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*Viktoriia Bozhkova, Mykhailo Bilukha***THE ESSENCE AND CONTENT OF PRODUCT DISTRIBUTION AS  
AN ECONOMIC CATEGORY****Sumy State Pedagogical University named after A. S. Makarenko**

The volatile and turbulent environment requires the ability to timely identify, analyze and counteract challenges in the field of product distribution, which is the key to sustainability, competitiveness and successful development of business entities. Effective distribution not only optimizes distribution processes but also enhances the efficiency of management decisions, which helps to reduce costs and increase profitability. At the same time, the lack of clear conceptual approaches to defining the essence of distribution complicates the integration of its various aspects into a unified management system and requires a comprehensive understanding of the theoretical foundations for the study of distribution as an economic category. In order to systematize the existing approaches to the concept of “product distribution”, a content analysis of definitions presented in the works of scholars was conducted; based on the structural and logical analysis, the key components of the content of this concept were allocated; using the methods of comparison and analogy, common and distinctive features in the interpretation of the essence of distribution by different researchers were identified; taking into account a thorough analysis of the advantages and disadvantages of existing approaches to the definition of product distribution, the author’s vision was substantiated using the methods of induction and deduction. Thus, the study made it possible to systematize current approaches to defining distribution in terms of chronology and three-component structure (essence, content and result of the phenomenon), which served as the basis for the author’s definition. The authors propose to understand distribution as a complex system that ensures timely and efficient movement and sale of necessary products to end consumers in accordance with their needs and demands with a high level of service and realization of economic interests of participants. Therefore, the proposed definition of the concept of “distribution” combines the key aspects of the definitions presented in the literature, conceptually reflects its essence and content with an emphasis on a systematic approach and covers marketing, logistics and commercial contexts.

**Keywords:** marketing activity, logistics activity, commercial activity, distribution, selling, products, sales, concept structure.

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***Introduction and problem statement***

Distribution is an important element of the operations of modern enterprises, as it directly affects their economic performance. Moreover, effective distribution ensures optimal market coverage, timely delivery of products to customers, and increased

customer satisfaction, which, in turn, helps to increase revenues and strengthen the company’s competitive position. Distribution also significantly affects the company’s market position and brand. Fast and reliable delivery of products boosts customer loyalty and satisfaction, which increases repeat purchases and

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positive feedback. This, in turn, helps to expand the customer base and strengthen long-term relationships with partners. Efficient distribution also allows businesses to quickly adapt to changes in demand and market conditions, minimizing the risks of delivery delays and warehouse overload. In addition, optimization of logistics processes helps to reduce operational costs, which allows companies to maintain competitive prices and increase margins.

Furthermore, efficient distribution allows businesses to respond promptly to changes in market conditions and adapt to new challenges. This becomes especially important in the context of globalization and increasing competition, when businesses must quickly react to changes in demand and adapt their distribution channels to ensure product availability throughout different regions.

Product distribution is not only a key element of economic systems, but also an important aspect for the effective functioning of modern companies in all industries. This process ensures the transition of products from the producer to the end consumer, covering various channels and tools to do this. The scientific interpretation of product distribution allows us to consider it in terms of strategic planning, data analysis, technological innovation, and market development [1].

Research in the field of product distribution facilitates the development of new strategies aimed at increasing the efficiency and competitiveness of companies, and the scientific interpretation of product distribution reflects current trends in production and consumption, contributing to the sustainable success of business entities.

#### ***Analysis of recent research and publications***

Conceptual approaches to understanding distribution, selecting its participants, formalizing relations between them and other issues of distribution management have been actively studied in the works of both foreign and domestic researchers, among whom are Krykavskiy Ye., Pererva P., Kovalchuk S., Chukhrai N., Zhukov S., Bilovodska O., Falovich V. and others. For example, in the studies of Chatterji S., Chaudhuri R., Vrontis D., Kadic-Maglajlic S. [2], Dorokhova L., Kuuzik A., Dymytrov R., Pentus K., Dorokhov O., Petrova M. [3], Lee K. J., Lee S. [4], Ristanovic V., Tosovic-Stevanovic A., Maikan S., Munthean A. [5], Shubita M. F. [6], Van L., Fan Kh., Gong T. [7], Khanfar I., Dalbakh I., Attei A., Al-Sheikh M. [8], Takada Kh. [9], McBain J. [10], Sepekhri M. [11] have confirmed the significant impact of distribution on the economic indicators of the enterprise (market share, sales, product demand, etc.), and also emphasized that with well-established

