
CONSUMER ATTITUDE TO FAST FOOD: THE CASE STUDY OF LITHUANIA

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Abstract

The fastening pace of life is changing Lithuanians' nutrition habits and the following change turns to be the most favorable for the development of fast food industry. The attitude has a very strong meaning for consumer behavior. The attitude determines the obtainment and loyalty of consumer product and service. It is significant for marketing specialists to identify the components, which form positive attitude towards service or products. The availability of food is increasing; however, there emerges a lot of fast food, the consumption of which the aggressive advertising is promoting a lot. As in all fields, as well as in the industry of fast food, there are people, who support the following business and there are some against it. The following attitude might be determined by different components, which shape one's attitude. The research problem: what are the attitude components and how do they evidence in the selection of fast food in Lithuania? The article aim is as following: after having investigated the consumer attitude components to identify their impact on Lithuanian consumer attitude towards fast food. The research object: the impact of Lithuanian consumer attitude on the selection of fast food. For the research completion, the methods of questionnaire survey were applied. The gained research outcome has disclosed that the selection of fast food in Lithuania is determined under hedonistic consumption although, there is present the expression of the cognitive information process between the components of cognition and behavior.

Key words: consumer behavior, consumer attitude, fast food, Lithuania.

Introduction

Social and economic causes, such as price, comfort, fast pace of life and constantly increasing employment – all that is a modern human's daily life when there is not left any time to eat, fast prepared fast food turns to be a modern person's daily life. The origin of fast food has radically changed human's lifestyle, attitude towards nutrition and its peculiarities. According to Oxford University Press, (2006) fast food – is fast prepared processed food served in bars or restaurants as a fast snack or it is intended for takeaway. The availability of food is increasing and a lot of fast food restaurants and cafes emerge, the consumption of which is promoted by advertising. There is flood of fast food restaurants and cafes in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, and their turnover is increasing. According to Ieva Salmela, the development director of Hesburger, in Lithuania, 'Hesburger' reached the turnover of 25 million Litass in the year 2011, and that is about 38% or 9.5 million Litass more than in the year 2010. Hesburger's turnover in Lithuania increased by 24%, i.e. 31 million Litass in the year 2012 in comparison with the year 2011. It is the greatest increase in all Baltic States in comparison with the growth of the company turnover in Latvia (8%) and Estonia (7.3%) in the same period. General sales incomes in all Baltic States reached 141 million Litass in the year 2012: in Lithuania - 31 million in Latvia – 52 million and in Estonia – 56 million Litass. In the year 2013, Hesburger's turnover reached 36 million Litass in Lithuania in comparison with the year 2012, the restaurant chain turnover increased by 13.2% last year and that is the greatest increase among three Baltic countries (in Latvia – 11.35%, but in

Estonia – 9.9%). (Business week, 2012). The turnover of the fast food restaurant chain - McDonald's is increasing. Since the year 2012, the sales in operating McDonald's restaurants in Lithuania has increased by 9% in comparison with the same period in the year 2011. McDonald's restaurant sales increased in other Baltic countries too: by 11% in Latvia and even by 20% in Estonia (Business week, 2012). That reveals that fast food demand is increasing in Lithuania and other Baltic countries. According to T. T. Ming et al. (2011), a major part of consumers have a negative attitude towards the consumption of fast food and there forms a paradoxical situation as the consumption of fast food is not decreasing and oppositely it is increasing. Thus, it is significant to research the components forming consumer attitude towards fast food as they turn to be significant for consumer behavior and the selection of the accepted information, trademarks and fast food products. The research problem is the attitude components and how they evidence in the selection of fast food in Lithuania. The research object is the impact of Lithuanian consumer attitude on the selection of fast food. The aim of the following article is after having researched consumer attitude components, to identify their impact on Lithuanian consumer attitude towards fast food.

Materials and Methods

Lithuanian consumer attitude towards fast food was researched after having adapted a three-component model according to the attitude by M. Solomon et al. (2006). There has been chosen the quantitative, questionnaire-survey method for the research of the empirical research problem. The scope of the research

sample is 386, while surveying the population of Alytus, Kaunas, Klaipėda, Marijampolė, Panevėžys, Šiauliai, Tauragė, Telšiai, Utena and Vilnius. 30% of men and 70% of women participated in the survey. 52% of the surveyed are married people. The major part of the surveyed (75.6%) is at the age of 35 and even 74% have average income a month that exceeds 1.5 thousand Litas, and 73% of the surveyed have an advanced vocational education and training or higher education. Respondents are from all over Lithuania, i.e. survey outcomes reveal population opinion from different Lithuanian regions. The questionnaires were distributed to respondents in an electronic way (uploading them on websites and sending via emails).

