

The Self-representation of Secular Spirituality Movements in Virtual Space: The Case of Lithuania

Dalia Senvaitytė

Researcher, Kaunas Faculty of Vilnius University

e-mail: dalia.senvaityte@knf.vu.lt

Gintarė Vaitonytė

Senior Researcher, Vytautas Magnus University, Educational Research Institute

e-mail: gintare.vaitonyte@vdu.lt

Eugenija Valienė

Researcher, Vytautas Magnus University, Department of Lithuanian studies

e-mail: eugenija.valiene@vdu.lt

Abstract: In the second half of the 20th century, along with the alternative New Age spirituality movement, the practice of self-improvement became widespread, and by the end of the 20st century it had become extremely widespread, permeating the most diverse areas of life in the Western world, practically becoming a mass cultural phenomenon. Accordingly, it can be described as a secular phenomenon with minimal links to traditional spirituality: the concept of spirituality has changed significantly, is often not linked to transcendental ideas and is focused on the self and self-improvement and the search for personal well-being and happiness. Relevant practices in the 21st century are particularly widespread in Lithuania.

The article examines the peculiarities of the self-presentation of spiritual self-improvement practices in Lithuania. The self-presentation of the phenomenon in virtual space is analysed and texts written by some service providers are studied. Aspects of the social communication of spiritual practices in the online space are examined from the perspective of linguistic analysis and marketing, and spirituality practices are distinguished and discussed. In this context, the needs–wants–demands relationship emerges, along with the need for self-actualisation. The online descriptions of the services offered by providers of spiritual practices are constructed according to commercial logic. The results of the linguistic analysis correlate with the findings of previous researchers about the orientation of the offered spiritual practices towards self and secular practices.

Keywords: spiritual movements, secular spirituality, New Age spirituality, spiritual practices, Self, self-actualisation, needs, text functions, text analysis, online texts

Introduction

Various self-improvement practices (such as meditation, yoga and mindfulness practices, reiki healing, various events to express femininity or masculinity, and others) are extremely popular in the Western world, including Lithuania. In the West, these practices began to spread in the 1970s due to various social and cultural changes. In the 21st century, alternative culture has gradually become a mainstream cultural phenomenon.

Representatives of various scientific disciplines, such as anthropologists, sociologists, psychologists, cultural scientists, and others, have studied this phenomenon, generally from the perspective of religious studies, which became particularly popular at the end of the 20th century. The phenomenon is often associated with new religious movements and is often treated as ‘New Age’ spirituality (Lewis 1992; Heelas 1996; Heelas 2011; Hanegraaff 1998; York 2004), as post-traditional spirituality, postmodern spirituality (Kotila 2006; Motak 2009), everyday spirituality (MacKian 2012), alternative spirituality (Partridge 2004), popular spirituality (Knoblauch 2014), or is linked to concepts of pseudo-religion or quasi-religion (Tillich 1963), etc. The phenomenon could also be interpreted as postmodern magic (O’Loughlin 1999) and has traits of magical thinking.

Various research point out that the meaning of the term spirituality, which has been used in the Christian world since ancient times, has changed in modern times (e.g. King 2004). The term 'spirituality' was originally associated with the Christian tradition and was originally derived from biblical pneumatics, or 'spirituality', which means the control of God's Spirit, and then applied to the inner life of Christians. In Christian theology and practice, this term, which is associated with the human search for holiness and inner perfection, means primarily the search for God. In modern times, the concept of spirituality has been separated from its Christian theological roots and it is now commonly used in various religious traditions, although there is no strictly equivalent concept to 'spirituality' in non-Western languages. Spirituality has gradually begun to be understood anthropologically, as an exploration of what it means to become fully human. Thus, spirituality is seen to be inseparable from the human subject itself, as an inner dimension linked to a general search for meaning, wholeness, self-transcendence, and connection with others. In this sense, the term 'spirituality' can function in multiple secular contexts and can be postulated as a potential dimension that is latent in every human being (King 2004).

These changes in the concept of spirituality began to emerge especially in the second half of the 20th century. Wouter Hanegraaff links its emergence to the New Age movements of the 1970s. He distinguishes these phenomena from earlier New Age movements in the restricted sense (which had their origins in Theosophy and Anthroposophy) (Hanegraaff 1998). According to Steven Sutcliffe, the concept of New Age spirituality gradually spread from the "subcultural pioneers" to the broader "countercultural baby boomer" groups. Between 1967 and 1974 the meaning of the term 'New Age' changed and the term 'spirituality' began to be used in a broader sense than the old religious sense to encompass a variety of alternative spiritual activities and practices (Sutcliffe 2002).

