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ON THE IMPORTANCE OF ENSURING QUALITY INDICATORS IN THE PRODUCTION OF PRODUCTS IN DEMAND AND COMPETITIVE AMONG CONSUMERS

Abstract: in the article, the authors draw the attention of manufacturers when choosing their product range policy to the need to ensure the quality indicators of their manufactured competitive and in-demand products among consumers in the regions of the Russian Federation.

Key words: assortment, assortment policy, quality, profitability, profit, market, demand, relevance, competitiveness.

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Introduction

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In today's increasingly saturated consumer goods market, the most pressing issue is ensuring the quality of products offered meets consumer demands. Among

consumer requirements for footwear, ergonomics, defined by the concept of "comfort," ranks first in importance. Footwear certification tests are based on current regulatory documentation, which sets out technical requirements and testing methods for determining key quality indicators. To support this,

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the quality indicators and testing methods for determining them are provided below.

What is the "Russian Quality" Program? The organization's promotional materials state that it "identifies high-quality products and services available on the Russian market and informs consumers about them; enables companies to demonstrate to consumers that the quality of their products or services is significantly higher than the standard; and enables government agencies to procure high-quality products and services." The "Russian Quality" seal, which a company receives upon successful participation in the Program, becomes the most authoritative proof of such quality. Upon completion of its participation in the Program, a company can present to interested parties not only a diploma but also an assessment program and a report on its results as proof of high quality.

The results of successful participation in the Program can be used in marketing and advertising campaigns, when demonstrating capabilities to clients and customers at exhibitions and fairs, and when participating in competitive bidding and tenders. To promote products bearing the "Russian Quality" seal and enterprises that are -Program diploma recipients, the following is provided:

- holding all-Russian, regional and industry presentations
- products awarded the "Russian Quality" mark;
- publication of all-Russian and industry catalogues "Russian Quality";
- release of the Bulletin of the Russian Quality Program;
- [posting information about the diploma - winning enterprise](#) and its products -on preferential terms on -the Program website www.roskachestvo.ru and other Internet -resources;
- participation on preferential terms for program diploma holders in exhibitions and fairs held with the participation of the All-Russian Quality Organization;
- publications in industry, regional and national mass media."

In accordance with the documents: "Regulations on the program "Russian Quality" CEP VOK No. RK -01 -02 and "Regulations on quality assessment programs used in the program "Russian Quality" CEP VOK No. RK -06 -02", Work Program No. RK -PR -CEP -47 -02 -05 was developed, which included the following points:

- products being evaluated;
- the nomenclature of the assessed product quality indicators, their acceptable and optimal values and the scores corresponding to them;
- determination of actual values of quality indicators;

- assessment of the ability of production to ensure stable product quality; -conclusion on the compliance of product quality with the highest level.

The quality of the declared models of everyday men's footwear was assessed in four groups, namely:

- functional indicators (1) characterizing the durability of products;
- ergonomic indicators (2);
- aesthetic indicators (3);
- indicators of packaging and labeling quality (4).

The first group includes the following individual indicators:

- strength of thread fastenings of shoe upper blanks, N/cm for one stitch;
 - strength of thread fastenings of shoe upper blanks, N/cm with two lines;
 - sole attachment strength, N/cm;
 - residual deformation of the toe cap, mm;
 - residual deformation of the back, mm;
- in the second group:
- weight of a half pair, g; flexibility of shoes, N/cm;
 - thermal resistance of the shoe upper, m² °C/W (for winter shoes);
 - thermal resistance of the bottom of the shoe, m² °C/W (for winter shoes);
- in the third group:
- silhouette, points;
 - appearance, points;
 - interior decoration, points;
- in the fourth group:
- quality of marking;
 - quality of packaging, b

Let's turn to the second group of indicators. Clearly, these indicators don't provide an assessment of the overall footwear characteristic (comfort) that interests consumers, much of which is determined empirically. Comfort depends on numerous factors, but the most significant are the design characteristics of the shoe models and the properties of the materials used.

Main part

The development of footwear quality assessment methods should be linked to the use of CAD systems. The physical and -mechanical properties of materials determine the force interaction between the foot and the shoe, provide protection from environmental influences, and determine the foot's microclimate. In this context, the automated comfort assessment method -developed at the A.N. Kosygin Russian State University (RSSU) for shoe uppers based on the physical and mechanical properties of the upper material packages appears quite attractive. The method is implemented within a software system, the flow chart of which is shown in Figure 1.

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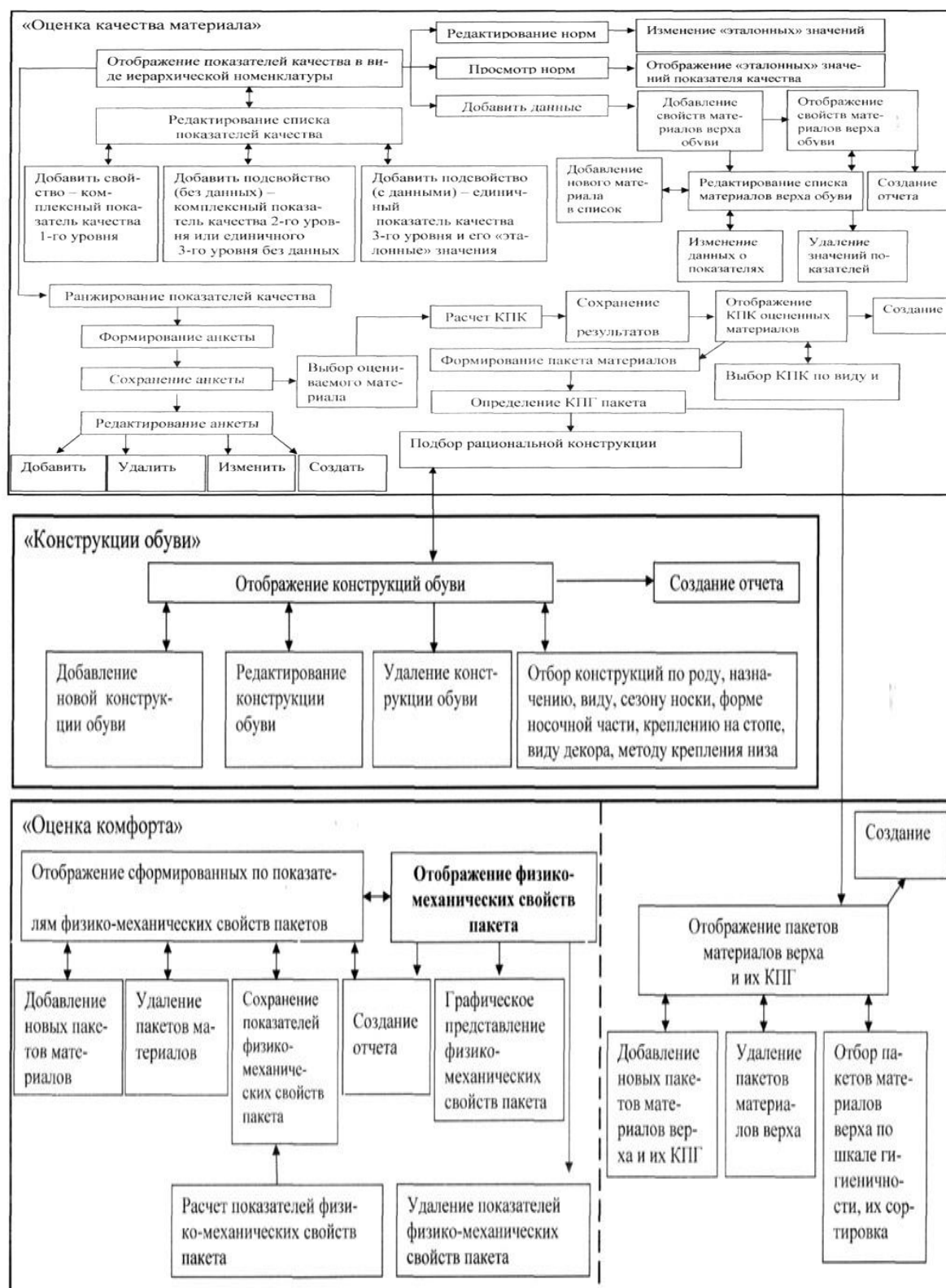


Figure 1. Operating scheme of the empirical indicators software for product quality assessment

Therefore, in addition to the identified groups of indicators, it seems appropriate to include another group, "Comfort," whose criteria, in our opinion, include the temperature and relative humidity of the

interior space, and the pressure of the shoe upper on the foot. Factors influencing the pressure of the shoe on the foot include relative elongation, relative humidity, and the rigidity of the material packages, for

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which we have established variation levels and rational values based on the operating and manufacturing conditions of the products.

The developed tool system implements methods for automated shoe comfort assessment and the creation of the most efficient upper packages based on the physical -and mechanical properties of materials. It also provides an express -method for selecting shoe designs of a specific quality and purpose. The practical significance of the system lies in reducing the subjective factor in selection, collection, and organization.

Marketing experts agree that consumers prioritize product quality. Market monitoring confirms a strong tradition of demand for quality products. But not everything is so simple and obvious.

The point is that statistics is a pure operator, and statistical data are therefore absolutely dependent on the chosen conceptual description of the process. Statistical results are always correct, as they are obtained using proven mathematical apparatus, but correctness and truth are two very different things.

For something "correct" to be "true," the entire chain of logical and mathematical operations must be verified for accuracy. Certification is required not only for physical and software products. The underlying knowledge must also be certified, otherwise, flaws in the initial judgments will migrate to the inferred knowledge. And no technology will correct the inherent flaw.

In the ideology of production, especially in the production of consumer goods, the concept of "quality" must be a system-forming factor. We anticipate the objection: "What's the point of quality if quality criteria limit quantity, and the prioritization of quality characteristics will undermine product range and drive up prices?" and we have a response to these opponents.

If product quality isn't ensured, no amount of quantity will improve the situation. One will have to either accept what is (to professionals) an obvious (and even obvious) deception of the consumer, or compromise one's professional competence and deliberately lower quality standards, allowing a fundamentally inferior product onto the market. As for product assortment, its dependence on product quality requirements is relatively arbitrary and indirect. Product assortment is tied to the technical state of production, technology, and the professionalism of the developers.

The more visible the features of a civilized market, the more pressing the issue of quality becomes. Moreover, the issue of quality has moved from the realm of theoretical relevance to the level of practical relevance. Let's try to justify this shift in relation to Russian reality.

The positive shift toward increased purchasing power among Russians over the past five years is undeniable. Official inflation statistics are clearly

misleading, but even if we increase them by a factor of 0.5 and arrive at a real average annual rate of 15–20%, we can only conclude that the well-being of the majority of our citizens has improved, despite a certain level of overall economic growth. The rate of change is modest, but the fact itself is clear.

But how fair is it to talk about "well-being"? Money is merely an exchange equivalent. Earning more money doesn't necessarily make you better off. Money must be exchanged for necessary goods. And here the problem of quality comes into full play. Having earned money, you can easily spend it "unnoticed," i.e., buy not a product, but a "phantom product."

"Phantom product" is a non-specific concept within a specialized knowledge system. Nevertheless, it's important to get used to it as a theoretical expression of the realities of an underdeveloped product market.

Speculating on the "white" and "gray" "spots" of a quality ideology in an extremely neglected state, "black" producers of low-quality consumer goods, together with sympathetic officials from the services responsible for product quality, have flooded the market with substandard products.