distribution networks, the indicators of profitability and sustainability in the market are higher. However, despite the significant developments, modern changes in consumer behavior, technological progress and the emphasis on sustainable development require ongoing research to understand their influence on the product distribution, which would take into account the current challenges for business entities.

#### ***The purpose of the article***

The purpose of this research is to systematize scientific perspectives on the interpretation of the concept of “distribution”, and also to justify the author’s approach to defining its essence and content which corresponds to the current realities of business entities’ functioning.

To achieve this purpose, the following tasks were set:

- to conduct a content analysis of concept definitions of “distribution” presented in the works of scholars and to identify the key components of its content based on structural and logical analysis;

- to identify common and distinctive features in the interpretation of the essence of distribution by different researchers using the methods of comparison and analogy;

- to propose the author’s own approach to understanding the essence and content of distribution of products as an economic category, considering a thorough analysis of the advantages and disadvantages of existing approaches and the use of induction and deduction methods.

#### ***Main material***

In today’s world, product distribution is viewed as a science of material flow management, which has become an independent area of economic science and practice. There are numerous approaches to the interpretation of this category, which is due to different content and tasks. Each area of activity, whether it is marketing, production, logistics or trade, has its own vision of distribution that reflects its specifics. This leads to different interpretations of this concept, which take into account both economic and managerial aspects, creating a wide range of approaches and emphasizing the multifaceted nature and complexity of this category.

This article systematizes the existing approaches to understanding the content of product distribution as an economic category based on the approach of Starostina A.O., Kravchenko V.A., Nahachevska T.V. [1]. The results of the author’s systematization are presented in Table 1. Moreover, it is important to note that the authors also interpret product distribution as allocation or dispensation.

Table 1

**Systematization of approaches to understanding the essence and content of product distribution as an economic category (according to the approach of Starostina A.O., Kravchenko V.A., and Nahachevska T.V. [12])**

Author, concept, year, source	Essence of the phenomenon	Content of the phenomenon	Result of the phenomenon
1	2	3	4
Apopyi V. et al. ... the promotion of products to the end consumer with the involvement of distributors and dealers on the basis of a unified marketing and technological policy developed by the supplier, 2008 [13].	–	promotion of products to the end consumer with the involvement of distributors and dealers based on a unified marketing and technological policy developed by the supplier	–
Bashuk T. ... structures and means that allow a manufacturing enterprise to reach a customer-consumer, 2007 [14].	structures and means	–	an opportunity for the manufacturing company to reach the customer-consumer
Bilovodska O., Domina O. ... a system of relations between producers, their suppliers, intermediaries and end users for the supply of products and services to consumers to coordinate and realize the economic interests of all participants in this process, 2024 [15].	system	supply of products and services to consumers	coordination and realization of the economic interests of all participants in the supply process
Bolvinova A. ... comprehensive logistics activities, which involves the promotion of products from the manufacturer to end consumers, organization of product distribution in the segment, on the territory, organization of sales, pre-sales and after-sales service, 2021 [16].	comprehensive logistics activity	promotion of products from the manufacturer to end consumers, organization of product distribution, sales, and service	–
Boniar S., Hrabitchenko K. ... the process of promoting products, in which the main aspects are the formation of high-quality service and effective management of resources to meet the needs, 2024 [17].	process	product promotion	creating high-quality service and efficient resource management to meet customer needs
Hayvanovych N. ... a set of interrelated functions implemented by subjects of joint (partnership, contractual, legally institutionalized) activities for the distribution and promotion of products (products, works, services) from the manufacturer (first representative) to the end consumer on the basis of integrated strategic and tactical management, which allows to ensure optimal movement of products, turnover rate of working capital and high efficiency of commodity exchange processes, marketing and logistics, 2017 [18].	set of functions	distribution and promotion of products from the manufacturer (first representative) to the end consumer on the basis of integrated strategic and tactical management	Ensuring optimal movement of products, speed of working capital turnover and high efficiency of exchange processes, marketing and logistics
Huzhel Yu. ... organization of the products movement from the producer to the buyer by distributing products for sale through the distribution network, 2018 [19].	organization	products movement from the producer to the buyer through the distribution of products	Sales through the distribution of products
Zhukov S. ... the formation of a sales management and planning system across various distribution channels, bringing the supplier closer to the consumer of its products, 2019 [20].	system	management and planning of sales in various sales channels	proximity of the supplier to the consumer
Klapkiv Yu. ... the process of moving products and services from the producer to the end consumer, 2018 [21].	process	the movement of products and services from the producer to the end consumer	–

