

UNIVERSITY OF TARTU  
Faculty of Social Sciences  
School of Economics and Business Administration

Denys Pisariev

MOTIVATION DRIVERS AT DIFFERENT CAREER STAGES: EVIDENCE FROM  
UKRAINIAN FAST-MOVING CONSUMER GOODS COMPANIES

Bachelor thesis

Supervisor: Associate Professor Anne Reino

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I have written this Bachelor Thesis independently. Any ideas or data taken from other authors or other sources have been fully referenced.

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## Introduction

At the heart of every successful organization lies its most valuable asset: a motivated workforce that drives productivity, job satisfaction and employee retention. Highly motivated employees not only achieve greater results but also contribute to a positive work environment and improves business outcomes. (Jiang et al., 2012) Although happiness and motivation are not the same thing, they are connected, because happier employees are more likely to be engaged in work process. Recent research about employee happiness highlights that happier employees demonstrate a 13% increase in productivity, showing its connection with employee performance (Bellet et al., 2023). However, motivation is not static, it evolves over time, shaped by individual career stages, organizational environments, personal goals and values, health, age, culture and other factors (Kooij et al., 2011). The dynamic nature of motivation requires organizations to develop tailored strategies that adapt to shifting needs of employees throughout their career paths.

Existing studies offer insights into the nature of work motivation, but they often ignore its dynamic evolution, forgetting about age, career stages, external circumstances and other factors. This paper will primarily focus on career stages and their influence on motivation. Important to mention that in this study the term career refers to an individual's development within a specific industry. This approach states that while some employees may move between different companies within the same industry, their career development is shaped by overall industry opportunities and their personal achievements in that industry. The study does not consider career changes between unrelated industries or starting a career from the beginning in another industry. It only examines how motivators evolve as employees advance in their chosen field of work.

The fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) industry refers to companies that produce and sell products with a high turnover rate. Common examples include food, snacks, personal care items, detergents etc. From employee perspective, such companies are characterized as labor-intensive, high-competitive, and stressful work environment (Iqbal & Faisal, 2023; Binti Mohd Said et al., 2024). In such businesses, understanding and maintaining employee engagement is essential. FMCG companies operate in a high-pressure atmosphere defined by rapid decision-making and a constant need for innovation and efficiency increases (Iqbal & Faisal, 2023). These problems require strategies for motivation that engage employees in the short term while also maintaining their commitment and well-being in the long run. As Kooij et al. (2011) state, work motivation changes with age and professional growth, highlighting the need for career-stage-specific HR approaches. Despite its significance, not much study

has focused on how motivation drivers transform throughout various career stages within FMCG companies, resulting in a considerable gap.

Addressing these gaps about interaction between motivators and career stages is essential for understanding how to synchronize HR strategies with the changing needs of employees as they evolve through different stages of their careers. Nicholson (1984) states that career changes often lead to shifts in priorities and motivational drivers, and as Iqbal & Faisal (2023) underline, the unique challenges of the FMCG sector complicate these issues. These reasons require a careful balance of different motivators from managers. Despite this, the literature offers minimal guidance on how specifically FMCG companies can apply motivational tactics made for specific stages, leaving HR managers to navigate these challenges with insufficient empirical evidence. The decision to conduct the study on Ukrainian FMCG companies comes from unique economic and external challenges, including instability of labor market, shortages of labor, and insufficient safety due to war in Ukraine (Ukraine LMP, 2025). Due to the obvious circumstances of the war, motivation studies have been taken a back seat, so this study addresses existing gap in research.

The aim of this research is to find out major intrinsic and extrinsic employee's motivators at early, mid and late career stages. More specifically, in the empirical part, this study examines how value of extrinsic and intrinsic motivators change between career stages in Ukrainian FMCG companies and how motivation strategies can be adapted to this concrete environment.

Research tasks are as follows:

- To explore concepts career, career stages, motivation, motivation theories and a specific context of the FMCG sector;
- To examine which motivators are connected to different career stages and how these connections change as the employee moves between stages;
- To develop a methodology to conduct qualitative research and design a structure for narrative interviews;
- To conduct interviews and analyze them using thematic analysis to identify the motivators for each stage of the career;
- To make conclusions, based on findings, how motivators evolve during career development and make recommendations for HR managers.

By addressing these tasks, the study connects theoretical foundations and practical realities, offering a comprehensive understanding of employee motivation in the specific context.

This research enhances both theoretical and practical insights. Jiang et al. (2012) demonstrate that aligning HR policies with employee motivation increases organizational outcomes, such as increased retention and work satisfaction. By filling the motivating requirements of employees at different career levels, organizations may cultivate a more efficient and flexible staff, so improving their competitive advantage in the market.

This thesis is divided into two main chapters, each addressing the research tasks and objectives.

The first chapter establishes the theoretical foundations of employee motivation. The first subchapter explores term career, its nonlinear nature, and describe different motivation theories. The second subchapter examines specifics of the selected FMCG sector and reviews studies on motivation drivers at specific career stages as early, mid and late stages, showing how extrinsic and intrinsic rewards change each other's values throughout an individual's lifetime.

The second chapter focuses on the empirical study of motivation drivers in Ukrainian FMCG companies. The first subchapter describes the context of Ukraine and the methodology, explaining how interviews were conducted, the selection of participants, and methods for data analysis. The second subchapter, using thematic analysis, identifies patterns in motivation dynamics across career stages, and connects theoretical and empirical findings. It presents the findings, illustrating the most significant motivators for each career stage and provides recommendations for HR managers.

The conclusion summarizes the key findings of both theoretical and empirical parts, addresses the study's limitations and proposes directions for future research.

**Keywords:** Motivation, career, career stages, FMCG, Ukraine.

## **1. Theoretical foundations of motivators across career stages**

### **1.1. Concept of career and employee motivation theories**

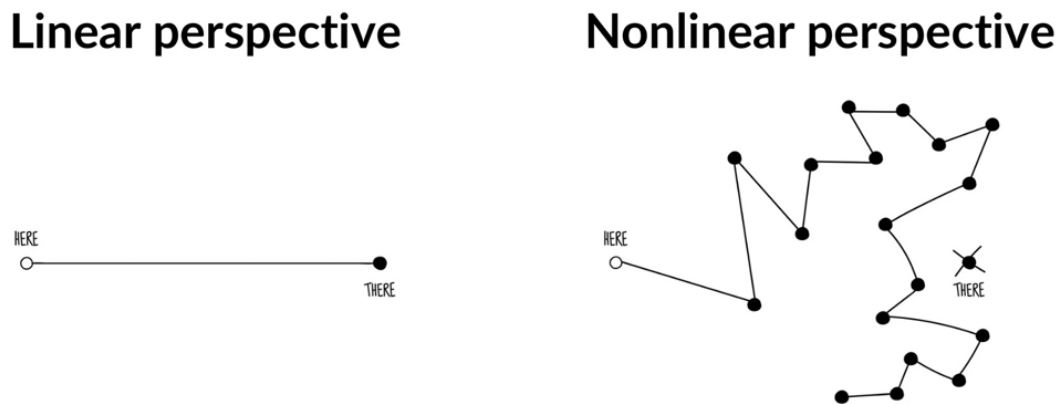
In order to form an effective theoretical foundation, we need a full understanding of fundamental concepts like career and career stages. The concept of a career includes a variety of positions and responsibilities individuals take during their professional journeys (Arthur et al., 2005). Super (1980) characterizes a career as the progression of roles, occupations, and positions occupied by an individual, influenced by personal ambitions and social environments. This term demonstrates the interaction between internal and external factors, indicating that careers are dynamic and develop over time. Arthur et al. (2005) expanded on this concept, defining a career as a subjective construct that combines objective accomplishments, like promotions, with subjective elements, such as personal satisfaction. This perspective demonstrates the significance of understanding both concrete job achievements and the personal value that individuals get from the employment. Schein (1996) discusses this concept by defining a career as a continuous progression of experiences and attitudes related to work, influenced by personal ideals, organizational opportunities, and social standards. All of these perspectives emphasize the dynamic nature of careers, shaped by both internal and external factors.

The term career stages is closely related to the concept of a career, describing the specific phases individuals experience throughout their career path. These stages are defined by changing priorities, objectives, and motivations, which differ significantly over time (Super, 1980). Super (1980) indicates an order containing four principal stage of career development: exploration, establishment, maintenance, and disengagement, where each stage aligns with unique development and motivational requirements, such as a desire for growth and accomplishment during exploration and the emphasis on stability and personal satisfaction during maintenance. This approach provides a comprehensive view of the transformations that happen during a career. Kooij et al. (2011) support this perspective by highlighting the evolution of age-related job motivation, where younger employees favor extrinsic benefits like career development, while older employees tend to prefer intangible advantages such as autonomy and personal values. Nicholson (1984) emphasizes the importance of transitions in career stages, stating that these changes usually require individuals to adjust to new roles and responsibilities. Work transitions offer employees the chance to align their roles with changing professional and personal goals and values (Nicholson, 1984). Collectively, these theories illustrate that career stages are not only variable but deeply connected to individual and social factors.

At this point, we cannot define early, mid and late career stages, because careers are not linear anymore, they are becoming more diverse over time. Career trajectories are becoming increasingly complex and less predictable due to labor market changes (Riekhoff et al., 2021). Today, it is becoming increasingly difficult to predict how an employee's career will develop in the future. Previously, employees who started working for one company often continued to work there for many years and had a straight-line growth trajectory within this organization. Today, many people do not follow a single trajectory, but much more often change roles, companies in which they work, and even sectors and fields of work. (Sullivan & Al Ariss, 2021) Sullivan & Al Ariss (2021) states that a reason for this was both the rapid technological development over the past decades and a significant change in labor market conditions. According to Wiernik and Kostal (2018), judging by current trends, the previously standard concept of a career is changing towards a boundaryless or diverse career. This means that people are starting to choose more flexible and independent career options, such as contract or project employment or even a combination of multiple roles, which are non-traditional career structures. Therefore, it is making career decisions less linear and less dependent on the term of employment. Experienced workers and professionals can come back to earlier stages of their careers or even start their career path from the beginnings when changing the sector (Sullivan & Al Ariss, 2021). However, repeating the same career stage for a newcomer and for an experienced employee usually has different major motivators, because repeating a stage brings new motivators and creates new goals (Nicholson, 1984; Sullivan & Al Ariss, 2021). As Volmer & Spurk (2011) state, such careers are becoming increasingly common, so careers are becoming more self and value driven. Employees take responsibility for their own careers and shape them based on their own values (Volmer and Spurk, 2011). Dawson et al. (2021) states that in order to remain relevant in a changing job market, it is now important to continuously improve skills and be able to adapt quickly to changes.

In order to make the concepts of linear and nonlinear careers more understandable and easier to visualize, the Figure 1 is presented to illustrate these two perspectives. Both illustrations were originally created by Lucy Klippan and published in van der Bijl-Brouwer (2019). The two images were combined into a single figure by the author with visualization purpose. These figures show that a employee' career does not develop in a straight line from point A to point B, so it is wrong to clearly define a career stage based on a person's age or years of experience. We see how in the figure of a non-linear career a person travels back and

forth, creating an individual career path. It shows that in reality, stages are determined by a attitude of a person towards their own career, but not a certain criterion.



*Figure 1: Linear and nonlinear career perspectives*

Source: compiled by author using images created by Lucy Klippan, retrieved from van der Bijl-Brouwer (2019).

