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Cultural consumption as practices of social distinction: styles of consumption in Russian big city

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Statement of research problem

Cultural consumption studies are tightly connected with examination of the stratification system. Classical works show lifestyle is a marker of membership in a social group[1234]. Taste preferences are considered as tools to demonstrate group identity. Created differences in lifestyles should emphasize the difference in positions held in the social space. As individuals find similar ones based on common interests cultural consumption can be considered as the resource for creation of friendship or marriage ties[5678]. In this tradition cultural consumption can be defined by different ways, for example, museum attendance or musical preferences can be used as indicators. This information is used by scholars to make conclusion about lifestyle and social position. Therefore, these cultural consumption studies are not focused on description of practice but emphasize the role of taste in boundary-defining activity.

There are two main models describing differences in cultural consumption in contemporary discussion – homology thesis introduced by Pierre Bourdieu[9] and omnivorousness introduced by Richard Peterson[1011]. According to the first model social hierarchy is accompanied by hierarchy of cultural preferences. It means lifestyles of representatives of different classes don't intersect. For instance, representatives of dominant class prefer modern art while representatives of working class are not interested in these works of art. According to the second model taste structure looks like the pyramid. Groups who are located at the top of the status hierarchy choose different types of cultural goods (they are omnivores) while groups who are located at the bottom of the hierarchy choose one type of cultural good. Richard Peterson demonstrates it based on example of tastes in music. Members of elite prefer not only classical music, now their consumption style includes different kinds of music. At the same time Richard Peterson claims that individuals who are located closer to the bottom of the hierarchy will demonstrate gender and age specificity in tastes.

[1] Bourdieu, P. (1984) *Distinction: A social critique of the judgement of taste*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
[2] Veblen, Th. (1899) *The theory of the leisure class*. AM Kelley.
[3] Warner, W. L. *et al.* (1963) *Yankee City*. Yale University Press.
[4] Weber, M. (1978) *Economy and society: An outline of interpretive sociology (Vol. 1)*. University of California Press.
[5] DiMaggio, P. and Mohr, J. (1985) 'Cultural capital, educational attainment, and marital selection', *American journal of sociology*, 90(6), pp. 1231-1261.
[6] DiMaggio, P. (1987) 'Classification in art', *American sociological review*, 52(4), pp. 440-455.
[7] Erickson, B. H. (1996) 'Culture, class, and connections', *American journal of Sociology*, 102(1), pp. 217-251.
[8] Lizardo, O. (2006) 'How cultural tastes shape personal networks', *American sociological review*, 71(5), pp. 778-807.
[9] Bourdieu, P. (1984) *Distinction: A social critique of the judgement of taste*.
[10] Peterson, R. A. (1992) 'Understanding audience segmentation: From elite and mass to omnivore and univore', *Poetics,* 21(4), pp. 243-258.
[11] Peterson, R. A. and Kern, R. M. (1996) 'Changing highbrow taste: From snob to omnivore', *American sociological review*, 61(5), pp. 900-907.

Different descriptions of taste structure and representations of relations between social groups follow these two models. The phenomenon of social exclusion is considered by followers of Pierre Bourdieu as the main one in his theory: through the classification of cultural products and the legitimization of a certain lifestyle the dominant class creates a distance with other groups[12]. However omnivorousness in contrast to snobbery (in case of cultural consumption it means an individual has preferences exclusively in high-brow culture) is connected with such qualities of individual as openness, flexibility and tolerance[13]. In consumption these qualities are shown in equal attention to high-brow and low-brow culture.

Despite the fact that theses about homology and omnivorousness were formulated more than thirty years ago debate about applicability of each model is still presented in recently published articles mostly due to discussion and revision of methodology. Authors inspired by the tradition of Pierre Bourdieu considered for a long time survey methodology as the main one to study the structure of taste. It influenced research designs that compared two models of cultural consumption. However, this methodological solution has been criticized for using crude measures of taste that cannot be used to grasp changes in style of consumption in modern society. Now qualitative methods are used to study not only what individual consumes but also how s/he consumed[14][15][16][17][18]. The usage of qualitative research designs gives a possibility to show that individuals who demonstrate omnivorousness in consumption and openness to any cultural product still create boundary between high-brow and low-brow culture and these cultural preferences are tightly connected to their class position[19][20][21]. It demonstrates that combination of quantitative and qualitative design is useful in cultural consumption study.

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[12] Lamont, M. and Lareau, A. (1988) 'Cultural capital: Allusions, gaps and glissandos in recent theoretical developments', *Sociological theory*, 6(2), pp. 153-168.

[13] This discussion is presented, for example, here Ollivier, M. (2008) 'Modes of openness to cultural diversity: Humanist, populist, practical, and indifferent', *Poetics*, 36(2-3), pp. 120-147.

[14] Atkinson, W. (2011) 'The context and genesis of musical tastes: Omnivorousness debunked, Bourdieu buttressed', *Poetics*, 39(3), pp. 169-186.

[15] Friedman, S. and Kuipers, G. (2013) 'The divisive power of humour: Comedy, taste and symbolic boundaries', *Cultural sociology*, 7(2), pp. 179-195.

[16] Holt, D. B. (1997) 'Distinction in America? Recovering Bourdieu's theory of tastes from its critics', *Poetics*, 25(2-3), pp. 93-120.

[17] Jarness, V. (2015) 'Modes of consumption: From 'what'to 'how'in cultural stratification research', *Poetics*, 53, pp. 65-79.

[18] Ollivier, M. (2008) 'Modes of openness to cultural diversity: Humanist, populist, practical, and indifferent'.

[19] Atkinson, W. (2011) 'The context and genesis of musical tastes: Omnivorousness debunked, Bourdieu buttressed'.

[20] Jarness, V. (2015) 'Modes of consumption: From 'what'to 'how'in cultural stratification research'.

[21] Ollivier, M. (2008) 'Modes of openness to cultural diversity: Humanist, populist, practical, and indifferent'.

New types of discrimination based on cultural preferences were found recently, for example discrimination in the labor market[22][23]. It supports the idea that categories used by individuals to describe their cultural preferences deserve attention. Findings of Kyla Thomas[24] study reveal individuals associate highbrow consumption with upper classes and attribute those consumers greater competence. To grasp the meaning of new types of discrimination it is necessary to revisit methodology as the usage of traditional questions about frequency of visits to art museums or preferences in fine arts doesn't allow to see how individuals evaluate someone's taste and what kind of meaning attribute to it.

