Everyday Consumption of Russian Youth in Small Towns and Villages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Journal:</th>
<th>Sociologia Ruralis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Manuscript ID</td>
<td>SORU-16-095</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manuscript Type:</td>
<td>Original Article</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keywords:</td>
<td>rural-urban continuum, consumption styles, youth, Russia</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Abstract: The article analyses everyday consumption of young people who live in villages and small towns in modern-day Russia. Based on 59 semi-structured interviews conducted in three districts of Leningrad region (close to St. Petersburg), the authors try to answer the following questions. How does everyday consumption fit in biographical experience of rural youth? What consumption styles are implemented in small towns and villages? The conceptual framework of the analysis is the category of 'rural-urban continuum', which underscores blurred boundaries between 'the city' and 'the countryside', transformation of traditional rural forms of sociality and mutual diffusion of elements of the rural and urban lifestyles. The authors come to the conclusion that differentiation of consumption styles of modern rural residents can be explained in the context of life strategies, construed on the basis of family capital, education, employment and orientation towards success. The article describes four basic styles that characterise consumption of young rural residents: the 'family', 'status-oriented', 'individualistic' and 'conformist' styles.

The common theoretical framework of analysing modern practices of youth consumption is a transition from 'labour society' to 'consumer society'. Russia becoming a part of the new global order is marked by a controversy typical for countries which transitioned 'from necessary consumption to overconsumption' (Gurova 2009: 276). On the one hand, researchers note that in Russia, 'a new civil order is being established, an order with various types of today's reality, in which consumption has become one of the leading factors of private and public life' (Kozlovsky 2011: 64). At the same time, Russian society corresponds to Western consumption standards 'only in some Russian territories, forming insignificant focal points of "real consumption"' (Vtorushina 2011: 259). Among such territories, there are Russian major cities, St. Petersburg in particular, which along Moscow is becoming a Western-type 'shopping about' place' (Ilyin 2005: 31). This has resulted in the 'urban-centred' model, in which young residents of cities with population over a million people are a 'privileged' research target. It is their consumer experience that is regarded universal and serves as an empirical basis for new theories and concepts.
of youth consumption. At the same time, their peers who live not in big cities but in small
towns and villages are not in the centre of research interest and are often marginalised
(Mkrtchyan 2014).

Another reason for marginalising rural youth is the perception of the countryside as a
relatively closed and conservative society, which reproduces the same consumer
behaviour patterns from generation to generation. Rural youth is deprived of individuality
and is believed to adhere to the rural lifestyle, unified in its manifestations. In the Russian
and especially in the Soviet historical context, the opposition of the rural lifestyle as
'conservative/reactionary' to the progressive urban one played an important role in
legitimising the state policy aimed at blurring contrasts between the city and the
countryside. In the 1930s, individual farms in the USSR were forced to unite into
collective ones (kolkhozs) (see Fitzpatrick 2001). Moreover, during these years the
government actively encouraged migration of rural population able to work (mostly
young people) to the construction of large industrial facilities (Gorbachyov 2002). On the
other hand, it was at this time that the so-called 'cultural revolution' (Fitzpatrick 1974)
occurred, aimed at the elimination of illiteracy, spread of universal secondary education
and fight against cultural 'vestiges of the past'. Despite the government's attempts to carry
out a large-scale transformation of Soviet society, which were accompanied by purges
and mass victims¹, the views of the countryside/collective farm as a space of backward
mentality, stagnation and conservatism remained and was well established both in
academic representations of the Russian countryside and in the daily discourse.

Liberal reforms of the 1990s were accompanied by the destruction of the technological,
cultural, economic and social infrastructure and the existing rural-urban cooperation,
developed under the command economy, which resulted in a sharp drop in the living
standards of rural residents (Efendiyev and Bolotina 2002). These processes strengthened
the problematisation and marginalisation of rural youth. Russian countryside started to be
regarded as a social problem, a permanent crisis zone, and researchers focused only on those aspects of consumption which illustrated the idea of the plight of Russian countryside. In this context, the focus of many Russian researchers on the topic of alcohol consumption is representative (Granberg 2015, Poltavtseva 2003, Roshchina 2012, Staroverov 2004, Zaigraev 2002). Furthermore, increasing migration of young rural residents to cities helped to establish the perception of the countryside as an 'ageing' space where there is no place for the young. The 2007–2008 global economic recession and the current sanctions crisis of 2014/2015 (Okhotskiy 2016) only strengthened the perception of rural youth as a group straddling social frustration and migration.

This article has a double goal. At the empirical level, we strive to make up for the shortage of data on rural youth's consumption, who are often marginalised and rarely become the focus of either youth studies or research of the countryside. The theoretical goal of the article is the synthesis of modern concepts of youth consumption, on the one hand, and current theoretical approaches to the study of the countryside, on the other hand. We ask ourselves: how everyday consumption fits into biographical experience of rural youth, which consumption styles are implemented in the context of small towns and villages?