At the turn of the 21st century, the concept of 'spirituality' continued to expand. According to Boas Huss, spirituality can now be defined simply as a way of improving one's life independently of structured and institutionalised spaces. Today, spirituality is practically understood as a way of improving one's life, with an emphasis on spiritual practices rather than theories and doctrines (as opposed to the characteristics of the earlier New Age movement) (Huss: 2014).

Cornel W. Du Tois proposed the concept of secular spirituality as a name for this phenomenon, defining it as a modern phenomenon of spirituality

experienced in spheres that are separate from structured, institutionalised religion (Du Tois: 2006). This term is useful when talking about the broader phenomenon of self-improvement ideas not directly associated with any religion (even those traditionally associated with New Age traditions), formal healing or psychological practices. In many cases, these practices are not related to religion today even though there are some outward signs of it.

Most of the researchers analysed separately the peculiarities of one or other of the practices related to this phenomenon of spirituality, the origins of specific practices and the development of their diffusion, emphasising how these contemporary ideas and practices of spirituality are very eclectic and intertwined, often linked to different religious traditions, psychology, medicine, healthy lifestyles, etc. They often mean very different things to different people. Systematising these practices is very problematic. It is often difficult to distinguish them from each other, from one religion or another, or from psychological or healthy lifestyle practices recognised in the academic world.

Spirituality is closely related to general trends in the postmodern world such as individualism, religious pluralism, secularisation, etc. Consequently there is distrust of traditional authorities, institutionalised traditional religions or religion in general, the popularity of Eastern religious traditions and mystical teachings, the development of academic psychological science, transpersonal psychology, the human potential movement, the spread of ecological ideas, etc. The sociologist of religion Steven Bruce linked the 'New Age' to the milieu, the general social environment, social context (Bruce 2006).

Most of the researchers pointed out that people who engage in the self-improvement practices offered by spirituality training often do not want to associate themselves with one or other institutionalised religion, or with religion in general, but rather describe themselves as engaged in the search for spirituality, or simply say that they want to improve themselves or their quality of life in some way. Their ideas are simply a particular philosophy of life and a particular relationship to the world. Accordingly, the philosophy of secular spirituality and the self-improvement practices associated with it, unlike those associated with traditional spirituality, turn away from transcendence and focus on this material world, on the personal 'self'. Secular spirituality emphasises the interconnectedness of body, mind and spirit, and focuses on a person's physical and emotional well-being, success, 'happiness', and material gain. Belief

in the existence of a “core or true self” and the idea of “personal growth” are widespread (Hammer 2001).

Note that the development of relevant ideas and practices is closely related to the baby boomer generation, sometimes called the Me generation, which is characterised by self-oriented traits (Lasch 1984). The important cultural aspirations of this generation are self-realisation and self-fulfillment rather than social responsibility. These cultural aspirations are even more evident in the Millennial generation (Stein 2013), among whom ideas and practices of secular spirituality are even more prevalent. Undoubtedly, the development of the Internet has facilitated the mass dissemination of these ideas and practices.

In Lithuania, regardless of the specific historical context, the relevant ideas of spirituality began to spread at a similar time as in other countries in the Western world, i.e. in the 1970s and 1980s. At the beginning of the 21st century, there has been a revival of the relevant ideas and a particular spread of various spiritual practices related to these ideas, which can already be described as secular spirituality.

Some research has been devoted to the development of this phenomenon in Lithuania, especially in the field of religious studies (e.g., Ališauskienė 2014; Kuznecovienė 2016; Peleckis 2022; Pranskevičiūtė 2014).

This article analyses the self-representation of the phenomenon of modern secular spirituality and related self-improvement practices (also referred to as spiritual practices in the text) in Lithuania and its representation on the Internet. The focus is on those self-improvement practices that are believed to be unrelated to traditional spirituality but are associated with secular spirituality, which aims to improve physical and material well-being.

We assume that the popularity of this phenomenon is determined by the demand-supply principle, which means that service providers offering related services either consider and respond to the needs of society or create the necessity for the service. Service providers disseminate information about themselves in public discourse. The Internet is the dominant medium today, and communication models that are specific to virtual space are expressed within it. In this article, we have chosen to examine only texts published in Lithuanian on the websites of service providers related to the phenomenon of spirituality. They publish basic information and create the image of a trustworthy service provider.

We want to find out how this phenomenon, subject to business logic, manifests itself in a specific country (Lithuania) and language (Lithuanian).

The aim is to define what self-improvement practices are offered and what narrative of personal growth and self-help they create. From the perspective of linguistic pragmatic, the following tasks are set: conduct quantitative and qualitative research on the content published on the websites of providers of spiritual practices, distinguishing thematic directions and dominant social communication.

