MARKETING IDENTITY
Design that sells

Conference Proceedings
from International Scientific Conference
4th - 5th November 2013
Congress Hall of the Slovak Academy of Science
Smolenice, Slovak Republic

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We are happy to welcome at our conference permanent and new participants from abroad – the Czech Republic, Poland, Italy, Romania and Russia. We were especially honoured to welcome a world known guest who took part in our conference for the first time – professor of sociology Zygmunt Bauman. He was awarded the honorary degree “doctorate honoris causa” for his lifetime research and academic work.

Granát award ceremony was an important part of the conference. The competition was announced by the Faculty of Mass Media Communication in the preceding year of the conference in November 2012. Its aim is to reward projects focused on social responsibility of educational institutions. 38 projects participated in this year’s competition. The jury selected and awarded three best projects. The winners were awarded prizes during the opening ceremony. The competition is held under the auspices of the Slovak Ministry of Education.

Conference website: http://konferencie.fmk.sk/marketing-identity-2013/

Faculty website: http://fmn.ucm.sk

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(All photos from the conference are here to see)
IDENTITY AND ISSUES CONCERNING SUBJECTIVE EXPERIENCE OF HAPPINESS AS PART OF THE YOUNG GENERATION’S WAY OF LIFE

Ondřej Roubal

Abstract
In social scientific discourse, the concept of identity covers plurality of approaches and definitions. Various social constructivist concepts of identity as a social construct produced and maintained in social relationships are gaining ground. Anthropo-biological approaches and their essentialism identity concepts compete with the constructivist theories of human identity establishment. The definition of male and female identity is often ambiguous. The question is to what extent the essence of male and female identity is determined by an invariable base of biological-genetic types and how significantly it is pre-conditioned by sociocultural environment and produced as a social construct. There is a certain consensus with regard to the assumption that male and female perception of life differs in various situations in life. Relying on empirical data, we are trying to clarify the specificity of male and female perspective of subjective perception of happiness, seen as an extensive set of sources and manifestations of positive emotions. Possible differences of male and female perception of happiness are observed in the context of the impact of wealth on the quality of life, the effects of hedonic adaptation on duration of achieved levels of pleasure in different social situations.

Key words:

Introduction
There is no doubt the identity concept has had a breathtaking career within the social sciences in the past decades. The thematization of identity has been experiencing conjuncture, particularly across sociological and psychological thinking. According to Gleason,
identity is growing to be an established cliché, whereas the sociological and psychological concepts of identity are becoming fragmented and often contradicting, which leads to an overall ambiguousness, disorientation, incomprehension, and misunderstanding of discussions on human identity. Most frequently, there are disputes over to what extent identity is a constant or variable quality, from which sources it is established, what is its true contents, or what are its authentic manifestations in people’s way of life. Therefore, the identity concept is not only undergoing the period of conjuncture, it is also amidst the period of certain inflation and ambiguity of its definition.

In this study, we address the issue of gender identity with regard to the modernity of lifestyles, taking into account the current economic situation. The study is part of the conceptual preparation for a project that examines the changing ways of life within the Hlučínsko micro-region. The region is characterized by certain specificities that significantly differentiate it from other parts of the Czech Republic. It is thus possible to compare the impact of modernization processes on identity, value orientation, and people’s way of life using an empirical sample. First of all, it is necessary to define the term “identity” in more detail. The fragmentation of opinions within the discourse of human identity is also amplified by differences relating to issues of establishment of male and female identity. In this regard, two absolutely different perspectives revealing the essence of such identities are gaining ground. Arguments of the anthropo-biological approach rely on the principles of evolution psychology, genetics, and particularly on many findings of modern neuroscience. These arguments lead to the “essentialism” approach to the essence of male and female identity, determined by constant biological base and typical hormonal structure, accountable for many differences in male and female behavior, thinking, and mental experiences. From this perspective, we are “born into” male or female identity and further develop and validate it, as inborn disposition, in social relations.

3 This study came into existence with the financial support under project no. 13-23870S 41 81 CZ Changes in the way of life and modernization processes within the Hlučínsko micro-region.