The empirical basis of the research is comprised of the materials of the project 'Work and Consumption in Russian Youth Life: Comparative Analysis of Rural and Urban Experiences', carried out within the framework of the Basic Research Program at the National Research University Higher School of Economics (HSE) in 2015—59 biographical interviews with young people living and working in small towns, urban-type settlements and villages of Leningrad region. Respondents work in different fields and have different levels of education. Men and women are equally represented (29 men, 30 women) in two age groups (31 people aged 20–25 and 28 people aged 30–35). Besides, informants are equally distributed over the three districts of Leningrad region which
comprise the sample: (Luga District – 21 people, Priozersk District – 18 people and
Volkhov District – 20 people). The collection contains interviews with employees of
agricultural and industrial enterprises working at various positions in the organisation
(from general labourers to mid-level managers); employees of budgetary and municipal
government organisations (teachers, staff of municipal organisations); private sector
employees (lawyers, bank employees); services and sales representatives (sales assistants,
bartenders, waiters) and the self-employed (people working under short-term contracts
and individual entrepreneurs).

Statement of the research goal has determined the choice of the biographical
approach as the main method of data collection and analysis, where the unit of analysis is
an individual as a separate subject of social life and social relations. This methodological
position allows researchers to put rural youth's consumer behaviour into the general
social and economic context of the risk society, which is characterised by blurred social
and economic boundaries and individualisation of life strategies. The application of the
biographical approach in studying rural informants is gaining popularity in Russian
sociology thanks to the development of the method of 'reflexive peasant studies'
(Khagurov 2009, Shanin 2002).

Rural youth's consumption in the context of the academic debate

It can be assumed that the key trend in the academic debate on rural youth's consumption
is a shift from the discrete dichotomy 'city' – 'countryside' to the concepts emphasising
flexibility and diffusedness of boundaries, a variety of economic and consumer logical
patterns, lifestyles, patterns of sedentarity and mobility, which can hardly fit into the
binary model of 'urban-rural' contrasts (Berreman 1978, Halfacree 2012, Lynch 2005,
Newby 1977, Patsiorkovskiy 2010). The choice of topics and research strategies depends
on the country's specifics. For instance, in developed countries, researchers' attention is
drawn to ideological aspects of consumption, such as a focus on maintaining a healthy
and/or ecological lifestyle and sustainable consumption (Levidow 2015). Studies of youth consumption in rural regions of developing countries are characterised by a focus on socio-economic aspects of consumption. Here, one of the key research focuses is the analysis of consumption variety and transformation of consumer preferences under the influence of changing lifestyles (Bansal et al. 2013, Gaiha 1988, Prialatha and Mathi 2011, Rao 2011).

These studies demonstrate a complex interrelation of 'rural' and 'urban' patterns in consumer behaviour of young rural residents. On the one hand, there remains a 'traditional' focus on reciprocity and ritual consumption, which help maintain or improve a person's social status in rural society (Rao 2011). On the other hand, there is a generation gap in choosing consumption strategies and tactics. Older rural residents often repeat their food choice; they mainly tend to trust their experience and not to experiment with new products. Young rural residents attempt to try new products, which are later often included in their everyday consumer basket (Prialatha and Mathi 2011). In addition, the growth of the education level among young rural residents leads to the fact that they often become 'opinion leaders' in their families regarding consumption strategies.

Migration processes also give a powerful impetus to transformations of consumption. Migration of youth to cities and their later return to the countryside make young people's rural consumption market-oriented; rural youth increasingly prefer to buy branded goods and try to emphasise not the low cost but the uniqueness of their belongings, thus indicating the shift of the consumption style towards urban consumption (Bansal et al. 2013).

For Russian research it is typical to study transformations in consumption strategies of rural residents, which are based on studying the changes in Russian rural areas and changes in leisure practices (Khagurov 2009). A common feature of these studies is that
they merely touch upon the topic in question, focusing on youth consumption in the broad context of rural residents' consumer behaviour.

Russian researchers' attention is mostly drawn to the topic of alcohol consumption in Russian countryside, where alcoholism in rural areas is to a large extent considered to be the central social problem (Granberg 2015, Poltavtseva 2003, Roshchina 2012, Staroverov 2004, Zaigraev 2002). In particular, analysing the consumption of non-commercial alcohol, Zaigraev (2002) mentions a significant increase in the consumption of home distilled alcohol (samogon) both as part of vodka consumption and in the absolute value: according to the 2001 survey, respondents consumed samogon 4.8 times more often than other drinks, including vodka. A correlation between alcohol consumption and age was brought into light: the most active consumers were the retired, the least active ones were young people under 30 years old. A similar conclusion about the correlation of age and alcohol consumption was also made by Ya.Roshchina (2012) in the study based on the 2006–2010 RLMS-HSE data, dedicated to alcohol consumption in the city and in the countryside.

