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**Editörler / Editors**

Doç. Dr. Kubilay ÖZYER

Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Müslüme AKYÜZ

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**Yazışma Adresi / Mail Address**

Doç. Dr. Kubilay ÖZYER

Örgütsel Davranış Araştırmaları Dergisi  
Gaziosmanpaşa Üniversitesi Taşlıçiftlik Yerleşkesi  
İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi İşletme Bölümü

60150 TOKAT

Tel: +90 356 252 16 16 – 2363

Fax: +90 356 252 16 73

E-Posta/E-Mail: [info@odad.org](mailto:info@odad.org)

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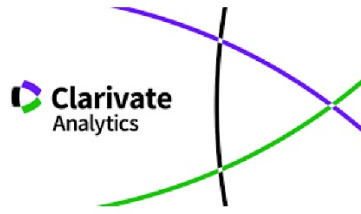
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ÖRGÜTSEL DAVRANIŞ  
Araştırmaları Dergisi

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## **SOCIAL ASPECTS OF CHANGE OF ECONOMIC BEHAVIOUR OF THE RUSSIAN YOUTH**

Gyuldzhan Kamilevna AZAMATOVA<sup>1</sup>, Andemirkan Khachimovich SHIDOV<sup>2</sup>, Albina Olegovna VINDIZHEVA<sup>3</sup>, Azamat Haseynovich LYUEV<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Candidate of historical sciences, associate professor of "the Theories and technologies of social work", Kabardino-Balkarian state university of H.M Berbekov, Russia,

<sup>2</sup> Doctor of Economics, professor, head of the department of accounting, analysis and audit, Kabardino-Balkarian state university of H.M Berbekov, Russia,

<sup>3</sup> Candidate of sociological sciences, associate professor of "the Theories and technologies of social work", Kabardino-Balkarian state university of H.M Berbekov, Russia,

**\*Corresponding Author**  
Email: azagulya2007@mail.ru

### **ABSTRACT**

*The article considered the economic behavior of the Russian youth in the conditions of the formation of consumer society. The Russian youth unlike representatives of the senior generation, has been more adapted to new realities of market economy and has been capable to overcome the constant components of economic realities (connected with mentality). In the economic sphere, using the example of economic practices and strategies, the line of a break between young and senior generations of Russians has been most accurately traced. The authors considered the changes in the economic behavior of youth in Russia within the context of the assimilation of values of consumer society. Based on the results of the work carried out it is possible to say that the characteristic features of the economic behavior of youth would continue to remain within Russia, that is a largely scarce model of consumer society. In line with the emerging trend, the majority of the segments of the population tries to be economical and reduce their daily expenditures, values of the consumer society, in the short term, would play a key role in the formation of positive identities of youth, as have undoubted economic attractiveness for the majority of the country's population.*

**Keywords:** *Economic Behavior, Sociology, Consumer Society, Assimilation of Values*

### **INTRODUCTION**

The study of problems of economic behavior of the Russian youth in the conditions of formation of consumer society is of great interest as the youth, being the leading subject of social and economic reproduction, is capable to express the advanced and at the same time global trends of processes of modernization. Young people, as a rule, show innovativeness in economic behavior, but at the same time, they are more exposed to risks connected with deviations from the standards of the economic culture (more than representatives of the senior age cohorts), which is developed in a certain society due to the increased suggestibility, lack of life experience and social marginality of the considered population group (Talalaev, 2018).

Studying changes in the economic behavior of the Russian youth would allow: specifying social and economic needs of this group in connection with global processes of the world market and defining the limits of the growth of consumerist installations in the conditions of the crisis phenomena in economy and sanctions policy. It would also help in revealing the risks connected with negative impacts of values of consumer society on modern Russian youth

which is also in many respects connected with dissatisfaction of representatives of the considered group with their own financial position. Additionally, it would allow making examination of consumer society's impact on the strategy and practice of modern Russian youth, to define the ability of young people to act rationally, and also to differentiate this group on extent of impact on it from various social institutes and define the consequences of the deformation of economic behavior of the Russian youth including geopolitical calls, and social and economic trends. One of the aims of this research was to study the consequences of the deformation of youth economic behavior in connection with the assimilation of values of consumer society in Russia.