1	2	3	4
Krykavskiy Ye. ...the process and structure that covers the movement of products from the producer to the end consumers and includes all actions aimed at ensuring the availability of the product for consumers at the right place and time. It is a tool for adjusting the supply of products to the demand for them, 2005 [22].	process and structure	movement of products from the producer to the end consumers	ensuring the availability of the product for consumers at the right place and time, adjusting the supply of products to the demand for them
Litvinenko M., Protsenko N., Chorna I. ... a complex system that includes analysis and practical actions aimed at effective sales, 2017 [23].	system	analysis and action	effective sales
Lozynsky V., Mishchuk I. ... a complex economic system that unites a producer of finished products and various intermediaries who, on a contractual basis (on the basis of a distribution agreement), jointly carry out marketing, commercial, logistics activities to promote products to the end consumer and sell them in accordance with the strategy of the business entity that organizes such a system in compliance with the terms of sale, sales prices, service standards and under its control, 2010 [24].	system	an association of a producer of finished products and intermediaries who jointly carry out marketing, commercial and logistics activities on a contractual basis	Product promotion to the end consumer and its sale in accordance with the entity's strategy under control and in compliance with the established conditions, selling prices, and service standards
Naydenov I. ... activities related to the receipt of products, their storage until the moment of order receipt, and subsequent delivery to customers, 2016 [25].	activity	Receiving products, storing them until the order is received and then delivering them to customers	–
Ramenska S., Sabirova I. ... the art of creating additional value of products and services for consumers 2011 [26].	art	Creating additional value for products and services	–
Rozumei S., Nikolayenko I. ... activities aimed at overcoming spatial, temporal, and quantitative differences in products between the production and consumption spheres, as well as transferring ownership rights to the products in order to satisfy consumer needs and achieve the goals of the enterprise in target markets, 2017 [27].	activity	overcoming spatial, temporal, and quantitative differences in products between the production and consumption spheres, transfer of ownership rights to the products	meeting customer needs and achieving the company's goals in target markets
Falovich V. ... type of activity on wholesale purchase and subsequent sale of products in the local market, 2017 [28].	activity	wholesale purchase and subsequent sale of products on the local market	–
Chukhrai N. ... a set of actions (measures) and decisions related to the offer of a product (products) in a place and time that meet the requirements of customers, 2001 [29].	a set of actions (measures) and decisions	offering product(s) in place and time	compliance with customer requirements

It should be noted that Table 1 does not provide an exhaustive list of existing definitions of product distribution, however, in our opinion, it is sufficient as it systematically reflects the main approaches to its understanding, which other scholars describe and explain in their works [30-35].

Furthermore, it is possible to trace certain changes in the understanding of this economic category in chronological terms. Thus, until the first decade of the 21st century, the essence and content of distribution was mainly defined as a process

phenomenon of moving or promoting products to end consumers, however, without a clear understanding of the distribution result. In the second decade of the 21st century, the emphasis shifted to the management and value aspects of distribution, their comprehensive understanding and reflection of both logistics and marketing guidelines. The systematic nature of the understanding of distribution is demonstrated by the works of the third decade of the 21st century, in which the result of this phenomenon is the alignment and realization of the economic interests of distribution

entities, however, some manifestations of this understanding can be identified in 2010–2020 by such scholars as V. Lozynsky and I. Mishchuk.