Methodology

The variety of self-improvement practices offered in the virtual space is abundant. According to the google.lt search engine, the keywords 'spiritual practices' in Lithuanian provide ~ 268,000 (viewed in November 2022) results. Often, as in all other countries, these practices are related to various alternative medicine practices, psychology, ideas of healthy living, etc. It should be noted that the same service providers are often not attached to a specific spiritual practice. Often, they offer different spiritual training. For example, the same service provider may offer both yoga, mindfulness, and rebreathing sessions, while another service provider may offer theta healing workshops as well as various retreats, other spiritual practices, and so on.

To explain the popularity of certain secular spiritual practices, key words related to a certain spiritual practice and its proposed activities (teachings, courses) were entered into the Google search engine, and it was observed how the information search algorithm prioritizes the results at a given time. According to the search engine google.lt in Lithuanian, the obtained results are arranged in the order of popularity presented in Table 1 (see Table 1).

The 17 specific well-known spiritual practices listed in Table 1 (the concepts 'Crystals' and 'Stones', 'Minerals', 'Femininity', 'Masculinity' used in this text are respectively referred to as 'Crystals practices', 'Stones practices' and 'Mineral practices', 'Femininity practices', 'Masculinity practices' or related trainings) were selected for further analysis. It should be noted, however, that this study does not distinguish the popular practice of 'meditation' separately, as it is part of the spectrum of many different spiritual practices (such as yoga, mindfulness, or other practices).

The information that appears on the first ten pages of the Google search engine for each practice was reviewed. Websites of service providers offering

services to spiritual practitioners (e.g., training, courses, internships) were selected for the study. Obviously, Google's search engine prioritizes sites promoted by the service providers themselves. Information on the Internet is changing and adapting to the searcher should also be considered.

Table 1. Results of frequency of mentioning spiritual practices in Google search system according to data from November 2022.

Spiritual practice	Mentions
Yoga	318,000,000
Reiki	51,600,000
Energic medicine	10,000,000
Aromatherapy	2,350,000
Stones	833,000
Crystals	746,000
Mindfulness	639,000
Angelic Support	565,000
Femininity	426,000
Masculinity	419,000
Minerals	220,000
Human design	137,000
Rebreathing	106,000
Taping	74,000
Forest Bathing	49,300
Theta healing	31,500
Retreats	11,600

The study of the websites focused on the texts. The strategies used by providers to communicate the content used to represent spiritual practices in article were analysed. To clarify this, a discourse analysis and (in some respects) a rhetorical and stylistic analysis were conducted. The texts were processed by the Text function determination tool <https://sitti.vdu.lt/teksto-funkciju-nustatymas/> developed by the Center for Computational Linguistics of Vytautas Magnus University, which obtained a word frequency list and a prototypicality table

of functions (hereafter – KLC tool). The nature of the functions of these texts is explained in the article. The analysis of the social communication aspects of the practitioners is based on the perspective of linguistic pragmatics (Marcinkevičienė 2008; Koženiauskienė 2013; Smetonienė 2009, Gabrėnaitė 2007).

Later, the frequency list of words used in the presentations was analysed and the lemmatized words repeated in the descriptions of the spiritual practices were counted. These recurring words are called ‘spotlights’ in the study because they highlight the most important aspects of each practice. This makes it possible to identify similarities and differences between spiritual practices.

Diffusion of Secular Spiritual Practices on the Internet: Linguistic Aspects

Without exception, all spiritual practices discussed in this study and practiced in Lithuania are represented in many ways: the providers of these services, who spread information about them as their field of activity, have websites, blogs, or accounts in social networks (mostly Facebook), less – on Instagram and only a small part – on YouTube. Internet media is the main communication channel, so the intentions of the service provider unfolding in it presupposes the nature of the information provided to the addressee.

On the Internet, spiritual practices are most often presented in the form of segmented texts of 400–500 words, illustrated with associative or photos of service providers (person, practice space/facility). Considering that the average human reading speed is 150–300 words per minute, it means that it takes about 3–5 minutes to read such a text. As these texts are published on web pages and/or blogs, they provide basic, essential, little or no change information about a particular spiritual practice, related services and/or providers. These types of text presentation strategies are suitable for people who are always in a hurry and save their time.

Using the KLC tool, the dominant (about 45%) texts representing spirituality practices are characterized as academic prose texts, according to their prototypicality for functions. This type of text is characterized by its descriptive and directive nature. This means that they are characterized by the expression of the modality, the present tense, the naming of alternatives and conditions.

Argumentative language characterizes academic prose texts. Academic prose texts are characterized using argumentative language, trying to influence the listener or reader, as well as long sentences, impersonal constructions. They also capture from a bit of spontaneous expressiveness, when spontaneity is infused, a bit of spoken language intonations and connections with a narrative or conversational situation.