## **METHODOLOGY AND MATERIALS**

During the current research, different theoretical approaches were used. Their complex applications allowed doing a sociological research and making judgment of the deformation processes of the Russian youth's economic behavior occurring in the conditions of a developed consumer society. It was possible to carry provisions to them using theories of valuable and rational actions for "understanding" Weber's sociology which revealed the rationalization trends of the economic behavior of youth in the conditions of the Russian reality; the structurally functional theory going back to the works of E. Durkheim allowed considering the consumer practice of youth as mechanisms of maintenance of society in a condition of stability; Social and reproduction approach (Chuprov) helped to allocate the role of economic and labor socialization of youth in the course of rationalization of economic behavior of this group in the context of aspiration by a social maturity; the risk approach (Zubok) going back to the works of the German sociologist U. Beck, considered consumption among young people regarding their ability to form conformality and the deviant behavior of representatives of this group, in this approach, the instructions on the risks of "excessive" consumerism (consumerism) and "toxic" (harmful) consumption resulting from the transformation of the information and technological environment were also used; the theories of "consumer society" (Baudrillard, 2006) allowed to claim that the consumer society values, which are mainly derived from logic of the development of a world order of the late capitalism, also promoted the labor and educational motivation of the Russian youth without being a source of only negative impacts on younger generation; the sociocultural approach was used to do a research on economic events (Zaslavskaya, Ryvkina, Arkhipov, Vodenko, etc.) which allowed considering the economic behavior of modern Russian youth through a prism of the influence of the consumer fashion and the practice of leisure where entertainments still have the defining role.

The materials of the sociological researches conducted by the All-Russian selection, dissertation work of Talalaev (2018) were also used.

### ***Main Part***

Sukhomlinsky (1975) very precisely and figuratively expressed the difficult process of the formation of the identity of the young man: "... the first time is born the living being, the second time — the citizen, the active, conceiving, acting personality ... The family is that primary environment where the person has to learn to create good".

The process of "rebirth" is commonly referred to as the socialization process which is connected with the development process by the growing and maturing individual of primary labor and professional knowledge, abilities, skills, with the vital self-determination which is



equitable to public, group and personal interests (Pavlov, 2017). And, at last, it marks the transformation of the individual into the personality who is capable and ready to the conscious introduction in public reproduction process as an active and capable subject of transformation of surrounding reality. Peculiar "midwife" at the birth and formation of the capable socialized personality is her economic behavior. The proof of this are those functions which are carried out by this behavior for the young man (Vasilenko, 2008). They have been shown in the table below.

**Table 1 - Functions of economic behavior**

Function	Content of function
Adaptation	The Economic Behaviour (EB) allows to use available resources more effectively, helps in the adaptation to new realities of society, and the formed global market
Socializing	Subjects join in various social groups, and also join the social world.
Integrative	Models and types of the EDS reflect fashion and public opinion, i.e. by means of economic behavior, the individual is integrated into this or that social group and society.
Regulating	These or those behavioural acts mention the deep mechanisms of perception and understanding of the existing customs, traditions, habits, and rules of conduct. Eventually, it defines the legislatively enshrined provisions, and promotes the preservation and maintenance of a public system.
Goal-setting	The social and economic system constantly develops, as the behavior models of people appear and develop that cause the continuous updating of the purposes and the creation of new values.



The prospect of the economic behavioral changes of contemporary Russian youth are largely determined not only by the general growth of the national economy and real incomes of the population, but also by the degree of assimilation of the values of the consumer society, which are global in nature. In this regard, the internalization (from Lat. *Interims* - internal) (Abercrombie, 2004) is a rather complex psychosocial process, as a result of which the external norms and values become internal regulators, including the economic behavior of both an individual and the entire social group (Talalaev, 2018). Therefore, in the context of considering the deformation of the economic behavior of young people, it is necessary to reveal how the socialized consumption values were assimilated by this group in the process of its socialization. In doing so, one should take into account the general trends in the assimilation of values of consumption by the Russian society as a whole. Internalization has been considered as "assimilation."

At the present stage, the values of the consumer society grouped around wealth, and material comforts have become indispensable benchmarks in the public consciousness of the Russian population, which have turned wealth into an integral symbol of success and good luck. According to Gorshkov (2017), in comparison with the inhabitants of other European countries, the desire of Russian fellow citizens for material well-being and respect from others is not so much an end in itself, as it is the other side of the deficiency of these components of life. In the ideas about the directions of further development of the country, attitudes towards

the revival of traditions prevail. The so-called visual poverty of the population in combination with the crisis phenomena of recent years has affected the processes of mastering consumer values. Thus, the values of the consumer society have been assimilated by the bulk of the country's population under the sign of need, the scarcity of financial benefits and financial possibilities for expanding the consumer practices.

