įvairius vartotojo ir prekės ženklo aspektus. Apklausos dalyviams buvo suteikta galimybė pasirinkti teiginius, geriausiai atspindinčius jų elgseną ar požiūrį į šį prekės ženklą. Ši analizė tyrimo autoriams suteikia galimybę numatyti, kaip vartotojai reaguoja į prekės ženklo autentiškumo bruožus ir kaip jie veikia vartotojų elgsenos veiksnius. Rezultatai aptariami 5-ame paveiksle.

5 pav. Autentiškumo bruožų poveikis vartotojams
Šaltinis: sudaryta autorių, remiantis tyrimo rezultatais, 2025

Apibendrinant 5-ame paveiksle pateiktus duomenis, galima teigti, kad reikšmingiausią poveikį UAB „Kontėna“ vartotojų elgsenai daro prekės ženklo siūloma produktų kokybė. Kaip svarbiausią šį kriterijų įvardino 25,1% apklausos dalyvių. Tai dar kartą patvirtina, kad kokybė yra kertinė prekės ženklo savybė, kuri lemia pasirinkimą ir lojalumą. Antras svarbus kriterijus yra prekės ženklo kuriamas pasitikėjimas. Jį pasirinko 18,1% tiriamųjų. Taip pat aukštų vertinimų sulaukė šie kriterijai: prekės ženklo vertybių atitikimas vartotojų asmeninėms vertybėms (13,5%) ir prekės ženklo rekomendavimo draugams (12%). Būtent šių kriterijų gana aukštas vertinimas sukuria pagrindą prielaidai, kad prekės ženklo „Kontėna“ kuriamas įvaizdis turi pakankamai aukštą pasitikėjimo pagrindą.

Kiti prekės ženklo „Kontėna“ autentiškumo bruožai tyrimo dalyvių buvo įvertinti 2-7 proc. amplitudėje. 7% apklausos dalyvių nurodė, kad jų sprendimui pirkti kaina įtakos neturi, todėl galima daryti prielaidą, jog šiems vartotojams svarbus kriterijus yra ne kaina, o kokybė ir vertybinis tapatumas. 6,7% apklausos dalyvių pasidalino, kad yra arba planuoja būti ilgalaikiu prekės ženklo „Kontėna“ vartotoju, o 6,1% įvardina, kad neigiama nuomonė apie prekės ženklą jų sprendimams jokio poveikio nedaro. Tai itin svarbus kriterijus, suteikiantis galimybę daryti prielaidą, jog šį atsakymą pažymėję vartotojai yra itin lojalūs.

Mažiausių vertinimų sulaukė tokie autentiškumo bruožai kaip aktyvumas prekės ženklo bendruomenėje (3,9%) ir emocinis ryšys su prekės ženklu (2,2%). Būtent šie rezultatai įmonei „Kontėna“ suteikia tiek iššūkį, tiek galimybę skatinti prekės ženklo emocinio ryšio su vartotojais stiprinimo per istorijas ir bendruomeniškumo iniciatyvas.

Apibendrinant rezultatus, kurie surinkti kiekybinio tyrimo metu, galima teigti, kad prekės ženklo UAB „Kontėna“ autentiškumo bruožai yra svarbus veiksnys, galintis daryti skirtingą poveikį vartotojų elgsenai. Atsižvelgiant į anksčiau analizuotą mokslinę literatūrą ir tyrimo metu surinktus duomenis bei apibendrintus rezultatus, galima tvirtinti, kad prekės ženklo autentiškumo bruožai skatina vartotojų pasitikėjimą, ištikimybę, lojalumą, puoselėja emocinį ryšį, atspindi vartotojų socialines vertybes, suteikia atsparumo neigiamai nuomonei prekės ženklo atžvilgiu, paskatina dažniau rinktis (nepaisant kainos) ar visapusiškai palaikyti prekės ženklą. Be to, autentiškumo bruožai skatina vartotojus dažniau rinktis prekinį ženklą dėl to, kad sutampa jų asmeninės ir prekės ženklo vertybės, o tai stiprina buvimo prekės ženklo dalimi

jausmą. Autentiškumo bruožų dėka, vartotojai ne tik puoselėja ilgalaikį ryšį su prekiniu ženklu, bet paskatina vartoti ir kitus.