Hence, based on the analysis conducted above, we will classify the selected approaches to defining product distribution (Table 2).

Table 2

Classification of the approaches to the definition of “distribution”

№	Author	Essence of the phenomenon							Content presence	Result presence	
		structures and methods	set of actions and decisions	process	set of functions	organization	system	activity			art
1	Apopyi V. et al.									+	
2	Bashuk T.	+									+
3	Bilovodska O., Domina O.						+			+	+
4	Bolvinova A.							+		+	
5	Boniar S., Hrabitchenko K.			+						+	+
6	Hayvanovych N.				+					+	+
7	Huzhel Yu.					+				+	+
8	Zhukov S.						+			+	+
9	Klapkiv Yu.			+						+	
10	Krykavskiy Ye.			+						+	+
11	Litvynenko M., Protsenko N., Chorna I.			+						+	+
12	Lozynskiy V., Mishchuk I.			+						+	+
13	Naidonov I.							+		+	
14	Ramenska S., Sabirova I.								+	+	
15	Rozumei S., Nikolaienko I.							+		+	+
16	Chukhrai N.			+						+	+
17	Falovich V.							+		+	

Thus, it can be stated that there are many approaches to explaining the essence of the economic phenomenon of “distribution” as a “process” – Krykavskiy Ye., Chukhrai N., Klapkiv Yu., Lytvynenko M., Protsenko N., Chorna I., Lozynskiy V., Mishchuk I., Boniar S.M, Hrabitchenko K.; as “activity” – Naydenov I., Rozumei S., Nikolayenko I., Falovich V., Bolvinova A.O.

Here (Table 3) we will evaluate the existing approaches to defining the concept of “distribution” on a scale from 1 to 5 points (1 point – weak compliance with the criterion; 2 points – partial compliance; 3 points – average compliance; 4 points – sufficient compliance; 5 points – high compliance) by the following criteria: component availability; definition distribution; theoretical validity; practical applicability (Table 3).

Thus, the best approaches are those of Krykavskiy Ye. – 20 points, Bilovodska O., Domina O. – 19 points, Chukhrai N. and Rozumei S., Nikolayenko I. – 18 points, Gajvanovych N., Zhukov S., Boniar S. and Hrabitchenko K. – 17 points.

It should be noted that the given definitions of distribution (Table 1) demonstrate a variety of approaches and emphases, but overall, they emphasize that distribution is associated with the movement (promotion, transportation, delivery) of products to the consumer, aimed at meeting their needs and contains a variety of elements such as logistics, marketing, sales and service.

A more detailed analysis of the approaches of this definition allows us to draw the following conclusions:

– first, most of the analyzed author’s approaches focus on that distribution is a process phenomenon of moving products to customers;

– second, the main participants or distributors are producers, intermediaries and consumers, while some authors’ approaches also cover suppliers;

– third, the purpose of distribution is to meet the needs of consumers through the optimal distribution of material flow;

– fourth, distribution is based on the effective allocation of resources, marketing, sales and services to end customers, as well as the alignment of the interests among all involved participants.

Table 3

**Assessment of existing approaches to the definition of “distribution”**

№	Author, year	Score, points				Total score
		Components presence	Definition prevalence	Theoretical substantiation	Practical applicability	
1	Apopiy V. et al.	1	4	2	4	11
2	Bashuk T.	2	2	3	4	11
3	Bilovodska O., Domina O.	5	5	5	4	19
4	Bolvinova A.	3	4	4	3	14
5	Boniar S., Hrabitchenko K.	5	5	4	3	17
6	Hayvanovych N.	5	3	4	5	17
7	Huzhel Yu.	5	3	3	4	15
8	Zhukov S.	5	4	4	4	17
9	Klapkiv Yu.	3	4	4	5	16
10	Krykavskiy Ye.	5	5	5	5	20
11	Litvinenko M., Protsenko N., Chorna I.	5	3	3	4	15
12	Lozynskiy V., Mishchuk I.	5	3	4	4	16
13	Naidonov I.	3	4	3	4	14
14	Ramenska S., Sabirova I.	3	3	2	3	11
15	Rozumey S., Nikolayenko I.	5	5	4	4	18
16	Chukhrai N.	5	4	4	5	18
17	Falovich V.	3	3	4	4	14

Considering these definitions in terms of marketing, logistics and commercial activities, they can be divided into the following groups.