Consumption studies in Russia have shown we can observe the connection between socioeconomic status and cultural consumption practices[25][26][27][28][29][30]. The authors identified not only such factors as education and income but also gender and age as the main ones to explain differences in cultural consumption. However, these papers have few limitations as it is based on a quantitative research design[31]. Firstly, when scholars use survey research design they are limited in options they can consider in the analysis of cultural preferences. Trying to cope with this problem they include questions about leisure activity that are designed to distinguish opposite styles of consumption. For example, museum attendance can be interpreted as an interest in high-brow culture while cinema attendance is the demonstration of interest in low-brow culture. However, in this case we have no possibility to measure what meanings individuals attribute to their tastes. Meanwhile Russian case attracts attention as Mikhail Ille and Mikhail Sokolov[32] have shown here young cohorts still demonstrate interest in high-brow consumption despite economic decline in situation of intelligentsia – group who fostered this culture. It allows to ask the question about the role of

[22] Rivera, L. A. (2012) 'Hiring as cultural matching: The case of elite professional service firms', *American sociological review*, 77(6), pp. 999-1022.

[23] Thomas, K. (2018) 'The labor market value of taste: An experimental study of class bias in US employment', *Sociological Science*, 5, pp. 562-595.

[24] Thomas, K. (2022) 'The psychology of distinction: How cultural tastes shape perceptions of class and competence in the US', *Poetics*, 93, pp. 101669.

[25] Echevskaya, O. G. (2011) *Consumption and distinction: social meanings and practices of consumer behavior of citizens*. Institute of economics and organization of industrial production in the Siberian branch of the Russian Academy of Science.

[26] Ille, M. E. and Sokolov, M. M. (2018) 'Status culture in the times of economic transformation. Cultural participation in Saint Petersburg, 1991-2011', *Universe of Russia. Sociology. Ethnology,* 27(1), pp. 159-182.

[27] Kapeliushnikov, R. And Demina, N. (2021) 'Consumption of cultural goods in Russia: scale, determinants, differentiation', *Journal of economic sociology*, 22(2), pp. 42-80.

[28] Korsunova, V. I. (2017) 'Public leisure practices in Russia: status distinctions and structural features', *Monitoring of public opinion: economic and social changes journal (public opinion monitoring)*, 5(141), pp. 194-213.

[29] Roshchina, Ya. M. and Martynenko, P. A. (2014) 'Patterns of alcohol consumption as a social group indicator in modern Russian cities', *Journal of economic sociology*, 15(1), pp. 20-42.

[30] Mareeva, S. V. (2021) 'Consumption and lifestyle of the middle class', *The Middle Income Group in China and Russia*, pp. 129-147.

[31] Among studies mentioned above only Olga Echevskaya's study includes both quantitative and qualitative parts.

[32] Ille, M. E. and Sokolov, M. M. (2018) 'Status culture in the times of economic transformation. Cultural participation in Saint Petersburg, 1991-2011'.

high-brow consumption in Russian society. Secondly, there is a doubt whether we can study omnivorousness if we are limited in options of leisure activity. If omnivorousness means openness to wide range of activities, we shouldn't narrow list of options otherwise we will obtain biased result because absence of cultural competence in case of some individuals can be the result of absence of possible answers in the list of leisure activities[33].

The relevance of the study proceeds from the following. Firstly, this paper tastes the applicability of models describing cultural consumption to make conclusion about taste structure in Russian big city. It is not the first paper where question about taste structure was raised however data used here allow to take into account criticism related to the survey methodology. I use database that can be considered as subcategory of big data therefore I can reply to the criticism about the limited options offered to respondents in questionnaires. At the same time this paper has advantage in the comparison of two models with the perspective on the specificity of the audience of low-brow culture. Homology argument states that consumption of high-brow and low-brow culture correlates with indicator of social position while in the model proposed by Richard Peterson only consumption of high-brow culture correlates with indicator of social position. At the same time according to Richard Peterson as we move down in the status hierarchy we observe the division of tastes based on such attributes as gender and age. Empirical validation of this argument is underrepresented in modern discussion. Secondly, the role of high-brow culture in boundary-defining activity is studied with an application of qualitative research design. It allows to contribute to debate where arguments about snobbery as preferences in high-brow culture and omnivorousness as openness to both high-brow and low-brow culture are opposed. It helps to supplement the results of the quantitative part and describe what is hidden behind omnivorousness: whether individuals construct boundaries between high-brow and low-brow culture and whether this opposition is reflected in practices of symbolic exclusion.

In this paper conclusion about cultural consumption is based on the analysis of fiction readership and preferences in movies and TV series. Advantages and disadvantages of such choice are discussed in the section limitations of research.

Literature review

Cultural consumption studies can be divided into three groups: (1) classical works suggested models to interpret differences in cultural consumption; (2) the studies of classifications in art and the social boundaries maintained using these classifications; (3) the studies devoted to specificity

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[33] Ollivier, M. (2008) 'Modes of openness to cultural diversity: Humanist, populist, practical, and indifferent'.

of taste patterns in different societies (here studies about Russian case will be mentioned) and studies dedicated to examination of readership in Russia.

One of the most influential book is Pierre Bourdieu's study[34]. The main thesis suggests cultural consumption can be predicted using information about capitals – economic and cultural ones. Social differences can be expressed in consumption as the skill to produce distinction is not universally distributed in society. Dominant class has the possibility to invest in consumption and cultivates this skill since childhood. Pierre Bourdieu formulated argument named now as homology thesis. According to it the constructed hierarchy of cultural preferences (where only certain objects of culture and consumption practices have a legitimate status) is associated with a social hierarchy where representatives of the dominant and working classes have different amount of capital.

Homology thesis was criticized using empirical evidences where coincidence of two hierarchies was not found. Richard Peterson[35][36] introduces the concept of omnivorousness as characteristic of cultural consumption. Omnivorous individual demonstrates interest in wide range of activities in contrast to snob who is interested mainly in high-brow culture. Richard Peterson suggests taste structure as pyramid where groups who are at the top of status hierarchy are described as omnivores while groups who are at the bottom are univores. Univores demonstrate preferences in few cultural goods or genres as Richard Peterson has shown. At the same time Richard Peterson also mentioned that the tastes of the audience at the bottom of this pyramid will be differentiated based on difference consumer attributes, for example, gender and age. It means the researcher moving down in the status hierarchy will fix the gender and age specificity of the audience[37].

Tak Wing Chan and John Goldthorpe[38] add to these argument one more model based on ideas proposed by Anthony Giddens and Ulrich Beck: there is the absence of connection between lifestyle and consumption preferences. However, this model was not widely adopted and tested in cultural consumption studies in comparison with ideas proposed by Pierre Bourdieu and Richard Peterson.