The ISO 9000 international quality control system -is more reminiscent of the latest incarnation of the famous Potemkin village. Only what is clearly defined can be effectively controlled. Anything vaguely defined is a gateway for semi-legal infiltration into the consumer hunting grounds.

ISO -9000 should be used not as a management tool, but as a tool for preventing quality violations. The circle is thus closed, because a violation presupposes quality, and we haven't properly defined quality.

In the system of specialized knowledge, which is the ideology of production, "quality" is replaced by "the state of quality", which in turn is reduced to quantitative parameters.

Quantitative characteristics are given discrete expressions, and thus another derivative concept emerges. Only this time, not from the root concept of "quality," but from its derivative—the concept of "state of quality."

The militant drive to describe quality through quantity is astonishing. Almost two hundred years have passed since Hegel, who asserted that quality is the primary factor in defining a phenomenon, since quality is that which, when it loses its "what," ceases to be itself. It's time to embrace this simple truth: quality is defined not by quantity, but by properties. Using quantitative measurements, we must determine the "measure" of "qualitativeness" and the "state of quality" (the level of expression of quality).

Practice rarely corrects theoretical errors; on the contrary, it usually conceals them until a certain point in development. Theoretical flaws become starkly

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apparent in difficult socio-economic circumstances and during times of political uncertainty.

It's no coincidence that such a unique time is "convenient" for the flourishing of theoretical uncertainty. The state, entangled in numerous problems, abandons control over economic processes, relying on the market to sort everything out. The market, however, has its own operating laws. The market adapts theory to its own interests. It doesn't obey the rules established by theory, but seeks to adapt these rules to its own advantageous relationship with the consumer.

The advertising claim: "The customer is always right" is a lie! Only the legal order that determines the nature of relations in the commodity market is always right. These relations themselves are built on the interpretation of product quality and the correspondence between quality and price. Whatever one may say, the issue of quality and its two aspects—the theoretical and the practical—will always be addressed.

In theoretical terms, one must strictly adhere to the fundamental postulate: quality is an association of properties that characterize the structural and functional uniqueness not of a single phenomenon, but of a set of phenomena united by common laws of formation and change. Therefore, quality can only be determined through the presence of corresponding properties. Given that, of all qualitative properties, only aesthetic ones (design) are directly assessable, comprehensive product certification is required, or more precisely, the product submitted for release to the market.

Moreover, testing a product for quality that meets consumer interests should not be limited to technical and materials science assessments. Social, psychological, medical, and regional studies are also required.

Let's consider this statement using footwear as an example. Footwear, like clothing, is a product dependent on national and historical characteristics. Can we recommend footwear for sale that doesn't take into account the specific geographic, climatic, or national mentality? Apparently, such products can be allowed on the market, but only in limited quantities, for the sake of diversity and expanding consumer choice. And this isn't a matter of "kvass patriotism."

Nature, diet, and traditions influence the anthropometric characteristics of the population: the configuration and proportions of the foot, lower leg, etc. Shoes designed without taking into account national characteristics—both anatomical and physiological—will inevitably contribute to the development of foot deformities. Shoes will lose their marketable appearance more quickly, and consumers will experience constant discomfort, which (considering that, on average, in Russia, shoes are worn without regard for recommendations until they become physically obsolete) can lead to the

exacerbation of chronic diseases or even the development of new ones.

China has already "thrown" onto the market such a quantity of shoes that the entire population of the Earth (≈ 6.5 billion people) could be shod "à la "Chine." Chinese manufacturers are driven by their own interests: creating jobs and ensuring sales. They offer footwear designed and manufactured without regard for the national characteristics of the consumer countries. Chinese footwear today poses serious competition not only to our domestic manufacturers but also to countries that set trends in footwear fashion, such as Italy, France, the USA, the Czech Republic, and others.

For the fifth consecutive year, the Italian footwear market has seen a significant decline in production volumes. Activity in this segment of the domestic market is declining, and demand for Italian products on both domestic and foreign markets is low. Given the euro's strong exchange rate against the dollar, competition from Chinese goods is becoming even more intense on the Italian market, especially after the abolition of sales quotas on January 1, 2017. Footwear production volumes decreased by 12.9% in 2024 compared to the same period last year. In terms of price differences, product supply decreased by approximately 9.3% in absolute prices. From 2018 to 2024, Italian production decreased by almost half to 281 million pairs, which negatively impacted employment. Leather footwear production decreased by 8.9%, flip-flops by 23%, rubber footwear by 32%, and canvas footwear by 40%. On the contrary, Italy steadily imports around 150 million pairs of Chinese shoes every year.

The Italian manufacturer is losing ground in international markets such as the US, Germany, and France. The rise of the euro against the dollar, as well as the market shift in favor of Asian manufacturers, are negatively impacting the Italian manufacturer. According to the Italian Chamber of Commerce, more than 600 companies, including shoe manufacturers, closed in the first five months of 2024. The only market segment in which Italian shoe manufacturers maintain a leading position is the production of luxury fashion footwear for international markets.

Over the past 10 years, the number of shoe manufacturing companies in the Czech Republic has decreased from 120 to 47. But even this number may decrease due to the lifting of restrictions on shoe imports from China. While at the end of the 20th century, Czech shoe factories produced approximately 70 million pairs of shoes, last year that number was approximately 5.5 million pairs. In 2025, approximately 80 million pairs of shoes were imported to the Czech Republic, 55 million of which were from Chinese manufacturers. The average purchase price of a pair of Chinese shoes is only 54 crowns—an unrealistic price for Czech companies. "No one buys our goods because we can't compete

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with Asian products on price, despite the fact that our shoes are much better in quality." "Unfortunately, Czech consumers prefer cheaper products, even though they know they won't last as long as our high-quality footwear," says Lubomír, a member of the Czech Footwear Industry Association. Chlumský, whose company has been producing and selling children's, women's, and men's footwear since 1998, is facing a setback. As a result, Czech manufacturers are losing ground in their own market. The situation is further complicated by the fact that, as of January 1, 2022, the European Union, in agreement with China and the World Trade Organization, lifted restrictions on imports of Chinese footwear. They can only be reinstated if the entire industry, and on a European scale, is threatened.

US Commerce Secretary Carlos Gutierrez, among the most important issues, notes the need to take effective measures to curb job losses in a number of American industries, which is also caused by growing competition from Chinese goods in the US.

But we still have a long way to go to match the progress made by Western shoe manufacturers. Russia's accession to the WTO has opened up market opportunities for many others eager to quickly offload low-quality goods. Moreover, unlike its Western neighbors, Russia already faces the fatal problem of expanding "gray" imports, which has arisen due to imperfect customs legislation and the spontaneous development of "shuttle trade." As the Presidential Plenipotentiary Envoy to the Siberian Federal District stated in an interview, the annual volume of "gray imports of Chinese goods" into Russia reaches \$6 billion. However, even in a civilized market, allowing footwear to enter the domestic market without restrictions based solely on positive assessments of the quality of raw materials, related materials, and fittings, along with significant expansion of footwear production, threatens Russia's national security.

National attitudes toward footwear can be quantified. Products can easily be measured for compliance with certain requirements, but it's important to keep in mind that the quality itself is assessed solely on a "present or absent" basis. Once a quality is recognized as existing, the expert can proceed to the next step—measuring the intensity of its existence—to determine how stable and pronounced the quality is.

The absence of even one of the product's qualitative properties, or its insufficiency, means only one thing: the product should not be considered a commodity. In exceptional cases, it is considered conditionally approved for sale on the national market.

The occupation of the national market by foreign footwear manufacturers undermines the development of the corresponding sector of the domestic economy, which has historically been adapted to the specific

conditions of national development and the peculiarities of anthropometric measurements.

The situation is exacerbated by the fact that Russia, having been recognized as a market economy, has no right to disrupt the orderly relationship between political and market structures. Unilateral actions by the state in defense of its interests could be considered a violation of this status and lead to economic and other sanctions from the global market. The exclusion of foreign competitors from the national market must be carried out in accordance with the recommendations and traditions of the international community.

Chinese, Turkish, and, to some extent -, Eastern European shoe manufacturers have flooded our market and established a strong presence there, thanks to consumer demand for their products.

Buyers with limited financial means are attracted by price, design, advertising, product selection, salesperson engagement, and professional service. A consumer unversed in professional "secrets" judges quality by its outward appearance and service packaging. The sales service itself skillfully shifts the focus from quality characteristics to visually appealing features. Quality, as an association of the most important product attributes, is "broken." Of all the attributes that combine to form a quality association, only the attribute that benefits the seller is highlighted, as it truly represents the appropriate level of consumer interest.

Sequestering quality by replacing it with a simplified understanding is the most common marketing ploy. The unsatisfactory state of mass consumer culture, the apathy of government oversight, their lack of initiative, and, in some cases, their direct interest in maintaining the current state of disorder, make it possible to manipulate public consciousness and control consumer behavior.

The occupation of the Russian market is, of course, temporary, caused by economic stagnation, limited consumer demand among the majority of the population, and the lack of an effective and consistent policy for the development of national production. However, the obvious inevitability of the situation is of little comfort. In Russia, there's a popular joke: nothing is more permanent than something -temporary. To prevent a temporary phenomenon from becoming stagnant, the conditions that gave rise to it must be changed. Opportunities exist. First of all, it's necessary to understand the theory that guides practical actions.

Underestimating theory naturally leads to practical miscalculations. In our case, such underestimation appears to be deliberate. Otherwise, how can one explain that, given the generally accepted definition of quality through the association of an object's fundamental properties, only the bare bones of a quality criterion remain in regulatory documents—that is, isolated attributes.

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To some extent, quality theory itself is "to blame" for its theoretical ambiguity and one-sidedness. The quality of natural phenomena differs from the quality of artificially created products. Natural phenomena are of natural origin, and all their properties are spontaneous. The quality of natural phenomena does not include their relevance to human needs. It is pointless to divide mushrooms by quality into edible and poisonous. The quality of mushrooms lies elsewhere, and this difference determines their place in biological taxonomy. Trees are conventionally divided into beautiful and ugly, valuable and weedy. Such contrasts have no bearing on quality. Artificial products, on the contrary, are characterized, above all, by their relevance to our needs. Consumer properties are included in the quality system of artificial products, just like natural ones. And not only are they included, but they outrank natural ones in importance.

Shoe quality is determined by a combination of consumer characteristics. The material the shoe is made of is not fundamentally important. What matters is that the material's properties ensure the shoe's functional relevance to the consumer.

The buyer doesn't care whether the shoes are made of natural or synthetic materials, given the price. What matters is that their expectations are met.

Domestic practices for assessing the quality of footwear (and other things) invert this theory, seeking to focus on natural characteristics. What -will Russian quality ideologists do when animal rights activists take them seriously, as has happened in Western Europe, particularly the UK.

The most tragicomic thing is that the nature of the raw material is truly not such a fundamental issue if chemical and physical technologies are developed. Analogs of natural raw materials are a reality of today's production and are no longer a fantasy. But quality issues are by no means limited to raw materials. Other aspects of production are no less pressing: taking into account national, age, and natural -climatic characteristics when determining the quality and conditions for product market entry.

Unfortunately, today, domestic input into developing policies aimed at improving footwear quality, and, in essence, ensuring consumer rights, is extremely inconclusive. One gets the impression that manufacturers' aspirations are completely disconnected from the interests of the country that gave them citizenship.