Texts with the characteristics of an official document (17%), a fictional text (15%) and a substantive discussion (13.6%) are more than twice as common. The characteristics of official documentary texts are directive and narrative, i.e., they are modal, use the present tense, list conditions and alternatives, have third-person pronoun dominance and prepositions denoting spatial relations. In addition to these features, appellativeness and spontaneous expressiveness characterizes the official document-type essays, i.e., the use of argumentative language to influence the reader, the use of spoken language and expressiveness, and the content of the text being linked to the narrative situation. Fictional texts are characterized by spontaneous and non-spontaneous expressiveness, which can be seen in the highly expressive rich vocabulary, the features of spoken language and the links to the narrative/conversational situation. There is a directive and appellative quality in texts of this type, which means that they show signs of modality, the use of the present tense and the use of alternatives and conditions to list and argue to influence the addressee. Appellativeness and spontaneous expressiveness characterize the type of substantive discussion texts. In other words, such texts aim to influence the addressee by argumentation, spontaneity, expression and spoken language, and by focusing on the narrative situation. In other words, such texts aim to influence the addressee by arguments and facts, to actualize the content of the text, using spontaneity, expression and spoken language, and focusing on the narrative situation. Personal and emotional aspects do not play a significant role in the substantive discussion type of texts.

The smallest group of texts in terms of prototypicality of functions is identified as spoken texts (8.5%). Spontaneous expressiveness and directive characterize these texts. This means that they are characterized by spontaneity, features of spoken language, links to a narrative or conversational situation and high expressiveness. They are also appellative texts, which means that they record the use of argumentative language to influence the reader.

Looking at all the texts studied from the point of view of textual functions, the most characteristic feature of all of them is spontaneous expressiveness, which is expressed through the intonations of spoken language and a high degree of expressiveness. Spontaneity is considered a feature of spoken language, but as seen from the texts under study, it is also a feature of the written text in the given situation. The texts published on the Internet presenting spiritual practices or their service providers are part of a public discourse influenced by the global democratization process. As a result, public discourse expands and breaks canons: public speaking (i.e., public discourse) begins to take on the intonations of speaking in writing (i.e., colloquial speech). This means that the aim is not to write formally, but to write as if naturally, to give the impression of a free, lively, popular, and persuasive text. The result is an educational text with a promotional implication and/or a non-aggressive promotional text and a description of the services offered.

A closer look at these texts reveals that they are used online to make a detailed case for the relevance of their services or worldview to a potential customer, based on certain sources, such as scientific data (*Rebefingas veikia visais lygiais: fiziniu, psichiniu ir dvasiniu. Fiziniam lygmenyje keičiasi anglies dvideginio ir deguonies kiekio santykis kraujyje, tai veikia ir kitų cheminių elementų pusiausvyrą organizme, dėl to gerėja savijauta ir visų organų veikla, valosi organizmas.* [Rebreathing operates on all levels: physical, mental, and spiritual. On the physical level, it changes the ratio of carbon dioxide to oxygen in the blood, which also affects the balance of other chemical elements in the body, resulting in improved well-being and the functioning of all the organs, as well as purification of the body.]). The degree of explication of this argumentation is not uniform: the arguments are based on the thoughts of authorities (e.g., the Dalai Lama's statement: *Būkite geri, jei tai įmanoma. O tai įmanoma visada.* [‘Be kind if you can. It is always possible.’]; or *Jogai teigia, kad fizinių ir protinių tobulumą gali pasiekti kiekvienas, kuris sistematingai ir kryptingai atlieka jogos užsiėmimų programą.* [Yogis claim that physical and mental perfection can be achieved by anyone who follows a systematic and purposeful yoga program]) or their written works, thus demonstrating the ‘weight’ and uniqueness of the proposed spiritual practice; or the argument is strengthened by mentioning the founder of a particular spiritual practice and/or briefly presenting his/her views (e.g., *Šią jogos rūšį vakarų pasauliui pristatė Sri K. Pattabhi Jois.* [Sri K. Pattabhi Jois introduced this type of yoga to the western world]). Another

strategy is the positive personal experience of the service providers themselves and testimonials from satisfied clients, which encourages them to strive for the described result (*Didelis ačiū, Neringa, Human Design konsultacija kol kas yra geriausia, kas man padėjo pažinti save ir suprasti, kodėl gyvenime sekasi arba nesiseka*. [Thank you very much, Neringa, the Human Design consultation is the best thing so far that has helped me to get to know myself and to understand why I am succeeding in my life, or why I am failing in it.]). The recent example shows that one of the most influential persuasive tools is utilized – a specific positive result has already been achieved, making advertising of this nature quite evident in such posts. However, in other words, these texts have an advertising function, but they can only be described as typical advertising. These texts do not offer a concrete material object that can be easily represented (such as a car, ice cream or flowers), but a state of mind (which, for example, *padeda tapti sąmoningesniu, suvokti kas iš tiesų ESI ir K O D Ė L nori daryti, elgtis vienaip ar kitaip* [helps to become more awareness, to realize what you really ARE and what you WANT to do, to behave in one way or another]), which is essentially determined by a number of factors, the most important of which is the recipient of the service (the customer). Of course, some spirituality practices (e.g., stones, crystals, aromatherapy) use certain attributes (oils, minerals, etc.) to help achieve the client's desired outcome. The most essential element in these texts is the promise of transformation, which is expressed by focusing on certain objects of attraction.