It is important to clarify the usage of such concepts as high-brow and low-brow culture. For researchers who followed tradition initiated by Pierre Bourdieu these concepts are connected with constructed hierarchy of cultural goods and consumption practices. In this hierarchy cultural goods

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[34] Bourdieu, P. (1984) *Distinction: A social critique of the judgement of taste*.
[35] Peterson, R. A. (1992) 'Understanding audience segmentation: From elite and mass to omnivore and univore'.
[36] Peterson, R. A. and Kern, R. M. (1996) 'Changing highbrow taste: From snob to omnivore'.
[37] Except gender and age Peterson mentioned such attributes as religion or region (Peterson, 1992: 254).
[38] Chan, T. W. and Goldthorpe, J. H. (2007) 'Social stratification and cultural consumption: The visual arts in England', *Poetics,* 35(2-3), pp. 168-190.

are divided into ones that are highly rewarded by experts (for example, art critics) and have been approved as objects of legitimate culture and ones that are rated lower. The existence of distinction mechanism according to Pierre Bourdieu[39] assumes an individual has competence required for perception and consumption of legitimate culture. As representatives of the dominant class cultivate it since childhood their taste judgments are different in comparison to representatives of other classes. Following this tradition high-brow consumption is an aesthetic experience that can be gained without preliminary training while low-brow consumption in contrast to it means consumption with an aim of entertainment and it doesn't require special training[40]. Accordingly, high-brow culture includes such cultural goods that need special competence to be consumed and low-brow culture doesn't require it. As objects of legitimate, high-brow culture are evaluated higher an individual who demonstrates preferences in high-brow culture will be judged by others as a consumer with good taste in opposition to one who chooses only objects of low-brow culture and who will be judged as a consumer with bad taste.

Considering the division into high-brow and low-brow culture it is necessary to mention what kind of bridging potential researchers consider in consumption of elements of these cultures. It is assumed that low-brow culture will become the common denominator that will allow representatives of different groups to find common topic in the conversation (since acquaintance with objects of low-brow culture does not assume the investment of resources compared to the experience of interacting with objects of high-brow culture), while the discussion of high-brow culture will build stronger bonds among high-status groups[41][42].

Judgments of taste becomes a set of codes that are used by the participants in the interaction to identify similar others and maintain group boundaries[43][44][45]. Michele Lamont and Virag Molnar[46] claim there is the mechanism of social exclusion appeared as a result of usage of classification schemes in behavioral patterns. They consider research conducted by Pierre Bourdieu as an

[39] Bourdieu, P. (1984) *Distinction: A social critique of the judgement of taste*.

[40] More detailed information about this discussion can be found here Lizardo O. How cultural tastes shape personal networks, pp. 782-783.

[41] DiMaggio, P. (1987) 'Classification in art'.

[42] Lizardo, O. (2006) 'How cultural tastes shape personal networks'.

[43] DiMaggio, P. (1987) 'Classification in art'.

[44] Lamont, M. and Lareau, A. (1988) 'Cultural capital: Allusions, gaps and glissandos in recent theoretical developments'.

[45] Lizardo, O. (2016) 'Why "cultural matters" matter: Culture talk as the mobilization of cultural capital in interaction', *Poetics*, 58, pp. 1-17.

[46] Lamont, M. and Molnár, V. (2002) 'The study of boundaries in the social sciences', *Annual review of sociology*, 28, pp. 167-195.

example of such process: representatives of the dominant class using a constructed classification of cultural objects monopolized privileges and created a distance with other groups[47].

To make conclusion about social exclusion, to demonstrate how members of one group monopolize resources special research design is needed. The description of this phenomenon was not part of my study however I had an aim to show how taste judgements can be connected with boundary-defining activity that's why I used the concept of symbolic exclusion inspired by the paper written by Omar Lizardo and Sara Skiles. They showed[48] the phenomenon of symbolic exclusion can be seen in dislikes when patterns of rejection mirror created distance in social space. For example, individuals connect musical genres with certain audiences and express dislike as they don't want to be associated with this groups. Therefore the concept of symbolic exclusion can be useful if we need to study connection between cultural preferences and relations in social space.

It is also necessary to take into account the context in the description of the structure of taste. Michele Lamont[49] showed the French middle class gives a high importance to cultural preferences, while the American middle class is more focused on maintaining of moral boundaries. As for the Russian case, the authors specify the following trends. First, consumption patterns are described using an activity/passivity scale[50][51][52], where activity means involvement in a various leisure practices associated with both highbrow and lowbrow culture. Women are more active than men, as well as individuals with the university diploma are more active than other groups. The older the person the less active s/he is. Specialists with the highest qualification level demonstrate activity in variety of leisure activities as well as individuals belonging to high-income groups. At the same time as it was shown high-income groups are characterized by higher frequency of choice of educational or leisure tours abroad[53].

The second dimension that attracts the attention of researchers is involvement in practices associated with high-brow culture such as theatre, opera, ballet and museum attendance. Such factors as age, gender and education are significant to explain position in relation to this

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[47] Lamont M., Molnár V. The study of boundaries in the social sciences, P. 172.

[48] Lizardo, O. and Skiles, S. (2016) 'Cultural objects as prisms: Perceived audience composition of musical genres as a resource for symbolic exclusion', *Socius*, 2, pp. 1-16.

[49] Lamont, M. (1992) *Money, morals, and manners: The culture of the French and the American upper-middle class*. University of Chicago Press.

[50] Kapeliushnikov, R. and Demina, N. (2021) 'Consumption of cultural goods in Russia: scale, determinants, differentiation'.

[51] Korsunova, V. I. (2017) 'Public leisure practices in Russia: status distinctions and structural features'.

[52] Ille, M. E. and Sokolov, M. M. (2018) 'Status culture in the times of economic transformation. Cultural participation in Saint Petersburg, 1991-2011'.

[53] Mareeva, S. V. (2021) 'Consumption and lifestyle of the middle class'.

dimension[54][55]. The connection between social position and lifestyle is found not only in the choice of leisure activities such as museum, theater or cinema attendance, but also in the alcohol consumption. It has been shown that lower classes are characterized by high levels of alcohol consumption while representatives of the upper and upper middle classes demonstrate the choice of a healthy lifestyle[56]. In addition, there is an emphasis on the necessity to use both quantitative and qualitative methods as individuals demonstrating a similar type of consumption may differ in strategies used to justify their choices. For example, discussion of food preferences revealed individuals in low-income groups attribute a high value to the need to give the "right" impression, while high-income groups show a desire to experiment with food consumption[57].