Apžvelgiant bei palyginant kokybinio ir kiekybinio tyrimų rezultatus, pastebėta, kad iš esmės abiejų tyrimų dalyvių nuomonė panaši, todėl rezultatai skiriasi nežymiai.

Tiek kokybinio, tiek kiekybinio tyrimuose buvo siekta nustatyti, kaip tyrimo dalyviai suvokia prekės ženklo autentiškumą įmonės „Kontėna“ atžvilgiu. Kokybinio tyrimo informantai nurodė, kad prekės ženklo autentiškumas yra grįstas vertybėmis, remiasi tradicijomis bei vykdo skaidrią veiklą, siūlo aukščiausios kokybės produktus. Kiekybinio tyrimo dalyviai mano, kad autentiškas prekės ženklas yra tas, kuris siūlo aukštos kokybės produktus, yra besilaikantis pažadų, jo veiksmai atitinka deklaruojamas vertybes, turintis istoriją ir ištikimai besilaikantis savo pažadų.

Kokybini tyrimo dalyviai nurodė, kad pagrindiniai autentiškumo bruožai yra tradicijų laikymasis, ryšys su vartotoju, rankų darbo kokybė, skaidrumas ir vertybių puoselėjimas. Tuo tarpu kiekybinio tyrimo dalyviai, atsakydami į panašaus pobūdžio klausimą, išskyrė šiuos autentiškumo bruožus: kokybė, patikimumas, unikalumas, prekės ženklo reputacija.

Atliekant abu tyrimus taip pat siekta nustatyti, kokie autentiškumo bruožai skatina vartotojus pirkti būtent prekės ženklo UAB „Kontėna“ produktus. Informantų nuomone, tai yra tradicijų laikymasis, produktų gamyba pagal senąsias technologijas, ryšys su vartotoju dalyvaujant prekybinėse mugėse, organizuojant edukacinius renginius bei tiesiogiai bendraujant su vartotoju, rankų darbo kokybė, skaidrumas gamybos procese ir vertybių puoselėjimas. Kiekybinio tyrimo dalyviai dažniausiai nurodė, kad sprendimą pirkti jie priima dėl pasitikėjimo prekės ženklo siūlomų produktų kokybe, pasitikėjimo, kurį kelia prekės ženklas ir dėl prekės ženklo vertybių sutapimo su jų asmeninėmis vertybėmis.

Svarbiausias abiejų tyrimų klausimas buvo apie autentiškumo bruožų poveikį vartotojų elgsenai. Informantai nurodė, kad jų atstovaujamo prekės ženklo autentiškumo bruožai vartotojų elgseną veikia įvairiai. Vienus tai inicijuoja rinktis autentiškumą, kitus paskatina pirkti ir vartoti, o dar kitiems tai ugdo lojalumą, skatina pasitikėjimą prekės ženklu, stiprina emocinį ryšį. Kiekybinio tyrimo rezultatai atskleidė, kad prekės ženklo autentiškumo bruožai turi gerokai didesnę įtaką vartotojų elgsenai nei buvo nurodyta informantų atsakymuose. Tyrimo duomenys parodė, kad prekės ženklo autentiškumo savybės stiprina vartotojų pasitikėjimą, lojalumą, emocinį ryšį ir atspindi jų socialines vertybes. Tai taip pat suteikia pasipriešinimą neigiamoms nuomonėms apie prekės ženklą. Be to, vartotojai dažniau renkasi prekinį ženklą, kurio vertybės atitinka jų asmenines nuostatas, ir jie jaučiasi priklausantys šiam ženklui. Autentiškumo savybės ne tik stiprina ilgalaikį ryšį tarp vartotojo ir prekės ženklo, bet ir skatina vartotojų įsitraukimą, taip pat didina kitų prekių pirkimo tikimybę.