The texts presenting spiritual practices, or their service providers highlight certain centers of attention, i.e., the objects on which they focus. These objects are described by nouns: nouns, adjectives, pronouns, and numerals. Numerals refer to the number or order of things, which are very rarely recorded (mostly referring to the days of the week on which the activities take place), and therefore will not be the focus of this class of nouns. Nouns dominate in the texts studied. The concept of a noun includes the names of things, phenomena, actions, or properties. Obviously, depending on the topic (or, in other words, on the direction of the practice of spirituality), the dominant words are those that name the practice of spirituality and/or the service provided: e.g., In the context of 'Human Design', different forms of the Lithuanian noun 'žmogus' (usually paired with 'design') or its English equivalent 'human' (+ 'design') are most common, while in the context of energy medicine, the dominant forms are variants of nouns and adjectives with the root 'energ-' (e.g. *cosmo-energy, cosmic, cosmo /*

bio-), and so on. However, when summarizing all the texts studied, there are 2 dominant nouns – ‘žmogus’ [human] and ‘gyvenimas’ [life] (e.g., *Continuous self-development of the personality in the four main spheres of a human's life* [here and further in the text underlined by the authors]: *managing emotions, building harmonious relationships, pursuing life goals, and achieving financial well-being*). This suggests a focus on the person and his/her earthly existence.

Adjectives describe the characteristics of things: in a specific case, this part of speech is used to describe a spiritual practice/service (*klasikinėmis autentiškomis jogos žiniomis*) [with classical authentic knowledge of yoga] and the benefits it provides, the expected effect (*ugdome dorybingas charakterio savybes, lankstų kūną; kuriam harmoningą santykį su pasauliu ir savimi*) [we develop virtuous character qualities, a flexible body; which has a harmonious relationship with the world and oneself] to a potential client, claiming only positive future experiences and/or results (*vidinę darną*) [internal harmony]. In this regard, it is important to note that adjectives are used to name and describe change, i.e., as if a promise is made to help replace the inadequate present with the desired harmonious future. However, the transformation is often described using the verbs (*pagerinti, padėti, lavinti*, etc.) [improve, help, educate, etc.].

A pronoun that refers to things or their properties is quite common in the texts studied. This pronoun is expressed in the texts in two ways: by direct naming (*Tavo širdis, tikruoju AŠ, jūsų protą*, etc.) [*your heart, your true self, your mind*, etc.] or by the endings of the verb (note: in Lithuanian, the number and person categories can be expressed without pronouns, using only verb endings) (*patyrinėsimė* – ,meš, *pakeisk* – ,tuš, *pailsėsite* – ,jūsš, *kviečiu* – ,ašš) [(we) will explore – ‘we’, (you) change – ‘you’, rest – ‘you’, invite – ‘I’]. In the texts studied, the most frequent pronouns were possessive pronouns (*savo, jūsų, tavo*) (note: All three translate into English as ‘yours’), less frequent – personal pronouns (*mes, jie*) [we, they] and reflexive pronouns (*savęs*) [self], quite rare – demonstrative pronouns (*pats*) [self] and their different cases. Considering the context of use, these pronouns emphasize the relationship between the service provider and the client, a clear orientation to the latter’s personal life, identity and awareness, and physical body. The proper pronouns are used to emphasize the introspective focus of spiritual practitioners, the objects, things, or actions that the potential client controls, and the environment that is important to him (e.g., he is encouraged *dar labiau pamilti, suvokti save, savo kūną ir savo aplinką*) [to love himself, his body, and his environment even more]. The most com-

mon forms of verb endings are plural first (we) and second (you). On the one hand, it is an expression of polite communication with the client. Then again, it expresses solidarity with the client, showing the commonality of interests.

Self-actualization Need: A Supply-side Perspective

Providers of spiritual services follow a commercial logic: they offer services that relate to the needs and desires of service recipients, which influence demands. A word count analysis in the descriptions of the services presented on the internet pages of the service providers reveals the spotlight of each of the practices examined (see Table 2). Spotlight shows specific suggestions for how to meet demands. Demand is based on transforming customer wants into needs.