According to the theory of marginal utility and consumer choice, proven by international practice, consumers prefer the product that best suits their personal perception of utility within their financial means. The state's task is to create the necessary legislative preconditions to protect the interests of its citizens and develop a reliable control mechanism.

At the same time, the state must understand that consumers' consciousness is generally amateurish.

Consumers lack the professional culture to comprehensively navigate the complexities of choosing their course of action. Therefore, the state or organizations delegated protection must provide consumers with sufficient information about the consumer properties of products.

Instead, the buyer is offered, at best, a minimal set of material and technological characteristics, which is a gross violation of consumer rights. Product specifications should include, in addition to static data, detailed dynamic (behavioral) information. For example, product properties should be described in the same way as reputable pharmaceutical companies do, outlining key properties, indications, contraindications, age recommendations, functional warnings, directions for use, storage conditions, and recommended shelf life.

Experience with this approach in other industries already exists. The development of information technology today allows for the creation of entire communication systems for product support, based on the CALS concept, which is widely used to improve management efficiency and reduce communication costs in the ordering, production, supply, and operation of products. The basis for this concept is the natural need to organize a "*single information space*" that ensures the rapid exchange of data between producers and consumers throughout the entire product *lifecycle*: from marketing to disposal.

We don't see anything like that in the actions aimed at improving the quality of footwear products. There isn't even a desire to change the information situation that developed during the times when the range and quantity of goods were limited. To confirm this, let's turn to the experts' conclusions: "When certifying mass-produced products, experts from the certification body (CB - author's note) assess the state of production directly at the enterprise or based on the submitted documents (in absentia (!) - author's note) (technical description of a specific type of product, process flow diagram, material, components with sanitary -Epidemiological reports on component materials and footwear confirming the safety of the primary and auxiliary materials used in footwear for consumer health. In accordance with the program developed by the expert during footwear certification at the IL (testing laboratory – author's note), the following parameters are determined: sole strength; heel strength; and the strength of the upper's thread seams.

When certifying children's footwear, the design of the upper part of the shoe and the hygienic properties of the materials used are additionally assessed for compliance with the standards of Sanitary and Epidemiological Regulations No. 42 -125 -439087." "To operate at the lower end of the price range, a company must produce footwear models that are affordable due -to their low price and

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offer only the basic set of features in accordance with national standards." What conclusions can be drawn?

First - the industry still -relies on an outdated approach—the simplest and only necessary one: do no harm to consumer health. Shoe manufacturers and their regulators have firmly grasped the first Hippocratic commandment, but they haven't gone any further. Under these circumstances, it's unlikely they'll be able to hold off the competitive siege for long.

Secondly - basic properties should not be equated with qualities. Properties can only be qualities in the production cycle due to its differentiation into technological operations. However, in this case, it is advisable to put "quality" in quotation marks, emphasizing the conventionality of the term. Otherwise, we will resort to philosophical and scientific concepts, which will inevitably lead to a distortion of practical characteristics. Quality is an association of certain properties, therefore, one cannot simply extract the properties that form the association based on production needs and pass them off as quality.

Third -, it's high time to define basic properties conventionally, not limiting ourselves to the proposals of sanitary hygienists and epidemiologists. Much valuable information can be gleaned from the research of gerontologists, geriatricians, regional specialists, valeologists, and pediatricians.

Fourthly -, how long will the basic characteristics be practically devoid of aesthetic properties, even in a conspiratorial form?

The satisfaction with the de facto replacement of State Standards with national standards is also unclear. The fact that we've adopted international terminology in this component of quality ideology isn't particularly helpful. If our production and ideological positions were aligned with those of Europe, then we could rejoice. As it is, the chaos only worsens.

In the absence of corporate culture and traditions, companies left to their own devices will resort to arbitrary action. Government agencies have acknowledged their own inability to manage market development in a civilized manner and have reverted to the American fairy tale that the market itself will arrange and organize everything.

The ineffectiveness of the state quality control system lies not in its status, but in its functioning. Unscrupulous and unprofessional officials prevent government agencies from functioning effectively. According to official data from the Federal Agency for Technical Regulation and Metrology, certification refusals average 2% per year. Meanwhile, more than 30% of products are rejected directly at the point of sale.

In the European Union, approximately 4% of the product range is subject to mandatory certification, not because European officials are liberal. The reason lies in the customs and traditions of production itself,

and civilized relations in a market whose age exceeds the combined era of the Romanov dynasty and the Soviet regime. Haste inevitably entails costs. To move with the crowd, it's not enough to dress and put on the same shoes as everyone else, and fall into line.

As long as the government and producers feign market relations, the mass consumer will bear the brunt, as the costs will fall on their shoulders. Exclusive buyers are protected from the vagaries of the Russian market by truly free choice. They purchase goods directly from reputable manufacturers. Officials are willing to do anything to be considered exclusive buyers. Companies likely share this view and are willing to pay officials for their own freedom of action. The situation can only be described as creeping state anarchy. -The state has begun to degenerate prematurely.

According to Russian official regulations, until recently, 70–80% of product ranges required state quality certification. Critics reject this practice and propose adopting Western standards. -European experience.

They aren't bothered by the fact that the share of illegal and semi-legal businesses in Russia is estimated at 40–60%. This means that even though 70–80% of products need to be centrally tested for quality, less than 40% of certified goods are already on the market. Critics defend the interests of unknown manufacturers. And who will stand up for consumer rights? Officials, or perhaps judges, who are independent only by definition. All that remains are human rights organizations, which exist today and vanish tomorrow.

The motivations for quality improvement are directly linked to economic factors. This means that quality management aims to achieve economic benefits, i.e., is focused on generating profit for the company.

In modern conditions, the economic success of a manufacturer is ensured by the production of products that meet the following requirements, namely:

- fully meets consumer demands;
- meets safety and environmental protection requirements;
- meets current standards and specifications;
- offered to consumers at competitive prices;
- is economically advantageous for production.

Managing the competitiveness of footwear in footwear enterprises in the Southern and North -Caucasian Federal Districts (SFD and NCFD) is associated with frequent changes in product range and the increasing influence of regional socio-economic factors.

Improving the competitiveness of footwear is only possible through the development of new models based on marketing information and in-depth study of the preferences of specific customer groups,

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accelerating the process of changing the product range while simultaneously maintaining or increasing the efficiency of the production system.

Shoe manufacturers in the Southern and North Caucasian Federal Districts account for a significant portion of domestic footwear production, more than 30%.

Despite the large share of footwear production in the South and North -In the Caucasus Federal Districts, only 19.6% of footwear demand is met; the rest is imported from neighboring and distant countries. These imports are often smuggled. The import of cheap footwear is the most serious problem for domestic footwear companies.

Another problem for companies in the Southern and North Caucasian Federal Districts is the lack of high-quality raw materials and components for footwear production, resulting in the products of shoe factories in southern Russia losing out to the price competition of cheap imported footwear.

Furthermore, footwear companies in the Southern and North Caucasian Federal Districts specialize primarily in men's footwear. Moreover, they produce virtually identical models in identical colors. Of course, labor costs for women's and men's footwear are disparate. Therefore, women's footwear production in the Southern and North Caucasian Federal Districts accounts for approximately 3% of the total footwear market, children's footwear for 15%, and specialty footwear for 40%. This low production volume for women's footwear is due to the fact that competition in the women's footwear market is much fiercer, and in this segment, shoemakers in the Southern Federal District immediately clash with Moscow-based -Chinese manufacturers, which currently hold the majority of the women's footwear market. Unfortunately, however, shoemakers ignore the fact that the women's footwear market lacks footwear for older consumers, which is not served by Chinese shoe manufacturers, leaving a niche for manufacturers.

The situation with children's footwear production by most footwear companies in the Southern and North Caucasian Federal Districts remains more problematic. This is due to the abolition of federal budget subsidies for their production, imperfect taxation of children's footwear, and a lack of the necessary volume and style of lasts for their production. In the Southern and North Caucasian Federal Districts' children's consumer market, domestic manufacturers have been displaced by foreign suppliers who can afford to sell shoes on a payment-on-sale basis. However, these products, for the most part, lack certificates of conformity and hygiene certifications. Imported footwear is typically in the most popular, "average" sizes and is not intended for children. Therefore, children and their parents are currently forced to satisfy this need with affordable imported adult footwear. Providing

children with properly fitted, physiologically appropriate footwear is a key challenge for domestic manufacturers, including those in the Southern and North Caucasian Federal Districts. The situation in the Southern and North Caucasian Federal Districts necessitates the development of a set of regional measures aimed at improving the socio-economic situation in the Southern and North Caucasian Federal Districts. Increased purchasing power for high-quality footwear in the mid-price consumer segment determines the economic feasibility of developing footwear manufacturing facilities. Establishing a wide range of footwear production will transform the currently subsidized regions of the Southern and North Caucasian Federal Districts into self-sustaining ones, increasing household incomes; stimulate the creation of new jobs; ensure the development of small businesses and support for legal private entrepreneurship; and create the basis for bringing a significant portion of the real sector of the economy out of the shadow economy to support the regional budget, as the implementation of a set of regional measures has economic, political, and social implications.

The main stage of structural restructuring should be improving the technical level of production at footwear factories and the competitiveness of their products, ensuring the introduction of innovative products and high technologies, replacing certain types of imported footwear with domestically produced ones, and their entry into the Russian and global markets. This requires measures to modernize and reconstruct existing footwear production facilities and create new ones, strengthen control and implement modern quality management systems; certify products and production facilities themselves; develop a dealer and distribution network; implement an active marketing policy; and expand the practice of leasing schemes for innovative activities. To revive the production of children's footwear in the Southern and North Caucasian Federal Districts, organizational and financial support for footwear companies at the Russian government level is primarily necessary, as well as regional and local authorities, namely:

- in the form of a reduction in VAT;
- provision of an open-ended loan;
- urgent loan at a preferential interest rate with payment deferrals for 3 or more years;
- in the form of support for footwear companies in providing high-quality and affordable shoe materials (natural, artificial and textile).

Furthermore, companies should be allowed to use balance sheet profits to replenish working capital to provide them with high-quality and affordable footwear materials when producing children's footwear under the same conditions as for financing construction, i.e., tax-free. State procurement for

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children's footwear with advance payment is also possible.

Local authorities need to take a differentiated approach to establishing the structure and amounts of local taxes, i.e., reducing their amounts for children's footwear production. Particular attention should be paid to creating opportunities for large and low-income families to purchase footwear through targeted compensation, the establishment of special departments, discounted prices, credit, and installment plans.

As global experience shows, leadership in the competitive struggle is achieved by those who are most competent in product range policy, who have a perfect command of the methods of its implementation and who can manage it most effectively.

A product range development forecast should show a trajectory that will ensure the company's product offering meets the expected changing market demand structure. Product range planning is a continuous process that continues throughout the product's life cycle, from the inception of the concept to its removal from the product line.

To ensure the competitiveness of footwear products from the Southern and North Caucasian Federal Districts in terms of quality and demand, it is necessary to transform the disparate light industry enterprises in these regions into a dynamic, competitive *footwear cluster*.