As institutions of information society are developing in Russia, consumption of mass media and the Internet in rural areas is becoming another important research focus. According to the stereotype, media consumption in Russian countryside is described in terms of digital inequality (Ilyin 2010), which reflects the overall situation of uneven distribution of wealth between 'the city' and 'the countryside'. However, more recent studies show that the information gap between 'the city' and 'the countryside' is reducing mainly because of the spread of the Internet (Logunova and Davydov 2011).

Some research by Russian sociologists focuses on the topic of leisure and cultural consumption of rural youth (Boyak 2012, Kazhaeva 2011, Kulichkov 2009, Zhamseueva 2013). Here, researchers note, first of all, the prevalence of home leisure consumption: watching television programmes, communication on the Internet, meetings and
gatherings with friends at home, travelling to the nearest cities or towns and going to leisure centres. The description of public leisure is dominated by the narrative of 'decline', which, according to the authors, is due to the general degradation of leisure infrastructure inherited from the Soviet era, as well as a low level of involvement of young Russian rural residents in cultural and sports events, country celebrations and festivals.

In addition to the main topics we can be identify several relatively new research agendas which are focused on the processes of mobility from 'the city' to 'the countryside' taking the form of return migration and agricultural tourism (Nikiforova 2013, Yakovleva 2011). These studies also touch upon the topic of youth consumption. For example, Yakovleva (2011), who studies a specific Russian form of downshifting in the context of the 2008 crisis, considers the radical change of consumer behaviour to be among its main features; this is the so-called 'consumption retreatism', a desire for a simple life, not burdened by a race for objects of prestigious consumption.

The development of new consumption patterns is analysed in the context of the phenomenon of ecovillages, emerging in Russia (Bolotova 2002, Kulyasova 2004, Kulyasov and Kulyasova 2008, Shubina et al. 2014). Particular attention is paid to the formation of consumer ethics, the basic principles of which are minimisation of demands, eco-friendly consumption and a reduction of economic relations to cash-free exchange (Bolotova 2002: 49).

To sum up, it can be noted that the experience of studying consumption in Russian countryside has content-related and methodological specifics, which can be characterised by the prevalence of the problem-oriented approach and dispersion of topics. A variety of consumer groups and topics draw a researcher's attention. At the same time, the study of alcohol consumption can be named the main topic. Lines of research related to particular groups and their consumer behaviour in the countryside are forming and developing, these groups being tourists, eco-settlers and downshifters.
Stylistic features of consumption in the space of the rural-urban continuum

The main logic and patterns of youth consumption in rural areas are formed at the encounter of socio-economic processes, whose overall thrust is blurring social boundaries between 'the countryside' and 'the city', transformation of traditional rural forms of sociality, and mutual diffusion of elements of the rural and urban lifestyles. A proper framework for conceptualising these processes may be the term 'rural-urban continuum' (Lynch 2005, Miner 1952, Redfield 1930 Treyvish 2016), which articulates the idea of continuity of the social space placed between the poles of 'the city' and 'the countryside'. Marsden (1999) notes that modern countryside is increasingly becoming a 'post-industrial village', with all the strategies that are typical for urban consumption. The following factors are named among the ones influencing youth consumption in villages and small towns:

Rurbanisation, i.e. the countryside resembling cities in terms of conveniences and standard of living (Eaton et al. 1980, Nefedova and Treyvish 2002). Here, we can refer to such distinctive features of rural locations included in the study as a relatively well-developed retail and services infrastructure, represented by grocery stores and stalls, confectionerries, bakeries and bank branches. Thanks to this, a young rural resident is integrated into the system of market relations typical for big cities, and his/her consumption is mainly goods consumption.

Another issue is the landscape of rural settlements: there are one- and two-storey houses next to multi-storey panel block of flats, and the number of the latter is constantly increasing. A lot of young rural residents do not only consume like 'city residents' but also are born and live in standard flats, accustomed to 'urban' standards of domestic comfort and the associated patterns of consumption from their childhood.

A significant impact on the pace and nature of rural life is also made by interdistrict mobility, which is especially characteristic of young people: regular trips to
the district centre and St. Petersburg for work, studying, leisure, entertainment, meetings with friends and family – are an integral part of young people's everyday lives. Many informants work away from home, in the district centre; the opposite situation is also typical, when urban youth (residents of district centres) commute daily to work at enterprises located in rural areas.