Therefore, the Russian youth in their economic behavior continues to focus on Western consumption trends. "Youth inquiries are high, as Sheregi (2013) declares, but they meet the modern standards of well-being for the middle class. The youth expects that they will be acquired in the future as follows : their own apartment (89%), car (78%), computer (49%); summer cottage (43%), and video-audio electronic equipment (38)". Moreover, consumer values have been the basis of a certain optimism regarding the future life, at least they have been a completely understandable guideline, that is, what you can and should be striving for (Talalaev, 2018).

Young people have been experiencing economic optimism, hoping in the future for mandatory growth of their own income. Moreover, "the material expectations of young people are connected with their social status claims. Today, 83% of Russian youth and their financial position, and their social status on a 10-point scale has been estimated not to be higher than 5 points, and would like to have a financial position by analogy with the top five layers of property groups - 72%, and the same - located in the top five social strata"(Sheregi, 2013). However, in assessing the current state of affairs, young people often define their real wealth as unsatisfactory.

As a result of the assimilation of the values of the consumer society and modern youth life, "adhering to their moral code, which, as a rule, coincides with the code generally accepted. For some, such behavior is a reflection of actual tolerance, for others, a position that demonstrates to others the "breadth" of views, the ability to appear "modern", "advanced", etc."(Gorshkov, 2011).

Talalaev (2018) noted that the "observation of the current situation related to the rather long existence of Russia in the context of Western sanctions shows that, starting from the second (2016) year, the crisis began to affect the majority of Russians, and first of all the poor people suffered from it". Therefore, it is quite possible to say that the status consumption has experienced a heel and has been perceived as an elite benefit. "In these conditions, economy has become the main adaptation strategy for the population. In the spring of 2016, only 13% of the population did not start saving because there was no need for this or a similar desire. The rest of Russians (87%) noted that the crisis forced them to change their usual consumption patterns. The most frequent areas of savings for the population were the purchase of clothes and shoes, food and leisure. In addition, about 40% of Russians also began to save on current leisure and the acquisition of expensive durable goods" (Gorshkov, 2017). Saving has again become the strategy of a significant part of the population, including the middle class. Thus, there is a trend to limit the consumption by the citizens of the country, including young people, which could not but reflect on the reduction of wasteful behavior.

Obviously, with the social development of young people, the costs associated with the consumption became not just the main aspects of the functioning of the goods and services market, but also the leading factors in shaping the spiritual world of the modern personality.



Moreover, consumption has become not purely utilitarian, but quite symbolic, and, most importantly, it has become, especially in the period of youth, a means of communication.

The fetishization of goods and services constructs the consumption practices not only in modern Russia, but also in the world. In this regard, as suggested by the domestic researcher of the phenomenon of mass culture Kostina (2016), the consumerism itself in its most developed forms, primarily in the form of “commodity fetishism” described by K. Marx, “leads to the desire to satisfy the numerous, artificially formed needs, which are perceived as an indispensable attribute of modern man, to an orientation to certain standards of behavior, images and stereotypes that allow you to demonstrate your own economic superiority or - more often - to imitate it, to the conviction of the relativity of the scale of values and readiness. They should be adjusted in accordance with the changed social conditions, towards a prestigious consumption setting and the desire to conform - at least partially - to the social stratum, which serves as an ideal guideline. In this regard, many young people want to become rich and successful despite their own real possibilities.

Consequently, it is possible, of course, to distinguish between necessary consumption and consumerism as something “false” or “redundant”, although sometimes it is extremely difficult to establish the real boundary between these phenomena. For example, if a young man from a family with a low income saved up on any brand, status thing for half a year, it would be rather strange in this connection to accuse him of lacking the spirituality and fetishism. In addition, consumption in many cases is impossible without the previous rather “rigid” economy, to which young people have to resort. Thus, consumer values may well become the motives of work (Shevchenko, 2009), a manifestation of quite adequate economic and further career ambitions.