The author believes that the approach of Super (1980) is best suited for a clear definition of early, middle and late career stages. A specific understanding of definitions of each stage is a crucial factor on which both theoretical and empirical research is based. As already mentioned, Super (1980) defined career stages based on the feelings of the employee and his desire for development, therefore in this study the early, middle and late stages will be connection to the stages of this theory. The early career stage corresponds to the exploration phase, during which people try out different roles and form their professional personality. The middle career stage corresponds to the establishment and maintenance phases, when employees secure their positions, deepen their experience and maintain their level of development. The late career stage corresponds to the disengagement phase. This phase does not mean that the employee stops to be motivated, but it does indicate that values of employee are changing. It shows a gradual shift from routine work to the transfer of knowledge and the creation of a certain legacy. (Super, 1980)

The concept of career and its stages is not the only key concept for this study. The aim of the study is to understand motivators, so for this it is also necessary to define the concept of motivation. Motivation is the feeling that drives individuals to achieve their personal and professional goals. Gagné & Deci (2005) characterize motivation as the mechanism that initiates, sustains, and inspires goal-oriented behavior, highlighting its importance in workplace engagement. Deci & Ryan (2000) and Vallerand (2000) say that motivation is a

concept shaped by internal psychological needs and external environmental influences. These definitions emphasize motivation as a dynamic interaction between internal drives and external factors, building a basis for understanding its critical influence on employee.

Building on basic concepts, it is essential to analyze also the frameworks and theories that clarify why individuals do specific actions and what drives their engagement in the workplace. Motivation theories offer frameworks for understanding human behavior in corporate contexts, allowing leaders to formulate successful methods to improve employee satisfaction, performance, and retention. Analyzing various motivation theories is crucial for identifying patterns in motivational changes throughout every stage of a career. These theories assist in identifying fundamental motivators and distinguishing between in- and ex-types. In order not to overload the main part of the text, but at the same time to familiarize new readers of this topic with the concepts of different theories, Appendix A was created. In Appendix A, can be found the information that structurally describes the main concepts of each of the discussed theories.

One of the most widely recognized theories is Maslow's hierarchy of needs, which classifies human motivational drivers from fundamental physiological needs to self-actualization. Maslow (1951) emphasized that lower-level needs, such as safety, must be fully satisfied before individuals can pursue higher-level goals, such as self-actualization. According to Adler (1977), this hierarchy remains relevant for understanding career motivation, as employees in the early stages of their careers often prioritize income and job security to meet basic needs. In contrast, those in later stages may focus on fulfilling higher-level needs, such as self-worth and professional purpose. Adler (1977) also highlighted that although Maslow's theory has been critiqued for its inflexibility, it offers valuable insights into how motivational priorities shift over time. Moreover, supporting Maslow's, research on organizational culture shows that cultural alignment within a company can improve employees' feelings of belonging, which in turn increases motivation (Schein, 1996).

Self-determination theory (SDT), created by Deci & Ryan, points out three fundamental psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. According to self-determination theory, motivation is most effective when these three demands are satisfied. Employees who see autonomy in their jobs, feel confidence in their competence, and have a sense of relatedness with their team and organization are more likely to demonstrate sustained engagement, dedication and intrinsic motivation. (Gagné & Deci, 2005; Deci & Ryan, 2000) This theory provides an advanced perspective on the simultaneous existence and development of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, offering significant insights for

organizational behavior and management techniques. The SDT also explains how different organizational contexts can influence these three fundamental psychological needs. For example, being a leader supports autonomy, while micromanagement from a supervisor reduces a feeling of autonomy and competence.

Herzberg's two-factor theory is another significant addition, categorizing workplace factors into hygiene factors and motivators. Hygiene factors, including wage, job security, and working conditions, are essential for preventing dissatisfaction but do not extrinsically encourage employees. In contrast, factors such as recognition, transparency, and opportunities for growth increase engagement and satisfaction. (Putra et al., 2017) Herzberg's framework highlights the dual aspects of workplace motivation, indicating that both extrinsic (hygiene factors) and intrinsic (motivators) components are crucial in shaping employee fulfilment (Hunt et al., 2012; Putra et al., 2017). Moreover, recent research in the hospitality sector confirms that intrinsic motivators, including meaningful work and recognition significantly influence employee engagement, confirming Herzberg's initial conclusions (Putra et al., 2017).

Boundaryless career theory provides a more modern and innovative perspective on employee motivation and career development, as it focuses more on the formation of subjective success. In this theory, employee motivation is formed from subjective and objective successes at work. Subjective successes include things such as personal fulfillment or job satisfaction, and objective ones include financial compensation for work or career development. (Arthur et al., 2005) This view has been confirmed by recent research by Wiernik & Kostal (2018), which has shown that many people value subjective motivators and make career decisions based on personal values. These people have more active career planning and are more open to changes.

The work role transition theory supports this research as it examines how employees adapt to changing roles, job responsibilities, or new skill requirements (Nicholson, 1984). This idea shows how changes in roles affect employee satisfaction and motivation depending on unique personal traits and attitudes, and how motivation affects the speed of adaptation (Nicholson, 1984). It offers a dynamic view of motivation, especially in contexts characterized by frequent role changes.

To organize the ideas from the previously mentioned authors, a comparative analysis that can be seen in the Table 1 which was created to illustrate major findings and observations from the studied literature.

Table 1

*Comparison of theories*

Theory	Key concepts	Strengths	Weaknesses
Maslow's hierarchy of needs	Classifies human needs from basic (physiological) to advanced (self-actualization). Needs must be satisfied in a hierarchy.	Offers a clear structure for understanding evolving employee needs. Helps to explain shifts in motivators over time.	Critiqued for its inflexibility and assumption of a strict hierarchy. May not take into account individual or cultural differences.
Self-determination theory	Focuses on three psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Intrinsic and extrinsic motivations coexist.	States that intrinsic motivation is crucial for long-term engagement. Is adaptable to different work environments.	May not fully explain the role of extrinsic motivators in early career stages. Requires fulfilling all needs simultaneously.
Herzberg's two-factor theory	Distinguishes between hygiene factors (prevent dissatisfaction) and motivators (increase satisfaction and engagement).	Offers the practical framework for identifying both positive and negative workplace factors. Shows the importance of recognition and growth.	Theory has a hard division between hygiene factors and motivators. Factors like salary, recognition, job security are influencing both satisfaction and dissatisfaction.
Boundaryless career theory	Distinguishes between subjective (personal fulfilment) and objective (rewards like salary, promotion) measures of career success.	Helps to explain how people find motivation and define success in non-linear career paths.	Highlights individual responsibility while often ignoring organizational limits and barriers.
Work role transition theory	Shows how role transitions affect motivation. Supports adaptability and adjustment during career transitions.	Offers a dynamic approach to motivation. Is relevant for high-pressure environments with frequent role changes.	Mainly highlights individual adaptation while sometimes neglecting the external support and influence required during transitions.

Source: compiled by author based on Adler (1977), Arthur et al. (2005), Deci & Ryan (2000), Gagné & Deci (2005), Hunt et al. (2012), Maslow (1951), Nicholson (1984), Putra et al. (2017), Schein (1996), Wiernik & Kostal (2018)

Together, these theories explain the complex nature of motivation and what affects it, which is crucial for identifying primary motivators at every stage of the career. But not all of them are equally applicable in the modern realities of centralization of personality and popularization of non-linear careers. For example, Maslow's hierarchy of needs or Herzberg's

two-factor theory are based on more traditional, linear career progressions and may not fully account for the diverse motivational needs of employees. These theories do not take into account that people can simultaneously fulfill several levels of needs or be simultaneously satisfied and motivated by a certain factor. Author believes that the two most applicable theories are Self-determination theory and Boundaryless career theory. Together they provide a solid foundation for understanding both the complexities of motivation at various levels of a career. Self-determination theory highlights internal psychological needs such as autonomy, competence, and a sense of belonging. Such needs are especially important in situations where external motivators are unstable. Boundaryless career theory shows how people define career success at different career stages based on subjective values.

### **1.2. Motivators at specific career stages in FMCG companies**

Understanding employee motivation across career stages is essential for formulating successful strategies that can improve organizational performance. In this subchapter, by synthesizing findings from various studies, this research provides a comprehensive theoretical understanding of how motivational elements evolve. Knowing these changes is essential for organizations to design flexible and adaptive strategies that address employees' changing needs, support career transitions, and ensures sustained engagement and performance over time.

Before discussing career-specific motivators, it is necessary to understand the unique characteristics of the FMCG sector. The FMCG sector is characterized by high production volumes, since most of them are products of everyday use, namely what we buy every day. Since the products of the FMCG sector are always in demand, it is not surprising that there is very high competition in this sector. (Iqbal & Faisal, 2023) Usually, such competitive markets are also called red oceans (Kumar, 2023). Due to the large production volumes and incredibly high competition, the slightest shift in consumer preferences has a significant impact on seemingly stable organizations. Therefore, FMCG companies have to react quickly and adapt to the changes (Iqbal & Faisal, 2023).

As a result of such work environment with constant pressure and risks, it is not surprising that this causes a lot of stress for employees of these companies. Employees must simultaneously focus on both short-term results and constant monitoring of efficiency, and on innovation and development. The combination of such different purposes is very difficult for both the companies themselves and for their employees. According to Iqbal & Faisal (2023), the FMCG sector also has another feature — it is very rapid staff turnover. As mentioned in the previous sections, it is very common for people to have non-linear careers now and they

are ready to change roles and companies, which leads to even greater staff turnover (Sullivan & Al Ariss, 2021). These reasons make FMCG definitely not the easiest place to work.

Examining the difficulties of the FMCG sector in more detail, we can see that activity, competition, stress and staff turnover are not the only problems. George & George (2023) say that FMCG is experiencing difficulties with digitalization and automation. The very rapid development of technologies that we have seen in recent years has also touched the fast-moving customer goods sector (George & George, 2023). Today, many companies are moving to more digital and modern work models, so employees need to adapt again to regular changes and continuous learning (Dawson et al., 2021). A summary of key difficulties and causes of FMCG sector is presented in Table 2.

Table 2

*Summary of FMCG-specific sector characteristics*

Difficulty	Description	Reasons
Production volumes	Ensuring the daily demand of users results in a large-scale need for production and perfection of operational processes.	The nature of FMCG products in itself provides large volumes with strict criteria, because these are the products of everyday use get.
Competition	FMCG is a red ocean, which is characterized by high competition and constant fighting for the consumer. A market in which products are in constant demand always creates an even higher level of supply.	FMCG products have a short life cycle and are in constant demand, so companies are actively fighting for their share in the market. So, a small increase in market share brings significant profits.
High staff turnover	FMCG companies face the problem of staff turnover and problems of creating long-term employee engagement, which affects the stability of the team and requires constant recruitment and adaptation of employees.	Many reasons as the low entry requirements and regular need for new hires leads to the recruitment issues. Also, the popularity of nonlinear career and frequent burnout increase this problem.
Stressful environment	Many FMCG employees have stress and high probability of burnout due to extreme requirements and the need to combine short-term results with long-term plans.	Intense and unstable atmosphere creates a stressful environment. Factors as staff turnover, multitasking and intensity of the processes bring a lot of stress.
Digital issues	Too rapid development and implementation of new technologies requires constant training, so employees begin to lose motivation. This is especially difficult for senior workers, as they feel that they are beginning to lose their value.	Current trends in the rapid development of technology and a variety of digital and automation tools combined with the lack of digital skills in employees, create some difficulties.