IŠVADOS

1. Remiantis mokslinės literatūros šaltinių analize, prekės ženklo autentiškumas yra vartotojų suvokimas apie prekės ženklo unikalumą, sąžiningumą ir atitikimą jo deklaruojamoms vertybėms. Vykdant sąžiningą, nuoširdžią ir skaidrią veiklą, išlaikant vienodą komunikaciją, sukurtas prekės ženklo autentiškumas pritraukia lojalius vartotojus, kuria patikimą įvaizdį ir pritraukia sėkmę.
2. Atlikta mokslinių šaltinių analizė atskleidė, kad prekės ženklo autentiškumo bruožai matuojami gebėjimu išlikti sėkmingu rinkoje, vadovautis išsikeltomis vertybėmis, vykdyti savo pažadus ir išlikti originaliu rinkoje. Pagrindiniai prekės ženklo autentiškumo bruožai yra: tęstinumas, patikimumas, aiški prekės ženklo istorija, skaidrumas, vertybių išlaikymas, unikalumas, emocinis ryšys, vientisa komunikacija, ryšys su vartotojais, socialinis atsakingumas ir kokybė.
3. Remiantis mokslinės literatūros šaltinių analize, nustatyta, kad vartotojų elgsena yra procesas, kurio eigoje pirkėjas nusprendžia prekės/paslaugos įsigijimą, savo poreikius

vartoti. Sprendimo priėmimo procese sąveikauja psichologiniai, personaliniai, socialiniai ir kultūriniai veiksniai. Kaip dar vienas svarbus aspektas, lemiantis vartotojų elgseną, yra išskiriami prekės ženklo autentiškumo bruožai, kurie pasižymėdami sąžiningumu, vertybių išlaikymu, kokybe, socialine atsakomybe, emocinio ryšio su vartotojais kūrimu bei pasitikėjimo vartotojams kėlimu, skatina jų lojalumą, įsitraukimą į prekės ženklo bendruomenę, norą dalintis ir reklamuoti/rekomenduoti produktą kitiems. Tai taip pat dažnai tampa sėkmingu pagrindu vartotojų pirkimo įpročių formavimui, nepaisant kainos ir kitų rinkoje esančių panašių prekių/paslaugų pasiūlos.

4. Atliktas mišraus tipo tyrimas, kurio metu atlikti kokybiniai ir kiekybiniai tyrimai patvirtino, kad prekės ženklo autentiškumo bruožai, tokie kaip: tradicijų laikymasis, ryšys su vartotoju, rankų darbo kokybė, skaidrumas ir vertybių puoselėjimas, kokybė, patikimumas, unikalumas ir prekės ženklo reputacija, daro poveikį vartotojų elgsenai. Autentiškumo bruožai stiprina vartotojų pasitikėjimą prekės ženklu, skatina ištikimybę ir lojalumą, kuria tarpusavio ir emocinius ryšius su prekės ženklu, skatina palaikyti įmonės veiklą ir rinktis įmonės prekes, nepaisant kainos ar kitų savybių. Tyrimas taip pat atskleidė, kad prekės ženklo autentiškumo bruožus vartotojai neretai sieja su savo asmeninėmis vertybėmis, o tai ne tik didina pasitikėjimą, bet ir prisideda prie vartotojų ilgalaikio įsitraukimo, paskatina pirkti, išlaiko vartotojus lojalius, kurie rekomenduoja prekės ženklą kitiems ir pritraukia naujų vartotojų.