At present, young people are oriented towards a high income, which is tied to an assessment of their own social status. But in the light of the above, there has been a clear contradiction and potential conflict “between limited material resources and the motivation to achieve material well-being, which gives rise to the destructive ways of social communication and surrogate forms of communication that promote self-affirmation in the form of a departure from social reality” (Lilyuhin, 2016), in connection with which, especially of the youth, the economic behavior gets deviant forms.

Empirical studies of recent years have testified in favor of the fact that, in the opinion of the respondents and representatives of young people, the mass culture of consumption plays a key role in shaping the personality and character of the modern youth representative (40%), then education follows with a double lag (24.5%), and only the last place is occupied by classical art (5%) (Zlotnikova et al., 2015). In this regard, it becomes quite obvious that it is precisely mass culture in its industrial phase, of which active consumption is an integral aspect, regardless of negative assessments, and the determining mechanism for the socialization of young people.

Some young people continue to maintain a rather critical attitude towards the consumption values. Many researchers have noted the “transition from status consumption of brands by young people to the routine”. This transition has focused on the expression of individuality. Thus, young people in the regions choose comfortable and functional clothing (50.6%), corresponding to an individual style (27.5%), corresponding to the closest environment (20.6%), representing a well-known brand (19.4%), and finally trendy and beautiful (15.6%)





(Krasova, 2015). A significant part of the data obtained indicated that the orientation on certain consumer goods is largely determined by branding and communication requirements. It cannot be said that in all cases the assimilation of consumption values by young people may lead to their moral and social degradation. On the contrary, the values of a consumer society may be well awakened by “healthy” economic ambitions, including stimulating young people’s desire for additional earnings (Talalaev, 2018). Research by the Levada Center showed that, despite the fact that “adolescents generally had enough money that parents or relatives give them to spend (85% of respondents), about 50% of the respondents were trying to make more money” (Children: Rights, Admissibility of Parental and State Control, 2016). Young people (both adolescents and students) wanted to work and work in their free time to expand their own consumer opportunities.

The economic socialization of today's youth to a much greater extent flows through virtual networks, which has a much greater impact (in comparison with older groups) on their consumer orientations. According to Lopatina (2016), “advertising goods on social networks, in addition to the usual advertising, can enable people also watch through virtual“ word of mouth ”, which works as follows: your friends purchase a product or service and publish its photo or use it on a photo or video, focusing attention on this subject. This represents the effect of the reference group, and there would be a desire to purchase the same product. Having bought such a product, a teenager places a photo of his purchase on social networks so that friends can evaluate his purchase. This process resembles a spiral: buying - demonstration - buying another thing - demonstration ” (Lopatina, 2016). Thus, the consumer behavior of young people is largely associated with the communication with peers because such purchases often serve only as a reason for communication and acquaintance in the network.

The economic behavior of contemporary Russian youth in recent years, evolving under the influence of information society technologies, is largely mediated by the communication with peers, which in itself is an important form of communication. In modern conditions, there is a significant routine of consumer practices of young people, the expansion of whose role in the overall structure of economic socialization occurs against the background of the growth in the consumption of the information content. At the same time, the scarcity of the current model of the consumer society, launching the mechanism of deviance, contributes to the growth of the frustration among young people (Talalaev, 2018). Consumer practices in recent years have been largely institutionalized, which have allowed them to play a rather positive and regulatory role in the socialization of young people, especially in matters of relaxation and the realization of minimal freedom of choice. In the near future, the economic behavior of young people might become more saving-oriented due to the economic crisis and would largely be determined and restrained by a scarce and, accordingly, more rational consumption model.

## **FINDINGS**

As a result of the analysis of the social tendencies of the deformation of the economic behavior of young people, Russia revealed that they are, on the whole, rather indirectly related to the global formation of a consumer society and the formation of its system of value concepts and ideas. Consumer practices and well-defined consumerist-oriented consumerist attitudes have



been firmly rooted in the structure of the everyday life of Russian youth, becoming symbols of wealth and success.

At the same time, the risks associated with the deviant behavior of young people have been most likely caused by the unresolved number of social problems, including problems related to the organization of work, education, medicine, and the lack of a full-fledged leisure infrastructure for young citizens of the country. Self-realization of a young person in the process of vital activity plays the main role in this category. Also, the social characteristics of young people have a sphere of leisure. However, during the period of social and economic crisis, there has been a discrepancy between leisure needs, interests and objective possibilities of their realization, which has characterized the way of life of young people, which can contribute to the emergence of certain deformations, including Internet addiction.