In the context of the biological approach, the human brain is “programmed” to apply typically male and typically female roles within the society in many functions. The functional differences of brain activities and mental abilities of males and females are most frequently explained in the light of evolution, during which many “male” and “female” qualities were genetically fixed in the neural centers of the human brain. The concept of male and female identity and of different mentality is also often derived from dissimilar sexual strategies, once again, subject to the evolution principles and, to this day, genetically encoded within specific areas of the human brain. The aforementioned approaches lead to the conclusions, for example, that male brains specialize more in “systemization”, while female brains are rather prepared to “empathize”. From this perspective, males appear to be specialists in the nonliving world of objects, while females specialize in the living world of people and in social relations. According to the model, men are usually more proficient when it comes to mathematical exercises, they cope more easily with visual-spatial exercises (however, not with exercises testing location-object memory) or display much higher level of aggressiveness. On the other hand, women demonstrate, in psychological tests, more developed social intuition, ability to communicate and express themselves, and they tend to appreciate more the altruistic and reciprocity relations and more sensitively “read” facial expressions, nonverbal communication and differences in verbal communication. Therefore, sociobiological approaches are gaining ground in terms of viewing male and female identity. According to socio-biologists, the differences in male and female mentality always have a biological basis, representing a set of inborn dispositions, genetically encoded by the evolution process, and determining a specific nature of male and female social conduct. Therefore, socio-biologists believe that the way men and women experience reality is predominantly defined biologically. Opposite to the anthropo-biological concepts of male and female identity, there are social constructivists concepts.

of thinking, represented by a number of sociological, psychological, and culturally anthropological trends. The social constructivist bases for the approach to identity are significantly recognized in, for example, the so-called “gender studies” or in some feminist tendencies, uncompromisingly rejecting any biological essentialism and phylogenetic predetermination of male and female identities. The social constructivist perspective is primarily associated with the notion of social aspects of identities. Therefore, people are not born as men and women in terms of social behavior, but they only become men and women in the course of the socialization process. It is possible to learn the male and female roles; in this context, they represent a social construct “negotiated” within a specific sociocultural environment. In each society, there are certain behavior patterns, considered as typically male or female. Men and women gradually identify with such patterns in the course of the socialization process, thereby constructing their own identity. These patterns also determine what has to be performed, achieved to ensure the male and female identity/social role is recognized. In this context, the causes for different behavior of males and females are typically derived from social and cultural factors.

Each of the aforementioned perspectives explaining the establishment of male and female identity has its foundation, rational substance, supported by logical and convincing arguments. However, neither of the said aspects may be described as more or less “true” or empirically convincing. In spite of the fact that both notions of male and female identity and mentality fundamentally differ, they ultimately lead to some common conclusions. One of the key ones is the fact that male and female roles represent, in some situations in life, different strategies for behavior and conduct, although for totally different reasons. This may also form, to a certain extent, two different mental worlds, two worlds of experiences and dual life strategy. It may concern different preferences of values, life expectation tendencies, setting of goals in life, satisfaction of needs, etc.

Therefore, various efforts aimed at identifying potential differences of male and female dimension to experiencing subjective feeling of happiness, notions of the quality of life, strategies for achieving and maintaining positive emotions, or methods of deriving joyful feelings from various sources and situations in life are becoming relevant in this regard.

In this study, we will try to use empirical materials to point out some potential differences in the subjective level of experiencing joy and happiness in life for men and women within the generation of today’s university students. We examine the specifically male and female experiencing of feelings of happiness in connection with evaluation of life satisfaction as well as one’s own perception of the quality of life and financial income level, affecting the standard of living. We assume that the financial income level in relation to subjective perception of quality of life will be given different significance and importance in case of men and women. Furthermore, we will focus on the issue of hedonic adaptation and its effect on the duration of the achieved level of happiness for different situations in life. In this context, we wish to find out how the hedonic adaptation effect affects the experiencing of different sources of positive emotions under the male and female perception model.

1 Identity as art of self-creation

Problems with identity do not solely appear in terms of the ambiguity of the extensively grasped discourse of research workers. In the late modernity era, identity is mainly becoming the problem of its creators – in the words of Zygmunt Bauman – “artists of life.” In this connection, human life – blessed with will and freedom of choice – may be perceived as a work of art, which comes into existence under constant confrontation and interconnection of the variable world and plans of individuals. Such work of art results in identity – something absolutely distinct, specific, and non- fungible. The problem is that the production of an artwork is becoming more and more uncertain, temporary, and too variable in the period of late modernity, similarly as the path associated with the artwork creation. The identity project

is becoming an increasingly individual task, for the achievement of which involved persons have less and less stable sources intended for meaningful planning and gradual implementation of the project. In the background of problems with the creation of one’s own identity lies a deinstitutionalization process, mainly demonstrated by the declining importance of modern formal organizations. Approximately from the mid-1970s, there is a transition in the world of organizations to less formal, more flexible and economically effective network structure. It is the transition to the so-called networks that should overcome too rigid and not really functional pyramidal structure of organizations, while enabling more free and independent movement of all involved parties. Tight and often lifelong bonds interconnecting individuals and organizations are becoming looser, as networks require more individualism, independence, flexibility, and mobility. The functioning of global networks produces sources for dissemination of doubts relating to one’s own identity - identity that should be similarly flexible, variable, and constantly prepared for changes.