For the completion of the research there were set three hypotheses: H1: attitude towards fast food is based on the cognitive information process; H2: attitude towards fast food is based on behavioral learning process; H3: attitude towards fast food is based on hedonistic consumption. For the validation of hypotheses there were applied the methods of correlation and regression. In order to identify correlations among variables, there was completed the computing of variables and the question statement were combined into blocks “affective”, “cognitive”, “behavioral” and “attitude”.

A correlation strength scale for the estimation among variables in order to assess correlation coefficients was applied. According to V. Kasiulevičiaus et al., 2008, there is existent very weak (0.00–0.19), weak (0.20–0.39), average (0.40–0.69), strong (0.70–0.89) and very strong correlation (0.90–1.00). The correlation coefficient varies from 0 to 1, and its strength is not equal. In order to validate/accept or reject the set hypotheses, there was completed a regression analysis. The regression analysis can be completed, because after having completed a correlation analysis it was determined that among variables there is existent direct positive and significant correlation. Carrying out a linear regression analysis, three main indicators were taken into consideration: the coefficient of determination (R^2), the influence coefficient of (non-standardized β) and model relevance (p). The coefficient of determination R^2 gains values from the interval [0.1]. The higher the coefficient value is, the more the model is relevant for data. It is irrelevant when $R^2 < 0.20$. If ANOVA p -value is less than 0.05, the model is relevant. The non-standardized β – coefficient estimates (Čekanavičius et al., 2004). There was applied Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the estimation of the data reliability. The data were analyzed and managed applying a statistic software package for social sciences (SPSS Statistic 17.0 version).

Results and Discussion

Attitude conception and the components for its formation

Attitude formation can be one of the most significant marketing objects as it is highly significant for consumer behavior, accepted information and the selection of trademarks and products. The formulated attitude determines the assessment of fast food and the quality sets assigned to them in consumers' mind. The attitude is determined under the fact if an individual is keen or not on the certain issues and how he/she behaves in terms of it (Oxford University Pres, 2006). According to G. Antoanides et al., (1998), the mentioned conception – an individual trend to assess the existent objects or phenomena in a favorable or unfavorable manner. The attitude forms the human's respective conception concerning any object, etc. Besides, it is unique agreeably with the fact that it saves the resources of thinking and energy and especially due to the following reason, attitudes change with difficulties (Bakanauskas et al., 2010). The components of the attitude have quite significant impact on its formation: beliefs/emotions, behavior and cognition, further *cognitive* – it is a way of the object cognition, comprehension and understanding (Urbanskienė et al., 2000). As C. L. Bovee et al. (1992) claims, the following component is the easiest to be penetrated. It consists of the certain consumers' beliefs and knowledge. The following beliefs can be false and correct, positive or negative. *Emotional component (further affective)* – these are positive and negative consumer's feelings and emotions in terms of the certain object, i.e. how strong something what a person likes or dislikes, is. However, it is necessary to highlight that the individuals', with the same beliefs or opinions, response might differ (Bovee et al., 1992). Consumers' emotional response to an object means 'affective' attitude. For example, a person states: “I like fast food” or, Fast food is terrible'. Such an example reveals emotional assessment (affective) of the trial result (Urbanskienė et al., 2000). *Behavioral component (further behavioral)* consists of different actions that a consumer involves while following his/her beliefs or opinions and feelings (Bovee et al., 1992). As R. Urbanskienė et al. (2000) state, the following component outlines an intention to act in terms of an object. A lot of decisions related to purchase and non-purchase of a respective product or recommendation of the service to friends and coworkers reflects “behavioral” in the formation of attitudes. According to C. L. Bovee et al., (1992), only a positive attitude is not the final factor that determines the purchase of a good. After all, a consumer might simply have a need or some factors might limit its purchase, for example, financial possibilities or a good might be absent in the