In the papers devoted to study of reading practice scholars determine the same tendencies as were mentioned before. Women are more active than men and the cohort of 30-40-years old consumers are the most active in readership. Women choose detective stories and prose while men choose fantasy, science fiction and thrillers. Russian and foreign classics are chosen mostly by readers with higher education[58]. Boris Dubin and Natalia Zorkaya as well as Lyubov Borusyak claim there is the decrease of interest to reading in Russia[59][60]. One of the explanation mentioned by authors is the decline of the influence intelligentsia had on the cultural life of the country. Lifestyle that is associated with this group here is connected not only with reading of fiction but with interest in reading of any kind of book. Lyubov Borusyak emphasizes interesting phenomenon: on the one hand there are individuals among representatives of metropolitan middle class who don't consider reading as valuable practice, on the other hand there is the group who consider it as necessary activity for their children. At the same time Lyubov Borusyak notes that the second group considers the absence of interest in reading as norm deviation[61]. It means we can expect there are groups who still consider reading as part of the lifestyle of cultured person.

Research question

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[54] Sokolov, M. M. (2019) 'Generations instead of classes? Age and consumer revolution in Russia', *Sociology of power*, 31(1), pp. 71-91.

[55] Korsunova, V. I. (2017) 'Public leisure practices in Russia: status distinctions and structural features'.

[56] Roshchina, Ya. M. (2016) 'Health-related lifestyle: does social inequality matter?', *Journal of economic sociology,* 17(3), pp. 13-36.

[57] Echevskaya, O. G. (2011) *Consumption and distinction: social meanings and practices of consumer behavior of citizens.*

[58] Dubin, B., and Zorkaya, N. (2005) 'Books in present-day Russia: Publishing, distribution, reading', *Russian public opinion herald*, 5, pp. 39–57.

[59] Dubin, B., and Zorkaya, N. (2005) 'Books in present-day Russia: Publishing, distribution, reading'.

[60] Borusyak, L. (2010) 'Reading as the value among young Russian intellectuals', *Russian public opinion herald,* 3(105), pp. 53-65.

[61] Borusyak, L. (2010) 'Reading as the value among young Russian intellectuals'.

Two research questions are presented in this paper. (1) How cultural consumption is structured in a modern Russian big city based on the case of St. Petersburg? (2) How the construction of social distance is reflected in cultural consumption?

St. Petersburg was chosen as the city under study. In the discussion of methodological aspects of cultural consumption studies unequal access to cultural goods was mentioned as one of the main criterion we need to take into consideration making decision about choice of indicator of taste[62][63]. Cultural consumption studies have shown in Russia big cities and small towns demonstrate different level of cultural activity. For instance, residents of Moscow and St. Petersburg are the most active consumers who prefer wide range of activities; they are more active in comparison with residents of other cities in cinema, museum, concert and theatre attendance (at the same time as it was shown residents of St.Petersburg are more active than residents of Moscow).[64] It gives opportunity to expect variety in consumption styles. It should be taken into account residents of St. Petersburg have access to a greater number of cultural institutions[65] in comparison with rural residents or residents of small towns.

Despite the fact this paper is focused on cultural preferences (shown in the domain of literature and movies) and it doesn't cover theatre, cinema, museum and concert attendance, I consider discussion about access to cultural goods important as this access means opportunity to get acquainted with objects of high-brow culture since childhood. It may partly explain the high level of cultural activity in St. Petersburg in comparison with other cities. According to Pierre Bourdieu[66] individuals who have possibility to cultivate their cultural competence since childhood will become the most experienced consumers no matter whether we discuss museum attendance or fiction readership. As the main aim was to study consumption styles and meanings attached to consumption of high-brow and low-brow culture I consider St.Petersburg where residents show high activity level in cultural consumption as proper example.

I think obtained results can be used to explain consumption patterns in other Russian big cities as conducted studies have shown similar tendencies in case of consumption for the country as a whole and for St. Petersburg: similar factors such as gender, age and education level were mentioned as

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[62] Robette, N. and Roueff, O. (2014) 'An eclectic eclecticism: Methodological and theoretical issues about the quantification of cultural omnivorism', *Poetics*, 47, pp. 23-40.
[63] Yaish, M. and Katz-Gerro, T. (2012) 'Disentangling 'cultural capital': The consequences of cultural and economic resources for taste and participation', *European Sociological Review*, 28(2), pp. 169-185.
[64] Kapeliushnikov, R. and Demina, N. (2021) 'Consumption of cultural goods in Russia: scale, determinants, differentiation'.
[65] It is important to mention also these institutions represent different art movements. In addition to collections of classical art in the Hermitage and Russian museum residents of the city can also see modern art, for instance, in Erarta museum, art center 'Pushkinskaya-10' and Novyj museum.
[66] Bourdieu, P. (1984) *Distinction: A social critique of the judgement of taste*.

the main ones explaining difference in cultural consumption[67]. However specificity of St.Petersburg case should be taken into account (the existence of cultural institutions) that's why results can be used for big city but not for small town.

Aims and objectives

The aim of the study is (1) to analyze the styles of cultural consumption in the modern Russian big city and (2) to analyze how these consumption styles can be used in practices of symbolic exclusion.

It is important to clarify how description of consumption styles is connected with the taste structure. Models proposed by Pierre Bourdieu and Richard Peterson create the theoretical basis of this research. According to Pierre Bourdieu taste structure is represented by column of ordered tastes where consumption of high-brow and low-brow culture signifies social position of an individual as consumption interests of representatives of different classes don't overlap. Whereas in the model proposed by Richard Peterson we observe pyramid structure where only consumption of high-brow culture signifies social position as representatives of socially privileged groups are considered as the main consumers of it. At the same time in this model consumers of low-brow culture are characterized by heterogeneity: consumption of low-brow culture is connected with such attributes as gender and age. Snobbery or omnivorousness are considered as consumption styles that are characterized by shown interest only in high-brow culture or interest in combination of high-brow and low-brow culture. As the argument proposed by Richard Peterson is divided into two parts – whether representatives of socially privileged groups are omnivores and whether consumers of low-brow culture demonstrates gender and age specificity of taste, two objectives were formulated in this paper (these objectives match with statements to be defended).