Table 2. Spotlights in spiritual practice descriptions

Spiritual practices (in alphabetical order)	The most actualized words (in decreasing order)
<i>Angelic support</i>	<i>angels, archangels, human, energy, message</i>
<i>Aromatherapy</i>	<i>oils, essential, aromatherapy, group, self, works</i>
<i>Crystals</i>	<i>workshops, crystals, stones, life, observation</i>
<i>Energic medicine</i>	<i>energy, massage, practice, healing, meridians, channels,</i>
<i>Femininity</i>	<i>self, life, femininity, happiness, relationships, alone, we can</i>
<i>Forest bathing</i>	<i>forest, nature, bathing, therapy, connection</i>
<i>Human design</i>	<i>self, human, me, life, you, system</i>
<i>Masculinity</i>	<i>man, life, education, self, energy</i>
<i>Mindfulness</i>	<i>mindfulness, awareness, self, practice, thoughts, emotions, stress</i>

<i>Minerals</i>	<i>minerals, self, can, human, planets</i>
<i>Rebreathing</i>	<i>awareness, self, life, energy, practice, emotion, human, body, our</i>
<i>Reiki</i>	<i>energy, practice, life, health, body, healing, human</i>
<i>Retreats</i>	<i>retreats, self, practice, time, life, body, awareness, journey, to experience</i>
<i>Stones</i>	<i>course, life, self, person</i>
<i>Taping</i>	<i>angels, categories, message, energy, self</i>
<i>Theta healing</i>	<i>theta, healing, thetahealing, during, sessions, beliefs, technique, course, can</i>
<i>Yoga</i>	<i>practice, self, body, human, spiritual, life</i>

On the other hand, there are common denominators in the descriptions of these practices (see Table 3). Common denominators are the most frequently used common root words in all descriptions of spiritual practices. The common denominators with the highest frequency of use in the practice descriptions were selected for analysis. The number of actualizations shows how many practices mention a particular lemmatized word. Lemmatization was chosen because the Lithuanian language contains many derived words and their active variants.

Table 3. The common denominators in the descriptions of analysed spiritual practices.

<i>No.</i>	<i>Common denominator (word)</i>	<i>Number of actualizations in 17 practices</i>
<i>1.</i>	<i>Self</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>2.</i>	<i>Life</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>3–5.</i>	<i>Energy</i>	<i>6</i>

3-5.	<i>Human</i>	6
3-5.	<i>Practice</i>	6
6.	<i>Body</i>	4
7.	<i>Awareness</i>	3
8.	<i>Healing</i>	3

Analysing the data obtained, in the emic lexicon, service providers usually refer to their services as ‘practices,’ i.e., reality-changing activities (yoga, energetic medicine, retreats, rebreathing, mindfulness). The spiritual practices presented are the most ‘self’ (aromatherapy, femininity, human design, masculinity, mindfulness, minerals, rebreathing, retreats, stones, taping, yoga) actualizing, i.e., the essential being of a person that distinguishes him or her from others, especially when considered as an object of introspection or reflexive action. In this context, another important concept is ‘life’ (human design, reiki, retreats, yoga, stones, rebreathing, masculinity, femininity, crystals).

Namely, the addressee, i.e., ‘human’s’ (angelic support, minerals, reiki, yoga, human design, rebreathing) life, is a ‘reality’ that service providers offer to transform through ‘energy’ (understood as general life force and close to the East Asian concept of ‘qi’) (reiki, rebreathing, masculinity, angelic support, energetic medicine, taping). The use of this energy can be treated as a magical practice that can be used to improve the physical life of a person – the self. The emphasis is on ‘body’ (rebreathing, reiki, yoga, and retreats) because the focus is on the present time, the physical presence in the present. This can be achieved through ‘awareness’ (rebreathing, mindfulness, retreats): some of the activities offered by the practices encourage concentration and reflection on the actions that you are doing. The practices that are clearly associated with alternative medicine use the word ‘healing’ (energetic medicine, reiki, theta healing) to introduce themselves, which indicates the patient’s dissatisfaction with the current situation, both spiritual and physical, and actualizes the holistic concept of health and offers a healing.

The apparent focus on ‘self’ reveals that in the practices discussed, ‘spirituality’ is not understood in the traditional Western sense, where the search for God is important. In the context of these practices, ‘spirituality’ is more associ-

ated with the concept of 'energy' that permeates the entire world and each self. This shows that in Western culture, the concept of 'spirituality' is not related to any religion. In contrast to traditional spirituality, the practices studied do not focus solely on inner perfection, but this orientation is two-fold (both inner and outer), aiming for inner harmony and physical and psychoemotional comfort. While religion projects human actions and thoughts into another, afterlife existence, these practices are oriented towards being 'here and now'.