An important factor of rurbanisation is the mobility of boundaries between 'rural' and 'urban' youth: many young people living in district centres are first-generation city residents. After moving to the city for permanent residence, they tend to keep an active connection with classmates, friends and family who remain in the country. In addition, along with the process of rurbanisation of the countryside, there is a process of suburbanisation (Jackson 1985, Mason and Nigmatullina 2011, Mieszkowski and Mills 1993), during which young people (mostly couples from big cities) are moving to the country for permanent or temporary residence, attracted by a favourable ecological situation. Suburbanisation also contributes to the mutual approach and diffusion of the 'rural' and 'urban' lifestyles.

Undoubtedly, a huge impact on bridging the gap between images and lifestyles of the city and the country, as well as the formation of sufficiently stable relations and interactions is caused by the penetration of information technology and new media in everyday communication: studies show (Logunova and Davydov 2011) Russian rural residents are active users of the Internet, and mostly the mobile Internet as the cheapest source of access to the Net. For young people living in rural locations in question, owning a mobile phone, a laptop or a computer with access to the Internet is not a luxury but a standard of everyday life. Global network resources work actively on the convergence of 'urban' and 'rural' standards and consumption patterns.

It is worth noting that in this case the boundary between 'the city' and 'the country' is not completely destroyed, and it is still important as a part of social reality and
an attribute of symbolic positioning. It can be said that modern countryside has partially
get rid of the stigma of consumer deficit and lack of product range, however, it retains
'career deficit', a limited range of career opportunities and status mobility: the lack of
jobs, and as a result, limited financial resources, which in its turn, significantly narrows
the horizons of consumer opportunities of rural youth.

As Nefedova and Treyvish note with regard to the experience of Soviet housing
rurbanisation, it did not destroy people's independent agricultural activities but expanded
the sphere of the quasi-urban lifestyle: 'Rural blocks of flats were surrounded by
vegetable gardens, cattle sheds, access to which was blocked by haystacks.' (Nefedova
and Treyvish 2002: 76). This trend is still relevant today. Along with the general focus on
the consumption of goods traditional 'rural' practices of food self-sufficiency remain:
horticulture, gardening, animal husbandry, which may not play a significant role in
consumption of today's youth, however, they exist as a background component of
everyday life.

Finally, in rural areas the phenomenon of a 'close-knit social community'
remains, implying 'intensive communication' (Logunovs and Davydov 2011:41) and
'interweaving of family and neighbourly relations in the fabric of the work ones.' (41).

The factors considered here determine the space, the scope of opportunities and
limitations, where youth's consumption styles are formed.

We analyse consumer preferences of rural youth from the perspective of 'the
lifestyle' (Miles 2000, Omelchenko 2004), which connects everyday consumption
practices with the construction of youth identities. Therefore, we assume that young rural
residents, like their peers from cities with population over a million people, are included
in the context of the 'risk society' and can design their own 'lifestyle' – not through
assimilation, adaptation and mechanical reproduction of the existing social norms but
through acquiring the skills of self-sufficiency and organisation of their life as 'an open
process' (Beck 2009). A consumption style is regarded as one of the aspects of a lifestyle in general. By a lifestyle we mean a platform of values on which we build our entire life strategies, focused on achieving success, both individual and related to socially acceptable models. This platform helps with individual construction of pivotal choices, separation of the significant from the non-essential, the desirable from the unacceptable. Lifestyle strategies, including the ones in the consumption aspect, are construed in the context of maturing on the basis of family capital and developing habitus. Without excluding the impact of rural residence on the development of a consumption style, we, however, see it as one of the structural contexts, along with gender, employment and education of informants, as well as socio-economic conditions of a particular location.

**Consumption styles of rural youth**

**Family consumption style**

In accordance with the stated theoretical and methodological ideas and relying on the empirical data obtained through interviews with rural youth, four consumption styles were distinguished.

The family style characterises consumer behaviour of informants who connect their own life careers with marriage and self-realisation as spouses and parents:

*'My goal is to build a house, have a big family - so that I have at least 3 children. This is my goal. So that people won't point a finger at the person and say that he is an lousy guy and spoils everyone's life but enjoys the fruits of others' labour - I do not want this. A successful person. I look - here is a man in a suit with a briefcase and a good watch, going to work, but is he happy? If he likes that he earns a lot of money, probably it is a good thing, perhaps he is successful. As for me, I come home, I take my child in my arms and I am satisfied that I have a small child, I know that in the future I will probably have another one.'*(male, 30, livestock expert)
Within the family consumption style, among the already existing married couples the principle of 'all the best is for children' prevails: children's consumption is considered a 'barometer' of a family well-being and the criterion of successful parenthood:

'What can you easily spend money on? Respondent: (thinks). I guess on children, it's more likely. I want them to be dressed well and beautifully, and the kids themselves ask for this...' (30 years old, livestock expert).

The range of preferred children's consumption varies depending on the parents' cultural capital. In families where one or both parents have a higher education, in addition to spending money on essentials, toys and entertainment, it includes investments in education and organised leisure (clubs, classes, etc.)

