

CONSPICUOUS CONSUMPTION AS AN ATTRIBUTE OF SOCIO-CULTURAL DECADENCE IN RUSSIA

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Russia's transition to market relations put forward the problem of conspicuous consumption in a number of particularly urgent ones. The conspicuous consumption ideology which is widely promoted by businesses concerned has established noticeably. Hence there is the scientific interest in considering consumption not only as a vital phenomenon, but as a phenomenon of a special kind of public display. The interest in this area is connected with the global scale of manifestations of this phenomenon, as well as with its dominant impact on other areas of society and the individual. This article is aimed at the analysis of the phenomenon of conspicuous consumption and its implementation in Russia. Conspicuous consumption, forming a vast sphere in the modern economy, is directly related to the expansion of the scales and quality transformation of the economy, encouraging its separation from the natural and humanistic principles and strengthening its unity with the rapidly increasing artificial world, giving a largely demonstrative character to the economy itself. Freedom of demonstration is combined in the current economy with the freedom of consumer choice and with the pricing for conspicuous goods and services, which increases the vulnerability of the economy due to the increase of its internal instability.

Keywords: Demonstrative behavior, consumption, consumer society, sociology, culture, social stratum, social inequality

INTRODUCTION

Consumption is an increasingly important social practice, in which social disparities are visualized; social boundaries are built up, social relations being formed around. Currently, consumption is not seen as 'simple satisfaction of needs', but rather a multivariate space of choice, expression, and presentation of oneself, construction of identities, the implementation of social communication and relevant social comparisons [Holt, 1998; Ilyin, 2005 and others]. Consumption is also a key characteristic of the lifestyles of the existing social strata, groups and classes in society [Bourdieu, 1984, and others].

The issue of possibility and context of applying the Western concepts and ideas in terms of a consumer society to the modern Russian society is currently debatable, but the fact that a consumer society is also being formed in our country, at least in the socio-cultural space of large cities, does no longer admit of doubt.

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Against the background of the increasing role of consumption in the 'production' of social differences, the importance of employment as a key foundation for social differentiation, by contrast, is reduced. For example, regular employment is no longer a 'guarantee against poverty', and a significant part of the new urban poor is constituted specifically by the employed, while the similarity in the conditions and the nature of work does not guarantee similar lifestyles at all. In the context of the above trends, studying differences in consumption and lifestyles of social groups is taking on particular importance for understanding the processes and changes occurring in the modern Russian society.

The changes apply not only to the fact that labor and consumption have 'swapped places' in the formation of social differences, but also the very nature of the differences in consumption: the consumption of traditional sociology is seen as a consequence of stratification or the function of the consumer's social status (at this point, the works by Thorstein Veblen [Veblen, 1899] and Pierre Bourdieu [Bourdieu, 1984] are classical, the most telling illustrations), whereas currently the stratification take on consumption is being revised for several reasons. Thorstein Veblen introduced the concept denoting 'conspicuous (demonstrative) consumption' and 'conspicuous (demonstrative) leisure', 'conspicuous waste'. He defined " - conspicuous consumption as "the utility of consumption as an evidence of wealth," consumption as "a means of reputability". This style of consumption, according to T. Veblen, was typical for the so-called 'leisure class' - the nouveaux riches Americans who put their conspicuous consumption to public display.

Firstly, technological progress leads to the fact that the majority of consumer goods and services are made available to the majority of the population, and everyone but for the poorest gets access to consumer goods, tourism, and the media [Bell, 1976; Bauman, 2004; Ilyin, 2005; Radayev, 2005]. Secondly, the variety of things, shapes, and styles of consumption is increasing. The boundaries between 'high' and 'mass' markets are becoming blurred, blending the familiar cultural hierarchies into a common, ambiguously structured cultural landscape. Accordingly, the gap is reduced, if does not disappear at all, which used to create foundation for economic and cultural superiority of some groups, and relative deprivation of some others.