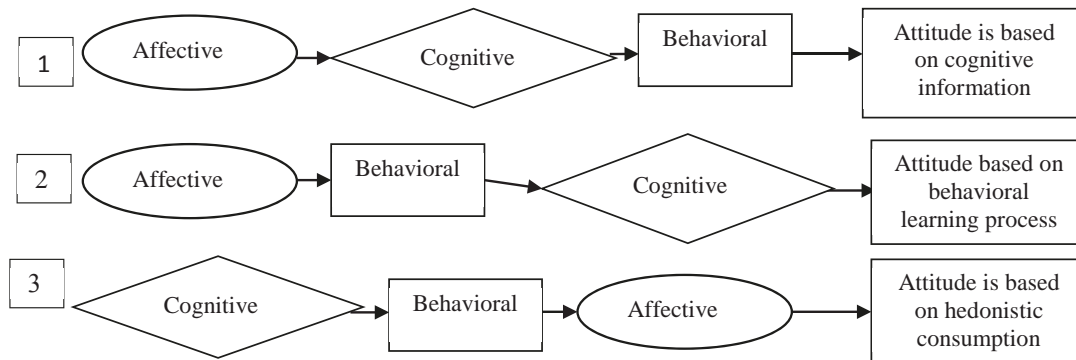


Figure 1. Three-component model of attitude.

Source: M. Solomon, G. Bamossy, S. Askegaard and M. K. Hogg (2006).

points-of-sales that are available to a consumer, etc. All three attitude components are significant and relative significance of each of it might differ depending on the consumer's level of motivation with the attitude object (Solomon et al., 2006). The scientists, who investigate attitude, created a lot of conceptions of formation. M. Solomon et al., 2006, investigated a three-component conception of attitude. The designed three-component theory of effect hierarchy interprets relative effect of three components on the formation of consumer attitude. The authors claim that 'behavioral' is one of the structural parts of attitude; however, it is not related with the very completion of the action, as it is action presumption of the attitude expression. During the analysis of a classical three-component structure of attitude, it is sought to find out which component impacts the formed attitude most or in other words, the following of which component enables the most precise expectation of the attitude trend. In order to achieve the following aim, there was formed the conception of hierarchical structures, see Fig.1. Each hierarchy represents a static way or in other words the succession of components in the formation attitude.

1) Standard learning hierarchy - an attitude is based on cognitive information process. In the following hierarchy, beliefs concerning respective attributes of a good are formed. A consumer grounds the following beliefs under cognition (assessment). Finally, according to the previously completed assessment, a consumer behaves in one or another way, e.g. purchases a product. In the standard learning hierarchy there is drawn a presumption that a consumer gets involved into the acceptance of a purchase decision. A person is motivated to receive as much information as possible to consider alternatives accurately and make a reasonable decision. In the following hierarchy, persons give a great part of time to the search of information and its processing, and the assessment of different alternatives in order to be able to make a reasonable decision, thus the following process quite

often determines trademark loyalty. 2) Hierarchy of passive participation in the process - attitude based on behavioral learning process. Differently from the first hierarchy model, in the second hierarchy, very poor attention is paid to the formation of beliefs and the selection of information related to the object and its characteristics. A consumer does not pay a lot of difference to the selection of one or another good for a purchase. Nevertheless, although there are collected minimal data concerning the object, a consumer decides to act positively in terms of it – to purchase a good. However, the attitude is formed only after the purchase process, when a person can try and assess the good and finally make a positive or negative feeling about it. That can be called learning from behavior, when a person's choice is strengthened with positive or negative experience after the completion of an action. There is drawn a presumption that a person does not show a great willing in collection of knowledge about an object, considering that being an absolutely unnecessary activity and waste of time. The selection of purchase is mostly impacted by stimulus – reaction links. Consumers are likely to be affected by different advertising in the points-of-sales, expressive packages, slogans, encouraging to purchase, etc. A consumer can assess a product only when it is purchased or used. A consumer does not need to collect information for every decision-making in the following sequence. 3) Empirical hierarchy – the attitude is based on hedonistic consumption. The key attention is committed to 'affective' in the following hierarchy. Other two components of the attitude are moved to the second plan although the final attitude is created after having formed all three components. The objects, characteristic to the following hierarchy, distinguish by exclusive untouchable or intangible characteristics: a product representation or the package design, advertising or trademark brand. A consumer purchases a good under hedonistic belief that the selected good will provide some pleasure and

Table 1

Cronbach's alfa coefficients for blocks of questions

| Blocks of questions | Number of questions completing the block | Cronbach's alpha, α |
|--|--|----------------------------|
| Assessment of emotional statements concerning fast food | 15 | 0.837 |
| Assessment of cognitive statements concerning fast food | 15 | 0.942 |
| Assessment of behavioral statements concerning fast food | 10 | 0.801 |
| Assessment of attitude statements concerning fast food | 8 | 0.727 |

joy.