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JOB INTERVIEW SIMULATION AS A TASK ENHANCING SOFT SKILLS

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Abstract

Simulation has been widely used as a teaching method in various disciplines for years, motivating, challenging the participants and honing variety of soft skills. The method has been applied in medicine, business, education, engineering, and many more fields. Applying simulation method helped the participants to improve problem-solving, teamwork, public speaking and plenty of other soft skills. In the digital age, when young adults are focusing on variety of digital competencies, the simulation method is still very relevant, helping to prepare for an actual job market. The aim of this article is to introduce the usage of simulation method and the importance of soft skills in the integrated lectures, to investigate the perception of this method by the students of academic and technical communication, tourism and recreation, technical translation and law, and to record and analyze students' attitudes towards similar practices during the lectures. The methods chosen for the research were literature overview and qualitative analysis. The steps for the qualitative analysis included class observation, interview simulation, and reflection. Three open lectures (February 14, March 1, and October 27, 2023) based on a simulation method were introduced at Kaunas University of Technology and SMK University of Applied Sciences, letting the students to try on different roles of employers and employees. Students of various majors participated in the integrated lectures and the simulations of job interviews were conducted by the teachers. Some of the students participated in the simulations in the roles of employers, employees and the observers of the interviews. The results showed high interest of a simulation method among the students of both universities. The analysis of students' reflections revealed the main advantages identified by the students such as an improvement of soft skills, practical recommendations for future job interviews, and practice of public speaking. The negative result specified by the students was the lack of possibility for the students to try all the roles of an employer, employee and the observer. Moreover, the primary knowledge of the students differed. Various stages of a simulation were described as innovative by some of the students. However, particular parts of a simulation were already known to a small group of the participants. The simulation method has been found as an engaging and motivating practice, required greater attention to time-management and inclusiveness of all students during the integrated lectures.

Keywords: simulation method, job interview, soft skills, integrated lectures.

INTRODUCTION

Research topicality and problem. Living in a fast-changing world with constantly developing technologies, when artificial intelligence can perform various tasks, it is a challenge to prepare young adults for the future market. Soft and hard skills like numerous other personal qualities should prove that this person will be able to work under pressure taking into consideration volatile environments and conditions. That might be the reason the simulation of a job interview has been a relevant topic for years as a way not only to primarily prepare for an actual job interview, but also to improve skills while struggling with mental issues (Humm et al., 2014), investigate interaction strategies (Gebhard et al., 2014), train social skills (Gebhard et al., 2018), develop oral language skills as well as the soft skills of decision-making and critical thinking (Ibrahim and Lucman, 2024). However, sometimes young adults have just a few minutes to demonstrate all their skills and to make a great first impression. Job interviews could now be compared to some talent shows when a few minutes of performance could change your professional future for better or worse. Job interview is not the first step anymore. Employers around the world may check on their future employees by analyzing their social media accounts, public posts and recommendations. The introduction section in the *Linkedin* platform may save hours of face-to-face meetings. At the same time an ambiguous or offensive post on social media may ruin the career possibilities of an individual. Simulation of real-life situations in a job market might be a way to avoid potential mistakes and prepare to represent the best version of you.

The lack of possibility for the students to try both roles of an employer and an employee to prepare for a perfect job interview encouraged to create simulated lectures for the students of KTU and SMK. Constantly dealing with online communication, students need to improve their face-to-face communication and interaction skills.

The aim of the research. The aim of this article is to introduce the usage of simulation method and the importance of soft skills in the integrated lectures, to investigate the perception of this method by the students of academic and technical communication, tourism and recreation, technical translation and law, and to record and analyze students' attitudes towards similar practices during the lectures.

The research methodology. In order to reach the aim, literature overview and qualitative analysis were chosen as the research methods. The steps for the qualitative analysis were as follows: class observation, interview simulation, and reflection.

The research results. Through the research it was found that the simulation of a job interview is still an engaging and motivating practice. The simulation conducted at KTU and SMK showed that students still need to practice their soft skills and practicing for a job interview is found as valuable practice among the participants of a simulation. The reflections based on the final lecture emphasized the need of such activities in higher education as the participating students were feeling quite stressed and uncertain about job interviews before the lecture and expressed a great variety of useful points received during the simulation-based lecture.