In parallel with this, there are justified doubts concerning the present role of the institute of family, which is being attributed increasing degree of fragility and instability. Impeachment of such institutions mainly represents the impeachment of reliable foundations, securities, and more permanent liabilities and responsibilities, ensuring valuable sources for the construction of identity. Consequently, this not only translates into conflicts in experiencing and implementing social roles, but also impairs self-confidence and assurance of people. To a large extent, individuals have to rely solely on themselves in the formation of identity; they individually search for their own sources of confidence, and inevitably deal with uncertainty experienced in the course of such search. According to some authors, the late-modern identity of people is in crisis; it reminds — ever more intensively — a liquid instance, ungraspably flowing and constantly moving from place to place. The freedom of self-creation has never reached such magnitude; perhaps never in history has it offered so many exciting forms, alternative faces,

and episodic adventures. However, it has never been so threatening, sooner or later bringing so many traumatizing states of uncertainty and unprecedented evaluation of importance of volatile instances in life, temporality as a strategy for life.

With regard to the self-creation processes, the market principles in the form of a growing interest of economic effectiveness of companies are presumably more significantly applied at the level of micro-social world of everydayness. At the same time, the execution of such interest is also promoted by a complex of functioning marketing communications and their effect on the “social aspects”.

Identity as the result of self-creation is, in a way, a creative process taking place within the social space. Identity represents the quality of human beings, constantly constructed and reconstructed under the specific conditions of the social space, which is more or less affected by marketing communications as an intervention factor in the life of consumer society. Marketing campaigns and countless advertising messages enter the environment, where the forms and contents of human identities are being socially negotiated and where, at the same time, individual and collective strategies for achieving, maintaining, and enforcing thereof are sought. Such strategies comprise various forms and types of lifestyles, preferences concerning value orientation, goals in life, or perception of human happiness. At the same time, the form and contents of such strategies are subject to everyday and pressing media and marketing communication. This type of communication creates representations of how to best fulfill and implement such life strategies. It usually provides commercial patterns for better, superior, and overall happier life. According to such patterns, life should, allegedly, provide enough sources of self-confidence and undeniable self-concept (self-identity), easily identifiable by using or utilizing specific products and services. The approach to such strategies and their preference also reflect social differentiation and economic potential.

We assume that the strategies for constructing male and female identity represent two different models that also reflect different moments of experiencing subject feelings of happiness.

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2 How to understand happiness?

How are we to understand human happiness? What does the term convey? What is its true content?
The notion of happiness falls within a wider group of phenomena; it is linked to an entire group of emotions, experiences, moods, feelings, and states of mind. "The word happiness does not have a simple meaning and should not be used as if it does." Experienced happiness is clearly connected not only with the feelings of well-being, joy, or satisfaction, but also with something we perceive as pleasure, delight, laughter, entertainment, rejoicing, delight, hedonic life, coziness, content, peace, and harmony. The term happiness may hardly be viewed as an isolated and unambiguously definable state of mind, but rather as a result of different combinations of intensity of experiencing, feeling, and thinking within certain time and space. The fact that the term happiness is used in a number of varieties and plurality of related meanings is also observed in foreign specialized literature. In addition to the perhaps most frequently used subjective well-being, we also come across the following terms: happiness, life satisfaction, subjective welfare, positive affect, affect balance, etc. Naturally, the context, in which the term happiness appears, and the discipline that examines it are of relevance here. For example, the term affect balance is almost exclusively used in specialized psychological studies; on the other hand, the term subjective welfare is predominantly identified in scholarly sociological production.

Another, more general, premise explaining the notion of happiness is

the fact that it is a purely subjective and authentically experienced phenomenon. It is a personal experience, the true nature and own value of which may only be relevant for the person experiencing it. In plain language, each individual has his/her own idea of happiness; such ideas may/may not be mutually shared, similarly as the sources, from which we derive the feelings of joy and happiness. Moreover, the manifestations of happiness, satisfaction, and enjoyable moments have many authentic forms and expressions.