Empirical research outcomes

According to a three –component model of attitude there was a completed empirical research in Lithuanian consumer attitude towards fast food. Reliability/credibility indicators of questionnaire questions are presented in Table 1.

All coefficients exceed 0.7, and as a result there might be drawn a conclusion that the questions are consequent and reliable. The highest reliability manifests in the assessment of the following category questions: cognitive (0.942), affective (0.837) and behavioral (0.801).

Correlation analysis

In order to identify connection among variables, computing of variables was carried out and question statements were divided into blocks 'attitude', 'affective', 'cognitive', and 'behavioral'. The estimated coefficients are provided in Table 2.

As it can be seen from Table 2, variables intercorrelate as in all cases $p = 0.000$ and it is less than the determined significance level ($\alpha = 0.01$) and the following means that there is present a statistically significant relationship among variables. Due to the fact that all coefficients are positive, the correlational relationship among variables is positive, too. Correlational coefficients among variables vary from 0.331 to 0.882. The strongest correlational relationship is between 'attitude' and 'cognitive' ($r = 0.882$) variables. Agreeably with correlational coefficients it can be seen that strong relationship

is between 'behavioral' and 'cognitive' ($r = 0.839$), between 'behavioral' and 'affective' ($r = 0.801$) variables. The relationship of average strength was determined between 'attitude' and 'cognitive' ($r = 0.461$) and between 'cognitive' and 'affective' ($r = 0.451$) variables. Weak correlational relationship is between 'attitude' and 'behavioral' ($r = 0.331$) variables. In summary, it can be stated that it was statistically determined that there is existent positive and statistically significant relationship among the components which form consumer attitude: affective, cognitive, behavioral and attitude.

Regression analysis

As it can be seen from the data presented in Table 2, the signs of all coefficients are positive as the correlational coefficients are; thus, the regression analysis is relevant. Besides, the coefficient of determination is quite high in all cases ($R^2 > 0.20$); thus, this means that the model describes data quite well, and simple linear regression model cannot be rejected as irrelevant one. The generalized data of the regression analysis are presented in Table 3.

In Table 3, it can be seen that in all cases p value of ANOVA criterion is less than 0.05 ($p = 0.000$), thus it can be stated that there is present dependence among variables. The coefficient estimates are presented in the column of Unstandardized Coefficients β . Thus, simple linear regression analysis is relevant for data, and the gained coefficients are statistically significant. Agreeably with the data presented in Table 3, it can be seen that there exists a simple linear regression between

Table 2

Correlations coefficient between variables

| | Affective | Cognitive | Behavioral | Attitude |
|---|-----------|-----------|------------|----------|
| Affective Correlation Coef. Sig. (2-tailed) | 1.000 | .451** | .801** | .882** |
| Cognitive Correlation Coef. Sig. (2-tailed) | .451** | 1.000 | .839** | .461** |
| Behavioral Correlation Coef. Sig. (2-tailed) | .801** | .839** | 1.000 | .331** |
| Attitude Correlation Coef. Sig. (2-tailed) | .882** | .461** | .331** | 1.000 |

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 3

Main influence on variable

| Independent variable | R ² | β | p | Dependent variable |
|----------------------|----------------|-------|-------|--------------------|
| Affective | 0.218 | 0.317 | 0.027 | Cognitive |
| Affective | 0.284 | 0.304 | 0.021 | Behavioral |
| Cognitive | 0.760 | 0.817 | 0.000 | Behavioral |
| Behavioral | 0.210 | 0.217 | 0.034 | Attitude |
| Behavioral | 0.294 | 0.392 | 0.014 | Cognitive |
| Cognitive | 0.276 | 0.319 | 0.012 | Attitude |
| Behavioral | 0.603 | 0.858 | 0.000 | Affective |
| Affective | 0.616 | 0.843 | 0.000 | Attitude |