Another argument in favor of weakening the status conditioning of consumption is adduced by postmodern theorists, such as Jean Baudrillard [Baudrillard, 2006] and Frederic Jameson [Jameson, 2000]. From this point of view, the main feature of modern capitalist society is overproduction of things-signs. The rapid multiplication of things-signs, in turn, gives rise to 'confusion' and uncertainty of consumer symbols that are not always readily and similarly taken by different social groups. The theoretical argument is also confirmed by empirical studies that demonstrate a high degree of similarity and a plurality of intersections in consumer preferences of various social groups [Bennett, 1998; Bourdieu, 1984; Holt, 1998].

At the same time, the emergence of a consumer society leads to the fact that the whole life of modern societies is organized around and through consumption. Things become not so much a means of meeting the needs as symbols, markers of social identity and belonging. Consumer goods in modern societies do not 'reflect' customer's status directly any more, but rather allow 'designing an image', taking up the desired lifestyles, reporting desired information about oneself, and reading a variety of information about others, which also contributes to revision of the 'stratification argument' essence [Baudrillard, 2006].

The hypothesis of a complete connection break between status hierarchies and differences in consumption has not yet found a popular support among social scientists, but the thesis about reducing the role of socio-economic factors in structuring consumption in the recent years has been asserted in sociological literature as conventional 'truth'. Discussions about reducing the role of social status as a key factor in the consumption differences stimulate the revision of traditional sociological ('stratification') study of consumption in the following, now yet poorly developed, directions:

1. The shift in emphasis from identification or description of the factors of consumer differences that are 'external' with respect to consumption onto the study of consumption 'per se' as a social (inter)action, which has its own, relatively autonomous, logic of organizing and structuring.
2. Searching and exploring new, 'non-stratification' foundations for differences in consumption. In particular, one of such foundations is tough-mindedness, i.e. a consumer's individual characteristic, reflecting the centrality of consumption and property in their life and in the processes of social interaction and – theoretically – not related directly to the consumer's socio-economic status.
3. Studying not structures or consumption styles, but the processes of social construction of social differences and identities through consumption.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Traditionally, modern scientific analysis of the demonstrative consumption nature is associated with Thorstein Veblen's work 'The Leisure Class' (1899), which deals with behavior aspects of the representatives of a new class – the so-called 'new rich' (from the French *nouveau riche* – new rich), i.e. the representatives of the lower classes who quickly got rich in time social changes, the rich upstarts who managed to reach the top of society. On the one hand, the analysis of the social stratum's behavior is considered by Veblen as a result of developing capitalist relations and a rapid accumulation of capital in the hands of 'new Americans'; whereas on the other hand, conspicuous consumption is regarded as conation of the new stratum to self-labeling, to the desire to assert themselves by deliberate

ostentatious display of their social status and power. Veblen speaks of '*exerting consumption in order to prove possession of wealth*' and considers it '*as a means to maintain the reputation of*' [Veblen, 1984:108] nouveaux riches. In that context, the classical study of the conspicuous consumption phenomenon narrowed to the framework of high society, where the 'leisure class' of new Americans began to penetrate in an effort to emulate the European elite. They put in the forefront their perspective of wealth and prestige, their standards of conduct, values and ideals, which caused bewilderment and contempt in the 'old' elite, but which the latter still had to reckon with because they were backed by solid capital.