An industrial cluster within a priority development area (PDA) is a group of geographically adjacent and integrated companies and related organizations operating in a specific industry (or multi-industry) and complementing each other. The Southern and North Caucasian Federal Districts (SFDs) have all the necessary conditions for creating a footwear cluster:

- preserved and educational institutions are functioning, which continue to train highly qualified personnel not only for footwear companies, but also for related industries;

- The regions of the Southern and North Caucasian Federal Districts are characterized by the presence of a large number of unemployed people (the unemployed), the percentage of unemployed women is especially high, which requires the creation of new jobs and the reduction of social tension in these regions;

- the ability to produce a wide range of footwear not only by type, but also by fastening methods, including for children, taking into account the national characteristics of those living in these regions;

- The shoemaking traditions that developed in these regions are still alive, and even today 35% of all footwear manufactured in Russia in 2026 is produced there;

- Geographical and transport proximity to Western Europe, where footwear companies face an even more difficult choice: moving production to China, India, Taiwan, or Eastern Europe. Consequently, there are significant opportunities for investment and technological partnerships within *the cluster* with Western European footwear manufacturers;

- The positive development experience of the Gloria Jeans company: 12 factories producing 20 million denim items annually under the Gloria Jeans and Gee brands Jay . The Russian company's leadership in the CIS market in a niche unconventional for the Russian light industry – the denim clothing segment;

- potential for the development of a raw material base through the implementation of a program to develop cattle and pig populations;

- the presence of local manufacturers of certain types of components (soles, heels), including those that meet European standards.

The creation of a *footwear cluster* in the Southern and North Caucasian Federal Districts will ensure:

- increasing the efficiency and productivity of enterprises, clearer coordination of work;

- increased attention to achieving business goals and meeting consumer expectations;

- achieving and maintaining conformity of the quality of the enterprise's products and services with the established requirements of consumers;

- achieving customer satisfaction that the required quality is provided and maintained;

- maintaining confidence in the capabilities of the enterprise among existing and potential consumers;

- opening up new market opportunities and maintaining existing sales markets;

- certification and registration of quality systems;

- the ability to compete in this field with larger enterprises (i.e. the ability to offer reasonable prices or maintain them).

Existing and newly established enterprises and firms in the South of Russia, using the proposed measures, will be able to produce competitive footwear in the volume necessary to meet the demand of various population groups with a certain level of income and social security.

In the history of the problem of quality, two periods are distinguished. During the first, serious interest in what constitutes quality was limited primarily to professional theory. Philosophers attempted to define quality and its systemic position, but even in numerous philosophical debates, the concept of "quality" was not among the central issues.

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The actualization of the theory of quality turned out to be dependent on the degree of development of the system-forming philosophical concept of "being" in the context of the basic concepts derived from it, i.e. those concepts that help to realize the ascent from the extremely abstract assertion of existence with the only distinguishing property of being, to exist, to a concrete understanding with an established content, thanks to the answers to derivative questions such as "What is everything made of?", "Due to what does everything exist?", "Is there non-being?", "In what systemic forms does being acquire its definition?"

Apparently -, it was precisely the last of the listed questions that led philosophy onto the "path" of that interpretation of quality that "hooked" not only those who "established" a fundamentally new type of worldview in human history.

It's logical to assume that the problem of the substance of being, as the first step toward a theory of quality, was unlikely to have interested anyone outside the limited community of philosophers. All evidence suggests that it was of interest to those whose gaze was directed toward the Cosmos, into the depths of its structure, while the overwhelming majority of philosophers' fellow countrymen were preoccupied with earthly problems.

For the masses, variety and choice in goods were essentially unavailable. The plebeians demanded "Bread and circuses!" The feast of life in all its diversity was enjoyed by a small aristocracy. The issue of quality of life was addressed in accordance with the sociocultural architecture of society. This problem undoubtedly existed, but it could not mature into a pressing issue for society. The reason is simple: there was a lack of sufficient mass demand for a quality product.

The issue of quality has acquired significant social relevance in the context of the transition to a mass production economy, the democratization of social relations, the development of education, the accessibility of education, and other cultural values. For the issue of quality to become one of the most important for society, it had to be relevant to the majority of those who make up that society. Without the right to freedom and the purchasing power to make choices, "quality" cannot be a priority in the mass consciousness. Elite demands for quality, however, are developed in exclusive, unconventional theories whose primary goal is not the attainment of truth, but the satisfaction of customer needs.

Of course, the qualitative and quantitative characteristics of natural and artificial phenomena were known long before these attributes became relevant in social existence and the consciousness that reflected its development. However, in light of our research, the existence of de facto knowledge of quality is less significant. The subject of our research is not the awareness of quality, but the development

of an understanding of quality across different horizons of social history.

Development is a universal state of all existence, from the simplest material substrates to the highest forms of thought. Both quality and quantitative expression were improved, and the relationship between qualitative and quantitative changes became clearer. The emphasis shifted from quantity to quality. Having proven its evolutionary resilience, humanity shifted to the principle of "skill, not numbers." The struggle for survival gave way to a desire for a high standard of living, broadly defined. The struggle for a dignified quality of life began.

As history shows, having abandoned savagery and barbarism and laid the foundations of civilization, humans have noticeably changed in their outward forms of manifestation, but civilization penetrates the depths of human nature slowly and arduously. Biological history has imbued human nature with an active principle, combined with a developed capacity for thought, significantly superior to all other forms of reflection. But this entire superstructure formed over a rather rigid animal framework, subordinated to the systemic goal of survival in struggle. The conditions of struggle have transformed, introducing adjustments to the means and forms, but the natural foundation itself has proven highly inert.

The transition from natural, biologically based egoism to rationally active egoism, despite the well-known civilizational means of cultivating it, did not meet the predictions of either romantics or -optimistic realists. Civilization was marked by non-civilizational forms of relationships in its movement toward a quality life, which further heightened interest in quality. To rank among the most important issues, quality had to be presented in several functions: as an end, as a means, and as a condition for the development of all social actors at all levels of life.

For historians, history is events and participants arranged in a temporal sequence, a kind of chronology of significant facts in social and, to some extent, personal life. Philosophers and -non-historian specialists see their own interests in history. Philosophical and specialized interest in history is driven by the need to understand the dialectic of process as it applies to human activity. The specialist seeks to discover trends in the past that provide solutions to their problems, often far from specific.

Intuitively, even at the dawn of civilization, the term history (historia) was interpreted as the study of a given process, as opposed to a chronological description. The Ionians called narrative, the account of the past, logos. Only later, in the works of the founders of philosophy, did logos acquire its modern meaning—thought, idea. Both Herodotus and Thucydides understood history as an understanding of the course of past events, necessary for "instructions in the way of life" for those living in the present. Having stood the test of time, historicism strengthened

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its position, becoming the ideological foundation of cultural memory. N.A. Berdyaev asserted: "From the first days of Creation... man is in the historical, and the historical is in man. To delve into the depths of time is to delve within oneself."

The past dissolves into time, leaving us, along with memories of the past, thoughts of the present and responsibility for the future. The new is always relative. Goethe was right when he said that everything intelligent is already known; we just need to think it through again.

History is a treasure trove of ideas, a gold mine for a thinking person, no matter what their occupation. Different attitudes toward history are the combined effect of two factors: the first is the interpretation of time, and the second is one's self-perception within time. In the pre-Christian period of history, time was understood cyclically, as the sum of repeating, self-contained cycles. With Christianity, this view of time changed. Time was seen as an ascent to the infinite, divided into a finite, earthly realm and an infinite, extraterrestrial realm. The opposition between cyclical and non-cyclical views of time is characteristic of theological theory. We are not interested in it, however, nor are the properties of time in their abstract form. After Hegel and Marx, the relevant approach is not to conceptualize anything -in general, but to delve into the concrete, objective, or concrete, -historical state of whatever is being studied. In the case of time, it is not so much its universal properties that are relevant, nor is it to determine where and how it moves. The important thing is that everything that exists in time can only come into being by conforming to these objective characteristics of time. To exist in time means to possess the properties of time. This proposition is universal both for the infinite diversity of individual phenomena and for the essential attributes of being inherent in them, which include "quality" and "quantity." The standard understanding of the law of the transition of quantitative changes into qualitative ones simplifies the view of their connection. Both Hegel and Engels were far removed from the meaning propagated under the guise of dialectical development theory. Quantity does not directly transform into quality. A new quality, a qualitative state, arises as a transition from a previous quality. Under changed quantitative conditions, measure exhausts its reserve of stable functioning.

Measure is a "qualitative quantity"; it indicates the limits of change in quantity without significant consequences for the quality of the phenomenon. When quantitative indicators necessary for the achieved quality exceed the limits of measure, qualitative transformations inevitably occur. Simultaneously with the loss of the previous quality, a new quality is born from it, commensurate with the changed quantity. Measure occupies a key position in the relationship between quality and quantity. Quality

specialists, however, prefer not to seriously discuss measure, reducing it to quantitative standards. As if measure were some kind -of passing state of the "quality- -quantity" system. It is necessary to clearly understand the objective and functional role of measure in the management of both quality and quantity.

"Measure" pertains neither to quality nor quantity. It expresses the systemic relationship between quality and quantity, linking them. So, first: quantity and quality interact through measure, and measure mediates their connection. What "benefit" will a practitioner derive from this conclusion -? Mass production, including its "thrifty" variety, requires a dimensional characteristic; otherwise, the fairy tale of the porridge pot or the " -seven-colored flowers" stands a good chance of being realized. Chinese consumer goods are -a classic example of the breakdown of dialectical unity in the "quantity- -quality" system. The market, by its very nature, is incapable of controlling the measure that regulates relations in the "quantity- -quality" system. With the emergence of wholesale forms of development, the dominant position of financial capital, and its natural offspring—large-scale speculation and intermediation—the modern market has pitted itself against production and lost interest in the state of production. The market, exploiting the specifics of mass production, has become saturated to the extent of its perversion and can afford to dictate the qualitative characteristics of goods.

The state behaves in the market like a kindergarten teacher. It places the interests of the market above those of producers and the mass consumer. Under the umbrella of the general idea that the market drives production, the market and the state are merging. Quantitative -assessments are relegated to the realm of subjective arbitrariness.

Until a theory of quality is systematically developed, quality management theory will be based on empirical principles, which are incapable of encompassing the subject matter as a whole and are relatively meaningful within the limited context of production. For lack of anything better, they are used to extrapolate local experience to other conditions, achieving results through additional adaptation measures, which, unfortunately, are again -temporary and partial.

A certain logic can be discerned in the kaleidoscope of changing quality management methods. Life, however, demands not a "definite" logic, but logical certainty in the form of a holistic, systemically grounded theory of quality as a methodological foundation for constructing universal principles of quality management theory. The starting point here should be the idea of a systematic relationship between "quality -and quantity" within the framework of their degree of coexistence.

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Quantity helps quality to fully blossom. A high-quality piece can be created in a single copy, but to fully realize the manufacturer's potential for quality, a single piece (or work) is clearly not enough. The Fabergé house secured its fame with its first branded piece, but it became a brand through subsequent successes in creating its collection.

An example of a systematic understanding of quality within the framework of a measure – dimensionality Small series and the issuance of collectible coins and medals serve as a means of achieving certainty. Quality is fixed within the boundaries of a quantitative value, which serves as a measure of its expression. This is not only about providing preferential conditions for VIP -consumers. The dependence of objective quality indicators on the quantity produced is also significant. Mass production is objectively associated with a decrease in product quality. The measure is the boundary of quality; going beyond the measured quantity is a crime against quality.

A mass domestic manufacturer is unlikely to be interested in quality theory. It's irrelevant to them. If anyone were -to stumble upon our arguments, they would likely smile at our naivety. Trying to restructure the Russian market with theory, to give it a civilized appearance, is classic quixoticism. First, we need to organize the market space through political will, legislative initiatives, and effective, not sham, oversight of the legal order. We need to bring back the manufacturer, eliminating the countless middlemen and speculators.