‘affective’ and ‘cognitive’ ($p < 0.05$), thus, when there is increasing ‘affective’, there is respectively increasing ‘cognitive’ component. The following regression is statistically significant as the least coefficient of determination is $R^2 = 0.210 > 0.20$. ‘Affective’ impacts ‘cognitive’ that is equal to 0.317. The following shows a weak, but statistically significant relationship. Although being weak, however, ‘affective’ has statistically significant impact on ‘behavioral’ ($\beta = 0.304$), and ‘behavioral’ impacts ‘attitude’ weakly ($\beta = 0.217$), ‘behavioral’ impacts ‘cognitive’ component weakly ($\beta = 0.392$), ‘cognitive’ does not have a strong impact, but very significant statistically one on ‘attitude’ component ($\beta = 0.319$). ‘Cognitive’ has a strong impact on ‘behavioral’ component as it was determined that when there is increasing ‘cognitive’, ‘behavioral’ component is increasing too, as there is present simple linear regression among them ($p < 0.05$) that is statistically significant ($R^2 = 0.760 > 0.20$), $\beta = 0.817$. As it can be seen from the data in Table 3, there is present linear ($p < 0.05$), statistically significant ($R^2 = 0.603 > 0.20$) relationship among ‘behavioral’ and ‘affective’ component, and ‘behavioral’ impact on ‘affective’ is equal 0.858. The analysis has disclosed that when ‘affective’ is getting better, ‘attitude’ is getting better too, as there is present linear ($p < 0.05$) statistically significant ($R^2 = 0.616 > 0.20$) relationship. ‘Affective’ impact on ‘attitude’ is equal 0.843. The data committed to the validation of the set hypotheses

in the methodological part of research are illustrated in ‘a three-component model of attitude’, see Fig. 2.

Standard hierarchy forms Lithuanian consumer attitude towards fast food. When consumer attitude towards fast food is based on the cognitive information process, respectively the gained data ($R^2 = 0.218 > 0.20$; $\beta = 0.317$), when ‘affective’ has a very weak impact on ‘cognitive’; ($R^2 = 0.760 > 0.20$; $\beta = 0.817$), when ‘cognitive’ has a very strong impact on ‘behavioral’; ($R^2 = 0.210 > 0.20$; $\beta = 0.217$), when ‘behavioral’ has a very weak impact on ‘attitude’. That discloses the fact that Lithuanian consumer attitude towards fact food is weakly grounded by cognitive information process, although ‘cognitive’ has strong impact on ‘behavioral’. Agreeably with the gained data of empirical research it was determined that *the hierarchy of passive participation in the process* determines Lithuanian consumer attitude towards fast food. Lithuanian consumer attitude towards fast food is grounded under behavioral learning process, when the gained ‘affective’ has weak impact on ‘behavioral’ ($R^2 = 0.284 > 0.20$; $\beta = 0.304$), ‘behavioral’ has weak impact on ‘cognitive’ component ($R^2 = 0.294 > 0.20$; $\beta = 0.392$), ‘cognitive’ has weak impact on consumer attitude towards fast food ($R^2 = 0.276 > 0.20$; $\beta = 0.319$). Following the research, it was determined that empirical hierarchy forms the Lithuanian consumer attitude trend towards fast food when ‘cognitive’ impacts ‘behavioral’ component ($R^2 = 0.760 > 0.20$; $\beta = 0.817$), ‘behavioral’

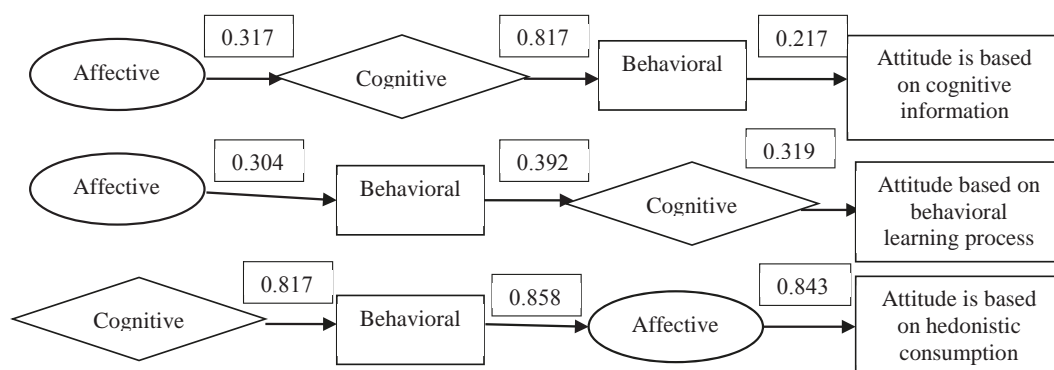


Figure 2. Empirical data in a three-component model of attitude.