First group. Distribution as the marketing activity perspective. First of all, this approach focuses on the promotion of products to end consumers based on their needs. Representatives of this approach include: Apopiy V. et al.; Bashuk T.; Klapkiv Yu.; Ramenska S., Sabirova I.; Boniar S., Hrabitchenko K.

Second group. Distribution as the logistics perspective. This approach primarily focuses on ensuring the optimal movement of material flows, taking into account the requirements of customers,

represented by Krykavskiy Ye.; Chukhrai N.; Huzhel Yu.; Naidonov I.; Rozumey S., Nikolaienko I.; Bilovodska O., Domina O.; Bolvinova A.; Hayvanovych N.

Third group. Distribution as the commercial perspective. This approach primarily focuses on the sale (realization) of finished products and their effective distribution. Representatives of this approach are Zhukov S.; Falovich V.; Lytvynenko M., Protsenko N., Chorna I.; Lozynskiy V., Mishchuk I.

Hence, considering the results of the preliminary analysis, we can develop the author’s approach to defining distribution as an economic category (Table 4).

Table 4

**Structure of the concept “distribution”**

Concept	Essence of the phenomenon	Content of the phenomenon	Result of the phenomenon
Distribution	system	timely and efficient movement and sale of necessary products and services to end consumers based on their needs and demands	high level of service and the realization of the participants' economic interests

Thus, we have defined the concept of “distribution” as a complex system that ensures timely and efficient movement and sale of necessary products to end consumers based on their needs and demands with a high level of service and realization of the participants’ economic interests.

Consequently, the improved definition integrates the key aspects of existing approaches to understanding distribution emphasizing a systemic approach that

covers marketing, logistics, and commercial contexts.

**Conclusions**

First. As a result of the analysis and systematization of existing approaches to the definition of the economic category “distribution” based on the essence, content and result of the phenomenon, the following changes in its understanding have been identified in chronological order: a) until the first decade of the 21st century, distribution was mainly

seen as a process phenomenon involving the movement or promotion of products to end consumers, without a clear understanding of its result; b) in the second decade of the 21st century, the focus shifted toward managerial and value aspects of distribution, with a more comprehensive understanding reflecting both logistics and marketing goals; c) in the third decade of the 21st century, distribution is understood as a systematic process, with the result being the alignment and realization of the economic interests of distribution participants.

Second. Considering the evaluation of existing approaches to defining the concept of “distribution” using the following criteria: the presence of components; the broadness of the definition; theoretical justification; and practical availability, the authors’ best approaches were identified and it was established that, generally the distribution is related to the movement (promotion, transportation, delivery) of products to consumers, aimed at meeting their needs and containing various elements such as logistics, marketing, sales and service. The main participants or subjects of distribution are producers, intermediaries and consumers, with some approaches also including suppliers; the purpose of distribution is to meet the needs of consumers based on the optimal allocation of material flow, based on the efficient allocation of resources, marketing, sales and service to end consumers, as well as aligning the interests of the participants involved.

Third. Authors’ approach to the definition of distribution as a complex system that ensures timely and efficient movement and sale of necessary products to consumers according to their needs and requests with a high level of service and realization of economic interests of participants is formed. This approach integrates the key aspects of distribution with a focus on a systematic approach and covers marketing, logistics and commercial contexts.

Further research on the issues of distribution management for business entities should focus on substantiating appropriate effective measures, that consider logistics, marketing and commercial guidelines and realizing the economic interests of distribution participants.