Originality/Value of the article. This article offers an application of relevant methods. Nowadays students constantly deal with a great variety of digital tasks, face-to-face interactive activities are extremely important. The simulation of a job interview has been chosen as a method to be integrated into the lectures of academic and technical communication to practically apply the skills analysed during the lectures and prepare university students for an actual job market. Furthermore, it was decided to organize the lectures including students of different majors and even different universities to show the variety of opinions, points of view and to challenge the participants of this simulation. Simulation method helps to apply problem-solving, critical-thinking, adaptability and many more soft skills.

THEORY ANALYSIS

Simulation as a teaching method. Simulation, described as "an experiential instructional method that teachers create to imitate or replicate actual events, problems, procedures, or skills to achieve the desired instructional results" (Jones & Barrett, 2017) has been widely used as a teaching method in education for years. According to Kincaid et. al. it takes a significant part in education as it is easily applicable to students of different age and level (from primary school pupils to graduates), lets the learners to connect the dots in complicated processes, gives a chance to variety of disciplines to be taught as integrated, introduces the method of problem-solving, reduces potential risks and saves the expenditure (2003). No surprise it has been used in ESL lessons and lectures for so long. Its main benefits were described as a consideration of various ideas, agreements and disagreements, and polite ways of solving conflicts (Sharrock and Watson, 1983). In 1985 simulation was introduced as a way to include authentic registers and to change the roles of students and their teachers (Krashen). As a result, this teaching method has been seen as motivating, improving self-confidence (Richard-Ammato, 1988; Mawhirter & Garofalo, 2016), having a chance to encounter the problems in the same way it appears in the real world (Jones & Barrett, 2017) and encouraging the participants speak expressively, controlling their stress level and intonation (Russel and Shepherd, 2010). Moreover, simulation allowed seeing the real-world situation not only in a simplified, but also accurate and dynamic way (Kaufman & Ireland, 2019). In comparison to real-life hands-on experience, Kaufman and Ireland (2019) emphasize the main advantages of a simulation method, such as:

- Repeating scenarios with specific learning objectives
- Practicing for longer periods of time contrary to available in real-life situations
- Using trials and errors, having a chance to experience risky or non-typical situations

- Measuring the outcomes, while applying various scoring systems

Like every other teaching method, simulation also has its disadvantages and limitations.

In the age of artificial intelligence, simulation remains as a relevant method asking the participants to leave their comfort zones, getting some real-life experience. Moreover, this method has been seen as a great way to hone interpersonal skills (Bastos et al., 2024). Adapting simulation helped to improve soft skills among medical staff (de Araújo Baptista et al., 2024) and to notice "interactional skills deficiencies" (Ghafili et al., 2024). Also, the method has been seen as way to better "cultural understanding, conducting interrogations and interviewing, and assessing adaptive thinking and leadership" (Hubal et al., 2008). According to Adedokun et al., 2022 the main themes of simulated activities are active engagement, adaptation strategies, mutual connectedness, peer and faculty support, linguistic difficulties, cultural challenges, feeling of being vulnerable, and pressure to perform. Not only does this method appear in language teaching, medicine, engineering, it also takes a significant part in business.

Simulation as a business method. As education is facing emerging technologies every day, the business sector is no exception. Life-long learning is seen as a part of a successful career path, and the implementation of business simulation appears as an innovative approach, helping to improve professional skills and allowing the participants of a simulation to get "a holistic view of the business environment" (Beranič and Heričko, 2022). Such skills are highly valuable in nowadays business. Business simulation training is now highly applied in large international companies. Léger et al. (2011) discuss the application of a simulation method in business in more than 100 universities and a dozen Fortune 1000 organizations, getting the results of reduced risk of making mistakes, provided scaffolds of self-confidence, reflection on mistakes, speculation of root causes and ability to design the alternative solutions.