Source: compiled by author based on Dawson et al. (2021), George & George (2023), Iqbal & Faisal (2023), Kumar (2023), Sullivan & Al Ariss (2021)

After analyzing the FMCG sector and its characteristics, now it can be explored how motivation develops at each stage of a career, namely on early (exploration), middle (establishment and maintenance) and late (disengagement) stages (Super, 1980).

The early stage of a career is characterized by exploration, skill acquisition, and the establishment of a professional identity. At this point, employees are frequently driven by extrinsic rewards, including financial security, recognition, and progress in their careers (Kooij et al., 2011). Putra et al. (2017) state that external motivators such as pay and bonuses significantly influence short-term engagement, however, dependence only on external benefits may not create long-term dedication and engagement. Intrinsic motivators, although less obvious, also impact early-career employees seeking purposeful work and growth opportunities (Gagné & Deci, 2005). Gagné and Deci (2005) believe that encouraging autonomy, competence, and relatedness increases intrinsic motivation, even at this stage of life. Intrinsic motivators can enhance individual performance and employee engagement (Rich et al., 2010). Nicholson (1984) states that adapting to new duties and organizational standards creates difficulties. He highlighted that job transitions often cause uncertainty, which requires psychological adjustments that may result in apathy if there is a lack of adequate support. Structured and organized mentorship may help to fill this gap.

In dynamic industries such as FMCG, early-career employees may find it hard to balance current performance goals with long-term career goals. Jiang et al. (2012) underline the significance of HR strategies such as transparent career opportunities and ongoing feedback. Organizations have to use techniques that combine extrinsic rewards with intrinsic motivators to overcome these difficulties (Gagné & Deci, 2005). Initiatives like transparent promotion criteria and skill development programs could help early-career employees in building stronger connection to their work (Jiang et al., 2012).

The middle-career stage is defined by consolidation, growth, and greater responsibilities. At this stage, employees have typically established their professional identity and seek possibilities for promotion, mastery, and work-life balance. While extrinsic motivators, such as income increases and promotions, are essential, intrinsic motivators, such as autonomy, purposeful work, and recognition of achievements, gain greater and greater importance. (Kooij et al., 2011) Mid-career professionals frequently prioritize positions that match with their values and beliefs and provide possibilities for self-directed career development. (Arthur et al., 2005). Building a successful career is a significant objective at this period, so employees want clear paths for vertical or horizontal promotion and skill development in their work (Jiang et al., 2012). Also providing employees the

leadership positions strengthen employees' feeling of purpose (Gagné & Deci, 2005). Rich et al. (2010) emphasizes that the chance to lead significant and meaningful projects, which align with their values, can foster a sense of ownership and competence. However, the mid-career phase presents its own variety of barriers. Nicholson (1984) says that promotion or a change in job responsibilities often requires people to develop both personally and in their roles. He states that career growth can create adjustment problems, especially if there is a lack of organizational support such as specialized training and mentoring. In the absence of such support, employees may feel apathy or dissatisfaction.

In the sector with rapid speed of operations, employees have to be adaptive, innovative, have high learning agility and be ready for continuous skill development (Dawson et al., 2021). Jiang et al. (2012) advice for HR approaches to use internal mobility, development initiatives, training and recognition to reduce these pressures. To support long-term motivation, organizations should consider developing specific strategies for mid-career employees, especially for employees with nonlinear careers (Kooij et al., 2011; Sullivan & Al Ariss, 2021). By balancing both basic needs of people as financial security and motivators as cross-functional collaboration or leadership initiatives, so in other words both intrinsic and extrinsic motivators, companies are fostering high level of motivation (Gagné & Deci, 2005).

The later stages of a career are typically about self-awareness and a transition from career progression to legacy creation and knowledge sharing. At this stage, employees emphasize intrinsic motivators such autonomy, purpose, and a desire to make significant contributions. (Kooij et al., 2011; Gagné & Deci, 2005) The value of financial motivators and career growth opportunities have declined, because self-realization and individual values are beginning to become more important than objective indicators of success (Arthur et al., 2005). A primary intrinsic motivator in the late career stage is the chance to mentor and advise younger colleagues. Building strong professional relationships can improve motivation, because it increases feeling of relatedness (Gagné and Deci, 2005). Employees in the latter stages of their careers frequently gain purpose from sharing their knowledge and influencing the business culture through advisory positions. Rich et al. (2010) state that intrinsic motivation, driven by meaningful work and personal contribution, improves individual performance. Arthur et al. (2005) say about the growing importance of subjective career success, where alignment with personal values play a crucial role.

Despite these powerful internal motivators, the later stages introduce unique challenges. As firms implement new technology and procedures, late-career individuals can feel worries of challenges in adapting to rapid changes (Dawson et al. 2021). Organizations

should cultivate an inclusive culture that empowers and values the contributions of late-career workers to address these challenges. For example, delegating important responsibilities, including mentoring and strategic planning help maintain their sense of purpose and relatedness (Kooij et al., 2011).

Leadership initiatives that offer and demand their skills can increase their value to the firm, which in turn provides a sense of competence, and relatedness, which are two of the three key psychological needs (Gagné & Deci, 2005). The late career stage is a crucial phase for firms to take advantage of the expertise and experience of their senior employees. By addressing the unique challenges of this phase, firms may improve engagement, promote knowledge transfer, and build a happy and collaborative work environment that benefits all employees. (Kooij et al. 2011)

To organize the ideas about all career stages, a comparative analysis Table 3 was created to illustrate major findings and observations from the studies discussed.

Table 3

*Comparison of specific career stage key motivators*

Career stage	Key motivators	Challenges	Strategies
Early career	Financial security (salary, bonuses), recognition (awards, promotions), professional growth (training, mentorship, learning opportunities)	Adapting to company culture and new responsibilities, building professional identity, balancing short-term financial goals with long-term ambitions	Comprehensive onboarding, structured feedback and recognition, clear career progression paths, mentorship for skill development
Mid-career	Autonomy (decision-making freedom), mastery (enhancement, expertise), meaningful work (purpose-driven tasks), leadership roles (leadership)	Increased workload and responsibilities, managing team dynamics, balancing career progression with personal life, risk of burnout	Work-life balance, leadership training, cross-departmental collaborations, personalized recognition of achievements
Late career	Purpose (organizational impact), legacy (mentoring, sharing expertise), strategic involvement (participation in key decisions, advisory roles)	Concerns about job relevance due to rapid changes, fewer career opportunities, change from active leadership to advisory roles	Advisory or mentoring programs, inclusion in strategic initiatives, public recognition of contributions

Source: compiled by author based on Arthur et al. (2005), Dawson et al. (2021), Gagné & Deci (2005), Iqbal & Faisal (2023), Jiang et al. (2012), Kooij et al. (2011), Nicholson (1984), Putra et al. (2017), Rich et al. (2010), Sullivan & Al Ariss (2021)

Therefore, understanding employee motivation at different career stages is essential for improving employee engagement and performance. As employees progress, their needs shift from extrinsic rewards, such as financial stability at the initial stages, to intrinsic motivators, such as autonomy and purpose, at later stages (Gagné & Deci, 2005). Individual motivational methods and techniques during role changes or career transitions have a significant impact on employee adaptation and motivation (Nicholson, 1984). And an effective combination of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation increases employee engagement (Putra et al., 2017).

## **2. Motivators at early, mid and late career stages in Ukrainian FMCG companies**

### **2.1. Data and methodology**

Since this study was conducted in 2025 among employees of Ukrainian companies residing in Ukraine, and as of April 2025, a full-scale war is ongoing in Ukraine, the specific context of Ukraine undoubtedly influences the results of the study of effective motivation strategies. For this reason, we need to consider this specific context.

The long-lasting war, which began in 2022 brings life and economic difficulties to workers. Labor shortages, infrastructure damage, unstable supply, and uncertainty about the future have strongly affected all companies in Ukraine (LMP in Ukraine, 2025). Cheromukhina (2024) emphasizes that this is also compounded by high rates of migration, both internal and external, which significantly reduces the availability of qualified workers. Many organizations struggle to keep talents in the company due to security concerns and emotional burnout (Cheromukhina, 2024). In addition, as of 2021, Yaroshenko et al. (2021) argues that remote and hybrid work formats, although used more often than in the past, they still remain not available and spread enough across regions.

Compared to EU values, Ukraine has higher mobility and turnover of workforce. This is especially noticeable in manufacturing industries that depend on physical presence of workers and continuous supply chains. (Zelenko et al., 2024) Although research by George & George (2023) shows that companies that prioritize retraining, internal mobility, and clearly defined career paths tend to achieve better motivational outcomes even in unstable environments, however, such initiatives are very difficult to implement in the current conditions of the war in Ukraine. Despite the fact that many companies are trying to create the right working atmosphere and increase internal motivators, in wartime conditions, the issues of physical safety and financial stability remain the main ones (Cheromukhina, 2024). Only after the basic needs are met, other factors begin to play a role (Maslow, 1951). The

challenges of the national labor market require Ukrainian managers to be highly flexible in HR practices. Taking into account all external and internal conditions, it is necessary to adapt and flexibly change motivational strategies.

The high staff turnover in the FMCG sector, combined with a high level of mobility due to the war; high production requirements and strong competition in FMCG, combined with instability in logistics and infrastructure; employee stress not only due to internal organizational but also external global factors — all together create a huge problem for managers, because in such conditions it is very difficult to maintain employee safety.

This study used a qualitative approach, since the goal is not to conduct a study in width, but in depth. The goal is to conduct an in-depth study of motivators that affect employees of Ukrainian FMCG companies at different stages of their careers. Using unstructured narrative interviews will allow to get detailed information about each interviewee, as well as individual nuances that quantitative methods may not take into account.

The empirical study consists of 7 key steps, which were carried out sequentially one after the other. These steps can be seen in Figure 2.

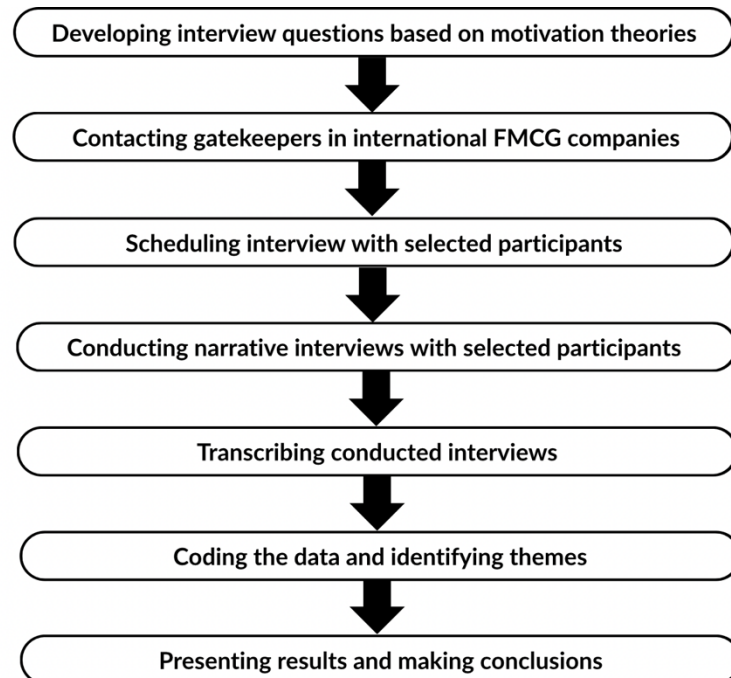


Figure 2: Research sequence

Source: compiled by author

During the narrative interviews, all participants were asked to share stories of their own development, personal career growth, and how internal and external factors gained and

lost their value over time. Although the interviews were conducted in a flexible, open-ended format, a set of concrete questions was prepared to ensure the coverage of all topics. The structure of the questions is built according to the logic of career stages: from early-to middle-to late. All of the questions were formulated in an open style not to impose specific answers. The detailed explanation of most important questions, the purpose for which they were created, and how they relate to theoretical concepts can be seen in Table 4,5 and 6, but a full list of questions is provided in Appendix B.