A true manufacturer isn't interested in speculative operations. For sustainable development, it requires its own consumer, who, incidentally, is not at all opposed to having a defined and accessible manufacturer within the framework of moral and legal relations. A sense of national dignity is nurtured by history and the existing reality. In school, you can study from the best history textbook, but beyond history lessons, there's current life, which is more impressive than historical excursions. In the East, they say, "No matter how many times you repeat halva, it won't taste sweet." Theory has always been considered the best practical guide, albeit under normalized operating conditions. By entering an illegal or semi-legal position, the manufacturer alienates itself from quality and, naturally, from the theory of quality. This then leads to the substitution of pseudo-quality, and the costs of advertising hype rise. Quality does indeed entail significant costs, but it guarantees a stable market position. By focusing on quality, the manufacturer builds confidence in its own and the nation's future. A properly developed understanding of quality guarantees prospects even in the domestic market.

In order to introduce the theory of quality, we will try to formulate practically significant fundamental provisions, namely:

- Quality isn't simply the sum of the properties essential to a product's existence; it's a unique combination of them, typically built on two attributes—one more general and one more specific. For example, shoes are "clothing for the feet," a hat is "clothing for the head," a scarf is "clothing for the nose and neck," and so on. Consequently, they deserve the most attention.

- Quality allows for changes that do not lead to a loss of quality but that reduce or increase its consumer value; quality is a set of qualitative states that satisfy, to varying degrees, system-forming characteristics. Quality "play" allows for flexibility in the process of creating a product with a given quality, depending on the specific capabilities of the manufacturer and consumer.

- Quality does not exist without quantity; they are dialectical opposites, their opposition valid only within the boundaries of unity. It follows that, when creating quality, it is necessary to incorporate quantitative expression into qualitative characteristics, both in relation to individual product properties and the quantity of goods produced. A.K. Savrasov, finding himself in a difficult life situation, made several copies of his famous painting "The Rooks Have Come Back." As a rule, original copies are of a high level of craftsmanship and command high prices. The artist was also paid. When P. Tretyakov was asked whether he would buy Savrasov's copy if something happened to the original, his answer was predictably categorical – no! Quality requires not only craftsmanship but also inspiration. Inspiration fades with repetition. Quality is always quantitative, and quantity is qualitative.

- Quality and quantity are linked by a measure that is often overlooked. However, when defining quality, one must simultaneously consider its dimensionality, both from the perspective of market conditions and from the perspective of the quality attributes themselves. "Quality" is concretized in the concept of "quality." "Quality" -is a concept that reflects the model image of a product, while "quality" -defines the quantitative limits of the reality and reasonableness of quality (the physical and moral status of a product).

- Quality and the concept of quality are stable phenomena, but time changes them. Initially, quality was identified with meaning. The criteria for quality were the usefulness and magnitude of an object or relationship. With the development of consciousness and practical capabilities, the foundations for comparison and choice emerged. Quality becomes relatively distinct from quantity. Utility is differentiated, and participation is reconsidered as quantitative attributes. The evolution of the understanding of quality is directly determined by the embodiment of creative potential in activity. The discrepancy in the intensity of the advancement of

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individual skill, the interests of those called upon to clear the path of talent, and mass consciousness complicates the understanding of quality and the process of quality management. The concreteness of the interpretation of quality, in particular, its basic characteristic of objectivity, acquires particular importance. The social theory of existence is built on a natural -Historically based—its outline was laid by nature, while its historical pattern was created by man. In the natural environment, all characteristics, including such synthetic ones as quality, are products of spontaneous movement. In society, every phenomenon undergoes activity, incorporating human mental and physical labor into its quality. Determining the quality of phenomena created by human activity is impossible without sociocultural specification. Therefore, two questions arise:

- in what status and to what extent does consciousness enter into what is traditionally called the quality of things.

The answers to both questions must be sought in the philosophical theory of alienation. Alienation theory has no direct relation to quality theory. It holds the keys to the methodology for constructing a theory of quality.

From the above discussion, it's clear that the authors aren't idealists; rather, they balance on the edge of pessimism and optimism. They are critical of the modern, pragmatic approach -of market liberals to scientifically and philosophically grounded theory. A watered-down version of theory, in which a fragment torn from a general theory is transformed into the theory itself and tailored to the structure of a market distorted to suit speculators, -suits the needs of theoretical economists and suppliers of high-quality surrogates for domestic stores. How long the Russian economy will maintain this configuration remains unknown; however, global experience of economic development at various stages of economic relations demonstrates that transition periods pass, and over time, economic life returns to normal.

The trajectory of the process of alienating human creativity to what exists outside of itself must necessarily preserve and activate the capacity for creativity. Unlike the existence of nature, human existence is not substantial. It is not self-sufficient and can only exist through mutual exchange, initially with nature, and subsequently with society, through which human relationships and interactions with nature are built. The instrument that ensures human existence is labor, and the highest quality of labor is manifested in activity. The quality of activity, on the one hand, is an indicator of the quality of human life (this is how it should be!); on the other, quality activity is integrated into the quality of what it transforms. The quality of "first" (natural) nature is formed spontaneously as a set of objectively interconnected natural attributes. The quality of "second" nature (reconstructed, adapted by humans to their own interests) is synthetic. It is

represented by a double helix formed by the natural attributes of the material (possibly in human relationships, indirectly expressed knowledge) and the qualitative characteristics of human activity—knowledge, emotions, will, value orientation, and skill. Ultimately, the quality of the product, as opposed to the product itself, embodies the quality of the individual. The individual is alienated through quality, and therefore, in principle, alienation is natural and does not oppress the individual. The negative consequence of alienation is caused by the disproportionate compensation for lost activity energy. Upon discovering a poor-quality product, a hidden manufacturing defect, or a deceptive seller, a normal buyer becomes upset, primarily because of -their own poor decision. Other losses in the transaction are most often compensated. A sense of the imperfection of one's own taste and knowledge remains.

The quality of everything created by activity encompasses the properties of activity, both practical and spiritual, in an objectified (objective or functional) form. This leads to the conclusion that it is necessary to shape and guide the development of the mass consciousness's capacity for qualitative evaluation of goods: certain experiences were established during the Soviet era and demonstrated their effectiveness: "circles," "schools," and "universities," including those initiated by television and radio. The place for systematic education of the mass consumer, professional assistance in developing a culture of qualitative selectivity, is today overwhelmed by aggressive advertising, the quality of which is uncontrolled or disproportionate to the scale of deception. Who should be the primary educator? The manufacturer, and only the manufacturer, for only they, according to the logic of developing understanding, should fully understand what quality is. Undertaking production of a product without understanding the specific quality of a given item means professional failure in the marketplace. Releasing a product with sham quality is punishable by law, albeit formally and post-factum. This is precisely what suppliers of pseudo-quality goods are hoping for. To be fair, let's say: true creators of quality products will remain pariahs in our market as long as law enforcement officials are confident of impunity for corrupt practices. Nevertheless, we must move forward. History, albeit ugly, -is moving toward order.

WTO accession hasn't increased our supply of quality products, nor has it lowered their prices. The real prospect lies in the creation of a unified economic space within the Customs Union. This will create cross-checking of quality, weakening the influence of corrupt national forces on the market. As for the potential for increased interethnic criminal activity, the danger exists, but the different organizational conditions and intercriminal competition should slow the degradation of the market—the main obstacle to

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the development of high-quality national goods. The market itself, whatever its nature, will expand, and access procedures will be simplified.

Let's be honest: the problem of quality remains theoretically one-sided, which is hardly noticeable because there is no proper organization for the production and marketing of high-quality products. Current practice is satisfied with this degree of certainty in quality theory. Quality management theory has been simplified to the concept of monitoring the conditions of high-quality production. Meanwhile, there is no systematic understanding of what constitutes product quality. Production is driven by the market. Speculators and intermediaries rule the market. The state strives to minimize its economic function before collecting taxes. -There is no real effort to impart a civilized form of "purchase and sale" to the market based on the principles of genuine freedom of competition. Oversight of essential quality indicators is limited to the point of being practically useless. The market dictates order to local and regional governments. A store director once ran the defense department. The culture of the producer and consumer is of little interest to anyone, and they are of no concern. Yet external order begins with internal order, with an awareness of the "political moment" conditioned by the economic situation.

Historically, the understanding of quality and the concreteness of its reality represented in a product reflect the economic and cultural development of society. During the era of guild production, quality was determined by the conservatism of manufacturing techniques, but even then, municipal authorities strictly monitored the quality of products, as well as the capabilities of potential producers; official regulations, approved by city or national authorities, were in effect. Agricultural products were controlled by consumers themselves.

The Industrial Revolution simplified the production process and created the conditions for mass production. Adequate quality control measures were required. As the social architecture became more equal and a wider range of goods became more accessible, notions of quality shifted toward its qualitative component. At the same time, the possibility of falsifying quality arose. From there, both de -facto and de -jure, it was only a step to substituting brand qualities. Going beyond the limits of this measure opens the door to legal violations and moral crises, even to the point of lawlessness.

Were the trends in the interpretation of quality and attitudes toward quality that emerged in the economy of mass production inevitable? No, they were generated by the new nature of production, reflected this nature, and to a certain extent constituted an objective reflection. However, beyond the object reflected by consciousness, there is a perspective of reflection determined by the reflecting subject's

position of consciousness, their interests as a participant in processes occurring in objective reality.

Objective reality itself, by definition, is located outside and independent of consciousness. Its reflection is subjectivized, which, in general, seems consistent with reflection theory. However, it also allows, in particular, for subjective distortion—involuntary, due to misunderstanding, and conscious, for the purpose of gaining a temporary advantage. Competition is always a struggle, but unfortunately, the struggle is not always conducted according to the rules.

Quality has been and remains a subject of manipulation in the interests of those who control the market. Consensus on quality among creator, manufacturer, seller, and consumer is the sweetest fairy tale. Agreement is achieved between creator, consumer, and producer. This "trinity" embodies the subjective mechanism for resolving the problem of alienation. The creator—the product's creator—finds satisfaction in production and consumption. They realize their human potential in them. The producer is interested in a stable relationship with the creator and consumer. The consumer is satisfied with quality and a reasonable price. "Promotions" and "sales" do not confuse or deceive them.