Consumption of adult family members is often formed based on the remaining funds and focuses on meeting the basic needs. Saving practices pervade the entire system of everyday expenditures: from food to clothing and home appliances. Things are purchased only if they are necessary, and their pragmatic features: functionality, durability and convenience – are valued above everything else.

In clothes, the 'casual' or (for men) 'sports' style prevail. As a rule, new clothes are purchased 'once in a season'.

The place of purchase and the product itself are chosen according to the following strategy: first, based on the available information (prior shopping experience, advertising, advice of friends and relatives) respondents decide on a shop/mall 'where it's cheaper', then they choose goods which 'are better quality', which they 'like' or which 'suit' them from the 'cheap' range presented in this shop/mall. An exception is footwear,
on which the informants are willing to spend a bit more if it corresponds to their perception of 'quality':

'And which brands of clothes and footwear do you like and buy? Where do you buy clothes? Respondent: Before, I earned less and I used to buy cheaper shoes. I generally prefer more expensive shoes, but not very expensive, still affordable, but more or less good ones. In our town, I like to shop for shoes at 'Burgershoes', because they are more practical, prices are more affordable, and the quality a bit better...' (female, 34, kindergarten teacher).

Reasonable minimalism in clothes is a distinctive feature of behaviour of both those who already have a family/children and those who are just planning to have them in the future. Another integral attribute of the 'family style is meticulous planning of expenses. Spontaneous purchases are either extremely rare (people say they 'like the item very much') or not possible at all:

'First of all, my wife says, "We need this and that." I say, "Alright, let's go." So we go ... and choose everything. For example, I come home after a night shift, sleep till 3 o'clock, which means we leave at three if we plan to buy some appliances. If we need to buy some clothes, then she tells me at the weekend. So we plan two or three days ahead, I mean if we have this thing planned, I don't make any other plans.' (male, 31, worker).

A constant lack of time (especially in families with two working spouses) and financial resources underlies the demand for the following economic practices among this category of informants:
a) individual wholesale purchase of food products: food is purchased once in the amount sufficient to meet the needs of the family for a long time (a week):

‘Interviewer: Tell me please, where do you usually buy things, such as clothes, food for every day? Respondent: I can't say we shop every day. After we receive our salary, we go to buy stuff, not for the whole month, but for a week, for example, meat; and if we need cigarettes or bread, we can buy it at the local shop.’ (female, 25, milking machine operator)

In this case, the priority shopping place is an economy class chain grocery store: 'Pyaterochka', 'Diksi' and 'Semya'.

b) the tendency to buy everything one needs in one place: regularly at weekends married couples go shopping to hypermarkets or shopping malls (Mega, Auchan), where they purchase food, clothing, goods for children and (if required) home appliances. A key role in choosing a particular shopping mall belongs to transport accessibility issues: a mall must be located near major roads which connect the countryside to the city and have parking places (as most trips are made by car).

It is worth noting that there is a certain 'gender division of labour' in the matter of shopping: men buy food, while choosing and purchasing clothes for the whole family is usually a woman's duty:

‘I usually go to the shop to buy products, food, and my wife goes shopping if we need clothes, she is better at this. It's hard for her now, so I have to do something. It's good that we have a car, we can drive somewhere, bring stuff and go somewhere and look for something while the kids are at kindergarten. On the whole, we both take part in everything.’ (male, 30, fodder manufacturer)
Home and housing is a key element of self-identity for informants with a family, it is a material correlate of their social success. A lot of informants build their own house or are planning/dreaming to build it in the future:

‘I want my family to live in one big house eventually at a piece of land... let there be fruit trees, a big house, a big piece of land.’ (male, 32, veterinarian)

For young people who live in flats taking care of their homes takes the form of 'permanent' renovation practices, a gradual 'upgrade' of their living conditions (as far as possible and as far as financial resources permit). In both cases, investments in the improvement of housing conditions are considered to be a priority expense category, in which people do not economise and for which they can cut back on everyday consumption.

‘Interviewer: So sometimes you want to buy new appliances, right? Respondent: Well, when we want to buy new ones, we do, of course, but only if we have money; if there is no money, then we don't buy new stuff. Besides, now we need to renovate the house, so we are trying to save.’ (female, 25, milking machine operator)

At the same time, interpretations of domestic comfort are dominated by conservative and not innovative implications. For instance, when choosing home appliances, informants with a family gravitate towards a typical set of technical goods (like the ones everyone else has), including a TV, a washing machine and a microwave oven.