The first part of questions has an introductory function, they are made to help the interviewee feel more comfortable and talk about his career path. These introductory questions ask about the background of interviewee and personal information that allow to understand whether the interviewee already has significant professional experience, what is current stage of career, and how interviewee perceives own professional development.

The part of questions associated with the early stage of a career — exploration phase, was made with the goal of reminding the first professional steps of the interviewee and identifying the typical motivators of this stage. The most important questions for this part, their purpose and their theoretical foundation can be seen in Table 4.

Table 4

*Most relevant interview questions for early career stage*

Question	Purpose	Theoretical foundation
Were there factors that made you to start working in company X, or was it due to circumstances?	Show initial decision-making, helps identify whether what influenced the beginning of a career	Early-stage motivation is often driven by basic needs such as financial stability (Maslow, 1951)
Were you more motivated by a desire to grow, earn money, find stability or something else?	Identifies the balance between different factors at the start of a career	Herzberg's theory distinguishes hygiene factors and motivators (Putra et al., 2017)
What motivated you to stay in this company at the beginning of your career?	Identifies retention factors and the factors with greatest value at early career stage	Focusing on motivators helps to create long-term motivation (Putra et al., 2017)
What aspects of your work did you enjoy? And what could demotivate you or cause internal stress?	Helps to understand strong emotional aspects in the early stage	Balance between positive and negative factors affects long-term motivation (Putra et al., 2017)
How did you perceive feedback during the early stage? How important was it for you?	Show the role of feedback in building strong motivation	Positive feedback supports intrinsic motivation (Deci, Olafsen, & Ryan, 2017)

Source: compiled by author based on Deci, Olafsen, & Ryan (2017), Maslow (1951), Putra et al. (2017)

The part of questions related to middle stage of a career — establishment and maintenance phase, will identify the changes in the employee's motivation drivers that happen after acquiring quite significant professional experience and achieving a certain status in the organization. In this research it will help to better understand how long-term engagement and goal setting evolve as individuals settle into their professional roles. The most important questions for this part, their purpose and their theoretical background can be seen in Table 5.

Table 5

*Most relevant interview questions for middle career stage*

Question	Purpose	Theoretical foundation
What has become more significant for you: salary, stability, influence, development, or something else?	Identifies the key factors with greatest value at middle career stage	Combines intrinsic and extrinsic factors and shows their relevance (Deci & Ryan, 2000)
What does professional growth mean to you right now?	Shows how the view on career development and future success	Career success consists of both objective and subjective factors (Arthur et al., 2005).
Have you ever experienced a moment of burnout? How did you deal with it?	Shows how employees maintain emotional stability and avoid burnout	Burnout is connected to changes in motivation. Intrinsic motivation helps prevent burnout (Rich et al., 2010).
How do you manage the balance between work and personal life at this stage?	Identifies the issue of professional or emotional exhaustion	Balance across life and work helps to fulfill psychological needs (Deci & Ryan, 2000)

Source: compiled by author based on Arthur et al. (2005), Deci & Ryan (2000), Rich et al. (2010)

Part of the questions related to the late career stage — disengagement phase, is made to show how does motivation change after achieving a certain professional status and experience. This period is often associated with a rethinking of goals, a decrease in the importance of external factors and an increase in the importance of internal motivators. But it is important to note that It is important to note that questions about late career are relevant not for all interviewees, because some of them have not objectively reached the late stage of their careers and are at the middle stage of development. Therefore, answers to questions about the late stage among people who are in the late stage are not taken into account in the analysis. The most important questions for this part, their purpose and their theoretical background can be seen in Table 6.

Table 6

*Most relevant interview questions for late career stage*

Question	Purpose	Theoretical foundation
What keeps you in profession? What motivates you to continue working in this field/company?	Identifies the key factors with greatest value at late career stage	Helps to understand if intrinsic factors dominate (Deci & Ryan, 2000)
Are money and financial bonuses still a key indicator for you?	Tests assumption that extrinsic motivation loses importance in late career	When basic needs are fulfilled, motivation shifts to higher level needs (Maslow, 1951)
Do you feel the need to share knowledge or support younger colleagues?	Identifies the motivation to mentor and transfer knowledge, experience	Mentoring is a key element of late stage motivation (Super, 1980)
What does it mean to you to 'leave a mark' in the them or company?	Shows the real sense of influence and legacy for the manager	Subjective career success includes meaning, legacy, and internal values (Arthur et al., 2005)
How do you feel about changes as new technologies, younger employees and managers, etc.? How do you adapt?	Identifies reactions to changes and potential difficulties in adaptation	There are difficulties in adaptation, especially in later stages (Nicholson, 1984)

Source: compiled by author based on Arthur et al. (2005), Deci & Ryan (2000), Maslow (1951), Nicholson (1984), Super (1980)

The final part of the interview was dedicated to reflection on the impact of the war in Ukraine or other external factors on motivation. Participants were asked to reflect on how their values, motivational attitudes, and career orientations had changed since the beginning of the full-scale invasion.

For empirical part the total number of narrative interviews conducted is 15. All interviews were conducted with professionals working in Ukrainian FMCG companies with many years of experience in the sector.

The interviews were conducted with representatives of 3 large FMCG companies located in Ukraine. There was no criterion for selecting a certain company, other than that it had to be an international company. It is worth noting that the companies are not native Ukrainian but are international companies with offices or branches in Ukraine. Among the companies whose representatives agreed to participate in the research were: Royal Canin — 7 participants took part, MARS — 5 participants, and Philip Morris — 3 participants.

The initial contact was made through gatekeepers, who in this case were managers or directors in the selected companies. The author contacted them in an informal way, through phone calls or personal messages, and the managers then forwarded and provided contacts of potential participants. After that, the author reached out to those specific employees who met

the necessary selection criteria. Some of potential participants agreed to be interviewed and some disagreed. As a result of this selection process, 15 meetings were held. To better understand the mentioned process, Figure 3 shows the process of getting interviews.

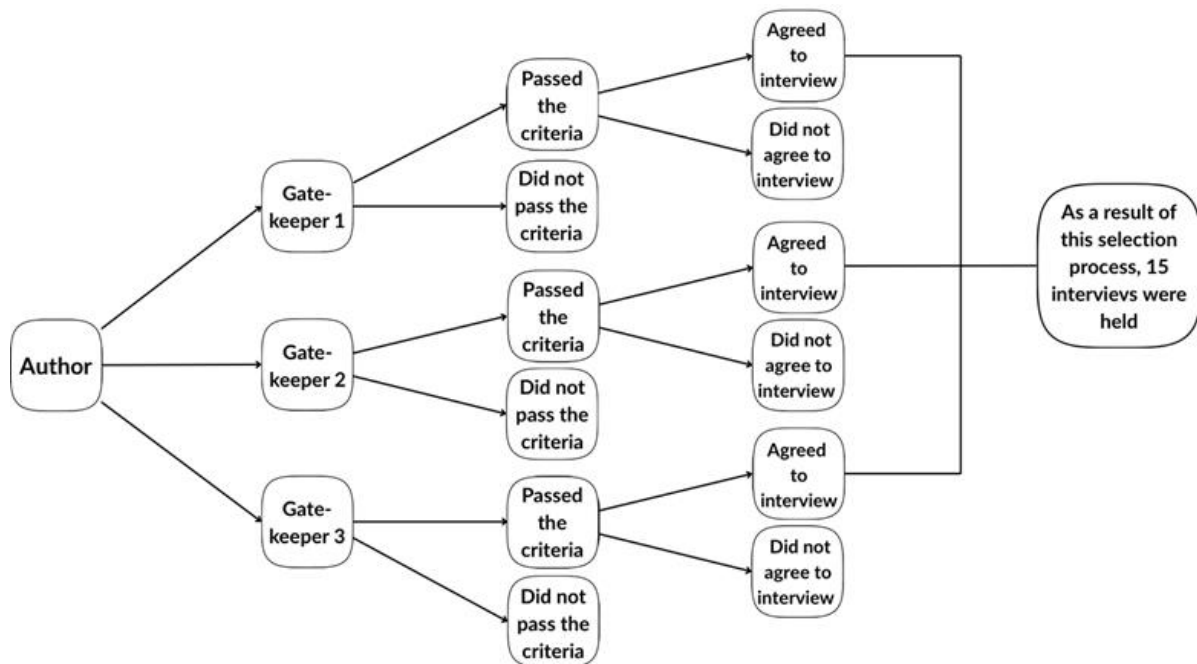


Figure 3: Overview of interviewee recruitment process

Source: compiled by author

A purposive selection of specialists was used. Gender was not considered as a selection criterion, but as a result, the sample consisted of 10 men and 5 women. There were three key selection criteria:

1. At least 10 years of experience in the FMCG sector;
2. Experience in international company with a large number of employees;
3. Practical experience in people management, namely managerial position.

The first criterion is at least 10 years of experience in FMCG. With such experience, people are more likely to have a deeper understanding of the sector's specifics. This mostly ensures that the employee is no longer in the stage of adapting to the sector, which significantly influences motivation. Although there is no fixed standard in the literature for this threshold, the author decided to set such a criterion to increase the likelihood that the participant has already passed certain stages of theory of Super's (1980): exploration, establishment, maintenance phases. This means that in framework of this study, the participant has already passed the early and mid-career stages.

The second factor is experience working in an international company. This criterion is truly important, because large international companies usually have formalized management

structures, stable corporate cultures. Although including employees from local companies can result in different findings, this study analyzes motivation in the formalized and structured organizational context typically provided by international companies. Future research could broaden this research by including also local firms and explore differences.

The purposive selection of employees who are in managerial positions and have people under their management is explained by the aim of this thesis. Since the aim is to understand how motivation changes at different stages of a career, interviewing employees who have not yet gone through a bigger career cycle would not provide a reflective view on changes in motivation. Managers, on the other hand, have not only personal experience of going through different stages of career, but have also observed these changes in their subordinates, which makes their responses more relevant.

All interviews were conducted online in a 2-weeks period from 07.04.2025 to 18.04.2025 via the Google Meet or Teams, or Zoom platform. They lasted from 35 to 73 minutes, giving a total time of 873 minutes (14 hours and 33 minutes), with an average time of 58 minutes per interview. The language of the interview was Ukrainian or Russian, depending on the participant's preference. All participants gave verbal agreement to audio recording for the purpose of further transcription and analysis. Each participant had the choice to remain anonymous and confidentiality was ensured according to the necessary standards. Structured information about the date, duration, and number of pages of transcription can be seen in Table 7.