The seller stands in the way of consensus. They are the party in the relationship who, essentially, has nothing to do with the quality of the product, yet they are the key figure in the market economy. We buy everything we need from them. They are a monopolist and, as such, dictate the terms of the relationship through price and profit margins. In Russia, not a single brand-name light industry enterprise has emerged in the past twenty years; on the contrary, a host of brand-name companies have emerged. Retail aisles are proliferating, yet consumers are being assured that their production is unprofitable. The concept of "sales quality" is replacing the culture of retail organization. This culture is measured by product selection, price and availability, high-quality consulting, the absence of lines, compliance with sanitary and -hygienic standards, the appearance and behavior of staff, and customer service. "Retail quality" is determined by the proportionality of price and product quality, the conformity of the product to its certification, and the demonstration of the product. The seller's profit should not exceed the manufacturer's profit. Both countries should not expect increased purchasing activity solely through rising consumer wages, but rather create the most favorable conditions for consumers (without colluding with yet another market predator – banks). Only in Russia, and only liberal marketeers, take every opportunity to recall how poor things were for the people before the advent of true democracy – starving, living in rags, living in who knows where and how. Monitoring quality of life – through quality consumption opportunities – is appropriate within the

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current timeframe. There is only one criterion: is the consumer basket growing, and how is it growing? Inflation is a necessary, but not sufficient, indicator of quality of life. The government has set lower inflation as its primary benchmark. This indicator is truly socially -and economically significant, testifying to market culture and, indirectly, to the state of production. The downside of this indicator is its lack of quality. Quality of life is determined by the quantity of goods consumed in monetary terms. The qualitative composition remains constant, and quality can only be speculated about, as quality dilutes quality. The quality of shoes, clothing, cereals, fish, vegetables, and fruits within a common name varies significantly. The potential for quality manipulation is significant. The key to understanding quality is not the name, but the systemic characteristics of the product, reflecting the assortment, its changes, and the dynamics of the proportional representation of the constituent goods. Quality represents a system of essential properties of a product—this is trivial and well-known, and it is actively exploited. Substituting properties or their systematic nature in a quality product. Essential properties are those that are not simply inherent to the product; they determine its functionality. Such properties are typically revealed during the product's intended operation; they are hidden from the untrained eye of the consumer. In its pure form, the market is an intermediary and should have no interest in product quality. The purpose of the market in the theory of commodity production organization is to organize exchange between producer and consumer. Market development stimulates the expansion of production in the interests of the consumer within the limits of the market's infrastructural status.

The monopolization of production led to the accumulation of financial capital, its autonomy, and market control. As a result, the market has transformed from an intermediary into a key player, attempting to replace its indicator function—demonstrating demand for goods—with the role of organizer of economic activity as a whole, which distorts the economic system. The commodity economy was created by the production of goods and the demand for mass production. The system-forming factor here is the production of goods as products necessary for consumption by others, that is, the process of alienation of consumption. Under natural production, product quality was hardly a pressing issue. Quality was "dissolved" in the conservatism of technology and technology, the traditional nature of product ranges. The consumer raised the issue of quality when he gained the opportunity to compare products at fairs. The market, which grew out of fair gatherings, gradually enriched its representative status with advertising, taking control of producer-consumer relations. The levers of control are financial policy, and the main directions are two: influencing quantity and quality.

Product quality became relevant in commodity production. It became clear that the understanding of quality involved both sensory and rational thinking (the latter in the form of calculation). The subjective factor was objectified and fetishized. The market was unable to directly influence the objective properties of a product (through its own mechanisms), but it could very well objectify subjective perceptions. Thus, quality manipulation was first included in the functions of the market, then became an element of economic policy.

A sound and healthy economic policy is called upon to work on improving quality in two interrelated directions: technical -Technologically, with a robust legal framework, and socioculturally, to provide comprehensive support for the development of conditions for the subjective perception of quality and to block the negative impact of advertising, which has long been a hallmark of market speculation on the importance of quality to buyers. Choice and affordability are no basis for the certainty of a quality purchase. In the current market, price and quality are divorced even at auctions renowned for their meticulous organizational culture. Buyers are being turned into experts, and this market grimace isn't so much bad as it is illogical. The market forces consumers to develop as individuals. To avoid being dupes, we involuntarily strive to learn more about the subject of interest, raising our "buyer qualifications." The term isn't new; journalists use it, but for them it's a passing phrase, a verbal gimmick. For us, however, it's no longer a new combination of commonplace words, but a crucial concept, without which modern quality theory lacks a systemic, holistic form.

"Buyer qualifications" include, along with certain knowledge needed to locate a store, the price range of a product, and require basic information about the manufacturer, the product's quality attributes, the manufacturer's market reputation, the company's traditions, and the scale of its operations. In today's consumer market, a naive buyer risks becoming a victim not only of deception but also of their own carelessness, and therefore without any -right to compensation.

Consumer protection in Russia is nominal. In reality, one must adhere to the famous maxim: "A drowning man (or "buyer") must save himself (read: "buyer")." Improving "buyer qualifications," if desired, is a mutually beneficial undertaking for the state, activating the national cultural heritage and patriotic sentiment of the mass consumer. However, there is another approach, tried and tested under Mao in China: "the worse, the better." Imported consumer goods—not Chinese ones—were a hit in our country in the 1980s -and 1990s -! The product selection, packaging, and external appearance were impressive. And the result? Ten years later, the manufacturer is bringing back Soviet brands, naturally without effective oversight, and not of Soviet quality.

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We know how to make high-quality products and are fully capable of reclaiming "our" market. The issue isn't even price; the problem is the loss of control over the consumer market (and not only consumer market, judging by the failures in rocket technology, aircraft operation, etc.). They tell us: economic measures are needed. True, but that's only half the truth. If they are needed, then accept them. The government must exercise more than just nominal power. It's time to understand that economics has always been politics, and economic theory, political economy.

Economic movement is self-movement, but it does not occur in a vacuum. The economy is the foundation of social movement. Society provides the conditions for economic movement, and the state has the right to vigorously engage in the mechanisms of economic self-movement, guiding economic development in the interests of society.

It's astonishing. When it comes to the future of technological progress, futurologists of all stripes lament that the autonomous movement of technology will lead to robots dominating humans, and that it's better not to interfere with economic development. For whom is this better? The obvious conclusion is: not disrupting the economy's self-propelled movement is in the interests of those who privatized the economy and who employ "border guards" who forbid political control of economic processes.

None of the convertible currencies are backed by a high-quality commodity equivalent, and the "free" movement of currency continues under the guise of politics. Financial self-regulation creates favorable conditions for chaos in the consumer market. The state weakly protects the legitimate interests of domestic producers, even when the goods are the product of international integration. There is no political aggressiveness; politics drags along behind the economy instead of anticipating its development based on objective socio-economic trends. The time for political action—not decisions—is most favorable. The intoxication of the 1990s and 2000s seems to be waning. Awareness of the qualitative advantages of many Soviet products in the light and food industries is returning. A revival in such activity is observed, which could stimulate agricultural production in rural areas. Mistrust of consumer imports is growing, in part due to their mass production in China. Migration flows are stabilizing.

The harsh assessment of the socio-economic situation and the direct reference to government responsibility for failing to implement the 2024 presidential instructions in Vladimir Putin's Address are associated with a determination to "tighten the screws" to ensure progress remains on track. The clear intensification of interethnic economic relations within the Customs Union and the reset of strategic relations with a focus on China, India, Iran, and Latin America are also evident. The real opportunity for

full-scale cooperation with Egypt, Syria, and Iran—key states in the Middle East and northern Africa—all of this represents a unique international opportunity to restore balance in the domestic consumer goods market.

Domestic producers need a "coherent" economic policy. By "coherent," they mean clarity, consistency, and guaranteed support that helps thwart the arbitrary exercise of administrative authority and law enforcement. Everyone is responsible for quality—both those who produce and those tasked with upholding producers' rights. The Customs Union has given national goods a green light to enter the markets of the member states. This has created balanced, real market competition, allowing for the evaluation of genuine, rather than advertised, quality. Incidentally, a fascinating research topic is "real quality versus 'advertised quality,' that is, quality created by advertising."

It's equally relevant to analyze the issue of quality within the framework of national mentality and interethnic integration. Integration is being deliberately replaced by globalization, despite the obvious differences between these phenomena. Both trends are objective and characteristic of recent history.

Integration is the transnational interpenetration of various activities on a socio-economic, cultural, and -humanitarian scale. It can be transnational in scope, such as the Union State (Russia and Belarus); local, such as the Customs Union; or regional, such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the EEC. Globalization refers to the global scale of the phenomenon. Global problems include those that arose as a consequence of general, but not necessarily integrative, processes and require a consolidated solution.

Global problems, unlike those related to integration, are potentially relevant and have strategic implications. For example, how to protect life on Earth from large meteorites. When the timing of an event is delayed, but the event itself is extremely urgent, speculators, including financial oligarchs, rush into the resulting gap, trying to profit from the uncertainty. Quality, however, is directly related to integration.

Let's examine the problem of "consumer product quality" within the "national" and "international" coordinate system. First, we must answer the question: can integration displace the national component of quality?

Integration processes are built on standardization and unified metrological characteristics of production, which correspond to objective reality. Technological progress is based on science, and scientific knowledge is imperative in terms of normativeness. However, the existence of the common is not self-sufficient. General requirements are realized through specific developments determined by the specific

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circumstances of action. In other words, no matter how standardized the production of a product, its unique production conditions will still manifest themselves.

The specificity of conditions—regional and national—is inherent in the raw materials, climate, traditions, and the culture of consciousness of the producers. And in all of this lies the power of production, determining the nuances of product quality that generate particular consumer interest. Tea is grown throughout the world today, but the uniqueness of Sri Lanka's tea plantations and the national attitude toward tea have ensured the leading position of the quality of Ceylon's product. The same can be said of Kenyan coffee, Bulgarian and Chilean peppers, French cognacs and champagne, Ukrainian lard, Bavarian and Dutch beer, Scotch whiskey, Russian linen, Egyptian cotton, Chinese silk, Argentine leather, Greek olive oil, and much more. The specificity of the environment should be cherished, and preferences for its reproduction should be ensured. The fundamental treaties regulating relations within the United Europe clearly stipulate the priority of national traditions.

The Customs Union consolidates the international division of labor established in the 20th century, facilitates the expression of the objective and subjective aspects of production development, and mutually enriches the market by facilitating producers' access. But all this is theory. Theory develops into sound practice not only because it is correct. Action transforms theory into practice, and to achieve the desired result, action must be systematic and consistent.

Interest in product quality, theoretically, shouldn't begin in production. Its starting point is in a normalized market, or more precisely, at the meeting between producer and buyer. A normal market is an indicator of product quality. Demand drives the production chain, but not the spontaneous demand of buyers abandoned to their fate. Demand is a state of mind determined by purchasing power, but it can't be reduced solely to the amount of money available, especially when lending is heavily encouraged by banks. Demand left to the mercy of intermediaries, lobbyists, and speculators is a fatal disease for Russia's national producers. Demand must be controlled and shaped, and buyers must be educated. Educating consumers is costly. But it's worth it, considering the future. Market liberalism corresponded to the rise of the first-type mass production economy, oriented toward ensuring free access and choice of goods. Such production perceives the consumer as an abstract subject in the "producer-seller-buyer" relationship. The seller is relegated to the role of an active intermediary, but nothing more. It culturally provides a meeting place for producer and consumer. The system itself must be functionally active, which presupposes not the

presence of its constituent components, but their participation. The perfection of a system is not determined by aesthetics—a design characteristic. It manifests itself in the maximum activation of the potential of the system of relations for which it functions. The perfection of a system's design lies in the ultimate realization of the potential of the relations that create systemicity. The buyer is perfect as a subject of systemic interaction through their purchasing preparation. They are perfect not by the size of their purchasing power. Their participation is determined by their knowledge of the commodity-economic situation. The consumer is not an object of the actions of the seller and producer. The consumer is a market participant, and it is in their interests (and those of other participants as well) to be informed not by the advertising community, but by professional sources. Then counterfeit goods and "suckers" will cease to populate the market. Product quality begins in the consumer's mind.

Imposing a concept of quality is bad for all legitimate economic actors. It must be fostered by everyone: the manufacturer, the seller, the buyer themselves, and civil society institutions, if the state is passive.

The transition to the second type of mass production—a "smart," "thrifty" economy—activates systemic relationships. The market's function appears in a new light. Together with the manufacturer, the retailer is guided by an understanding of consumer tastes. Only one, albeit not an easy, step remains to perfect the system: the entire world must work together to shape a consumer culture.