The particularly strong dominance of the concept/pronoun 'self' shows that, according to Abraham Maslow's pyramid of needs (Maslow 1943), all needs below self-actualization are less important. This shows that there is a correlation between the services offered and certain socio-economic groups of the society to which the services are directed. For the client of these practices, the lower needs in A. Maslow's hierarchy of needs are no longer a priority (already satisfied), so they focus on the highest level of the needs pyramid. In this context, the recipient of such services represents the middle or upper class. The latter findings support the insights of previous authors (see Introduction) regarding self-actualization and socio-economic orientation. According to marketing logic, it is obvious that service providers form the demand for self-realization needs. From the representative texts of spiritual practices on the Internet, an image of a person lacking in self-actualization is formed. The most important need realized through spiritual practices is the preservation of the sovereignty of a person's identity, self-actualization. Physical well-being is related to the inner state of a person: physical health determines the internal state and vice versa, so it is especially important to focus on physicality and conscious awareness of it.

In the pluralistic context of spiritual practices, the user/client/patient is presented with a range of practical solutions or combinations thereof that offer a process (search, ongoing dynamic) and guarantee an outcome (positive change, tangible benefit), although this depends on the practice offered and various other variables.

Conclusions

In the 21st century in Lithuania, as in other countries of the Western world, it is possible to observe an extremely rich spread of various self-improvement practices, which in one way or another have their origin in the ideas of the

New Age movement. These practices have permeated the most diverse areas of people's lives. The phenomenon can be described as secular, with minimal links to traditional spirituality.

Based on the results of Google search, it can be said that there is a lot of information about various spiritual practices in Lithuanian language on the Internet. There is abundant information, but most of it is provided about yoga, reiki, and energy medicine. From the point of view of the principle of supply and demand, it can be assumed that these practices are currently in great demand in Lithuania. Since the Internet is a dominant medium, the information published on it creates a certain discourse about spiritual practices. The content and language of the texts circulating in these media allow us to draw conclusions about the phenomenon of spiritual practices themselves, and to focus on the spotlights.

Analysing the service description texts provided by self-development service providers in the online space and using the prototypicality function determination tool, it became clear that most texts representing spirituality practitioners are, according to their prototypicality, academic prose texts. Texts of this type are characterized by descriptiveness and directiveness. These categories indicate that the goal is to provide the addressee with information and a more accurate picture of what is being said, and to encourage and inform the addressee to take certain actions. The following are texts that meet the characteristics of an official document, a fictional text, and a current discussion. When evaluating the texts from the point of view of text functions, the most characteristic feature of all of them is spontaneous expressiveness, which is spread by the intonation and high expressiveness of spoken language.

Of course, each of them strives to be unique and different from the others. However, most of them have common denominators that allow us to speak about the practices studied as a common phenomenon of modern spirituality.

The descriptions of services that providers call 'practices' are based on commercial logic. Services and products are offered to satisfy and develop the needs and desires of customers. The focus is on the needs of the customers, on the pronoun 'self' and on self-actualization. The comfortable physical condition of a person in this life is actualized, and 'energy' and 'awareness' are most often used to achieve the changes. Linguistic analysis shows that the spirituality practices presented to clients in Lithuania emphasize the same features of contemporary spirituality practices that have already been noticed by previous researchers.

References

- Ališauskienė, Milda (ed.) 2014. *Religijų įvairovė Lietuvoje: portretai, kasdienybė ir šventės* (= Religious diversity in Lithuania: portraits, everyday life, and festivals). Vytauto Didžiojo universitetas: Versus aureus.
- Bruce, Steve 2006. Secularization and the impotence of individualized religion. *The Hedgehog Review*, 8 (1–2): 35.
- Du Toit, Cornel W. 2006. Secular spirituality versus secular dualism: Towards post secular holism as model for a natural theology. *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies*. Vol. 62, issue 4.
- Gabrėnaitė, Eglė 2007. Retorinė topika reklamoje (= Rhetorical topics in advertisement). *Tekstai ir kontekstai: transformacijų sklaida. Mokslinių straipsnių rinkinys.* (= Texts and Contexts: Diffusion of Transformations. Collection of scientific articles). Kaunas: Vilniaus universiteto leidykla, pp. 258–266.
- Hammer, Olav 2001. *Claiming Knowledge: Strategies of Epistemology from Theosophy to the New Age*. Leiden and Boston: Brill. (Numen Book Series, 70)
- Hanegraaff, Wouter J. 1998. *New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought*. Albany, New York: State University of New York Press.
- Heelas, Paul (ed.). 2011. *Spirituality in the Modern World: Within Religious Tradition and Beyond*. 4-Vol-s. New York: Routledge.
- Heelas, Paul 1996. *The New Age Movement: The Celebration of the Self and the Sacralization of Modernity*. Cambridge: Blackwell.
- Huss, Boaz 2014. Spirituality: The Emergence of a New Cultural Category and its Challenge to the Religious and the Secular. *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, 29(1): 47–60.
- King, Ursula 2004. Feminist and eco-feminist spirituality. In: Christopher Partidge (ed.). *Encyclopedia of New Religions: New Religious Movements, Sects and Alternative Spiritualities*. Oxford : Lion.
- Knoblauch, Hubert 2014. Popular spirituality. In: Elisabeth Hense, Frans P.M. Jaspers, and Peter J.A. Nissen (eds.) *Present-Day Spiritualities*. Studies in Theology and Religion, Vol 18, pp. 81–102.
- Kotila, Heikki 2006. Contemporary worship as an expression of post-modern spirituality. In: *Religion, spirituality, and identity*. Nordic Conference on Religious Education 2005: Helsinki, Finland. Bern: Peter Lang.
- Koženiauskienė, Regina 2013. *Retorinė ir stilistinė publicistinių tekstų analizė* [Rhetorical and stylistic analysis of publicist texts]. Vilnius: Vilniaus universiteto leidykla.
- Kuznecovienė, Jolanta, Rutkienė, Aušra, Ališauskienė, Milda 2016. *Religingumas ir/ar dvasingumas Lietuvoje: Religijos sociologijos perspektyvos* [Religiosity and/