Subsequently, the phenomenon of demonstrative behavior was considered by Jean Baudrillard [Baudrillard, 2006], Pierre Bourdieu [Bourdieu, 2007] (the concept of behavior as a result of social conditions, socialization, and the individual's position in society), Maximilian Weber [Weber, 2012] (the concept of status groups, rationality and irrationality of consumption), Georg Simmel [Simmel, 1996] (the fashion theory), Emile Durkheim [Durkheim, 1996] (the theory of consumption as a value mission), Philip Kotler [Kotler, 2007] (marketing, psychology of consumption), Vilfredo Pareto [Pareto, 2008] (the theory of the individual's irrational actions), Karl Marx [Marx, 1960] (commodity fetishism), Alfred Marshall [Marshall, 2003] ('conspicuous consumption'), Talcott Parsons [Parsons, 1998], Erving Goffman [Goffman, 2009] (the theory of dramaturgical approach, including to behavior), George Ritzer [Ritzer, 2011] (the 'McDonaldization' concept), and others; it also became the target of research for domestic scientists, viz. Sergey Bulgakov [Bulgakov, 2009] (moral materialism and spiritual bourgeoisness), Aleksandr Butovsky [Butovsky, 1847] (the phenomenon of 'overt', or 'ostentatious' luxury), Aleksandr Gofman [Gofman, 2013] (the concept of conspicuous consumption behavior and fashion), Andrey Isayev [Isayev, 1907] (the problems of consumption and luxury), Vladimir Ilyin [Ilyin, 1998] (the demonstrative consumer behavior pattern in Russia), Nikita Pokrovsky [Pokrovsky, 2005], Dmitriy Ivanov [Ivanov, 2000] (consumption virtualization), Valery Radayev [Radayev, 2008] (socio-economic approach), Natalya Rimashevskaya [Rimashevskaya, 2000] (gender consumption factors), Valery Terin [Terin, 2000] (mass demonstrative behavior), and many others.

A qualitatively new attitude is given to the phenomenon of demonstrative behavior in the works of Daniel Bell [Bell, 1998], where contours of the coming post-industrial society are settled. Bell defines the transformation forms of social relations as a result of scientific and technical progress, the increased significance of knowledge technology, information communications development, that is, those prerequisites that characterize post-industrial society and the emergence of new information culture. According to Bell, the new type of consumer behavior is a result of scientific and technical progress, a consequence of changes in the human type. While consuming, an individual asserts their independence and uniqueness.

This idea was well expressed by Vladislav Inozemtsev: *'In determining their basic needs and desires as entirely subjective ones, a person first acknowledges them exactly as their personal needs, their own personal desires, not identical to the needs and desires of others, not only in quantitative, but also in qualitative terms'* [Inozemtsev, 2003].

In course of the nineteenth century in Europe, a lot of changes occurred both in the stratification system and the system of values, relationships, communication, and philosophy. First of all, it is referred to economization and rationalization of consciousness that led to the emergence of new classes and types of people, as well as the emergence of a new liberal-democratic social order. All changes were accompanied by the process of industrialization, standardization of production and urbanization, which was described by José Ortega-y-Gasset in *'The Revolt of the Masses'* (Ortega-y-Gasset, 2016).

With the development of industrial society, the economic factor becomes a basis of the social system, a foundation for qualitatively new social interactions. Penetrating into all spheres of public life, economy and capital become universal axiological categories, based on which new philosophy and model of social consciousness are formed.

In the world history, consumption has always been present, what mattered was only to which sphere it related to a greater extent, the spiritual or the material one. In the capitalism rise era, spirituality receded into the background; the priority was taken by the material sphere, not least because of the religious beliefs of people of that time. Max Weber described those processes in his *'The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism'*. Protestants, unlike Catholics, believe that it is not that *'work is created for man, but man is created for work'*. They deem hard work, honesty, and desire to increase their wealth, being un wasteful to be main virtues of a human. In accordance with the Protestant ethics, the one whom God loves is to be successful in temporal affairs. Therefore, accumulation of funds and any labor activity are the highest moral good that a man can commit [Weber, 2002]. There appeared ideas that all can be done with one's own work; class division took shape, i.e. the division of society into groups not by blood, but by the level of prosperity. Naturally, people from the lower strata, while breaking into the elite, were eager to prove their worth by demonstrating their capital. That was the way consumerism acquired the status of the highest social value.

Thus, capitalist society formed a new pattern of behavior, the main features of which were *'pursuit of profit'* and ability to *'make money.'* Economic calculation becomes a part of human consciousness, their way of life, relationships with others. Such type of person is described in the works of David Riesman and Erich Fromm and was named *'homo consummatus'*, *'marketeer'* [Fromm, 2010], *'externally focused'* [Riesman, 2001]. Personal fulfillment began to be understood as a compliance with a particular social position, possession of certain status things,

especially those that 'are on trend'. And if in the Veblen's era this trend was decisive for the owners of the 'new capital', in the society of mass consumption it has become widespread, where the goal is to demonstrate their status. Yu.A. Zimmerman notes that 'all the layers act as subjects of conspicuous consumption; however, some top of the upper class sets the tone, dictating role models and manipulating the consciousness of the majority in society' [Zimmerman, 2007:4].