Objectives:

To assess applicability of the model introduced by Pierre Bourdieu and model introduced by Richard Peterson for the description of taste structure in modern Russian big city based on the analysis of preferences in literature;

To find variables that structure the choice of high-brow and low-brow literature;

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[67] For instance, if we compare factors determined by Kapeliushnikov and Demina in the article 'Consumption of cultural goods in Russia: scale, determinants, differentiation' and factors mentioned by Sokolov in the article 'Generations instead of classes? Age and consumer revolution in Russia'.

To analyze the intersection between consumption styles shown in preferences in literature for readers with and without higher education diploma;

To describe how consumers with and without higher education diploma use classification of cultural goods in literature and movies domain to create social distance.

Education level was used to mark social position. It is widely used decision to identify socially privileged groups in cultural consumption studies[68][69][70]. In objectives and statements to be defended groups are determined by level of education with the reference to this discussion.

The object of the research is the residents of St. Petersburg, the subject of the research is the styles of consumption of the residents of St. Petersburg.

Theoretical and methodological foundations

It includes:

1. The main models explaining the connection between an individual's social position and her/his cultural preferences: Pierre Bourdieu's homology thesis and Richard Peterson's omnivorousness concept.

2. Studies of classifications, in particular classifications in art, which allows to understand what kind of options are available to individuals to categorize art and the audiences associated with it. It contains the concept of symbolic exclusion and papers on symbolic and social boundaries, demonstrating how the differentiation of leisure activities is related to the boundary-defining activities.

3. Article prepared by Luc Boltanski and Laurent Thevenot[71] based on three exercises with cards. Luc Boltansky and Laurent Thevenot had the aim to reveal logic behind groups' categorization made by individuals and attributes associated with obtained groupings. The ideas of these authors were used to create stimulus material for the qualitative part of this study.

Methods and selection of empirical data

To answer the research question quantitative and qualitative methodologies were used. At the beginning to study the differentiation of consumption sets, it was decided to analyze database that

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[68] DiMaggio, P. and Useem, M. (1978) 'Social class and arts consumption: The origins and consequences of class differences in exposure to the arts in America', *Theory and society*, 5(2), pp. 141-161.

[69] Meuleman, R. and Savage, M. (2013) 'A field analysis of cosmopolitan taste: Lessons from the Netherlands', *Cultural Sociology*, 7(2), pp. 230-256.

[70] Warde, A., Wright, D. and Gayo-Cal, M. (2008) 'The omnivorous orientation in the UK', *Poetics*, 36(2-3), pp. 148-165.

[71] Boltanski, L. and Thévenot, L. (1983) 'Finding one's way in social space: a study based on games', *Social science information*, 22(4-5), pp. 631-680.

can be considered as subcategory of big data. The database obtained from St. Petersburg libraries in 2015 was used. Since 2014 all libraries in the city have been merged into a single electronic system. It means each case when reader chooses the book for home reading new record appears in the database. These data allow to answer the question about variables structuring consumption as during registration in the library each reader should fill a questionnaire that includes socio-demographic characteristics. For the analysis only data on books in Russian[72] were used as well as only those books categorized as fiction in accordance with library classification.

To answer the question about correlation between library visitors and general population of book readers the question about library attendance, reading practices and preferences were included in the survey conducted in St. Petersburg in 2017[73]. Obtained results have shown 9,8% of surveyed visited library at least once in the previous year, women visit it more often than men and residents with higher education diploma visit it more often than residents without such diploma. The probability to visit library decreases with age; income is not significant. Except age the same proportions characterize the city population of book readers. Based on it we make conclusion that library visitors are not different from city population of readers. At the same time we compared the most popular authors in library database with statistics provided by Russian Book Chamber (data about number of copies of the most popular authors) and statistics on downloaded e-books[74]. It allows to take into consideration the comment about possible discrepancy between library visitors and readers who buy printed or electronic books.

To analyze the database of St.Petersburg libraries measures suggested by social network analysis were used. Firstly, Louvain algorithm for community detection[75] was applied to determine what kind of books could be borrowed together to know what kind of consumption styles appeared in data. Secondly, the measure of betweenness centrality and the measure of constraint were calculated to reveal where interests of different audiences can meet. To perform this analysis a bimodal network was created, where the nodes were readers and books' authors, and the tie signifies the reader's decision to choose the book. This bimodal network was then transformed into a unimodal network where authors were tied by common readers. To examine what

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[72] In includes books written by Russians and books of foreign authors that were translated into Russian.

[73] More details can be found here Sokolov, M. and Kazantsev, A. (2017) 'Survey types, sample biases, and the effects of demographic quotas. The results of an experiment with a three-frame survey in a major Russian city', *Economic sociology,* 18(5), pp. 87-110.

[74] More detailed information is provided here Sokolov, M. and Sokolova, N. (2019) 'Do low-brow tastes demonstrate stronger categorical differentiation? A study of fiction readership in Russia', *Poetics*, 73, pp. 84-99.

[75] Blondel, V. D. et al. (2008) 'Fast unfolding of communities in large networks', *Journal of statistical mechanics: theory and experiment*, 2008(10), pp. P10008.

consumption style is used by reader with certain socio-demographic profile logistic and linear regression were used[76]. The results of the quantitative part are presented in the following publications:

Sokolov, M. and Sokolova, N. (2019) 'Do low-brow tastes demonstrate stronger categorical differentiation? A study of fiction readership in Russia', *Poetics*, 73, pp. 84-99.

Sokolova, N. and Sokolov, M. (2020) 'Does popular culture bridge cultural holes? A study of a literary taste system using unimodal network projections', *Poetics*, 83, pp. 101472.

In the second, qualitative part of the study, it was planned to turn to the meanings that individuals attribute to consumption practices and to study the principles consumers use to classify art and social groups who are considered as the main audience of these art works. With the aim to understand better the main categories used by individuals to describe their preferences in literature a pilot study was conducted among students of one of St. Petersburg university. In this study informants were asked to sort cards with names of fiction literature authors into groups based on perceived similarity. Such categorization later helped to adapt tools for the main qualitative part of the study. The result of this pilot study is presented in the publication:

Sokolova, N. and Mikhailova, E. (2022) 'The Literature "Not for Everyone" and the Phenomenon of the Guilty Pleasure: Classifications in Literature as a Space for Distinction', *Russian Sociological Review*, 21(1), pp. 180-205.