- or spirituality in Lithuania: Perspectives of the sociology of religion]. Kaunas: Pasaulio lietuvių kultūros, mokslo ir švietimo centras.
- Lasch, Christopher 1984. *The Minimal Self: The Physics Survival in Troubled Times*. New York: W.W. Norton.
- Lewis, James R. 1992. Approaches to the Study of the New Age Movement. In: James R. Lewis; J. Gordon Melton (eds.). *Perspectives in the New Age*. Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, pp. 1–12.
- MacKian, Sara 2012. *Everyday Spirituality: Social and Spatial Worlds of Enchantment*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Marcinkevičienė, Rūta 2008. *Žanro ribos ir paribiai* [Genre boundaries and borders]. Vilnius: Versus aureus.
- Maslow, Abraham 1943. A Theory of Human Motivation. In: *Psychological Review*, 50: 370–396.
- Motak, Dominika. 2009. Postmodern spirituality and the culture of individualism. In: *Scripta Instituti Donneriani Aboensis* 21: 149–161.
- O’Loughlin, Maria. 1999. Postmodernity and the New Age of Enchantment. In: *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*. Vol. 88, No. 352, pp. 363–370.
- Partridge, Christopher (ed.) 2004. *Encyclopedia of New Religions: New Religious Movements, Sects and Alternative Spiritualities*. Oxford : Lion.
- Peleckis, Mindaugas 2022. *Naujieji religiniai judėjimai Lietuvoje: tarp tradicijos ir kosminių religijų*. [New Religious Movements in Lithuania: Between Tradition and Cosmic Religions]. Vilnius: Saulės titnagas.
- Pranskevičiūtė, Rasa 2014. Alternatyvaus religingumo raiška pokomunistinėse visuomenėse: naujieji religiniai, Naujojo amžiaus ir gamtinio dvasingumo judėjimai [Expression of Alternative Spirituality in Post-Communist Societies: New Religious, New Age, and Nature Spirituality Movements]. In: *Culture & Society* 5(1): 25–43.
- Smetonienė, Irena 2009. Reklama... Reklama? Reklama! [Advertisement... Advertisement? Advertisement!]. Vilnius: Tyto alba.
- Stein, Joel 2013. Millennials: The Me Me Me Generation. In: *Time*. 2013, May 9.
- Sutcliffe, Steven 2002. *Children of the New Age: A History of Spiritual Practices*. London: Routledge. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203471227>
- Tillich, Paul 1963. *The Eternal now*. New York: Scribner.
- York, Michael 2004. New Age traditions. In: Christopher Partridge (ed.) *Encyclopedia of New Religions: New Religious Movements, Sects and Alternative Spiritualities*. Oxford : Lion, p. 309.

Dalia Senvaitytė, PhD, currently is a researcher at the Institute of Languages, Literature and Translation Studies, Kaunas Faculty of Vilnius University. Her research interests include ethnology, cultural studies, modern pagan and spiritual movements, and digital humanities.

e-mail: dalia.senvaityte@knf.vu.lt

Gintarė Vaitonytė, PhD, currently is a senior researcher and lecturer at Vytautas Magnus University. Her research interests include meaning, cultural studies, studies in text and discourse, educational psychology, communication in education.

e-mail: gintare.vaitonyte@vdu.lt

Eugenija Valienė, PhD, currently is a lecturer at Vytautas Magnus University. Her research interests include sociology of literature, literary communication, literary criticism, contemporary literature, Lithuanian studies in school.

e-mail: eugenija.valiene@vdu.lt