Business simulation games are considered as an effective tool of merging the soft and hard skills. Moreover, students who highly engage in similar activities are significantly more motivated to experiment, introducing the innovative ideas to business and organizations they belong to. Moreover, it leads to the fast adaptation to various working environments and transfer of knowledge (Lovin et. al., 2021). Simulation method helps to apply problem-solving, critical-thinking, adaptability and many more soft skills. The usage of business simulation might be seen as "matching the needs of various business-related disciplines" (Avramenko, 2012). Nowadays, AI-based business simulation is valued as a successful educational method, focusing on the skills needed to be demonstrated to "potential employers or clients", while preparing for an actual job and presenting the professional portfolio (Potekhin, 2024). Finally, simulation of a job interview during the lectures not only improves the well-known soft skills, but also satisfies students' "needs for sense of accomplishment" and teaches them to actually adapt in volatile business market (Lin & Tu, 2012).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Business simulation games are considered as an effective tool of merging soft and hard skills. It leads to the fast adaptation to various working environments and transfer of knowledge (Lovin et al., 2021).

The initial number of students was planned to be around 56 based on the number of students registered for the particular modules. The actual number of participants who volunteered to participate in the simulation was 28 (N=28). The criteria for selecting the participants were based on their schedule and the curriculum of the lectures at both universities. This criterion ensured the similar background knowledge and possible skills of the participants. The average age of the participants was 19 years old, as all the participants were first-year students of Bachelor programs. To assure the volunteering participation, the students were informed about the open lectures beforehand with a possibility not to attend the lecture and prepare a different assignment instead. It was found that the number of participants in job-

interview simulations is usually not too big in order to have all the participants equally engaged as in the similar job-interview simulations carried out by fellow-researchers: 15 participants (Baur et al. 2013), 19 participants (Hassan et al. 2022). For the **qualitative analysis**, the chosen steps were as follows: class observation, interview simulation and reflection. The particular method has been chosen regarding time limitation (duration of a regular lecture) and trying to improve the engagement of the participants. Both teachers (KTU and SMK) were in charge of **class observation** based on the description by Madsa (2012:6). That means the teachers were responsible for time-management, choosing the different roles for the students, introducing the structure of an interview, and conducting the process. Noticing the students not following the requirements or struggling at the particular level of an interview, teachers had a right to encourage the students, providing some extra ideas or giving a remark. **Interview simulations** have been chosen as similar practices are helping students to prepare for the actual job interviews, providing them some actual solutions for the upcoming challenges (Shi & Li 2024), teaching the students to use "diversified narrative strategies" and improve the cross-cultural competences (Choi, 2014). The simulations of a job interview have been conducted at both universities at the specified dates and finally, the participants were asked to provide their reflections by the end of those lectures. Trying to create a setting similar to an actual job interview, the students were asked to sit in a front of each other at the prepared spot in the classroom, similar to the business office. Getting their roles, the students had a few minutes to prepare and think about the possible questions and answers beforehand. As two of the students were simulating a job interview, the rest of the participants monitored the process and prepared a list of remarks. The reflection have been prepared anonymously and handed in at the end of the activity. The questionnaire has been chosen as the final step in Madsa (2012:6) article; however, the reflection for this research has been chosen instead (Bubnys & Kairienė 2016). **The reflection method** has been chosen to let the participants to analyse the experience of simulation, to evaluate themselves and their fellow-participants (Bubnys & Kairienė, 2016). The students were asked for a short handwritten reflection on a sheet of paper, avoiding any possible distractions or sharing ideas among each other. The purpose of such reflections was to see the actual experience of every individual separately. The method has been chosen as having a positive impact in simulation-based courses (Hughes & Scholtz, 2015). Finally, the reflection method let the participants to plan the changes of their actions based on the experience analysis (Bubnys & Kairienė, 2016).

Research ethics. The research was conducted on the basis of the principle of free will, which according to Bitinas, Rupšienė, Žydžiūnaitė (2008) means that the subject must participate in the research only if they have freely decided to do so – no one can force them to do so. Written consents were obtained to participate in the research, and the purpose of the research was explained orally during the lectures. The reflections were asked to be written in an open form and as the expectations described above, all these reflections were anonymous.