Table 7

*Overview of research process*

No	Date	Duration	Pages transcription
ID 1	07.04.2025	1 hour 9 minutes	16 pages
ID 2	07.04.2025	1 hour 1 minute	15 pages
ID 3	08.04.2025	35 minutes	8 pages
ID 4	09.04.2025	51 minutes	13 pages
ID 5	09.04.2025	1 hour 9 minutes	18 pages
ID 6	09.04.2025	1 hour 13 minutes	20 pages
ID 7	09.04.2025	1 hour 11 minutes	17 pages
ID 8	10.04.2025	45 minutes	10 pages
ID 9	10.04.2025	49 minutes	12 pages
ID 10	10.04.2025	54 minutes	10 pages
ID 11	11.04.2025	56 minutes	13 pages
ID 12	15.04.2025	57 minutes	14 pages
ID 13	15.04.2025	58 minutes	14 pages
ID 14	17.04.2025	57 minutes	14 pages
ID 15	18.04.2025	1 hour 8 minutes	17 pages

Source: compiled by author

Table 8 presents structured information about the interviewee: their gender, position in the company, and number of years of experience in the FMCG sector.

Table 8

*Overview of interview participants*

No	Gender	Position	Years in FMCG
ID 1	Male	National Key Account Manager	19
ID 2	Male	Customer Relations and Distribution Manager	27
ID 3	Female	Brand Manager	16
ID 4	Male	Field Sales Head	21
ID 5	Male	Key Account & E-commerce Manager	15
ID 6	Male	HR Director	17
ID 7	Female	Corporate Affairs Director	17
ID 8	Female	Financial Director	14
ID 9	Male	Territory Sales Executive	15
ID 10	Male	Commercial Training Executive	28
ID 11	Male	Area Sales Manager	12
ID 12	Male	National Sales Manager	16
ID 13	Female	Area Key Account Manager	20
ID 14	Male	Sales Acceleration Manager	14
ID 15	Female	Sales & Marketing Director	18

Source: compiled by author

For data analysis method, thematic analysis was chosen to analyze the information collected from the interviews, as it suits the best for unstructured interviews. Nowell et al. (2017) recommends thematic analysis as a widely used method of qualitative research. Thematic analysis is excellent method for identifying recurring ideas, categories, and patterns in narrative data. This method provides a flexible structure for exploring different perspectives and their logical combination. (Nowell et al., 2017)

All interviews were first transcribed by software “TurboScribe” and then carefully reviewed and corrected by the author. In this way, the author ensured the accuracy and completeness of all transcriptions. Using font Times New Roman with font size 12, the total transcription lengths is 211 pages.

The 15 interviews conducted were completely sufficient to achieve frequent data repetition, namely the data saturation point. This means that further interviews would have made no or only minor changes to the research results.

The structure of the thematic analysis corresponds to the structure proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006), which consists of 6 key stages:

1. Familiarization with the data — careful making and reading all transcripts.

2. Generating initial codes — identifying common significant features in the data.
3. Searching for themes — grouping codes into categories and themes
4. Reviewing themes — clarifying themes to ensure logical consistency.
5. Defining and naming themes — clearly describe the essence of each theme.
6. Producing the report — connecting the themes to the theoretical framework.

All codes were generated manually by the author using Google Sheets by rereading the interview transcripts. The manual method was chosen, because the number of interviews is moderate. Since the author did all interviews himself, the manual method even deepens understanding of the material, which increases reliability and validity of the research.

The codes were grouped into categories, which are grouped into themes. In total were created 4 themes. An example of the part of coding table can be seen in Table 9.

Table 9

*Example of the coding table*

Quote	Keywords	Code
<i>“For me, for example, money is one of the key indicators... no matter what, but salary and its growth are important metrics.” (ID 1)</i>	money, salary	
<i>“The salary is motivating, and big bonuses too... I really appreciate that.” (ID 2)</i>	salary, bonuses	
<i>“For me, everything was simply based on money. I’m being honest with you now.” (ID 4)</i>	money	
<i>“They offered me a better salary. Honestly, that played a decisive role... In the beginning, it was important to have a salary that allowed me not to depend on my parents.” (ID 6)</i>	salary, financial independence	
<i>“My first official salary was 700 hryvnias which was 70 dollars at that time. I bought my first pair of brand jeans with that money. It was a big achievement for me.” (ID 7)</i>	salary	Financial compensation
<i>“The salary was high, and at the time, it was more than enough to cover my needs. It felt like something amazing.” (ID 13)</i>	salary, cover needs	
<i>"I just compared: the bank paid 1200 hryvnias [less than 200 dollars in 2009], and for merchandising company offered 1800 hryvnias [less than 300 dollars in 2009]. The decision was obvious" (ID 14)</i>	salary	
<i>“When I moved to my first international company, my salary tripled. That was a significant factor.” (ID 15)</i>	salary	

Source: compiled by author

A complete table with all themes, categories, codes, and their explanations can be seen in Appendix C. The following subchapter 2.2 examines each of the 4 themes created and all the categories and codes within these themes. This subchapter provides examples of

quotes of participants on which each code was based. In subchapter 2.2 all codes, categories and themes are combined with theoretical conclusions and the author's opinion. After discussing all of the identified themes, the author also discusses the overall result and gives advice for HR managers.

## 2.2. Major motivators at each career stage in Ukrainian FMCG companies

This subchapter describes the responses and presents the results of thematic analysis. The results are compared with the results of the theoretical part. The analysis will provide both theoretical and practical understanding what are key motivators at every stage of an employee's career. The themes, number of categories and codes are presented in Table 10.

Table 10

### *List of themes*

№	Name of theme	Number of categories	Number of codes
Theme 1	Early career stage motivation	3	8
Theme 2	Middle career stage motivation	3	9
Theme 3	Late career stage motivation	2	6
Theme 4	External factors influencing motivation	2	5

Source: compiled by author

It is important to note that in most cases, the quotes from interviewees were not translated or rewritten word by word. Author only described the main opinion of the participant. This was made, because all interviews had a narrative format, so the participants did not answer in the format of clear and short sentences, but often in the form of detailed stories with length of over several paragraphs. In order to ensure clarity and conciseness, the author described only the main idea from such answers and tried to combine several paragraphs into one generalized sentence. Although these quotes are not always direct, but they are accurately show real opinion of the respondent, without changing the meaning of his statement.

**Theme 1** is motivators at early stage of a career. Employee motivation at this stage is a crucial in shaping future professional development and growth. At this stage, employees begin to form initial standards and expectations regarding work and they start to build their desired career trajectory. In the context of the FMCG sector, this stage is particularly important due to the sector-specific characteristics, such as a high proportion of young and less-experienced employees.

The first common pattern at this stage is extrinsic motivators. One of the most frequently repeated codes was financial compensation, which allowed respondents to become

independent from their parents and meet their basic needs, which is a primary factor (Maslow, 1951). Among the quotes that clearly demonstrate this need are ID 6: "*They offered me a better salary. Honestly, that played a decisive role... In the beginning, it was important to have a salary that allowed me not to depend on my parents*". There were even cases where employees radically changed their field of work simply because the pay was higher: "*I just compared: the bank paid 1200 hryvnias [less than 200 dollars in 2009], and for merchandising company offered 1800 hryvnias [less than 300 dollars in 2009]. The decision was obvious*" (ID 14). These examples are well supported by Maslow's hierarchy of needs, which states that the lower basic levels of needs must first be met before moving on to the next steps (Maslow, 1951).

The second very frequently mentioned factors were any additional material benefits like a company car, insurance, bonuses, etc. These factors were often mentioned and emphasized for their importance, and for some, they could even be mandatory criteria. ID 13 said: "*I really wanted to have a company car, because I had much work travel. So, when I applied, one of my requirements was that the position included a company vehicle*". For some participants, even a basic factor such as medical insurance was quite motivating. For example, ID 9: "*I was impressed that the company provided good medical insurance, that was important to me*". Financial bonuses, which are as well considered as additional benefit, also played a strong role for ID 2 said: "*Annual bonus — a few months' worth of salary... It really motivates. I truly appreciate it*". From the answers, it can be noted that even if bonuses are external, they can contribute to the formation of intrinsic motivation (Deci, Olafsen, & Ryan, 2017). Approximately half of interviewees emphasized that other financial benefit, beyond salary, were crucial at the beginning of their careers.

Some participants also mentioned that it was important to them which company they worked for, meaning they were attracted by the company's prestige. Working for international corporations was especially valued, because they often provided good financial conditions, but also because working in a successful company was a good opportunity for development. For example, ID 15 said: "*I wanted to work there because the brand was strong and well-known. It seemed like the right career choice*". It can be concluded that the company's prestige forms the loyalty among young employees.

Another code at this career stage was stability and security. It was often said about official employment or certain guarantees from the employer. This gave people a feeling of predictability and safety, especially during economic instability, which is regular problem for Ukraine. For example: "*At the initial stages, official employment and a 'white' salary were*

*important to me*" (ID 6). This is a common issue in the Ukrainian labor market, as employers often give salaries in an envelope to avoid paying taxes, thus depriving employees of all the benefits of formal employment. Quite similar opinion was expressed by ID 2: *"I had no experience, so I was glad that I was immediately given an official job"*. Although theoretical foundation hasn't said that security is important at early career, empirical findings prove that employees often consider it.

Together with extrinsic motivators, prestige and security appeared very frequently repeated was professional interest and learning. This can be viewed as a person's willing for competence, which is one of the three key psychological needs (Deci & Ryan, 2000). One of the codes was curiosity and trying oneself in something new, because youth is a time of attempts and mistakes, which are necessary for the self-understanding. Young employees often search for what they enjoy and what they are good at. ID 6 said: *"I had no idea who I wanted to be, so I just tried different directions until I found something that felt right"* and ID 3 shared: *"After my first job I realized it wasn't for me, but I wasn't scared, on the contrary, it was a push to keep looking"*. This shows that even in the early stages there is a trend toward nonlinear careers, as people are willing to leave previous jobs to try something new to discover themselves (Sullivan & Al Ariss, 2021). Some also emphasized that at the beginning they were simply curious. ID 1 said: *"When you're young, everything new excites you. I didn't even think whether it would be long-term. I just wanted to learn in practice"*. Young workers want to learn, develop, and become specialists in their field.

Another common motivator in this category was the opportunity to learn. For many young professionals, the key factor was that the company would be able to provide them with learning and growth opportunities. It is easily explained by the reason that young employees have high ambitions and they want to increase their competence. ID 13 said: *"I joined a company where I knew they would teach me. I didn't have experience back then, but I had the interest and desire to grow"*. Quite similar opinion about learning opportunities expressed ID 12: *"I didn't have a specialized education, but the company hired and trained me. And that gave me confidence in myself"*. These examples show that many people have a desire to learn and a striving for a sense of competence (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Although biggest half of interviewees emphasized external motivators, many told that they showed interest in self-discovery and learning at the very beginning. This indicates an important shift from external to internal motivation. Once more common type on motivators were social factors. At the early stage of the career, social factors play an incredibly important role, because young employees who do not yet have enough professional experience or

confidence often compensate it through interpersonal support or inspiring leadership. As noted by Deci, Olafsen & Ryan (2017), the need for support quite strongly influence motivation.

For many interviewees, team support in the workplace and a warm work climate were crucial for maintaining motivation in the early years. ID 10 noted: *“I stayed in the company only because the team was great, we supported each other”*. Respondents often mentioned that the team was a great support during difficult life moments: *“The team was a key motivator for me. They weren’t just colleagues, they were friends who helped me through hard times”* (ID 7). As we spend quite big part of our lives at work, we begin to strongly connect to work community, so good relations with coworkers can be an important motivator. ID 4 shared: *“Support from colleagues and humor in tough situations helped a lot”*. This also shows that a proper social environment often compensates for other difficulties, such as adapting to new responsibilities or lack of confidence. So emotional safety in the team is a significant factor in employee motivation and retention (Deci, Olafsen, & Ryan, 2017).