‘Family' informants, in contrast to groups of other styles, do not tend to distance themselves from the elements of the 'rural' lifestyle, in particular, from working in their
gardens. Their garden land has in their eyes a double value: it is 'an additional way to
feed the family' (female, 32, accountant) and an additional source of family income:

'I think it is quite possible in the future to really have a huge yard, have some
cows, for example, or chickens, we will be perfectly able to sell these natural products...
we have only natural products, like in the past. Well, of course, I would like to have my
own business.' (female, 21, forewoman at an agricultural enterprise)

Status-oriented style
A symbolic benchmark for this consumption style is the change and strengthening of a
class position through professional, educational and economic growth. The decisive
factor for choosing this consumption style is the coherence of informants' views
regarding social prestige within 'the whole society' and individual interpretations of
success.

The way informants interpret their social careers is influenced by their current
occupation. Young workers consider moving up the social ladder primarily as transition
from the sphere of 'dirty' physical work to the field of intellectual, managerial 'clean'
work. Young people with 'clean' jobs (lower-level experts at enterprises, educators, office
employees) are characterised by a wider horizon of planning and structuring of their
career expectations:

'I mean, I am going to work in (name of the firm) for some time, get experience
in civil cases, then I will find a job in the structure of the agency for internal affairs and
get some experience in criminal law, so later I can become a criminal defence lawyer.
This is one scenario. Another one is similar: I am going to work at the Prosecutor's
office, just live and get my rank and position and serve till I get something stable and high position.’ (male, 23, lawyer)

So, whereas for the first group their life career is perceived as interclass mobility and achievement of a higher class status, for the second one it is upward mobility within their subjectively defined (by background, level of education and the nature of employment) social class. These differences are also reflected in the field of consumption. For instance, the first group is characterised by attaining upward mobility through consumption, which correlates with their career expectations. The second category of informants tends to see individual (and often family) consumption as a rational investment in their social status. For example, when choosing clothes it is important to maintain a distance from the non-prestigious 'class', which is associated with 'the countryside' and 'kolkhoz' (collective farms):

'Again, to dress yourself, to look not worse than others, not some "kolkhoz" style, I mean. Well, again, we choose good quality expensive clothes, we don't buy something that will fall apart in a week.’ (female, 30, sales assistant)

A similar function (a division line between classes, which partly coincides with division between generations) belongs to the symbolic distancing from agricultural practices, such as horticulture, gardening and animal husbandry, associated with the rural lifestyle and habitus of the older generation:

'Well, mostly it is my opinion, sometimes we tell mum, "Mum, stop spending your time on these vegetable patches, these potatoes, we can buy you some." As to my
grandma, she is of the old generation, so she grows these vegetables...’ (male, 25, shop administrator)

Under the new conditions, said practices are either completely abandoned or redefined and legitimised as an ('urban') form of pastime:

‘Interviewer: And why do you grow vegetables? Do you like it or..? Respondent: As a hobby, I guess. To do something, because you can't grow enough to eat. What can you eat there? Only during the summer we can eat some of our own herbs, tomatoes or cucumbers.’ (female, 22, teacher)

In the narratives of working class young people, there is a pattern of positioning oneself through clothes, but it is much less pronounced. In general, the wish to dress 'well' prevails; however, the idea of 'well-dressed' is reduced to clothes from brand 'urban' shops: 'In general, before I bought clothes in the markets, now I usually go to St. Petersburg and buy clothes at Sportmaster, at brand shops.' (male, 21, mechanic at an agricultural enterprise)

An important marker of social success within the status-oriented style is having your own housing and a car. Unlike in the family style, where purchasing property and/or a car is driven by family needs, here the horizon of consumption is formed by ambitions of professional self. As has already been noted, young 'careerists' are sensitive to the public opinion, the way people assess their professional achievements, material correlates of which are, in particular, a large well-furnished house and a good car make:

‘I think that earning enough money is important, especially for a man. A car is important not only because others will see it, but because this is the first sign that a man can earn money.’ (female, 24, accountant)
In general, working class young people show more pragmatism when buying a car: they buy what they can afford at the moment, taking into account the available resources. 'White collars' consumption is often ahead of their real opportunities, hence the prevalence of auto loan practices.

A different approach is typical for choosing gadgets. Mobile phones and tablets are not objects of status positioning. Their purchase is usually driven by 'strictly business' reasons:

'Yes. For instance, now that I have this job, I need Internet access; I know that I will go to court or the registrar office and that I have a gadget where I can write everything down, where I have access to certain files, the Consultant-Plus system, for example. You can go online, look it up, and you have everything you need. Of course, there are many other functions: video, MP3-player, yeah, but for me they don't matter.'

(male, 23, lawyer)

**Individualistic style**

The individualistic consumption style is characterised by the following significant criteria of social success: individualism, independence (both economic and independence from life trajectories imposed by the social environment), hedonism and self-expression. 'Individualists' construe their biography as a self-made narrative, a story of individual success and achievements:

'To be successful is ... let me think (thinks) ... well, it means achieving the goals you set. Once I had a goal to get a higher education. I got it and I think that I am successful in this area. I really wanted to be a mother, and I am a mother, so I am
successful in this as well. I really wanted to become financially independent by myself, without any lucky beautiful marriages, and this is enough for me, this is success. That's all; probably, achieving what you want is success' (female, 33, teacher).