The main qualitative part was based on interviews conducted (from May to November 2021) among informants with university and vocational school diploma living in St.Petersburg. Recruiting was carried out using the "snowball" method with multiple entry points to avoid sampling bias. The interview guide addressed questions about consumption in the literature and movies domain. Cards with authors' names (as in the previous pilot study) and titles of movies and TV series, as well as cards with the titles of occupational groups were prepared as stimulus material. At the end of the interview the informants were asked to sort the cards with occupations into groups according to the similar organization of leisure (based on informants' opinion). Later interviewer asked participants to comment on lists of authors and movies in relation to obtained occupational groupings. Participants were asked to imagine what kind of objects in the lists could be chosen by representatives of any occupational grouping. The interviews were analyzed using a topic-focused coding procedure. The result of cards sorting was analyzed using the procedure of

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[76] In case when the measure of betweenness centrality and the measure of constraint were used in model analysis was carried out in the UCINET program to take into account the interdependence of cases in the analysis of network measures.

multidimensional scaling. Using it it is possible to represent the distance between the selected groups in a two-dimensional space. The results of this qualitative part is presented in the publication:

Sokolova, N. (2022) 'Intellectual" leisure activity and "simple" entertainment: preferences in art as system of signals', *Laboratorium: Russian Review of Social Research*, 14(3), pp. 59-86.

The overall empirical base of the study includes:

The database of St. Petersburg libraries in 2015 (it includes all cases of borrowing books in libraries in this year), covering 170312 readers and their choice of fiction literature - 1908251 cases;

15 semi-structured interviews with students of one of the St. Petersburg university aged 20-21;

28 semi-structured interviews with informants with university and vocational school diploma, aged 30-40, living in St. Petersburg.

In the quantitative part (articles co-authored with Mikhail Sokolov 'Do low-brow tastes demonstrate stronger categorical differentiation? A study of fiction readership in Russia' and 'Does popular culture bridge cultural holes? A study of a literary taste system using unimodal network projections') library database was obtained and analyzed by the author of the dissertation. In the qualitative part the author of the dissertation analyzed interview narratives (article co-authored with Ekaterina Mikhailova 'The Literature "Not for Everyone" and the Phenomenon of the Guilty Pleasure: Classifications in Literature as a Space for Distinction') and collected and analyzed interview narratives for the article 'Intellectual" leisure activity and "simple" entertainment: preferences in art as system of signals'.

Contribution to the discussion of the problem in existing literature

Based on the results of the study, four articles were written and published. It is the first time when attempt was made to analyze the database of St. Petersburg libraries by tools of social network analysis. It allows to consider firstly the potential of using big data for the analysis of cultural consumption, and secondly to demonstrate how social network analysis can be useful in obtaining results in studies based on big data. As for theoretical discussion in this study consumption is conceptualized based not only on the idea of separating audiences of high-brow and low-brow cultures but also gender and age specificity of the audience of low-brow culture is mentioned. It allows to consider the usefulness of Richard Peterson's model for the description of the specificity of taste in Russian society.

Analysis of data and findings

The aim of the first part of the study was to describe the consumption styles of St. Petersburg residents and to reveal the connection between cultural preferences and socio-demographic characteristics of the consumer. To distinguish styles of consumption and relate it with the discussion about the difference between high-brow and low-brow cultures I needed to find the 'brow' level of the authors whose books were borrowed in Saint Petersburg libraries. To determine authors who could be named as representatives of high-brow or low-brow culture institutional signs of recognition as awards and inclusion in the school curriculum were used[77]. Education level was used to mark social position. In case of Russia information about vocational and higher education 'shows the relative presence of individuals who at a certain stage of their careers made a conscious choice in favour of either vocational training associated with career tracks leading to qualified manual occupation, or higher education which is legally required as a qualification for a vast majority of professional and supervisory jobs'[78]. In the second part of the study the level of education was also used as one of the criteria for case selection, since it was required to find groups with different consumption styles and studies conducted in Russia and St. Petersburg in particular have shown that education is one of the main criteria structuring leisure[79][80].

The analysis of database obtained from St.Petersburg libraries has shown that among the readers of high-brow literature individuals with completed higher education predominate, while the audience of low-brow literature comprises mainly individuals without university diploma. At the same time it is important to highlight that individual with higher education demonstrate omnivorousness; they prefer objects of high-brow as well as low-brow culture. The audience of high-brow literature is more balanced. There is no concentration of female and male audience or consumers of different ages while audience of low-brow literature demonstrates gender and age specificity.

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[77] This decision in separating high-brow and low-brow culture is inspired by the attributes of legitimate culture highlighted by DiMaggio and Mukhtar in their paper DiMaggio, P. and Mukhtar, T. (2004) 'Arts participation as cultural capital in the United States, 1982–2002: Signs of decline?', *Poetics*, 32(2), pp. 169-194. Further in the text high-brow literature is used to mean high-brow culture, and low-brow literature is used to mean low-brow culture. In the case of the discussion of cinema in the qualitative part of the study the same solution was used to determine objects classified as high-brow and low-brow culture.

[78] Sokolov, M. and Sokolova, N. (2019) 'Do low-brow tastes demonstrate stronger categorical differentiation? A study of fiction readership in Russia', P. 88.

[79] Korsunova, V. I. (2017) 'Public leisure practices in Russia: status distinctions and structural features'.

[80] Ille, M. E. and Sokolov, M. M. (2018) 'Status culture in the times of economic transformation. Cultural participation in Saint Petersburg, 1991-2011'.

The observed trend allows to make conclusion about structure of taste in Russian case in terms of Richard Peterson model[81]. According to his idea high-status groups have more homogeneous consumer profile, while the scholar who analyzes consumption of groups located lower in the status hierarchy can trace division along lines of gender, age and another attributes of consumer. Table 1 helps to demonstrate it: the more individuals with higher education appear among the readers of any author, the smaller the concentration of a certain age or gender group.

Table 1 Spearmen's Rho correlations between characters of audiences for 500 authors

	Gender specificity (Z-score-measure)	Gender specificity (Rank-measure)	Age concentration	Age variance	Share university educated
Gender specificity (Z-score-measure)		−.883**	.178**	−.378**	−.496**
Gender specificity (Rank-measure)			−.214**	324**	−.413**
Age concentration				−.699**	−.376**
Age variance					.599**