Another factor that had a strong impact on motivation was the role of the first manager. While this factor varied greatly among answers, from very positive to quite negative experiences, for most of interviewees it was a positive one. ID 6 said: *“My first manager had a huge impact on me. He didn’t criticize, he explained and inspired. That set the tone for my whole career”*. Some interviewees expanded this topic by sharing their relations with managers. Examples of these are ID 14: *“My manager believed in me more than I believed in myself”* and ID 15: *“When the manager doesn’t pressure you but gives you room to grow, you can feel it. I wasn’t afraid to make mistakes, because I knew that I wouldn’t get eaten alive”*. All these examples confirm the role of a good manager who can be a role model and leader and has a strong and lasting impact on motivation at work.

In general, motivation at the early career stage is formed at the intersection of extrinsic factors, the interest for professional learning and the need for social support. This aligns with the theoretical approaches discussed earlier, which emphasize the importance of hygiene factors at the beginning and the gradual formation of long-term intrinsic motivation (Putra et al., 2017).

**Theme 2** is motivators at middle stage of the career. At the middle stage of the career, employee motivation shifts to deeper involvement in processes, a desire for influence, recognition, and participation in decision-making. These changes align with the growth of intrinsic motivation, which is based on the needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

The first repeated pattern in this theme is responsibility and influence. Based on the answers, this is one of the most common and important motivators at this stage. The ability to influence, build a team, create initiatives and make strategically important decisions plays a huge role in an employee's intrinsic motivation. For many participants, the sense of influence became another source of motivation. For example: *"I'm motivated by the fact that I build processes. Not just do the task, but shape the approach"* (ID 14) or quite similar opinion *"The greater the area of influence, the more meaning I see in my work"* (ID 15). These quotes show that intrinsic motivation is highly connected to a sense of competence and feeling of significance of one's own contribution (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Another common motivator was autonomy and the ability to take initiative. It fully aligns with the SDT, which identifies autonomy as one of the basic psychological needs, and its fulfillment leads to deeper engagement. ID 10 said: *"I realized I enjoy my work when I was given a project and wasn't micromanaged. Full freedom and independence gave me motivation"*. This quote of ID 10 both expressed the real desire of autonomy and in the same time explained that micromanagement can hurt employee motivation. Another short quote that highlights the negative impact of micromanagement, which can be considered opposite to the autonomy, is ID 4: *"Where is micromanagement, there is no motivation to work"*.

Closely linked factor to the autonomy, is trust from leadership. When your manager demonstrates trust, it strengthens intrinsic motivation and professional confidence. ID 7 said: *"When the manager doesn't control every step, you grow as a professional and as a person"*. ID 3 also shared that independence, which is basically a result of trust, was very important: *"After a few years in the company, I was finally given more independence. I really enjoyed that"*. Influence, autonomy, and trust activate intrinsic motivation and desire. These codes show how priorities shift from "receiving" at the beginning of the career to "creating" at the middle stage.

The second common topic at the middle stage of a career was recognition and fair evaluation. At the early-stage employees care more about support, while with a little more maturity they want to be appreciated (Kooij et al., 2011). The most obvious and probably the most effective form of recognition was verbal feedback from a manager or colleagues. Knowing that your work is noticed and valued strongly encourages you to deliver even better results. ID 5 said: *"I was always driven when my work was noticed. If no one sees your efforts, then why bother trying?"* Some participants also shared the opposite — when there are no recognition. As ID 8: *"I worked in a company where feedback was poorly given."*

*That demotivated me*". We can clearly see that presence of feedback can motivate, but its absence really demotivates employees.

Another form of recognition was participation in important decision-making. Being included in processes and seeing the impact of your work creates a sense of significance and professional growth. ID 13 shared: *"I'm motivated when my opinion influences the process. When I'm not just a performer, but have real impact"*. Many of the responses highlighted the willing to lead and influence, not just manually do tasks. ID 11 said: *"I understand I'm growing when I'm able to make important decisions"*. In such examples, the person feels involved, and that motivates them to be even more proactive.

Some participants also emphasized the importance of transparent evaluation processes and the ability to defend themselves in cases of misunderstanding. ID 2 shared a story that happened with him: *"My work was rated as unsatisfactory, but I disagreed. I was able to challenge that decision, and they reevaluated me. So, it's important for me to feel that if I'm right, that is acknowledged and not just written off due to hierarchy"*. Author believes that it is partly connected to the topic of safety, when the employee is confident that he is valued and he will be treated fairly. ID 4 also added: *"I want to work in a place where evaluation processes are transparent and clearly understood"*. Therefore, it can be concluded that fairness and clarity are important components of a healthy corporate culture. All these elements as recognition, involvement, and fair treatment become critically important factors and form an emotional connection to the organization.

The last frequently repeated was professional self-realization. Mid-career is a period when not only achieving external goals becomes important, but also achieving own goals. These are the characteristics of intrinsic motivation. (Deci & Ryan, 2000) One of the key sources of motivation at the middle career stage for many respondents is the feeling of continuous career development, which could take the form of vertical advancement, horizontal transitions, changes in functions, or work context. But for most, the important thing was the fact of movement or change in the role. There were quite a few similar responses, for example, ID 14: *"When I see no growth, my interest immediately drops"*, and ID 11: *"After 3 years in one position, I already want something new"*. ID 6 also told how important the opportunity for career growth was for him: *"I was inspired by the possibility of development, the chance to change, to learn something new"*.

In several interviews, participants told that even if vertical growth was not possible, new challenges or tasks were still necessary. For example, working with a new market or team. ID 13 said: *"I didn't have fast vertical growth, but I had many roles with different*

*functions, so it was interesting for me*". This quote explain that very frequent promotions are not mandatory if the employee keeps interested in their work. This interest can be reached by some new challenges or functions, which are not always followed by the promotion. ID 9 made a similar point: *"I transitioned between horizontal roles and that's how I expanded my experience"*. So, development in any form remains a critically important factor of motivation.

In addition to the desire to develop, the question of where exactly a person wants to grow also plays a big role. For biggest part of respondents, a key motivator was the need for a people manager role, where one can not only achieve results independently but also influence others and build their own team. ID 12 said: *"At that time I understood that this managerial experience would help me grow as a leader and open new opportunities"*. Some participants already clearly understood that they wanted to be managers. For example, ID 5: *"I'm good at bringing people together, helping them change and grow. That's probably one of my strongest qualities, and that's why I'm in management"*. Some participants even said that having their own team is crucial part of their professional identity. Example of this is ID 13: *"I don't want to work without a team, I want to be a people-leader. And that's definitely something I understand about myself now"*. So, the transition to managing others is an important factor for many specialists, as they already want to achieve results not only through their own tasks but also through their influence on others.

It can be said that motivation at the middle career stage is characterized by a focus on influence, autonomy, recognition and growth. At this stage, it is important to be involved in decision-making, to shape processes, to feel the trust of leadership, and to see real opportunities. The combination of these factors forms stable intrinsic motivation. And if the right combination of the listed intrinsic factors is created together with external reward factors, which are in fact important at all stages, it will contribute to long-term employee engagement.

**Theme 3** is accordingly motivators at late stage of a career. At the late stage of a career, employee motivation takes a new, deeper meaning. Instead of focusing on linear career development, the main source of motivation becomes the sense of purpose and value of work, as well as mentoring others. It is important to note that all respondents stated that financial reward still remains important, but it is no longer a top one priority. This corresponds to the shift in focus from individual benefits to supporting others and making an impact on the organization.

One of the most common motivators is the sense and value of work. At this stage, the main source of motivation for respondents became the awareness of their impact which can

also be called relatedness, the desire to create something meaningful (Deci & Ryan, 2000). In some responses, a clear shift from short-term results to long-term value can be heard, which shows career maturity of interviewees. ID 12 said: *“I try to create long-term stories, not just do tasks. For example, right now we are building new departments, new positions. And basically, I am the person who is shaping a new business in Ukraine, building all the processes. It inspires me”*. This story shows deep intrinsic motivation.

Mentoring also plays an important role in maintaining motivation. The desire to share knowledge with colleagues and help them grow. Some of the quotes that show such desire are: *“Training others is my source of motivation. I want to help others grow”* (ID 2) or *“I get satisfaction when I see younger colleagues grow, and I’m happy to help them”* (ID 4). We can conclude that at the late stage of professional life, a lot of attention is paid to the stage of transmission of knowledge and experience.

However, for many, it is important not only to share their experience, but also to feel self-important and that their experience is truly valued by others and by the organization. For example, couple of participants shared quite similar stories. ID 3 shared: *“There were moments when people came to me for advice, and I was glad to share it”* and ID 5 said: *“People come to me as someone who understands things, and it feels good”*. These quotes give the clear understanding that teaching and helping others can bring satisfaction and create a strong motivation as well. ID 1 said that even the understanding that you are inspiring your team is a motivator: *“You have to be an example to others, you have to be a quality manager for your team”*.

So, at the late career stage, motivation becomes more meaningful and value-oriented. The main motivating factors become the contribution to the long-term development of the company, mentoring, and the recognition of one’s experience.

Another pattern for the late career stage is stability and security. For many, it is important not only to pass the experience but also to feel a certain stability — both emotional and financial. Over time, it becomes increasingly difficult to adapt to changes, so the stability was particularly important for older employees (Nicholson, 1984). In many responses, there was a clear desire not for growth but for predictability and structure.

At this stage, many respondents emphasized that stability and confidence in income may be more important than rapid career progression. It is not so much about salary increase, but rather about confidence in the future. ID 1, for example, said: *“I’ve found my balance, so I’m not ready to trade this position, this career, the people I work with for money”*. This citation shows not only willingness of financial, but also emotional stability and strong

connection to current team and company. ID 8 showed her strong connection to the place of work: *“It’s a kind of stability. Both financial and emotional. I feel comfortable here and don’t want to lose it”*. This shows that some participants value guarantees and safety, which is quite typical at the late career stage. However, it should be noted that only part of the respondents, a bit less than a half, emphasized the importance of stability. For others, it was not a primary factor and they were still considering growth as more important factor.

Speaking of balance, it is important to mention the need for a combination of work and personal life. For many, balance is no longer seen as a bonus, but rather as a fundamental condition. ID 11 confirmed this statement: *“It has always been important for me to separate work and family... Yes, I can work in the evening, but I must know that I will also have free time”*. Some of interviewees shared a bit different opinion. They said that work has also become a part of life over the years. For example, ID 12: *“If you don’t make your work a part of your life, you’ll never have work-life balance”*. ID 5 had also quite similar opinion as ID 12: *“When your work becomes something you truly enjoy, then balance doesn’t exist for you anymore. It’s a part of your life”*. So, work-life balance can be varied factor based on individual, but still for many of the interviewees it was a big motivator at late career stage.

To conclude, at the late career stage, ability to pass experience, stability and balance between professional and personal life become a decisive factor and big motivator. These changes are fully in line with modern theories of career development as a process that evolves depending on the life stage (Sullivan & Al Ariss, 2021).