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## СУТНІСТЬ ТА ЗМІСТ ДИСТРИБУЦІЇ ТОВАРІВ ЯК ЕКОНОМІЧНОЇ КАТЕГОРІЇ

Вікторія Божкова, Михайло Білуха

Мінливе та турбулентне середовище вимагає здатності своєчасно ідентифікувати, аналізувати та протидіяти викликам у сфері дистрибуції товарів, що є запорукою стійкості, конкурентоспроможності та успішного розвитку суб'єктів господарювання. Успішна дистрибуція не лише оптимізує процеси розподілу, але й підвищує ефективність управлінських рішень, що сприяє зменшенню витрат і збільшенню прибутковості. При цьому відсутність чітких концептуальних підходів до визначення сутності дистрибуції ускладнює інтеграцію різних її аспектів в єдину систему управління і вимагає комплексного осмислення теоретичних засад дослідження дистрибуції як економічної категорії. Для систематизації існуючих поглядів на поняття «дистрибуція товарів» було проведено контент-аналіз визначень, наданих у працях науковців; на основі структурно-логічного аналізу виокремлено ключові компоненти змістовного наповнення даного поняття; за допомогою методів порівняння та аналогій виявлено спільні та відмінні риси у тлумаченні сутності дистрибуції різними дослідниками; з урахуванням ґрунтовного аналізу переваг і недоліків наявних підходів до визначення дистрибуції товарів обґрунтовано авторське бачення з використанням методів індукції та дедукції. Так, проведене дослідження дозволило систематизувати існуючі підходи до визначення дистрибуції за хронологією та трикомпонентною структурою (суть, зміст і результат явища), що стало підґрунтям для формулювання авторського визначення. Авторами дистрибуцію запропоновано розуміти як складну систему, що забезпечує вчасне й ефективне розміщення й продаж необхідних товарів кінцевим споживачам відповідно до їх потреб і запитів з високим рівнем сервісу та реалізацією економічних інтересів учасників. Таким чином, запропоноване визначення поняття «дистрибуція» поєднує ключові аспекти представлених у літературі дефініцій, концептуально відображає його сутність і зміст з акцентом на системному підході і охоплює маркетинговий, логістичний і комерційний контексти.

**Ключові слова:** маркетингова діяльність, логістична діяльність, комерційна діяльність, дистрибуція, продаж, товар, збут, структура поняття.

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## THE ESSENCE AND CONTENT OF PRODUCT DISTRIBUTION AS AN ECONOMIC CATEGORY

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*The volatile and turbulent environment requires the ability to timely identify, analyze and counteract challenges in the field of product distribution, which is the key to sustainability, competitiveness and successful development of business entities. Effective distribution not only optimizes distribution processes but also enhances the efficiency of management decisions, which helps to reduce costs and increase profitability. At the same time, the lack of clear conceptual approaches to defining the essence of distribution complicates the integration of its various aspects into a unified management system and requires a comprehensive understanding of the theoretical foundations for the study of distribution as an economic category. In order to systematize the existing approaches to the concept of "product distribution", a content analysis of definitions presented in the works of scholars was conducted; based on the structural and logical analysis, the key components of the content of this concept were allocated; using the methods of comparison and analogy, common and distinctive features in the interpretation of the essence of distribution by different researchers were identified; taking into account a thorough analysis of the advantages and disadvantages of existing approaches to the definition of product distribution, the author's vision was substantiated using the methods of induction and deduction. Thus, the study made it possible to systematize current approaches to defining distribution in terms of chronology and three-component structure (essence, content and result of the phenomenon), which served as the basis for the author's definition. The authors propose to understand distribution as a complex system that ensures timely and efficient movement and sale of necessary products to end consumers in accordance with their needs and demands with a high level of service and realization of economic interests of participants. Therefore, the proposed definition of the concept of "distribution" combines the key aspects of the definitions presented in the literature, conceptually reflects its essence and content with an emphasis on a systematic approach and covers marketing, logistics and commercial contexts.*

**Keywords:** marketing activity, logistics activity, commercial activity, distribution, selling, products, sales, concept structure.

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