Thus, two opposite trends have become visible: on the one hand, people more and more show their individuality, and on the other hand, they increasingly get admass, standardized in their desire to stand out. Therefore, conspicuous consumption does not only become a way to stand out from the crowd and show their individuality, but also, oddly enough, a way to 'be like everyone else'. Individual element and human activity motivations are increasingly determined by what they consume and how.

In this context, the paradigm by Gary Becker is interesting, who in the 'Human Capital' [Becker, 1993] treats all human relations through the prism of economic laws. According to him, modern society appears as a kind of production, in which the rationality of consumption replaces and devaluates the sphere of human relations. For example, the rationality of consumption, first of all, reduces the need satisfaction time (similar to the law of goods production time reduction), and secondly, alters the traditional communication and life style: fast food instead of home-cooked meals, meetings in restaurants instead of visiting someone's place, etc. The traditional institution of the family has also undergone changes. 'Every aspect of family life can now be interpreted from the standpoint of the rational choice theory,' says Becker in his 'Family', 'this refers to such peculiar problems as the reasons for preferring one method of contraception to another, reasons why the spread of polygamy has reduced, as well as more 'traditional' subjects, such as the question of what determines the age at marriage, number of children, the amount of investment in the human capital of children, as well as the amount of funds spent by the children in the care for older parents' [Eatwell et al., 2004]. 'Marginal utility,' according to Becker, 'is the criterion with which the modern homo economicus conforms their life, determines their attitudes and outlook.'

Conspicuous consumption was also evident in the course of urbanization processes that changed the self-perception, self-identification of the members of society. Veblen says, '*Means of communication and population mobility present an individual to the general public who do not have any other opportunities to judge the individual's venerability than those material valuables (and probably education) that they, being under the direct supervision, are able to show off*' [Veblen, 1984: 122]. It should be noted that representatives of the rural population that migrated to the cities also resorted to demonstrating their status and solvency, modeling themselves on nouveaux riches. This was no coincidence,

as both were in similar marginal conditions; both had to prove to others and themselves their eligibility to be in the 'high society'.

In general, it is safe to say: behaviors of the 'new people' were very different from those of members of the traditional society. Now, the subject identifies themselves with the help of external symbols that assert their position before the public and before themselves, which often go beyond the scope of the necessary. We do not buy a 'Mercedes' as a car, but what we buy is its prestige. Not a 'Colgate' toothpaste, but the white teeth. Thus, a 'Rolex' on a hand is, first and foremost, not clockwork, but a proof that the owner is able to afford such a luxury [A. Ries and L. Ries, 2003: 56]. Now, *'all hopes are turned to the public authority; this is it that should justify the existence of a human, prove them their own usefulness and spiritual integrity'* [Kortunov, 2006].

Therefore, in addition to social and status discomfort, an individual also feels spiritual one. Feeling the need to enter into a society new for them as an 'equal', the individual compensates for the lack of value and spiritual resources by demonstrating their capital.

This dualism of internals and externals in the representatives of the new class has determined a new world order, which is based on economic rationality proven by Gary Becker, and the Protestant ethics rationally justified by Max Weber. Having surfaced at the junction of the social development paradigms shift, this dualism becomes the norm in the twentieth century. The ideal forms of social order are represented by the seemingly law-abiding and prosperous society, a representative of which is a cog in the system machine. Accordingly, the public management practices are changing, they acquire an implicit nature, affect the psyche of an individual through the slogans of individual freedom, liberalism, and democracy. The purpose of this policy is to increase consumption up to a massive scale. It is based on human psychology, their desire to attract attention as a representative of 'high-end' resulting from their 'free choice', the foundations of democracy. Jean Baudrillard calls this phenomenon 'symbolic consumption', which he describes in the 'Consumer Society: Myths and Structure' (1968). The philosopher says that consumption of things is no longer associated with the satisfaction of real needs, it rather serves to demonstrate the individual's desires, their super-needs and high status, 'In today's society, the objects of consumption are not so much material things as their cultural signs and symbols, which turns consumption out of materialist practice into symbolic one' [Baudrillard, 2006].