Accusing the current generation of a consumerist attitude toward life isn't entirely fair. Consumption is the ultimate goal of production. The problem lies in the lack of a mass consumer culture—a problem of truly sociocultural proportions. This is another consequence of the financing of cultural progress. Why does one government replace another, yet culture remains the last in line for political relevance? It's time to understand that science isn't the only thing that has become a direct productive force. Culture is also a factor in the development of production, a multifaceted and highly effective factor at that.

Yeltsin and Gaidar's reforms were bound to destroy mechanical engineering and light industry first and foremost. Yeltsin wasn't known for his theoretical training. Gaidar, however, must have clearly recognized that most of our achievements in these sectors—not counting the military-industrial complex and space technology—were "homegrown" successes. Here, we were clearly lagging behind our competitors, with whom the democrats were aiming for a common market.

We didn't have what the Poles or the Chinese had. Polish interests were actively lobbied in Europe, the United States, and Canada, and the scale of Polish reforms was incomparable to Russia's. In China, after

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the Cultural Revolution, it was possible to minimize wage costs for the bulk of the working population. Moreover, Chinese leaders were clearly more intelligent, honest, and patriotic. They were guided by Deng Xiaoping's ideas about the parallel development of socialist achievements and economic reconstruction, essentially modernizing Lenin's NEP plan. The experience of China's growing industrial and financial might in the following decades proved that it was not socialism that was economically weak, but those who managed socialist construction.

Reforms are rarely fruitful, but they are nonetheless important. Effective reforms, that is, scientifically grounded reforms, cannot be lasting. They are effective precisely because of their time limit. Time judges reforms and reformers. Pseudo-reforms, as a rule, take on a permanent form, accumulating references to global economic conditions, climate anomalies, and the like. This is precisely what happened in our country. However, misfortunes never come alone. The reformers had to explain to the people why they were testing their patience. The tactic they chose was also archaic—to shift the blame from the sick to the healthy.

Let's examine some myths related, in one way or another, to the present and future of the domestic light industry. It's important to analyze these myths in the professional -education process.

Let's start with what's being talked about everywhere: the idea that we're dependent on oil and gas, coal, timber, and minerals. Indeed, our revenues come from raw materials, accounting for almost 50 percent of our income. This is a frankly undesirable figure. Nevertheless, it would be possible to build a perfect economy, as Norway, the Emirates, and Kuwait have done. The crux of the problem isn't that Russia has become dependent on its natural resources, but rather how the income is used. China is developing manufacturing, particularly transportation, construction, and light industry. In Russia, however, only recently has attention been paid to those who provide shoes, clothing, and textiles for Russians. It turns out that this "unpromising" industry is responsive. The total market size for clothing, footwear, and accessories was 2.8 trillion rubles in 2024, and last year it exceeded 3 trillion. And yet, these are only -the first steps. Another common myth concerns the inability to compete with similar production in China. There's no denying that low wages give the Chinese a head start in the cost war. However, the Chinese will be forced to raise wages; their other organizational costs have already been optimized; the pursuit of quantity is accompanied by a loss of quality in Chinese goods; and hopes for European branded orders are bound to diminish due to crisis-related volatility and declining foreign investment. Europe and the US need China, but they need a China that works for them. The Chinese certainly think differently. Conflicts will mount as

China gains strength. No one except the Chinese wants to develop China into a global leader. China's economic growth rate has slowed.

Another factor hindering the development of consumer goods production in China is its distance from the consumer. "A heifer is cheap overseas, but the shipping is expensive." Transportation services are currently growing at an accelerated rate, as high energy prices show no signs of abating in the foreseeable future. When the Americans artificially devalued oil to undermine the Soviet economy, they hardly imagined their policy would boost production in China so much. The Chinese skillfully exploited the struggle between the superpowers. And the 1980s -, 1990s -, and 2000s -passed. With them, the -global political and economic situation changed.

For -a time, cheap labor will be found in China's neighboring countries of Southeast -Asia—Cambodia, the Philippines, Malaysia, Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, and Indonesia—but they lack the political stability China offers to guarantee the security of capital investments. Furthermore, these countries are maritime nations, and rail and road connections are hampered by underdeveloped railways and their regional scale. Sea routes are unsafe. 21st-century pirates around Africa are acting like -masters of the trade. They understand the futility of trying to escort all "merchants"; the bandits have nothing to lose, and their lives are unimportant. Risk excites them. Let's add to this discussion a thesis that rarely comes to light:

- low qualification of the workforce in the region.

Maintaining the quality of complex products can be achieved through extreme mechanization and automation. This creates a vicious circle, as highly skilled engineers and technicians are needed. They are accustomed to a certain way of life and decent compensation for their highly sought-after work. Costs have risen and are beginning to disappoint investors. Above all, they are frustrated by the futile logic of continuing along the same path. It's never easy to change course, but it's necessary. Changing realities require changes in business --planning. Experts agree that it's possible for Russian manufacturers to position themselves between European firms and Chinese consumer goods, the demand for which is forced. Statistics confirm this: Russians reduced their spending in this market sector in the second half of 2025. We are capable of competing with the Turks and Eastern Europeans, who have noticeably declined in the United Europe.

There is a scientific theory of management that embodies the results of reflection on management experience. Like any theory, it is not a manager's working tool. In it, the manager seeks directions and possible methods of action. Similarly, in a haute couture show, a businessman, versed in fashion, economics, and public sentiment—the market

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barometer—attempts to grasp significant ideas. Theory works only as an adapted application to the specificity of the managed object. Those who lack such specificity will be saved only by a command-based management approach, which subordinates management theory to production reality.

A "pure" manager is a hostage to finance. For him, production is a combination of cash flows, not the organization of human reproduction within the framework of national development. He is detached from the task at hand and an outsider, usually within the team—an appointed commander from a "parallel" enterprise.

The 21st-century history of top -managers clearly demonstrates their significance. All top companies are the first to show signs of crisis and the last to recover, despite government support. These companies are simply "nationally significant," the face of the state. The state has a vested interest in ensuring that their face doesn't wrinkle prematurely. Most of these "VIPs -" among managers capitalize on this.

Yudashkin, who was carrying out a government contract to develop and manufacture uniforms for the Armed Forces, was rightly outraged by the way his designs and instructions were used by a group of "clean" managers led by Serdyukov, who moved the production to China and changed the technical specifications.

A "pure" manager is always drawn to finance, not production. He needs quick returns. Quick returns are driven by the market. Real production doesn't leap and bound; it moves smoothly.

The normal development of production requires, along with smart decisions, strict control over the strict implementation of regulations. Everyone knows at what point and how political initiatives are stalled. It is also clear that managing the machinery of governance—officials at all levels—is the government's prerogative. It is precisely in how it manages its managers that -we should apparently look for the criterion of the quality of government performance. And this mission is called very simply: political will. Without a proper—reasonable—measure of will, there will be no order.

Finance Ministry officials love to hide behind figures, presenting them in a way that suits their own purposes. Figures, especially large ones, impress the uninitiated. Hiding the state of affairs behind them is convenient and profitable—it allows them to appear victorious in the public eye.

The government has developed and adopted the "Strategy for the Development of Light Industry in Russia through 2035." Within the seven-year period, the total share of domestic light industry goods in the domestic market should equal total imports. The plan is to achieve a strategic turning point in the interests of domestic producers.

The market is a different kind of war, unlike the usual, akin to a "cold war." Here, it's impossible to push the enemy to their absolute annihilation. The pike in the lake keeps the other inhabitants from stagnating, forcing them to move in real time and space. In the early 1990s, -tens of millions of Russians gazed longingly at the rich selection of foreign products. Twenty years later, disillusioned Russians are looking for something -domestically produced, realizing that true quality cannot be endlessly varied.

The pursuit of a wide range of products has little in common with the normal interests of the mass consumer. There's no such thing as too much of a good thing, because it can't exist. Beyond the limits of the present, objectively given quality gives way to advertising. "Similar" -is a mathematical concept, formalizing the quality of objects. In reality, "similar" usually replaces genuine quality. Why? Because similarity negates the quality of a product.

Quality is synonymous with originality, with itself. Wine from the same producer, made according to a centuries-old recipe, varies in price depending on the vintage. A wide range of wines is justified when it offers a variety of original qualities and quality states.

By displacing imports from the market, we must be prepared to expand the quality of our own products. Our socialist experience here is limited and must be expanded by all available means. Specifically, it is proposed to increase the share of innovative products in the overall market to 46 percent.

Progress drives forward, but there's little point in rushing. The public consciousness has its own laws. It's conservative. Managers don't make the economy smart; it will become smart when it aligns with sustainable public demand. We shouldn't chase innovations; we should -explore common sense in the public consciousness.

The Chinese don't like changes in policy. Russians fear changes in product selection. Comparing the advertised benefits of the latest products with the genuine materials and properties of rather forgotten items, they understand the trajectory of quality: it will be worse and more expensive. The 1990s -taught -us something; at least the euphoria of product selection has passed. Consumers are naturally drawn to the new, but experienced consumers are selective about innovation, matching the variety on display to their tastes, honed by their consumption experience. They are seasoned veterans, and you can't fool them with chaff.

A tripling of exports over the planned period, reaching -\$3.5 billion, is a very optimistic commitment. Therefore, such an unusual statistical spread of values. As for the goal of reducing shadow production and illegal imports by 10 percent, everything seems realistic and reflects the demands of lobbyists. The logic is interesting: the foreign market -is a solvable problem for us, but -we are unable to significantly change what's happening

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within our own borders. Officials are reluctant to crack down on illegal immigrants. The money circulating in shadow businesses is simply too big to be earned through exports. Incidentally, our focus in light industry, as of the mid-2020s -, is not on developing foreign markets, but on building our own market. Otherwise, the economic transition from socialism to capitalism will drag on for a long time, and our capitalism will resemble that of early 19th-century Europe.

Global economic experts are speculating about the beginning of a mass capital exodus from China. More caution is warranted when assessing statistical data. Global financial flows, like capricious rivers, overflow unpredictably, with investments flowing in different directions and waves. Even a significant period of observation is insufficient grounds for a definitive conclusion. In any case, China will continue to expand its production. The outflow of funds and the curtailment of production will not frighten them. China has recently matured, developing according to Mao's formula of "self-reliance." We can establish ourselves in the Chinese market by establishing joint ventures. The Chinese will support such an initiative. It is easier to promote exports to neighboring countries by offering cheaper, high-quality goods at lower prices. In the young countries associated with the European Community, the population has felt the price pressure and is learning to count the euro.

Fortunately, humanity hasn't ceased to be amazed. Curiosity draws us to the new and unusual; we desire what's good, what's useful, what's beautiful, and what's affordable. The simple availability of a product remains the purchasing criterion in the poorest corners of the world, among populations living below the poverty line. Everyone else has been taught by the "variety" of cheap goods, manufactured in unknown places and ways.

The flashy appearance and annoying advertising assuring the buyer of their beauty draw the buyer back to a recent past that ultimately resulted in complete disappointment and a loss of money. Even in the 1980s, the Chinese authorities -punished counterfeit goods, including execution, rightly believing that profiteering from national prestige undermined the country's status as a power. It's not our place to investigate the true motives behind the government's liberalization of consumer goods production, but it's absolutely clear that by the beginning of the third millennium, China's reputation as a country that once produced high-quality mass-market goods had reached critical levels.