**Theme 4** is last identified theme and it is external factors influencing motivation. Motivation is shaped not only by factors such as salary, recognition or other. Motivation is always also influenced by the broader social, economic, and political environment. In the context of the war in Ukraine, the motivational structure of many participants has changed. These changes can be seen as a reevaluation of values, which often replace previous ambitions.

The influencing factor obviously is the social-political context. For many respondents, the war became a moment that changed their attitude to work. Safety, family, and basic stability came to the priorities, while previously important goals such as career growth moved to the second place. This aligns with Cheromukhina (2024), who states that in wartime conditions, employees prioritize stability and security. The first code in this category is war and crises times. ID 13 said: *“After the war started, I lost the motivation to grow or work. I was ready to quit everything. I just wanted things to be okay”*. This clearly shows that such external factors have a strong influence on person’s emotional health and can lead to the

emotional burnout. Many interviewees as ID 14 started thinking about safety and reconsider past goals: *“When the war began, I realized I started thinking more about stability”*. These quotes confirm that in extreme circumstances people reconsider their goals, as adapting to changes requires rethinking (Nicholson, 1984).

People often had to change locations, moving to other cities or countries. But changing locations is not an easy challenge, especially when one has a family. ID 13 said: *“We went to Poland with the kids. For me, changing country where I live was very hard, it was like the end of the world...”*. ID 6 also shared a story about relocation: *“We’ve moved between the U.S. and back three times already. Once I even had to take a career break for eight months”*. All of interviewees, who had to change their location, highlighted that it was emotionally hard for them.

Many respondents also noted the company’s role during this difficult time. ID 3: *“The best decision was to stay here. Because here you get maximum support, maximum stability. And what our company has done: additional payments, relocation support, emotional help...”*. It shows that despite difficult circumstances, if company provides necessary support, employees retention will still be high. Supporting this opinion, ID 5 said about his company: *“I can be myself, not stress out, and you always have both financial and moral support. It’s a stability that helps you think about the future, not just about surviving”*. Additionally, several male participants mentioned the importance of military reservation. Military reservation is when you cannot be officially recruited in army. ID 6 shared: *“There was a period when I left home with fear because I wasn’t sure if my documents were in order. With the reservation, it became much calmer”*. To summarize, the war became one of the key external factors influencing the motivation of Ukrainian employees. In such conditions, companies need to show care to provide support and maintain employee’ motivation and emotional stability.

One more significant influencing factor is organizational changes or limitations. In addition to the global context, employee motivation depends on internal changes within the organization itself. Processes such as restructuring or transformation often become critical points in career motivation. They can either open new opportunities for professional growth or demotivate.

The first code is organizational changes. This may include organizational transformation or restructuring, the relocation of departments, or other shifts. This is especially characteristic of large international companies. Some interviewees shared difficult experiences related to such changes. ID 7 described a recent situation: *“For any person, change is stressful, any change. But you can’t always control it... I really love my team, so it*

*was hard coming to a team that technically is no longer your team... it was difficult".*

ID 14 said about the same situation happening, because they work together with ID 7: *"Right now there are many changes happening in company X... a cluster change, the regional team is now in charge. It's not easy..."*. So, any transformation at work can create difficulties in adaptation.

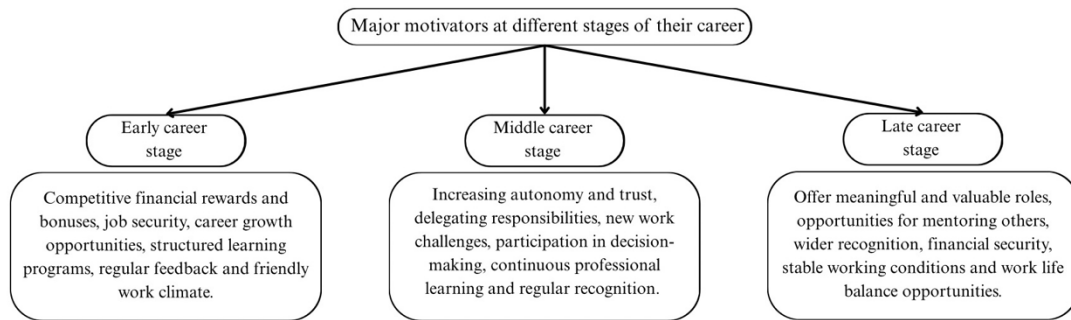
For some participants, certain limitations within the company or the sector were also very difficult. These organizational limitations or transformations often negatively impacted employee motivation, as they forced people to adapt or blocked their development.

ID 14 shared: *"These are very fundamental changes for a person. These relocations... they happen very frequently. I think it's typical for this sector. And it's very hard, especially when you're comfortable in your current place"*. Some of participants even felt impossibility to grow further without relocating to the capital city: *"I don't want to move now, because it's very difficult. But without relocation it's impossible to move forward in my career"* (ID 13). The lack of or limitations of growth opportunities is one of the most demotivating factors, and unfortunately, it was quite commonly mentioned among the interviewees.

In the conclusion of this theme, employee motivation is shaped not only by internal professional factors but also in close connection with the external environment. Politics or organizational changes can significantly reshape one's career path and motivation.

**Summing up** all of the disused themes, we can make a conclusion about major motivators at each career stage, as well as provide some recommendations for HR managers.

The empirical findings obtained from interviews with 15 managers from Royal Canin, MARS, and Philip Morris confirmed theoretical ideas. At the early career stage, employees prioritized financial rewards, professional development, and social integration. Employees at the middle stage valued autonomy, recognition, increased responsibility, and opportunities for growth. Finally, at the late career stage, motivation became mostly intrinsic, focused on mentorship, purpose, emotional comfort and stability at work. Although all participants said that extrinsic motivators like money never loses its relevance, it is no longer the primary motivating factor in late career stage. This aligns with Herzberg's two-factor theory, which states that hygiene factors do not create motivation but prevent dissatisfaction. To visualize result from empirical study, Figure 4 was created.



*Figure 4: Results from empirical study on major motivators*

Source: compiled by author

Also, during the interviews, it was noticeable how all the respondents mentioned all three basic psychological needs defined by SDT theory, which demonstrates relevance of this theory in studying motivation. The need for competence was noticeable through the importance of professional development, especially at the early and middle career stages. The need for autonomy was showed in the desire of employees to have decision-making and freedom, especially at the middle stage. Finally, the need for relatedness appeared at all stages but more often closer to the late career stage.

Based on the information obtained, several concrete recommendations for HR managers can be made. At the early career stage, motivational strategies should emphasize competitive salaries, clear career development paths, and strong onboarding programs that include mentorship and social integration. At the middle career stage, managers should focus on expanding autonomy, providing opportunities for influence and leadership, ensuring transparent evaluation systems, providing continuous professional learning and regular recognition. At the late career stage, it is important to support experienced employees by emphasizing meaningful roles, such as mentoring and strategic involvement, while also ensuring emotional and financial stability.

### **Conclusion**

The aim of this study was to identify the major intrinsic and extrinsic motivators at different stages of employees' careers. By using a combination of motivation theories and qualitative data from interviews with employees of Ukrainian FMCG companies, this research provided a detailed understanding of the key motivators at the early, middle, and late career stages.

To achieve the aim, the theoretical foundation explained necessary concepts, defined early, middle and late career stages and combined classic theories, included Maslow's hierarchy of needs, Herzberg's two-factor theory, Self-determination theory, Boundaryless

career theory and Work role transition theory. In addition, the study discussed more modern perspectives on career and its nonlinear nature. As well as it explored specific characteristics of FMCG sector and context Ukrainian labor market during wartime. This theoretical foundation allowed the research to accurately interpret finding received from empirical study.

The empirical study applied qualitative research using thematic analysis. Research was based on narrative interviews with 15 professionals working in three international FMCG companies in Ukraine as a data for research. These participants, selected through purposive selection, with such criteria as people management, FMCG and international experience. The interviews provided in-depth insights into the motivational drivers at the early, middle, and late stages of a career.

The findings of empirical study confirmed that employee motivation evolves significantly throughout the career lifecycle. The study reached the aim by identifying major intrinsic and extrinsic motivators at each of defined career stages. These findings support the view that motivation is not static, but shaped by internal values and external needs. The study also highlighted the unique challenges of maintaining motivation in the Ukrainian labor context. The ongoing war and economic instability were identified as significant external factors influencing motivators, showing the relevance of psychological safety and team support.

The results contribute to both academic literature and practical HR applications by providing specific insights about employees motivation. Despite the valuable findings of this research, it has limitations:

1. **Sample.** The research included only managerial level employees from three international FMCG companies. This limits the possibility to generalize results, because they may be different among employees at other levels, smaller local businesses, or different sectors.
2. **Qualitative method.** The study relied only on qualitative method, namely on narrative interviews. This approach provided deep understanding, but a quantitative study could allow for statistical generalization of the results.
3. **Time limitation.** The interviews were conducted at a single point in time, so they cannot fully show the dynamic evolution of motivation. A longer and repeatable research could offer a more comprehensive understanding of how motivational drivers change.

4. Critical external factors. This study was made with a focus on the Ukrainian market during wartime, but this factor unfortunately makes it impossible to generalize the findings to other markets not under such influence of the war.

Future research should consider these limitations. The author recommends conducting a larger-scale study in different sectors and interviewing employees at different levels. A larger sample size would also allow for statistical data analysis, which would increase the accuracy of the results. Additionally, the author would recommend conducting research without critical external factors such as war or economic instability, because it will provide more opportunities for data generalization.

In conclusion, a correct strategic understanding of employee motivation at different career stages is crucial for consistent motivation, retention, and productivity. By adapting motivational strategies to career stages, organizations can highly improve their effectiveness. This study will help future research, which explore different contexts and use bigger samples, to expand finding on major motivators at different career stages.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A

#### Description of discussed theories

Theory	Description	References
Maslow's hierarchy of needs	This theory categorizes all human needs into a five-level hierarchy: physiological, safety, belonging, esteem, and self-actualization. According to Maslow's hierarchy, an individual has to meet the previous-level need before progressing to the next level. Motivation can be created only in cases where the previous-level need is fully satisfied and the higher-level need is not satisfied. Then the higher level becomes a motivational level. Physiological needs include essential and basic things for existence, such as food, water, sex, etc. Safety needs are described as physical and financial security and stability, when a person does not have stress about an uncertain future. Belonging includes social connections, communication, and life in society. Esteem needs can be described as a feeling of recognition, respect, and support. The last self-actualization need is a very subjective need, which includes the fulfillment of individuals' potential and ambitions and achievements.	Maslow (1951)
Self-determination theor	Self-determination theory is a commonly used theory which distinguishes between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivators are internal, often emotional factors, such as autonomy, purposeful and meaningful work, recognition of achievements, and transparency. This can be described as any internal satisfaction that comes from participating in an activity. Extrinsic motivators, on the other hand, are external factors such as salary increases, bonuses, promotions, rewards, or any other external benefits. Self-determination theory highlights the simultaneous existence of both intrinsic and extrinsic motivators, stating that they always co-exist. Additionally, self-determination theory distinguishes three key psychological needs of individuals and states that if all of them are fully fulfilled, then the employee is the most motivated. These three psychological needs include: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. The autonomy need means that a person has the freedom of decision-making, allowing them to make self-relevant and meaningful choices. The competence need means that an individual feels confident in their expertise, mastery, and the effectiveness of their work. The relatedness need is a feeling of belonging to people, an idea, or a company that makes this connection emotionally relevant to a person.	Deci & Ryan (2000), Gagné & Deci (2005), Deci, Olafsen, & Ryan (2017)
Herzberg's two-factor theor	Herzberg's two-factor theory of motivation distinguishes between two categories of factors: hygiene factors and motivators. Hygiene factors include salary, job security, working conditions, and interpersonal relationships. They help	Hunt et al. (2012), Putra et al. (2017)