Thereby, a certain personality ideal is created and promoted, with a particular set of values, paradigms, and a place in the social structure. This type serves as a standard by which an individual must exercise their choice, and by which individual values are assessed, the style of behavior is formed. Thus, consumer ceases to be a full-fledged actor. They become an *object* of economic relations. This 'consumer paradox' is accounted for very simply: the mass production is not able to satisfy

truly unique exigencies, which is why advertising employees have to create averaged images of the ideal life and also sell them to consumers. It creates an illusion of freedom of choice, whereby a phenomenon of mind control emerges.

In addition, a new social stratification is formed, where the basis of the division is person's super-needs. Russian researcher Marina Rakitnykh notes that 'consumption patterns are the main definitions of social identities and differences. Thus, individuals with different income, but with the same consumer practices, which are termed lifestyle in sociology, may fall into the same social group' [Rakitnykh, 2004]. This fact allows marketers every year to conduct successful advertising campaigns, playing on social stereotypes of consumers.

The very cultural construction itself is based on such human psychological traits as the pursuance of pleasure, vanity, envy, and desire to attain perfection. It is also worth mentioning that demonstrative behavior is to a greater extent characteristic of representatives of the social sectors that have limited resources or representatives of marginalized groups seeking to compensate their social 'inferiority' or uncertain social status by demonstration. Such people are more easily manipulated, as they are already assured of 'inferiority' of their social status and are willing to change their position actively.

A behavioral model of this kind was described by Sigmund Freud in 'Introduction to Psychoanalysis' [Freud, 2005], which determines patterns of the so-called compensatory behavior when a person, having failed in one area, succeeds in another one (for example, the famous Freudian sublimation [Freud, 2005]). Such model can explain conspicuous consumption through the use of additional resources, acting as 'replacements' of the desired benefit. Accordingly, the absence of, for example, real social status can be compensated by consumption of status or pseudo-status commodities.

The inability to gain recognition can also be compensated by participation in informal groups, subcultural movements. As an example of this trend among young people, a commitment to the culture of glamor can be considered (from the English 'glamour', literally – charm, fascination, allure), i.e. an aesthetic phenomenon based on hedonism principles and associated with the culture of mass consumption, fashion, and show business. The mindset of glamor is characterized by an emphasis on luxury and gloss [Tochilov, 2011], so it is a demonstration of one's own status, one's own 'self', presented in the form of a kind of performance.

It is worth noting that an individual, apart from the desire to be considered a member of the new group, also has a wish to quickly leave their past one, as quickly as possible to get out of the threadbare social environment and to join the 'high society'. As a result, there is a phenomenon of marginalization, loss of social identity and a desire to express their 'unbelonging' to those conditions, those social groups an individual used to exist within. First of all, it is referred to the class of employees that served as a basis for the emergence of the middle class. To become

a member of the new community, one had to maintain a certain lifestyle, wear the 'right clothes', drive cars of certain brands, etc.

In general, it can be stated that the reasons for demonstrative behavior lie in the following factors.

The first important factor is the culture and behavior of the whole society, which automatically reproduces consumption scenarios. As a result, a new human sociotype has emerged, without thinking and seeing no other way of life except as a consumer.

The second factor is the psychological conditioning, the desire to stand out, to find one's own 'self' by joining reference groups.

The third factor is the impact of advertising, marketing, glamor, etc., deliberately stimulating ostentation as a lifestyle, a personality trait.

Thus, the ratio between the characteristics of the consumer's socio-economic status and the nature of individual consumption is changing: the consumer's cultural capital is gradually becoming a key feature differentiating the consumption of widely available products by citizens, whereas the level of income is retreating.