impacts 'affective' ($R^2=0.603>0.20$; $\beta=0.858$), and 'affective' impacts 'attitude' ($R^2=0.616>0.20$; $\beta=0.843$). Nevertheless, *empirical hierarchy* reflects Lithuanian consumer attitude towards fast food best, where *attitude towards fast food is based on hedonistic consumption*. 'Affective' component has some impact on Lithuanian consumer attitude towards fast food. Two other components of attitude are moved to 'the second plan' although the final attitude is created after having formed all three components. Fast food is distinguished by exclusive untouchable or intangible characteristics: product representation or the package design, advertising or trademark brand. A Lithuanian consumer purchases fast food under hedonistic belief that the selected fast food will provide some pleasure and joy. As the research shows, Lithuanian consumers' *standard attitude hierarchy*, when the attitude towards fast food is based on cognitive information process towards fast food, is expressed weakly although 'cognitive' component has strong impact on consumer behavior. That discloses the fact that nevertheless, Lithuanian population pays attention to information search related to fast food and assessment of food alternatives in order to make a reasonable decision. Meanwhile, Lithuanian population's *hierarchy of passive participation in the process*, where consumer attitude towards fast food is based on behavioral learning process, is expressed weakly. Consequently, there is drawn a presumption that Lithuanian consumer attitude towards fast food is weakly formed only after the process of purchase, when a person can try and assess the fast food product, while forming a positive or negative feeling about it. The stimulus – reaction links impact the consumer's purchase selection weakly. Lithuanian consumers are not affective for fast food advertising in the points-of-sales, expressive packages and slogans, those are encouraging to buy, etc. Lithuanian consumers pay greater attention to beliefs while selecting information about an object or its characteristics.

Generalizing the statistical claim of hypotheses, it can be stated that all three hypotheses, set in the methodological part, have been validated. The following means that all links determined under the adapted three component model according to M. Salomon et al. (2006) are statistically significant, and there is a present direct impact of variables. Three hierarchies form the trend of Lithuanian consumer attitude towards fast food: standard, when Lithuanian consumer attitude towards fast food is based on cognitive information process; passive participation hierarchy, when Lithuanian consumer attitude towards fast food is based on behavioral learning process most weakly and empirical hierarchy, when Lithuanian consumer attitude towards fast food is based on hedonistic consumption most.

Conclusions

A fastening pace of life and changing nutrition determine consumer attitude towards fast food, those are impacted by rapid economical development, globalization and employment. The fastening pace of life changes consumers' nutritional habits, and the following change is the most favorable to the development of fast food industry, the turnover of which is increasing not only in Lithuania, but in other Baltic States too. A need for already ready i.e. fast food is increasing.

Consumer attitude towards fast food is formed by 'affective', 'cognitive' and 'behavioral' components, the succession outlining of which determines the trend and hierarchy of attitude. The trend of attitude can be based on three hierarchies: standard, when the attitude is based on cognitive information process; passive participation hierarchy, when the attitude towards fast food is based on behavioral learning process and empirical hierarchy, when the attitude towards fast food is based on hedonistic consumption.

Empirical hierarchy forms Lithuanian consumer attitude towards fast food best, when the *attitude towards fast food is based on hedonistic consumption*, where 'cognitive' strongly impacts 'behavioral' component ($R^2=0.760>0.20$; $\beta=0.817$), 'behavioral' strongly impacts 'affective' ($R^2=0.603>0.20$; $\beta=0.858$), 'affective' strongly impact 'attitude' ($R^2 = 0.616 > 0.20$; $\beta=0.843$). *Standard hierarchy* forms Lithuanian consumer attitude towards fast food weakly, where the consumer attitude towards fast food is weakly based on cognitive information process, respectively, the gained data ($R^2=0.218>0.20$; $\beta=0.317$), where 'affective' has a very weak impact on 'cognitive'; ($R^2=0.760>0.20$; $\beta=0.817$), where 'cognitive' has a very strong impact on 'behavioral'; ($R^2=0.210>0.20$; $\beta=0.217$), where 'behavioral' has a very weak impact on 'attitude'. *The hierarchy of passive participation in the process* determines the trend of Lithuanian consumer attitude towards fast food most weakly. Lithuanian consumer attitude towards fast food is most weakly impacted by behavioral learning process, where the gained 'affective' has a weak impact on 'behavioral' ($R^2=0.284>0.20$; $\beta=0.304$), and 'behavioral' has a weak impact on 'cognitive' component ($R^2=0.294>0.20$; $\beta=0.392$), 'cognitive' has a weak impact on 'consumer attitude towards fast food' ($R^2=0.276>0.20$; $\beta=0.319$).

Following the empirical research, it was determined that the selection of fast food in Lithuania, determines Lithuanians' attitude towards fast food, based on hedonistic consumption, although there is present the expression of cognitive information process, particularly between 'cognitive' and 'behavioral' components.

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