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Boundaryless career theory	<p>to avoid dissatisfaction, but they do not increase motivation or satisfaction. Motivators, on the other hand, directly influence employee motivation and engagement. Common examples of motivators are recognition, higher responsibility, opportunities for growth, meaningful work, and leadership. Herzberg's two-factor theory states that if employers need only short-term results, hygiene factors are the most relevant for that purpose. However, if employers aim to achieve long-lasting motivation and engagement, they should concentrate on motivators. Motivators become effective only when hygiene factors are fully satisfied. If the hygiene factors are not met, the motivators will not produce the intended results.</p> <p>Boundaryless career theory moves away from traditional, linear career paths in a single organization, which were very common in the past. This theory is more modern and it takes into account that most careers in today's labor market are nonlinear, because employees move between roles, companies, and even sectors.</p> <p>The main difference between boundaryless career theory and others is that it focuses on individual goals, values, and definitions of success. In this theory, a growing salary or frequent promotions are no longer seen as the sole definition of career success, because that view is based only on an organizational structure and ignores individual values. Following this, in order to create motivation in the workplace, companies need to consider internal factors.</p> <p>Boundaryless career theory evaluates career success and motivation as a combination of objective factors, such as salary or a higher position, and subjective factors, such as emotions, values, and beliefs. It emphasizes the importance of the employee's will and emotions, and suggests that career decisions should be shaped both objectively and subjectively.</p>	Arthur et al. (2005), Wiernik & Kostal (2018)
Work role transition theor	<p>Work role transition theory explores how people psychologically and behaviorally adapt to changes in their work environments. These changes include various types: promotions, lateral moves, sector changes, or a return to work after a break. The theory describes transitions as opportunities to change identity, acquire new skills, and pursue personal development. Work role transition theory emphasizes that transitions give employees certain opportunities.</p> <p>However, this theory also points out that role changes can be both motivating and demotivating, depending on an individual's resilience and the support they receive from the organization. Support may include mentoring or training. For some workers, even a positive transition and improved conditions can cause stress or burnout, so the theory recommends providing employees with sufficient support and time to adapt.</p>	Nicholson (1984)

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## Appendix B

## Questions for interviews

Sections	Questions
Introductory questions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Could you please tell me a bit about yourself — what is your current role and where do you work?</li> <li>2. How long have you been working in the FMCG sector?</li> <li>3. How did your professional career begin? What was your initial field, direction, or position?</li> <li>4. What kind of emotions do you feel when you think back to the beginning of your career journey?</li> <li>5. In your opinion, is your career path typical for this industry, or is it rather unique?</li> <li>6. Would you say your career path has been more the result of careful planning or of unexpected opportunities?</li> <li>7. How do you generally feel about changes in your career? Do you enjoy adapting to new challenges, or do you prefer stability?</li> </ol>
Questions related to early career stage	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What brought you to this company, what attracted you to it? Were there any factors that influenced your decision to start working there, or was it more due to circumstances?</li> <li>2. Were you more motivated by a desire to grow, earn money, find stability – or something else?</li> <li>3. Did you have a clear career goal at that time, or were you more trying out something new?</li> <li>4. What motivated you to stay in this company at the beginning of your career?</li> <li>5. What aspects of your work did you enjoy at that time? And what could demotivate you or cause internal stress?</li> <li>6. How did you perceive feedback from management during the early stage? How important was it for you?</li> <li>7. What development or learning opportunities did you have at that time? How important were those opportunities for you?</li> <li>8. If you think back to the beginning of your career, which motivators were most important to you?</li> </ol>
Questions related to middle career stage	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Remember a period when you already had some experience and felt confident in your profession. When did you first realize that you had become a professional in your field? How did this realization affect your motivation?</li> <li>2. How has your motivation changed compared to the beginning of your career?</li> <li>3. What has become more significant for you: salary, stability, influence, development, or something else?</li> <li>4. Do you remember a moment when you were offered more responsibility? How did you react to it?</li> <li>5. Have you ever experienced a moment of burnout? How did you deal with it?</li> <li>6. What does professional growth mean to you right now?</li> <li>7. How do you manage the balance between work and personal life at this stage?</li> </ol>

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Question  
related to late  
career stage

8. In your opinion, which internal attitudes, values, and motivators changed during the middle stage of your career?
  1. Do you think you have already reached certain heights in your career?
  2. What currently keeps you in the profession? What motivates you to continue in this field?
  3. Are money and financial bonuses still a the most relevant for you? Are they the main motivator or are they starting to be replaced by something else?
  4. Do you feel the need to share knowledge or support younger colleagues?
  5. What does it mean to you to ‘leave a mark’ in the profession or company? Do you think about it?
  6. How do you feel about changes at work — such as new technologies, younger employees, or new managers? How do you adapt?
- Questions  
related to the  
impact of war
1. How has the war in Ukraine affected your attitude to work, career, or life in general?
  2. Have you noticed any changes in your motivation or values since the beginning of the war? What exactly has changed?
  3. How did the company you work for respond to the situation? Did it influence your motivation?
  4. What helps you remain professionally active despite the overall uncertainty?
  5. If you had to give advice, how to stay motivated and avoid burnout?
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Source: created by author based on Arthur et al. (2005); Cheromukhina (2024); Deci & Ryan (2000); Deci, Olafsen, & Ryan (2017); Gagné & Deci (2005); Hunt et al. (2012); Maslow (1951); Nicholson (1984); Putra et al. (2017); Rich et al. (2010); Super (1980); Wiernik & Kostal (2018); Zelenko et al. (2024)

## Appendix C

## Coding table

Theme	Category	Code	Definition of the code
Early career stage motivation	1. Extrinsic motivators	a) Financial compensation	Salary or other primary source of income that cover basic needs.
		b) Additional material benefits	Non-salary financial benefits like a company car, insurance, or performance bonuses.
		c) Company's prestige	Work for a well-known or reputable company or brand.
		d) Stability and security	Official employment, job security, "white salary" that gives feeling of predictability.
	2. Professional interest and learning	a) Curiosity and trying oneself	Desire to explore different jobs and roles to understand own strengths.
		b) Opportunity to learn	Training, mentorship by manager, or practical learning experience.
	3. Social factors	a) Work climate	Friendly team, emotional support and positive work environment.
		b) First manager	Influence of a first manager as a mentor, motivator, or role model.
	Middle career stage motivation	1. Responsibility and influence	a) Sense of influence
b) Feeling of autonomy			Work independently without constant micromanagement.
c) Trust from leadership			Get trust from linear or nonlinear managers.
2. Recognition and fair evaluation		a) Verbal feedback	Receive positive feedback and recognition from managers or colleagues.
		b) Participation in decision-making	Get involved in important decisions, contribute to new ideas and processes.
		c) Transparent evaluation processes	Clear and fair performance assessments with the chance to appeal these assessments.
3. Professional self-realization		a) Continuous career development	Constant progress, through promotions or horizontal role changes.
	b) New challenges or tasks	Engaged in new responsibilities, markets, projects.	

Late career stage motivation	1. Sense and value of work	c) Role in management a) Awareness of own impact b) Mentoring others c) Feeling of self-importance	Lead teams and influence others through leadership. Contribute long-term value and shape the organization. Teaching and supporting the growth of younger colleagues. Feeling valued and respected for experience and expertise.
	2. Stability and balance	a) Financial stability  b) Emotional stability  c) Work-life balance	Stable and predictable income that ensures comfort and financial safety. Stable position with calm work environment and reduced stress. Separation between professional and personal life.
External factors influencing motivation	1. Social-political impact	a) Change of values due to war b) Work location changes c) Support of the company	Reevaluation of life priorities under the influence of war. Change in geography of work (city/country/remote). Help from company during various crises times.
	2. Organizational changes or limitation	a) Organizational changes b) Limitations in the company	Changes in company structure, strategy, or operations. Different types of limitations that reduce intrinsic motivation.

Source: compiled by author based on interviews conducted

## Resümee

### PEAMISED MOTIVATSIOONI JUURID ERINEVATES KARJÄÄRIETAPPIDES: TÕENDID UKRAINA KIIRELT LIKUVATEST TARBEKAUPADE ETTEVÕTETELT

Selle uuringu eesmärk on välja selgitada töötajate peamised sisemised ja välised motivaatorid karjääri alguses, keskel ja lõpus. Täpsemalt uurib see uuring empiirilises osas, kuidas väliste ja sisemiste motivaatorite väärtus muutub Ukraina FMCG ettevõtetes karjääri etappide vahel.

See uuring täidab uurimislünga, pakkudes ülevaadet sellest, kuidas töötajate motivatsioonivajadused muutuvad sõltuvalt nende karjääri etappidest. Olemasolevad uuringud pakuvad ülevaadet töömotivatsiooni olemusest, kuid need ignoreerivad sageli selle dünaamilist arengut, unustades karjääri etapid. See artikkel keskendub peamiselt karjääri etappidele ja nende mõjule motivatsioonile FMCG sektori pingelises kontekstis ja Ukraina ebastabiilses töökeskkonnas. Lünga täitmiseks rakendab see uuring kvalitatiivset lähenemisviisi. Narratiivsed intervjuud viidi läbi 15 juhiga kolmest rahvusvahelisest FMCG ettevõttest: Royal Canin, MARS ja Philip Morris. Intervjueeritavatel oli kõigil üle kümne aasta kogemust selles valdkonnas ja nad olid juhtivatel ametikohtadel rahvusvahelistes ettevõtetes.

Empiiriline analüüs kinnitab, et motivatsioon ei ole staatiline. Karjääri alguses seadsid töötajad esikohale rahalise tasu, professionaalse arengu ja sotsiaalse integratsiooni. Keskmise karjäärietapi töötajad hindasid autonoomiat, tunnustust, suurenenud vastutust ja kasvuvõimalusi. Lõpuks, karjääri hilisemas etapis muutus motivatsioon valdavalt sisemiseks, keskendudes mentorlusele, eesmärgile, emotsionaalsele mugavusele ja stabiilsusele tööl.

Uuring järeldab, et motivatsioonistrateegiaid ei tohiks üldistada kõigile töötajatele. Personalijuhid peavad tunnistama motivatsioonivahendite kohandamise olulisust töötajate karjäärietappidele. Kui personalijuhid kasutavad kõigi töötajate puhul samu lähenemisviise, riskivad nad kogunud töötajate demotiveerimise või nooremate töötajate vajaduste eiramisega. Lisaks näitavad tulemused, et ebastabiilsed välised tingimused, nagu sõda või organisatsioonilised ümberkorraldused, suurendavad stabiilsuse ja emotsionaalse turvalisuse vajadust kõigis etappides.

Kokkuvõttes aitab see väitekiri kaasa karjäärietapispetsiifilise motivatsiooni sügavamale mõistmisele FMCG sektori ja Ukraina tööturu ainulaadses kontekstis. See rõhutab personalijuhtimise motivatsioonilähenede vastavusse viimise olulisust töötajate arenevate väärtuste ja psühholoogiliste vajadustega, et parandada töötajate hoidmist, kaasatust ja tulemuslikkust kõigis karjäärietappides.

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*13/05/2025*