Tough-mindedness, understood as the focus of consumption rather than consumer's characteristics, is based on a certain class of values that consumers use: the consumer's focus on things and, based on this, provision of classifying judgments about the characteristics of people and their solvency/success. Tough-mindedness is a specific foundation for differences in consumption and can 'work' differently in relation to different objects and contexts, as well as in different social strata. Social status and tough-mindedness are interrelated: tough-mindedness is a stratified characteristic and is defined both by the experience of being in a longstanding situation of resource constraint and cultural capital of a consumer.

People's description of their own consumption, as well as other people's consumption, often has a pronounced evaluative, moral connotation.

Depending on the method of harmonizing the socio-economic, consumer and moral hierarchies (substantiation register) used by a consumer, the same consumption may have the opposite assessment and 'social consequences'.

RESULTS

Summing up the above it can be stated that:

1. Demonstrative behavior within the framework of modern community has long gone beyond Veblen's understanding, it became inherent in representatives of any social strata and is a behavioral phenomenon which integrates social, economic and psychological components;
2. Demonstrative behavior is motivated by the following factors: *social motivation*, that is, the desire to acquire status, power, social rank, which is determined by such motivational factors as the desire to lead, to possess demonstrator resources, to comply with more successful social group;

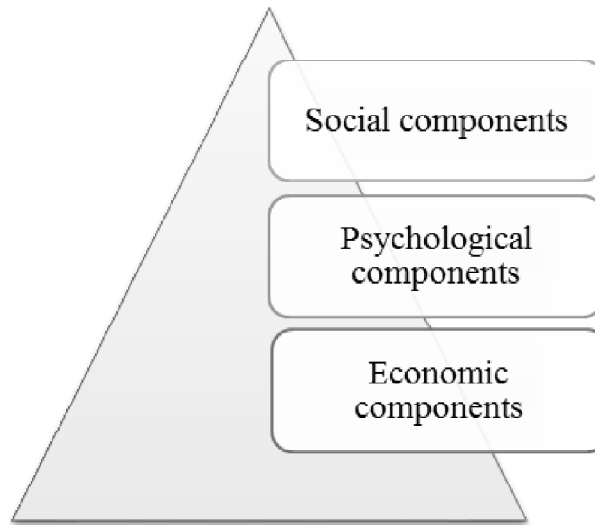


Figure 1: Structure of demonstrative behavior

psychological motivation, i.e. the desire to assert oneself, to demonstrate one's individual 'self', to raise self-esteem, to look unique, to relieve stress, to meet one's own aesthetic needs, etc.; *material motivation*, and, primarily, the pursuit of wealth, identifying oneself with a circle of rich people;

3. Emulation is a basic mechanism of demonstrative behavior.
4. Currently, the demonstrative behavior performs the most important social functions, including the function of socialization, the function of social communication and the function of social elevator;