The third potential premise for understanding human happiness is the fact it is a phenomenon with certain duration (it is referred to as long-term and short-term happiness). On the one hand, we may deliberate about the happiness currently experienced, momentary state of mind of an individual, who conveys joy, satisfaction, and happiness over something he/she is currently experiencing. Such happiness is usually characterized by its intensity, physiological changes, and motoric manifestations, sudden onset of euphoria, but similarly sudden recession of such euphoric, and often intensive wave of joy and the subsiding thereof. This is considered as an experienced form of happiness. On the other hand, the phenomenon of happiness may be viewed as a long-term state of mind, lifelong peace and satisfaction, which is manifested in its often quiet and decent form, without any significant signs of intensive joy and laughter. In this case, the present/current moment evoking sudden and often unexpected waves of positive emotions of joy is not the most important thing, as is the case of short-term euphoric happiness; instead, it is about a wider and overall assessment of past, current, and possible future events in life. The longer-term happiness comprises more "life-related dimensions" of happiness, and it is more stable as a whole and relates to feelings and more permanent human values rather than emotions as short-term subjectively experienced pleasure/displeasure. In this connection, we refer to life satisfaction and life assessment, which is different from the previous concept of experienced happiness.

The fourth premise is the extensity of happiness. Therefore, we may address the notion of happiness in its "most intensive" form, i.e. in the form of individual happiness; similarly, it is possible to address the topic of happiness in its more extensive forms, relating to social dyads

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12 According to Kant: "The notion of happiness is so indefinite that although every man wishes to attain it, yet he never can say definitely and consistently what it is that he really wishes and wills" (1976: 128)
3 Happiness within the dimensions of male and female experiences from the empirical perspective

As part of the 2013 questionnaire query, we verified certain assumptions associated with various models of subjective experience of happiness and joy for male and female population. The predetermined selection

18 Selected aspects of happiness were examined under the project entitled Changes in the impact of marketing communication on the area of consumption and lifestyle of people within the context of the current economic crisis. The project was carried out by the Department of Sociology of the Faculty of Social Studies at the University of Finance and Administration (VŠFS) with the financial support of the Internal Grant Agency of VŠFS in the period of 2012-2013. Originally, the research study focused on identifying possible changes in the consumer behavior of Czech citizens in connection with the consequences of the current economic crisis and also on analyzing changes in the contents and forms of marketing communications and their reflection by consumers (i.e. addressees) and professionals (i.e. producers, marketers). Furthermore, the project was expanded by certainly useful and interesting

focused on the population of university student at the age of 18-30 years. The selected sample mainly comprised students of the private University of Finance and Administration (VŠFS) in Prague.

The project was solved via a quantitative method, using a standardized questionnaire consisting of 27 material and 5 identification questions. Overall, 386 respondents at the age of 18-30 years filled out the questionnaire. The share of queried men and women is even – 191 male respondents (i.e. 49.5 %) and 195 female respondents (i.e. 50.5 %).

In connection with the identification of potential differences in the male and female model of experienced subjective happiness, we focused on the following research areas:

1) Overall evaluation of life situation – level of satisfaction with life up to now

H1 – We expect that the resulting evaluation of life situation and the manifested level of satisfaction/dissatisfaction will not differ significantly for men and women.

2) Quality of life and income – money as a factor affecting the subjective perception of the quality of life

H2 – We assume that money has a different significance for the perceived quality of life in male and female population.

3) Hedonic adaptation and its effects on the duration of achieved level of happiness – experienced positive emotions are subject to adaptation and gradually decrease in intensity, depending on the nature of sources of the experienced joy.

H3 – We assume that hedonic adaptation has a different intensity for men and women in various situations of experienced subjective happiness.

To determine the overall evaluation of life satisfaction, we used the question known as the Cantril Self- Anchoring Striving Scale19 in the questionnaire.

examination of how respondents perceive the quality of life in the context of their own financial situation, what factors they associate with life satisfaction, where and in what they seek sources of the feelings of joy, and how long they are able to enjoy such sources.

Imagine a ladder with steps numbered from 0 at the bottom to 10 at the top. The top of the ladder represents the best possible life for you and the bottom of the ladder represents the worst possible life for you. On which step of the ladder would you say you personally feel you stand at this time?