In order to increase the effectiveness of interpersonal interaction of young people, the level of communication skills, self-esteem and resistance to stress, and reduce the degree of dependence and social isolation, it is necessary to provide an opportunity for every young person to actively express himself and his initiative in various types of recreation and entertainment. Both the content and the form of youth leisure are very important, which must necessarily meet the needs and interests of young people.

The offered activities, entertainment, should be diverse, interesting and be entertaining and unobtrusive in nature, to be organically perceived by young men and women.

Unresolved household problems with high demands of consumption can enhance deviant tendencies, stimulate not only deviant behavior, but also act as a catalyst for the criminalization of the younger generation (Mariana *et al.*, 2018).

However, since a significant number of goods for the majority of young Russians has already remained inaccessible, the consumption of the predominantly branded products has been perceived by young people at best as an attachment to future economic wealth, that is, as the goal of aspirations, rather than the actual practices of everyday life.

As a result of the study, it became clear that the economic behavior of Russian youth, despite the impact of it on the irrational components of total advertising, continues to maintain the criteria of rationality, largely provided by the involvement in the practices of labor socialization, as well as due to the limited financial resources. At the same time, the growth of unemployment among young people in the last ten years has been mainly due not to the consequences of the protracted economic crisis, but it has been due to an increase in the number of students, especially those acquiring higher education.

The economic and social value of material well-being among young people has come to the fore, emerging against the background of the emergence of a certain tendency to stigmatize poverty, which, however, reflected the general nature of the deformations of Russian society. Unlike older age groups, young people have preferred to identify themselves as “Europeans”, which have led them to a significantly more positive assessment of consumer patterns characteristic of Western countries. On the other hand, in recent years, researchers have noted an increase in patriotism among young people, which also has had an impact on counteracting the formation of one-sided consumerist attitudes.

At the same time, survey data indicated that the consumer behavior of young people does not exclude a completely rational attitude to consumer goods, since almost half of respondents



pointed out the functionality of preferred products, and, consequently, the utilitarian nature of their own decisions in matters related to the selection of essential goods.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Based on the above, it can be concluded that the processes of assimilation of the values of the consumer society as a whole are at the world level of development despite the lack of financial resources and the weak growth of incomes of the majority of the country's citizens living under the sanctions (the growth of Internet purchases, increased consumption of information and entertainment content). It is important to note that the consumption for young people is an important means of communication, motivation for future career ambitions, as well as a marker of individual and depoliticized freedom, as many opposition trends in recent years are increasingly associated with the unresolved economic problems and poverty.

Moreover, the assimilation of the values of the consumer society has taken on a largely institutional nature, carried out not only through media institutions, but also through the “uncontrolled” Internet, and mainly through the state and educational institutions. Another thing is that in the process of young people assimilating the values of the consumer society, there may be excesses of deviant economic behavior, as well as increased risks of so-called toxic and wasteful consumerism.

However, the excesses described above have been largely regulated both by market rationality and by socialization institutions seeking to teach young people about consumer literacy. At the same time, an analysis of the work activities of young people, especially students and adolescents, showed that the assimilation of the values of the consumer society does not lead to a complete deconstruction of the labor orientations of young people, but, on the contrary, to a certain extent, stimulates the additional earnings that serve their consumer needs.

In conclusion, it should be noted that the best practices of consumer behavior can only be the result of a certain culture of economic behavior that ensures a high level of both production and consumption. They must be in the system of an organic connection with each other, since the dominance of consumer practices in isolation from the awareness of the need for other economic practices would inevitably lead to the dominance of irrational motives in economic behavior (Talalaev, 2018). Russian youth do not have this culture of economic behavior. The Russian consumer society is at the stage of its formation due to the low resource possibilities of most social factors, including young people. The dominant perception of the values of the consumption in the context of resource scarcity would lead to a violation of the principle of rationality in the structure of social action. This has been manifested in the desire to acquire goods that are redundant and are not provided with the necessary resource potential. The lack of the necessary balance between economic goals and the means to achieve them would lead to the deformation of optimal consumer practices among young people. And overcoming them would be possible through a targeted impact on the economic socialization of young people, which implies the development and adoption of special measures (improving financial literacy, creating new jobs, improving the quality of life) and a general nature (spiritual education and bridging the gap between generations).



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