History is the best teacher. By learning from historical experience and adjusting our activities in real time, much can be achieved. Control over product quality must never be lost; nothing can justify such a policy. Mass production and diversity can be combined with quality. A novel experience is essential

– from the appearance, material, and capabilities of the product.

One should not be deceived by the favorable prospects for developing new markets and strengthening positions in existing ones. Prerequisites are merely real possibilities. Opportunities "await" the activity that transforms them into actual reality. Unfortunately, activity not only transforms one level of reality into another. It intersects with various interests. It is precisely this divergence of interests that regulates movement toward an economic goal.

Competition for foreign markets isn't limited by external conflicts between actors and economic interests. Economic policy is characterized by "fifth columns," representing and vigorously defending the goals of their opponents. They process the funds spent on their actions. This is global practice, which is why it's so important to combine good intentions with willpower and practical energy. Only the strongest survive. The strongest in the struggle for market share are those who skillfully exploit the current situation and spare no expense in promoting their products, mindful of the price paid by the miser.

Much, as international experience shows, is determined by political will. The state operates within the framework of international relations, but it always has legal levers to control economic processes. State defense procurement has allowed the share of domestic light industry output to increase to 70 percent, leaving those who logically ask: why not 100 percent? The question is not rhetorical.

Mass production facilitates technological progress, reduces unemployment in disadvantaged regions, and taps into the reserves of vocational training. If production capacity was insufficient, there was no need to rush the transition.

First, we need to prepare production. -It's not wartime. As it is, a third of production has been transferred to competitors, complicating the industry's development. The leap from the previous 30 percent to the new 70 percent is undoubtedly a step in the right direction, but there's no consistency in the progress, as feeding a competitor and hoping for accelerated market penetration is illogical.

The market is a complex and heterogeneous system. The fundamental factor in the market is the conflicting interests of sellers and buyers. One seeks to sell a product and make a profit, the other to buy and save money. Resolving this conflict of interests is based on matching price and quality.

The buyer's journey, like in a fairy tale, is beset with obstacles. They must cast off the spell of advertising and understand the signs of quality, as the market allows for virtually unlimited deception, such as imitation quality. They must also be aware of real prices (considering that goods are cheaper at the market than in boutiques and supermarkets—lower costs, illegal delivery, etc.). The buyer is saved by the art of choosing and thinking within the bounds of

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"common sense." Common sense is a reliable "pilot" in navigating the rapids and shallows of the market, but even it is susceptible to temptation when something unusual is offered that evokes meaningful associations.

Linen is a traditional Russian export. Products made from linen, or with added linen, are popular. They are hygienic, environmentally friendly, and pleasant to the touch. Linen fabric is technologically advanced, aesthetically pleasing, requires delicate handling, and is suitable for all seasons.

Linen and linen fabric production plummeted -due to the agricultural depression during the "fateful" reforms. Farmers need incentives. Flax is labor-intensive to grow and process. Specialized equipment is essential. By creating the right technical conditions and providing economic incentives, businesses can quickly get going. Russian craftsmen have hit upon the idea of combining flax with nettle. Nettle needs no advertising. Its properties rival those of flax. Moreover, it has a reputation as a powerful and long-lasting antibacterial agent, a circulatory stimulant, and a neurostimulator. Products made from this blended fabric were a hit at Russian fairs! After all, this new product was brought from the non-Black Earth region of Western Russia. There's no doubt that Western consumers will be interested in these new products. They will also be in demand in the East.

Our government is planning to establish textile clusters in several regions. It will likely also take into account the agricultural characteristics of the locations where the promised clusters will be established. Material-intensive production, organized on a large scale, must be as close as possible to the raw material base, especially in the context of rapidly rising transportation tariffs. Separating the manufacturer of the final product from the production of the necessary raw materials places a double burden on both the manufacturer and the retailer. Ultimately, the consumer suffers at retail, which, during economic instability, boomerangs back into production. Why are Western countries emerging from crises and depressions more easily than ours? The answer lies in the market. Over three centuries of capitalism, a properly organized market automatically responds to declining purchasing power. In difficult economic times, businessmen try to extract consumer funds by reducing the price burden on their wallets. The practice of eliminating excess inventory to maintain prices is a thing of the past. The market stimulates mass consumer access to products through various promotions. Manufacturers are inventing ways to make the old cheaply new. The view of quality at such times becomes simplified and loses its relevance until the next economic recovery.

We have nothing like this in our market. The question inevitably arises: should we also prepare ourselves for a three-hundred-year wait, or is there another path? For those who join the movement as it

unfolds, history offers a chance to significantly accelerate. We must mobilize around a goal. -Political will is required, too. Self-propelled economic development becomes the primary mechanism at the stage of a developed economy and a properly attuned national consciousness.

Public consciousness needs a clear, appealing goal and the confidence that this goal is shared and the fruits will be fairly divided. We already built one social system, but democratic reforms have ruined us. The question: who is to blame? has ceased to be asked. The question remains: what to do? This is an eternal question, and a normal person always seeks an answer to it, turning to social institutions and politicians who manage social development.

Without a vigorous agricultural policy, Russian light industry will not achieve its strategic objectives. Increasing agricultural production without scientific support in the 21st century is unthinkable. This process is complicated by the reform of Russian science, which is also necessary. Therefore, we can only hope that the costs will not be exorbitant and the time available will not be limitless. It is also important not to lose positive experience amid the inevitable chaos and financial shortages.

The collapse of the USSR deprived Russia of its cotton base and left it dependent on capricious suppliers with national ambitions. But it turned out the country hadn't lost the ability to "produce its own Newtons." Scientists and plant breeders countered the politicians with their cutting-edge developments. A fast-growing cotton variety, "AC -1," was developed, distinguished by its greater drought resistance than global standards. In 2012, the first cotton harvest was harvested in the Astrakhan region, processed, and produced into high-quality cotton fabric.

Logic dictates that the task of creating a domestic raw materials base for the development of light industry should be a priority. Technical and technological equipment and personnel training must be implemented within this context. Naturally, all of these actions are interconnected. This base will need to be built and improved by specialists; without modern equipment and technology, it will be impossible to supply production with raw materials. Clusters will remain mere pipe dreams without a balanced system for building this economic sector, which some -have derisively called "light" industry. Light industry faces difficult times, but in Russia, "hardship" and "success" have always been in tandem. And we took a long time to harness, as Nikolai Gogol emphasized, which, incidentally, did not prevent us from saving Europe from fascism, helping Asia and Africa overthrow their colonial rulers, and building the world's second-largest economy in the space of half a century.

The historical development of the main types of footwear took place in direct connection with the natural socio- -economic conditions of their era, the

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aesthetic and moral demands of social life and the dominant artistic style in art.

Style in art is a historically established, relatively stable community of figurative means and techniques of artistic expression, conditioned by the unity of ideological content.

In a suit, the general stylistic direction is expressed in the basic forms and proportions, the way it is worn, the use of certain materials and their color combinations, the nature of the use of auxiliary materials, fittings, and jewelry.

Changes in the overall artistic style of an era are always associated with major ideological and social shifts. These shifts occur over a long historical period. But within *each style*, there exists a more fluid and short-lived phenomenon—*fashion*—that affects all areas of human activity.

The word "fashion" comes from the French "mode", which in turn goes back to the Latin "modus", which means measure, image, method.

According to V. Dahl, fashion is a temporary, changeable whim in everyday life, society, and clothing cuts and attire. Another common definition is that *fashion* is the short-term dominance of certain forms, linked to a person's constant need for variety and novelty in their surroundings. *Fashion* is particularly noticeable and active in clothing, which is subject to the most frequent changes in volumetric, planar, and linear forms.

Some fashion experts believe that the birth of fashion is difficult to pin down to any -specific period or event. Perhaps it's as uncertain as its end. But, on the other hand, the most important characteristic of fashion is its *inevitable changeability*. With the advent of a new fashion, shoes, like other items of clothing characteristic of the previous fashion, partially or significantly lose their aesthetic value, and with it, their monetary value. This fact has significant aesthetic and economic implications for manufacturers and consumers. Some are reluctant to buy, while others, experiencing a sharp decline in demand for these types of footwear at an inopportune time, were unable to introduce new, fashionable styles to the market in a timely manner to maintain high demand and their company's image as a trendsetter with a marketing department that monitors demand and makes timely, effective decisions. Unfortunately, manufacturers fail to understand that this fact—the loss of aesthetic value in the types of footwear offered to consumers—results from people's natural desire to update their wardrobes, which is associated with constantly changing needs (including aesthetic ones) and the general development of human society.

A company's operations without taking into account the current market demand today, or better yet, tomorrow, will inevitably lead to failure, because *fashion is both novelty and imitation*—not always new, but always unusual, with the expression of each consumer's individuality. One cannot but agree with

the statement of the renowned French artist -and designer Pierre Cardin on fashion: "Fashion is... renewal! A principle that nature has always followed! A tree sheds old leaves, a person sheds boring clothes and shoes. When things become familiar, people quickly tire of them. Fashion saves from tiresome uniformity. People want to please each other: being well-dressed and looking good is a natural need." A modern leader must possess that intuition, the ability to anticipate this emerging newness that is already in the air but has not yet taken shape. This skill requires learning, taking risks, surrounding oneself with talented fashion designers, trusting them, implementing their proposals and designs in small batches, testing them in demand, promoting the advantages of the offered footwear range, and cultivating good taste in the buyer and their desire to be well-dressed and look good. This doesn't happen automatically. This state of mind is shaped by the environment in which a person communicates, lives, creates, and desires to be recognized. Taste must be developed, but at the same time, each buyer, each member of society who considers themselves cultured, must have individual taste. Only then can *fashion fulfill its mission—to make each person an individual*. This is possible if people develop diverse personal tastes, if a society is created that respects the tastes of others without imposing its own, peacefully coexisting, and forming a society of intelligent, cultured individuals. Today, if not yesterday, every manager needs to reconsider their attitude toward what is happening at their enterprise in order to ensure the competitiveness and demand for the products manufactured at their enterprise.

Conclusion

This challenge is especially pressing for footwear companies, as Russian markets have been and will continue to be oversaturated with a variety of footwear products for the same purpose. Therefore, it's crucial to know precisely what the market will demand and how it should be implemented to ensure that your footwear range is chosen by customers, while withstanding the fierce competition that generates new offerings.

To achieve this, it's crucial to structure the product mix so that even if the same type of footwear is introduced to the market, it will vary significantly in price while still meeting standard requirements. Furthermore, both the company's manager and the -fashion designer must, when choosing a product mix, recognize that each *fashion* corresponds to a specific time, but it also has a certain repeatability, with appropriate adjustments for a different, modern era. Jean Cocteau famously said, "Take fashion seriously, because it dies so young." In fashion, more than in any other field, one must be willing to let go of a discovery, even a successful one, for the sake of the new. What's interesting is that you can bring great-

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grandmother's shoes to market a second time, and sometimes even a third time throughout a person's life. They "look good," they're durable. But this is impossible with yesterday's fashion, and this is confirmed by the entire history of shoe production, since *in fashion, yesterday's is unbearable, the day before yesterday 's is possible*. Here, a mechanism ingrained in our cultural consciousness comes into

play: memory revives the past, it becomes endearing and permeates modern footwear with a special note, creating a kind of anchor in the flow of changing impressions. *It's like breathing. It's impossible to take a breath and then stand still; a smooth, constant, well-established rhythm of inhalation and exhalation is Life.*

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