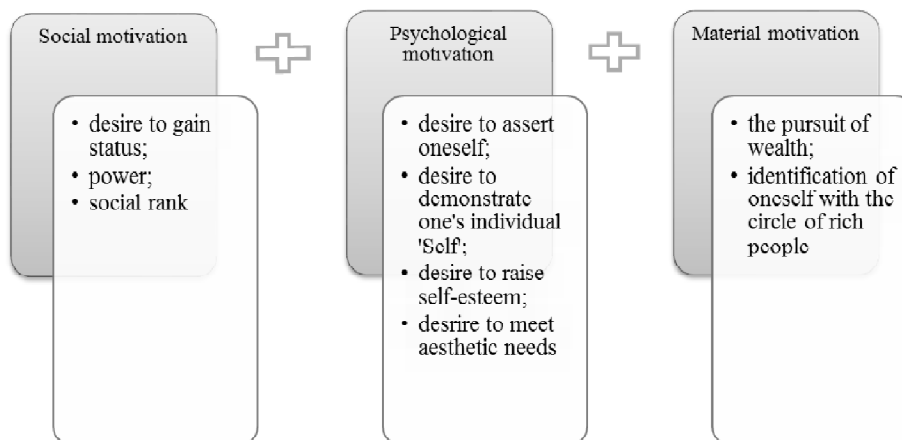


Figure 2: Motivation of demonstrative behavior

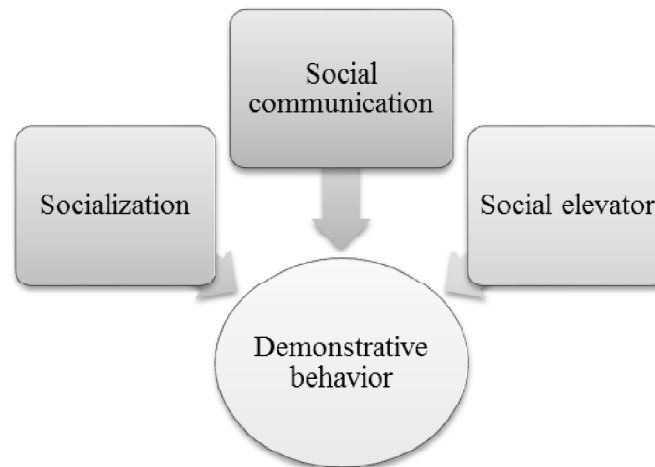


Figure 3: Social functions of demonstrative behavior

5. In the modern society demonstrative behavior is inherent in the representatives of specific social groups, as a rule, having low and middle economic well-being coupled with untapped capacity and a high level of claims (Zimmerman, 2007);
6. Demonstrative behavior acts as a certain 'engine of the economy', the development of society in its materialistic sense, because it is one of the main resources of manufacturers for profit-making.

Today consumption is a basis for economic development of countries. Therefore, the constant stimulation of demand is an inevitable and necessary phenomenon for the maintenance of the current social order. Human needs go beyond physiological requirements, the needs of a social and spiritual level are endless; therefore marketing experts know how to play this, attributing symbols to the goods of everyday life – properties of higher, intangible order, such as meeting the need for acceptance, love, belonging and even self-actualization need. That is why, in this context, it is fair to speak of an endless process of consumption since human desires are constantly increasing, and companies need in the growing expansion of sales markets.

Thus, one can see that the forms of modern demonstrative behavior are a logical consequence of the historical development of Western society. This is a phenomenon which has become a widespread social practice due to the deliberate intervention and its automatic reproduction in generations. Accordingly, the demonstrative behavior is a phenomenon that serves as an indicator of spiritual health of community, and the study of its manifestations is a necessary step to build more harmonious social relations in the future.

Considering the demonstrative behavior as a social institution, the authors offer its following structure consisting of three sub-systems: firstly, the tangible (houses, apartments, cars, motorcycles, yachts, airplanes, helicopters, clothing, accessories, jewelry, means of communication, artwork, etc.) and the virtual or symbolic (lifestyle, consumption patterns being signs by which one can estimate the availability of material resources); secondly, the subjective (head of the family or its members, friends, servants, etc.), performing the traditional or supposititious demonstrative behavior; third, regulatory (rules and norms of behavior that are reflected in manners, tastes, respecting etiquette, customs and laws, participation in public life).

Demonstrative behavior as a social institution performs certain functions, in our opinion, they are:

- a regulating function which involves making certain rules and standards of conduct and ensuring regulation of social interactions;
- a communicative function which facilitates interaction between people and mutual understanding and means information transfer using a set of consumable items;
- a socialization function which creates and develops the personality of the consumers, their taste, and is expressed in their assimilation of cultural values, social norms and roles, and the implementation of their social rank;
- an adaptation function which provides adaptation to the changing conditions of conspicuous consumption environment.

Depending on various criteria, a classification of types of conspicuous consumption can be proposed:

- depending on the hierarchical criterion of class belonging: the elite and imitative ones;
- according to the socio-cultural criteria: the direct and supposititious ones;
- according to the criterion of conformity to the community life standards: the socially positive and socially negative types;
- depending on the motives of conspicuous consumption: the conventional, hedonistic, status, prestigious and aesthetic ones.