**Evaluation of life satisfaction**

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**Chart 1 Evaluation of life satisfaction - according to gender** (overall average)

*Source: Empiric data of the project Changes in the impact of marketing communication on the area of consumption and lifestyle of people within the context of the current economic crisis, 386 respondents (the higher the average, the more positive evaluation of life).*

The Cantril Self-Anchoring Striving Scale observes the overall evaluation of respondents' life; therefore, it assesses the opinion of people when they retroactively evaluate their life. From the perspective of methodology, it is necessary to note that such opinion is affected, and also — to a certain extent — distorted, by current situations and present states emotionally experienced by respondents, either as positive or negative. In other words, the current "experiencing self" affects — in the form of situational factors — the "remembering self", responsible for the opinion invoked by the need of retroactive evaluation of one's life satisfaction.20

With regard to the evaluation of young generation's (aged 18 to 30 years) life satisfaction, the collected data suggest mild optimism and manifestation of slightly above-average life satisfaction. There are


only minimum differences in the answers of men and women. To test the second hypothesis (H2), we used the following question in the questionnaire: "It is said that money is not everything. However, you will certainly agree that money is important to ensure quality of life. What minimum amount would you have to earn per month (net amount) to say that money is no longer important for the quality of your life?" Respondents were offered individual options (specific minimum monthly incomes), starting from CZK 20 thousand to income in excess of 3 million. We mainly wanted to find out, up to what financial amount (expressed as net monthly income) respondents would consider money important for the quality of life, while identifying the point, at which the effect of diminishing marginal utility of wealth occurs, i.e. from what monthly income would respondents view money irrelevant for the quality of life. We expected that wealth, expressed as net monthly income, will be of different significance for the quality of life in male/female population.

**Chart 2 Quality life and money - according to gender** (frequency in %)

*Source: Empiric data of the project Changes in the impact of marketing communication on the area of consumption and lifestyle of people within the context of the current economic crisis, 386 respondents.*

With regard to the observed relation of money and the quality of life, answers for men and women do actually vary in some moments. Although the mode of answers is within the interval of minimum
perception of experienced happiness. We expressed a hypothesis that hedonic adaptation has different intensity, depending on gender, in different situations associated with experiencing positive emotions. In other words, we tested the assumption that when comparing the answers for men and women, some sources of happiness and joy will provide different period of feeling of joy and happiness and the positive emotions will subside at a different rate (depending on gender) as a result of the adaptation mechanisms.

For this purpose, we included the following question in the questionnaire: “On a scale from 1 to 10, record how long you personally experience the most intensive feelings of joy and happiness in case of the specific situations (1 shortest period of time – 10 longest period of time).” The following potential sources of pleasure were offered to respondents: mobile phone; new clothing; good food; sports activity; time together with good friends; job-related/school-related achievements; acknowledgement of close relatives for a performed service; job well done; and good health.

How long do you personally experience the most intensive feelings of joy and happiness in case of the specified situations?

Chart 3 Intensity of feelings of joy and happiness - according to gender (overall averages)
Source: Empirical data of the project Changes in the impact of marketing communication on the area of consumption and lifestyle of people within the context of the current economic crisis, 386 respondents, (the higher the average, the longer the period of experiencing the feelings of joy and happiness).
With regard to the given question, we came to a preliminary finding that women, compared to men, show higher ability of longer experiencing of more intensive positive emotions in all items under review (with the exception of sports activities) / sources providing the feelings of joy and happiness. The collected data suggest that different sources of feelings of joy and happiness are subject to slower degradation of the level of achieved satisfaction within the female population. In this context, women demonstrate longer resistance to adaptation mechanisms impairing the intensity of experienced positive emotions after some period of time. They are also likely to be more resistant to other external stimuli and excitaments as potential sources of emotional joys, being more focused (compared to men) to the currently experienced situations. On the other hand, men are able to quickly shift their attention from "what is", i.e. what they are experiencing, to what "could be" or "could happen" and be a potential source of higher level of joy.

Such findings could, for example, serve as attractive information for clients/creators of marketing and media campaigns, because – as the results suggest – the target group of women may be, compared to men, a social group that is more immune to adaptation mechanisms and, overall, more capable of preserving the more intensive feelings of joy and happiness in the different situations under review. In case the adaptation process to each new situation consists in the fact that such situations receive less of our attention and deliberation, it is safe to assume that men – unlike women – get used to some situations faster and sooner disengage their attention from them. It is possible that the reason why women experience longer and more intensive joy and happiness in the given situations is the fact that they give greater deal of attention to such situations and think about them more. From this perspective of findings, women are – compared to men - a target group, for which the joy saturation threshold occurs after a longer period of time, whereas the sources that provide the feelings of well-being do not lose their value as quickly for women as in case of men. Naturally, these findings would require additional detailed examination and verification; however, it is interesting information, which could be applied, for example, for the needs of marketing strategies and commercial practice.

Literature and sources:

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