*p < 0,05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001

The analysis of cultural objects located at the intersection of consumption sets reveal the specificity of Russian case. Theoretical discussion suggests there should be low-brow culture as the least-common-denominator to connect representatives of groups with and without higher education diploma. However, the results of our study showed it is 'classics' - literature endowed with institutional signs of recognition (therefore we attributed it to high-brow culture). This finding is interpreted by the mix of two perspectives. On the one hand, it is possible due to the phenomenon called Bourdieu[82] «cultural goodwill» - the desire of low-status groups to get acquainted with legitimate culture. It is specificity of Russian society as school curriculum assumes students have common experience in involvement in ideas and books of 'classics'. Later even individuals who usually don't demonstrate high level of activity in readership can turn to it if they would like because of early acquaintance with it. On the other hand, there are individuals with university diploma whose consumption style can be described as omnivorousness. They choose both books attributed to high-brow and low-brow culture. Consumption styles in this case can be interpreted considering time resource available for readers. The strategy for those who do not have much of this resource is based on investment in reading of well-known books as it allows to find connection with strangers briefly. This strategy is described by the case of individuals with vocational school diploma who in most cases prefer low-brow literature but can also show interest in 'classics', since these are the authors they already have acquainted with in their school years. At the same time group with higher education diploma has possibility to invest time in reading what includes both

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[81] Peterson, R. A. (1992) 'Understanding audience segmentation: From elite and mass to omnivore and univore'.
[82] Bourdieu, P. (1984) *Distinction: A social critique of the judgement of taste*.

high-brow and low-brow literature as their aim is to create unique style producing distinction among another active readers.

It is important to clarify possible contradiction that appeared in results. According to the analysis of the library database individuals with higher education diploma were mentioned as the main audience of high-brow culture and omnivorousness was mentioned as characteristic of their consumption style. At the same time the analysis has shown that objects of legitimate, high-brow culture are in the intersection of readers' interests with and without higher education diploma. Does this observation contradict the statement about omnivorousness as style of only those readers with higher education diploma and conclusion about applicability of Richard Peterson model for description of taste structure in modern Russian big city? To answer this question we need to revisit again key points in debate that opposes Pierre Bourdieu model and Richard Peterson model. One of the main ideas is the possibility to predict the position in social hierarchy based on demonstrated cultural preferences: according to the homology thesis the choice of high-brow or low-brow culture signifies social position while in Richard Peterson model only consumption of high-brow culture correlates with social position as representatives of socially privileged group are the main consumers of it. We observe the same trend in data: the main consumers of high-brow culture are individuals with higher education diploma and at the same time they are omnivores. Among the consumers of low-brow culture individuals without higher education diploma predominate; this audience demonstrates gender and age specificity in tastes. It supports our conclusion about applicability of Richard Peterson model. The analysis of intersection between consumers' interests reveal that individuals without higher education diploma can choose 'classics' but it doesn't mean their activity in reading of high-brow literature is at the same level as in case of individuals with higher education diploma. Observed phenomenon allows to make conclusion about specificity of Russian case but the model proposed by Richard Peterson is the basis for it.

Based on the results of second, qualitative part of the study meanings attributed by consumers to their tastes are described. Individuals with university diploma determine their leisure choice in terms of group's norms constrained their behavior. These norms prescribe to give higher priority to cultural goods with institutional signs of recognition, while low-brow culture should be avoided because this choice will lead to reputational losses. This principle is applied not only to their preferences in the literature domain, but also in movies domain. Cultural preferences are used by members of this group with an aim to highlight group affiliation. If a person wishes to identify yourself with 'educated, intelligent and cultured members of society' s/he needs to avoid objects that were not approved. Elements of low-brow culture can appear in their consumption set but only as examples of 'ironic' consumption. External boundary is maintained between them and 'others'

– consumers who don't support this strong division between high-brow and low-brow cultures. These observations illustrate the phenomenon of symbolic exclusion: individuals associate low-brow consumption with audiences without university diploma therefore they dislike cultural objects associated with this group.

Figure 1 will help to demonstrate this conclusion. It shows the results of multidimensional scaling of the grouping of cards by informants with higher education. The informants were required to group the cards in such a way that representatives of occupations with similar leisure activities were in the same group. Multidimensional scaling makes it possible to show the proximity of objects in two-dimensional space. Here, for example, the stage director is located closer to the surgeon, since most of the informants combined these cards into one group. The horizontal dimension in this figure shows what a large distance the informants see between the leisure time of individuals with a higher education and vocational school diploma. Despite the fact that the cards did not contain information about the level of education, all informants mentioned this as one of the main criterion to separate individuals with one or another way of spending leisure time and, accordingly, tried to divide occupations based on the required level of qualification.
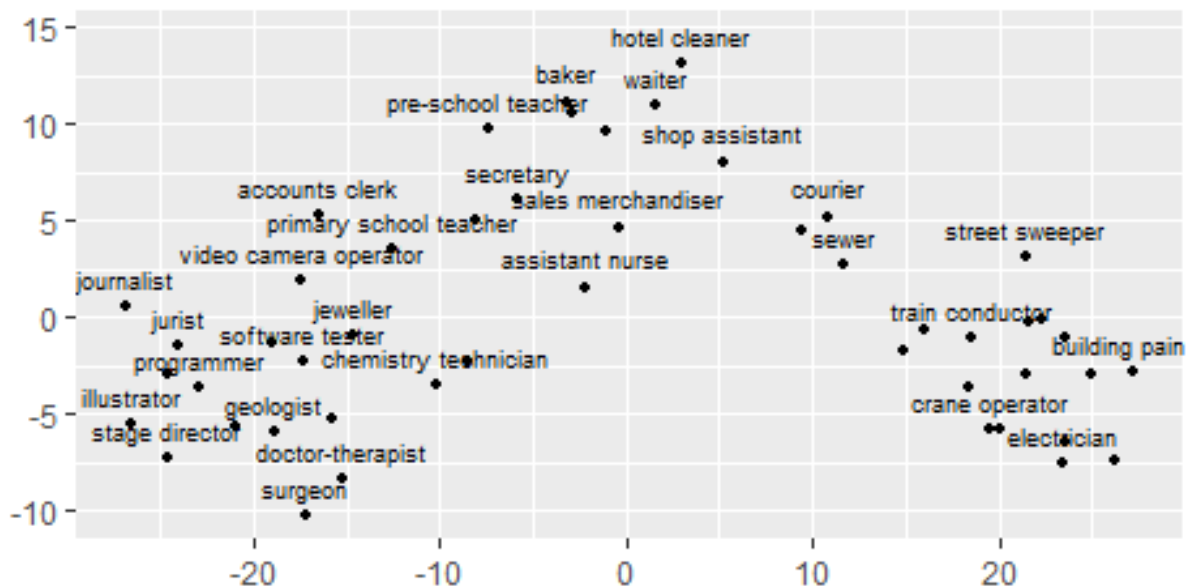

Fig. 1 Results of multidimensional scaling of the grouping of cards by informants with higher education

The interview analysis has shown that consumers with vocational school diploma on the contrary do not use cultural preferences in the same way to construct external boundary and don't connect high-brow or low-brow consumption with reputational benefits or losses. However, patterns of their consumption are characterized by attention to gender and age differences both in reading

practices and movie selection. For example, romance and interest to relationship are attributed as female interests therefore watching TV series with such topics will be considered as an exclusively female form of leisure activity. On the contrary, art works that are focused on the topic of violence are seen as cultural product for male audience.