Individualists' consumption practices, from food ones to home improvements, are built around the creation of the individual self. A great significance within this style is attached to comfort, aesthetics and hedonistic interpretation of consumption.

'I love beautiful things, I love a good and tasty meal, and now I am doing a renovation, so I have planned the reconstruct my flat, yeah, and I certainly want to buy a car in the future. So all my funds are spent on us, my son and myself. And we have also bought a Yorkshire terrier; we have spent a lot of money on him' (female, 33, teacher).

'Individualists' are well-informed consumers. They are well familiar with modern fashion trends and gadgets; however, instead of following the examples of popular culture blindly they prefer creating 'their own' style. A decision to purchase things is often taken spontaneously, following the principle of 'I saw it – I liked it – I bought it':

'There are some shops. Adidas, Nike. I like Marks & Spencer. H&M is cool too. Because when my wife takes me there, I don't look at price tags. If you like it, you should buy it. In general, it's normal. My mum taught me that; if you like it, it doesn't matter if it's necessary' (male, 26, entrepreneur).

Individualisation in the context of married women's consumption with an above-average income often takes the form of automobile emancipation. It is typical for such
families that both spouses have their own cars, selected to suit individual tastes and preferences; and their service is individual rather than family responsibility. The determining factor here is that the car is bought not 'for a business cause' but rather 'for pleasure' and correlates with the values of free time and personal independence:

"For the purpose of going to work, well, although here you can get anywhere on foot, I do not know, I just liked it, everyone in my family drives, and I just like driving somewhere, listening to music, going to work by car, or to a shop, or out of town with tents, barbecues, everything is easier when you own a car, you just get in and go. You don't depend on anyone, don't wait for anyone, you can take someone with you" (female, 23, a bank employee).

The strategy of individualisation and stylisation of everyday life can also manifest itself as 'the great refusal' to follow fashion trends ("But no, I do not chase brands. Advertising works, I realise that all of these brands cost a lot") (male, 30, IT-specialist)) and other forms of mass consumer behaviour:

"Interviewer: You have decided to give up meat, for what reasons? Respondent: Well, first of all, I watched some programmes that meat ... Well, of course, first of all, you eat it, and it is an animal, that is it has a soul, just like you do. So this is to start with, and well, I generally decided to try, and you see everything is alright, I manage without meat. It hasn't been a long time, I just started in November but still" (male, 25, administrator at a shop).
Common characteristics of the informants who adhere to this consumption style can be considered a fairly high level of cultural capital, both institutionalised (university degree) and in the form of self-education, and living in district centres.

**Conformist style**

The 'conformist' style cannot be called a style in the full sense of the word, since it is not chosen freely, even relatively freely, and does not imply any value orientation of consumer behaviour. While in all previous cases the determining factor in consumer choices was the consumer's personal views on success and/or plans for the future life, here they either do not exist or are expressed in unformed and poorly considered concepts. The defining characteristic of the 'lifestyle' is social conformity, i.e. 'to live like others':

‘Interviewer: OK. How do you see your future life in general? Respondent: (thinks) How do I see my future life? I don't know... Well, I'll start a family, have a job and will live basically like everyone else does’ (male, 21, worker at an agricultural enterprise)

Within this style, everyday purchases are made mechanically, for example, on the way home from work. The choice of a shopping location is determined by the logic of minimising the time period, focusing on saving personal time and effort: the shop must be located within a walking distance from home:

‘Here, mainly at the shop near the bus stop. Basically, it is not expensive, and there is everything you need. In Luga, if you need something, there are shops like "Pyatyorochka", "Diki"... all you need is close by. We cannot complain’ (male, 21, general labourer).
The same approach prevails in the choice of clothing: 'Conformists' do not care what to wear, they have no preferences for labels/brands or practical characteristics of the items they purchase:


Often, buying clothes is delegated to older family members (mothers), or the choice is made under the influence of friends/acquaintances.

The fundamental difference between 'conformists' consumer behaviour and economical strategies (which are popular, for example, in the context of the family style) is the lack of motivation to gather information in advance and evaluate comparative advantages of goods:

'Interviewer: How do you decide what clothes or appliances to buy? Do you check on the Internet first or go to a shop right away? Respondent: I go straight to the shop and buy... Anyone can write anything on the Internet' (male, 23, tree feller).

'Conformists' never encourage any improvement of the living conditions. Their participation in the practices of home renovation is determined by the already established system of family obligations, which are not to be questioned: 'the responsibility to help the older generation'.
This consumption style characterises consumer behaviour of a social group
distinguished based on the age, gender and employment: 20-year-olds, more often
unmarried men employed in the field of unskilled manual labour.