RESEARCH RESULTS AND DATA ANALYSIS

Lecture no. 1. The first lecture (February 14, 2023) has been named "Prepare for a job interview". The title has been chosen to sound as an invitation for the students to get practical advice and to prepare to face the upcoming professional challenges. The first lecture has been divided into 2 main parts. The first theoretical part has been introduced by the KTU lecturer Marija Vėžienė. The other teacher meanwhile had a role of an observer of a classroom, to notice the level of knowledge among the students and their willingness to interact. It included the short resumes of the participating teachers, necessity of soft and hard skills and simulation as a method itself. Following the literature overview and a brief introduction, some practical tips for a job interview have been shared by the entrepreneur and SMK lecturer Viktorija Čeplikė. During this part students got a chance to picture the process of a job interview from different

perspectives of an employer and an employee. The actual job interview experiences were shared by the second lecturer based on her personal experience owning a fashion brand. Later, the guest lecturer, HR specialist Jurgita Žukienė shared the key points of choosing a perfect employee for the company. Moreover, the students had an opportunity to see the challenges HR specialists are facing and the mistakes they usually notice, listening to numerous introductions of potential employees.

The second practical part has been based on a discussion and brainstorming. The students have been invited to form a few groups and to brainstorm the ideas of a "perfect" job interview, answering the key questions: what are the main requirements for the employee? How much time would it take to prepare for a job interview? What is the dress code, rules of etiquette, etc. The brainstorming part took about 10 minutes. The time might be modulated depending on the number of participants. All the teachers were mediating these discussions, commenting on some of the ideas and sharing their personal experience. By the end of this part of a lecture, students managed to prepare lists of tips and tricks for a successful job interview. Finally, these ideas were discussed in the class and presented to all groups.

The third and the last part of the first lecture was the simulation of a job interview. As there was not enough time for every single student to participate, the volunteers were selected. Three simulations have been presented, including different settings and challenges.

The first interview was conducted between the students of two very different cultures. The second interview focused on gender-based challenges, and the last one was more open to audience comments and suggestions. To be more inclusive, the simulations might take less time or more mediators might be invited to monitor the interviews.

Lecture no. 2. The second lecture **(**March 1, 2023) has been named "Linkedin: an extra skill or a basic necessity?" The main aim of the lecture was the analysis of a Linkedin platform and some advice for the students, creating their own Linkedin profiles. The lecture took place at the SMK University of Applied Sciences. During the introductory part, a lecturer from Kaunas University of Technology has introduced the platform of Linkedin itself. A brief analysis of the most frequent questions in Linkedin has been carried out. Furthermore, the frequent mistakes and the worst examples of public Linkedin posts have been introduced by the lecturer at the College of Applied Sciences.

The lecture has been presented to the students of technical translation, tourism and recreation, and law. During the first part of the lecture, the students were asked to comment on the material presented. Working in groups and individually students were asked to spot the violations in the given examples of public posts. Moral dilemmas, such as choosing work over family, working after a personal loss or sharing unnecessary information were discussed. Later, the students were asked to take a look to Linkedin accounts of the lecturers of this open lecture. Students were encouraged to share their insights and remarks about the possible improvement.

For the second part of the lecture, the participants of the open lecture were asked to create a prototype of their own Linkedin account. Students were asked to decide what kind of information is relevant to be posted and what kind of personal or professional facts could be seen as redundant. Those students who might not have felt comfortable about prototyping their account, were asked to prepare a prototype in a group of 2 or 3 members. Finally, the groups briefly presented their prototypes and were able to criticize or compliment the works of their colleagues.

The third and the last part of the lecture was a simulation of a job interview. The difference in comparison to the first open lecture was that this time, a teacher and a student were the participants of a simulation. The lecturer from Kaunas University of Technology invited the volunteering students to take part in a simulation, while the rest of the participants were asked to monitor and reflect their insights.