Trends revealed in the analysis of qualitative part of the study on the one hand confirms the previous observation about the existence of gender and age boundaries in the group without higher education diploma. On the other hand, it shows that consumers whose consumption style could be described as omnivorous, give importance to cultural objects with legitimate status and use taste to emphasize group exclusivity.

Limitations of research

Firstly, the results obtained do not allow to conclude about the role of income as the factor explaining consumption, since the data available for analysis did not include this information. However as it was shown cultural consumption indicated by cultural preferences, for example, preferences in domain of music or movies, is not so constrained by financial resources than consumption that is indicated in level of attendance, for example, theatre and museum attendance. At the same time cultural preferences are constrained by such resources as parents' education and respondent's education[83]. Therefore choice made in this paper to consider such cultural preferences as preferences in literature and movies domain allows to concentrate more on such resource as education.

The second limitation appeared in qualitative part of the study. Cultural consumption studies raise the question of the reflexivity of the consumer. It was suggested consumption should be seen rather as practical knowledge than strategic action[84][85]. It means individuals are unaware of the symbolic privileges associated with a particular type of consumption and cannot predict the social consequences of their choice. Thus, the researcher must find suitable tools to explore the meanings attributed to a particular style of consumption. In this paper a pilot study was conducted before the beginning of the main qualitative part. It was focused particularly on meanings used by informants to classify cultural goods and social groups. Findings obtained in this preliminary stage were used later to improve methodology of the main qualitative part. At the same time in this paper

[83] Yaish, M. and Katz-Gerro, T. (2012) 'Disentangling 'cultural capital': The consequences of cultural and economic resources for taste and participation'.

[84] Holt, D. B. (1997) 'Distinction in America? Recovering Bourdieu's theory of tastes from its critics'.

[85] Lizardo, O. and Skiles, S. (2012) 'Reconceptualizing and theorizing "omnivorousness" genetic and relational mechanisms', *Sociological theory*, 30(4), pp. 263-282.

the concept of symbolic exclusion is used as the main one therefore obtained results don't allow to make conclusion about social exclusion and describe spheres where boundaries are constructed.

The third limitation concerns the analyzed domain in cultural consumption. Researcher cannot cover all domains and as a result choose what kind of preferences will be considered. For example, it can include preferences in food, music, literature, etc.The choice of a specific domain shapes obtained results as it was shown in some domains like food or sport individuals don't pay so much attention to division between elements of high-brow and low-brow culture[86]. As a result, scholars won't observe the usage of taste as resource to maintain boundaries in discussion of these domains as consumers consider all options for consumption in the same way. The quantitative part of this study is devoted to the examination of choices made by readers of St. Petersburg libraries. To supplement the results obtained at this stage questions about preferences in the literature domain were also included in the qualitative part. Given the limitations imposed by the choice of only one domain it was decided to supplement the qualitative part with a discussion of preferences in the cinema domain. The results of the pilot study carried out before the main qualitative part started showed that the informants' judgments about high-brow and low-brow culture in the domain of literature are partially shaped by the influence of school education. This school experience is similar for all informants. At the same time the discussion of the movies domain does not imply the existence of the same unified experience of involvement in the system of classifications of culture proposed by experts. Therefore it was chosen for comparison with the literature domain.

Statements to be defended

1. Structure of consumption in Russian big city is explained by Richard Peterson model: individuals with university diploma demonstrate omnivorousness, they prefer high-brow as well as low-brow literature. These individuals comprise the main audience of high-brow literature. At the same time among the audience of low-brow literature representatives of group without university diploma predominate.

2. There is gender and age specificity of the audience of low-brow literature while the audience of high-brow literature is homogeneous what supports the observation made by Richard Peterson about boundaries based on gender and age divisions among audiences held positions on the same level of status hierarchy.

3. The specificity of the structure of cultural consumption in Russia is due to the fact that in the literature domain high-brow culture but not low-brow one is located at the intersection of consumer

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[86] Thomas, K. (2022) 'The psychology of distinction: How cultural tastes shape perceptions of class and competence in the US'.

interests of audiences with and without university diploma. Omnivorousness manifested in the choice of both more and less legitimate literature is the result of the investment of time resource made by individuals with university diploma in their reading experience with the aim to create unique consumption style. The choice of 'classics' by individuals without university diploma demonstrates the phenomenon of "cultural goodwill" mediated by the influence of the school curriculum.

4. Cultural preferences are used by consumers with university diploma to justify group exclusivity and maintain external boundaries. Despite manifested omnivorousness members of this group give higher priority to high-brow culture: they connect this choice with symbolic reward. The consumption of low-brow culture they attribute to individuals they don't want to be associated with what is shown both in literature and movies domain. Cultural preferences of consumers without university diploma demonstrates the presence of gender and age boundaries within this group what is shown both in literature and movies domain.

List of publications of the author of the thesis

Sokolov, M. and Sokolova, N. (2019) 'Do low-brow tastes demonstrate stronger categorical differentiation? A study of fiction readership in Russia', *Poetics*, 73, pp. 84-99.

Sokolova, N. and Sokolov, M. (2020) 'Does popular culture bridge cultural holes? A study of a literary taste system using unimodal network projections', *Poetics*, 83, pp. 101472.

Sokolova, N. and Mikhailova, E. (2022) 'The Literature "Not for Everyone" and the Phenomenon of the Guilty Pleasure: Classifications in Literature as a Space for Distinction', *Russian Sociological Review*, 21(1), pp. 180-205.

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Approbation of the results of the study

The results were presented at the following conferences:

Sunbelt (Utrech University, Utrech, The Netherlands, 30.06.2018) presentation (co-authored with Mikhail Sokolov) «Are high-brow tastes central in the "culture network"? A test of some implications of Richard Peterson's taste system model»

5th International Conference on Computational Social Science (University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, 18.07.2019) poster presentation (co-authored with Mikhail

Sokolov) «Network approach to the analysis of taste: high-brow culture as a bridge across cultural holes»

VDNH (European University at St. Petersburg, St. Petersburg, Russian Federation, 26.03.2022) presentation «Consumption and distinction: "highbrow" and "lowbrow" culture in the daily life of residents»