Peculiarities of food practices can be regarded a part of common characteristics
of the youth consumption styles described here. Regardless of the style, young people
prefer to cook and eat at home. Eating out is possible only within leisure and
communication practices of 'hanging out, drinking coffee and talking' and even then it
happens only sometimes, and mainly with young people (twenty-year-olds) who live in
relatively large district centres. This is both a general trend, that is the transfer of these
practices into a private place, and the apparent lack of 'socio-cultural' food infrastructure,
as well as financial constraints of young rural residents. In our view, the willingness of
the overwhelming majority of our informants to create their consumption strategies
independently and make consumption a part of the chosen lifestyle shows the increasing
reflexivity of rural youth.

Conclusions

The analysis of consumer practices of Russian rural youth has shown that the
proximity the city with population of over a million residents (St. Petersburg) and,
consequently, the availability (to a greater or lesser extent, but potentially for everyone)
of both the consumption infrastructure (supply) and urban consumption practices largely
determine the way and style of life of young rural residents. 'The city' appears in
biographical narratives not only as a source of material and cultural wealth but also as an
important symbolic resource of social mobility (between classes).

We have identified the following important factors of rurbanisation and
suburbanisation: blurred boundaries between 'rural' and 'urban' youth; penetration of
information technology and new media in everyday practices; development of a quasi-
urban lifestyle and maintaining the importance of a close-knit social community.
When distinguishing between different consumption styles of rural youth, we used the definition of a consumption style as an expression of a general life strategy, focused on achieving success, with regard to which people make vital choices. As a result, we distinguished four consumption styles that are most clearly represented in the narratives of the informants, dedicated to everyday consumption practices: the family, status-oriented, individualistic and conformist styles.

The family style characterises behaviour of the majority of rural youth, regardless of a particular area of residence; its features are young people's 'early maturing', typical for rural areas, as well as everyday inclusion and entrenchment 'from birth' in the rural infrastructure, in specific practices of 'labour' family upbringing and in the culture of rural neighbourhood.

In the status-oriented style, the key role is dedicated to the focus on success in society in general. Within this style, there are variations related to class distinctions: youth engaged in physical labour gravitates towards upward class mobility in consumption, while 'white collars' invest in their career and try to strictly distinguish between 'urban' and 'rural' consumption patterns.

The individualistic style of consumption, oriented towards the values of independence, self-expression and hedonism, is usually chosen by young people with relatively high cultural capital, living in district centres.

Inertial consumption within a separate 'conformist style' characterises consumer behaviour of 20-year-old unmarried men employed in the field of unskilled manual labour. This 'style' correlates with unformed and poorly considered views on success and life career.

Thus, we can state that consumer space of the rural-urban continuum is heterogeneous. On the one hand, tradition, structure and stability still remain important values and ways of organising everyday life; on the other hand, there is an increasing blurring of spatial
and time boundaries with the city and a reduction of symbolic and physical distance. Putting these separate styles on the symbolic scale 'the city' – 'the countryside', we can assume to some extent that the individualistic style corresponds to the consumption logic of a post-industrial city, the status-oriented style logically fits into the context of classic (industrial) urbanism and the family style reflects the logic of a suburban resident. The closest style to the 'rural' pole is the 'conformist style', which, at the first glance, reflects the established stereotypes of the 'backward' countryside. However, as our study has shown, this 'style' is marginal among rural youth and to a greater extent exists due to the low level of cultural and economic capital, and not due to residing in rural areas.

Acknowledgements

1. According to different estimates made by historians, mass starvation, which was provoked by the policy of total collectivisation and affected grain-growing regions of the USSR, took the lives of between 2 and 8 million people. (Anderson and Silver 1985, Conquest 1987, Ivnitskiy 2000, Lorimer 1946, Tsaplin 1989, Urlanis 1974)

2. The results of the project "Work and Consumption in Russian Youth Life: Comparative Analysis of Rural and Urban Experiences", carried out within the framework of the Basic Research Program at the National Research University Higher School of Economics (HSE) in 2015, are presented in this work

References


42. Paciorkovskij, V.V. (2010 Sel'sko-gorodskaja Rossija (Moscow.: ISJePN RAN)


44. Prialatha, P. and D.K.M. Mathim (2011) A study on factors influencing rural consumer buying behaviour towards personal care products in Coimbatore district (CHIEF PATRON)
46. Redfield, R. (1930) Tepoztlán, a Mexican village: a study of folk life (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press.)
50. Trejvish, A. (2016) Sel'sko-gorodskoj kontinuum: sud'ba predstavlenija i ego svjaz' s prostranstvennoj mobil'nost'ju naselenija. Demograficheskoe obozrenie 3(1) pp. 52-70