Lecture no. 3. The third lecture (October 27, 2023) took place at Kaunas University of Applied Sciences in Vilnius. The lecture titled "Your job interview, what needs to be known?" was a combination of the previous two lectures. Both lecturers took into consideration remarks and comments made by the students of the first two lectures. The participants of the third lecture were 28 students of International Business and Communication and Fashion and Style Management.

Before the lecture, students were asked to express their expectations towards the lecture. Some of the expectations were quite general:

(1)I would assume to broaden my point of view

(2)It would be nice to get a piece of advice for the interview

However, majority of students had some very specific expectations of the lecture, related to their future professional path:

(3) To know more tips and tricks of a job interview

(4) What to say and what not to say during the job interview

(5) To know some non-standard tips for a job interview

(6) To know how to dress for the job interview

(7) To prepare for a CV writing

Finally, there were expectations based not only on the skills necessary for the job interview, but also focusing on communication in general:

(8) Get to know how to manipulate people and situations

(9) Learn how to deal with stress

(10) Know whether I should answer all the questions and to learn how to look knowledgeable

During the lecture, the students were introduced to the biggest mistakes during the job interview, Linkedin platform questions, recommended before getting a job and finally, a few simulations of a job interview were carried out. Right after the second simulation, students were asked to reflect on their experience. The reflections were asked to be written in an open form and as the expectations described above, all these reflections were anonymous. The participants of the lecture shared many positive insights based on their experience, such as:

(10) Got some great interview examples;

(11) I have learned how you could sell yourself as a specialist;

(12) I have improved the methods how to deal with my stress;

(13) I understood that I can choose not to answer some questions;

(14) I have got more than I expected, especially I have learned that I can choose not to answer the question if I don't want to.

Results

In the initial stage, two lectures were planned, however, after getting students' feedback and suggestions, the third lecture was carried out as a blended version of the first two. Teachers took into consideration the strengths and weaknesses of the first two lectures and some minor changes related to time management and task monitoring were made.

Plenty of positive feedback was received after the lectures. Students improved their public speaking negotiation and problem-solving skills. Participation in those lectures gave students real-life experience and helped students to better prepare for future job interviews. Moreover, the simulation method was positively accepted by both university students, who kindly agreed to take part in the simulated scenarios.

CONCLUSIONS

The simulation method has been applied in various fields for years. Taking into consideration the volatile market tendencies and the increasing need for different skills for future employees, the application of this method, teaching students of various majors might be

seen as an important practical opportunity. The lectures carried out at the Kaunas University of Technology and SMK University of Applied Sciences engaged the students of various study programs and revealed their common professional interests and needs for development. The application of simulations at the university's lectures provides faculty with a more complex picture of students' abilities and limitations. Based on the experience of these open lectures, it could be concluded that simulation makes a lecture dynamic and interacting. Moreover, students feel more relaxed when speaking in a simulation as the role in prescribed in advance.

The application of simulation could be highly recommended in various lectures for the students of different majors. Such lectures will not only introduce the needs of the market, but also the needs of the students as future employees. Such practice might also be relevant for the students to practice business language, small talk, icebreakers and similar techniques.

It is recommended to prepare a tight schedule to carry out all the activities during the time of a lecture. The number of students and number of different majors in the mixed groups should also be taken into consideration. As the students expressed their gratitude about the chance to participate in this type of lecture, one of the drawbacks mentioned was the limitation of time.

More students were willing to participate in a simulation. However, during one lecture, only 2 or 3 pairs of volunteers could step in the simulated job interview. As the method included class observation, simulation and student reflection, the clear structure helped the participants to stay focused. The reflections based on the final lecture emphasized the need of such activities in higher education as the participating students were feeling quite stressed and uncertain about job interviews before the activities and expressed a great variety of useful points received during the simulation-based lecture.

Further researches will be aimed at identifying the specific needs of various markets and creating the strategies to prepare for a job interview, focusing on inclusiveness and equal possibilities of all the candidates (age, gender, abilities, etc.)

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