Age-specific ostentation is the main feature of the consumer behavior of young people. There is no single user among young people; there are different styles and types of consumer behavior. Over the past decade the priority of the material values over the spiritual ones has increased in Russia. However, in general, in the minds of young people new values characteristic of Western societies with market economies (individualism, pragmatism and striving to live in abundance) coexist with the traditional historical and cultural peculiarities (collectivism, equality,

priority of family values). Demonstrative behavior manifests itself in the purchase of clothing and accessories specific brands (mobile phones, handbags with certain symbols, players, etc.), as well as in the consumption of certain forms of leisure (visiting discos and nightclubs), moreover there is fashion for consumer objects. The mechanism of influence on conspicuous consumer behavior has changed due to transformation of the institutional environment in comparison with the Soviet period: today fashion and advertising have a greater impact, while other social institutions (the state, family, education) have faded into insignificance.

CONCLUSION

Nowadays Russian fashion begins to reveal features characteristic of the post-industrial society: intertextuality, i.e., permanent return to the 'archive', bringing elements and styles from different historical eras and ethnic cultures into fashion; allusion, appeal to traditional symbols and images, antiquated stylization, i.e. the shift in space and time; absolutization; eclecticism.

In modern Russia a strong influence of advertising on young people is noted, its role in the process of socialization is increasing. Mass media actively influence the mass consciousness by means of advertising, introducing certain socio-cultural patterns, lifestyles and codes of conduct; they become the main sources forming social and cultural values. The main consumer of advertising is the middle class that seeks to imitate the upper class, which determines the prevalence of imitative type of conspicuous consumption. Advertising imposes the hedonistic type of consumer culture, alien to the traditional national culture of Russia which is pushing aside spiritual values.

Over the years of reforms in the post-socialist Russia the sphere of consumption is becoming increasingly important, there is a steady focus on the material well-being among the youth. But at the same time, young people have a high level of education claims and obtaining professional qualifications, since receiving a profession for the young is a prerequisite for achieving a competitive position in the labor market, and thereby for ensuring the necessary level of consumption. The main purpose of conspicuous consumption that is characteristic of today's youth is to manifest exclusivity and individuality, though commitment of young people to the traditions is also strong. This indicates the ambivalence of their behavior. The observed regional features in the conspicuous consumption of youth, for example, differences in leisure activities, are explained, in our opinion, by different reasons: the influence of traditions, closeness to the nature, the infrastructure development and the impact of globalization. Under the influence of such institutions as advertising, fashion, mass media, and others the hedonistic type of consumer culture is spreading, the intensity level depends on the proximity to the capitals (Moscow, St. Petersburg) where luxury and wealth are concentrated today.

The following factors contributing to regional features of conspicuous consumption should be mentioned: economic development, the structure of the regional economy; standard of living of the population which is signaled by average incomes first of all, prices, consumption of basic goods and services per capita; geographical conditions of the region (climate, topography, urbanization); historical experience; demographic situation in the region (population structure according to sex, age, marital status, education level, nationality); socio-cultural factors (social structure of the population, occupational structure, religious beliefs, customs, development of cultural facilities – availability of theaters, museums, universities, libraries, clubs, etc. in the region), and so on; legal factors (regional legislation, legal infrastructure).

Currently, the combination of features can be found in Russia which are peculiar to the conspicuous consumption society of Pre-modernity, Modernity and Postmodernity. Trying to imagine the prospects of conspicuous consumption of the 'pure' Postmodernity society, the following traits suggest themselves:

- since people live in the artificial world created by them, everything natural will become the objects of conspicuous consumption (even today there is the fashion for 'natural': natural fabrics, food products are more expensive than artificial ones, it is fashionable to line walls with materials imitating brick or masonry);
- due to the weakening of relations in society, the phenomenon of conspicuous consumption is losing sense, because the virtual space (life before the TV screen, computer monitor) becomes the epicenter of life;
- those who will not go crazy, will seek prestige by means of information and knowledge.

Overcoming the growth of social alienation and negative consequences of Postmodernity is possible in the course of consumer education. Today, there is no consistent strategy of the state in the field of youth socialization. Youth policy is virtually not funded by the state and is pursued for a long time, but with low efficiency. The development of continuous consumer education aimed primarily at the formation of humanistic consumer culture should be its integral part.

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