



NATIONAL RESEARCH UNIVERSITY  
HIGHER SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS

*Iuliia O. Papushina*

# **IS OPERA ATTENDANCE FASHIONABLE? THE CASE OF PERM OPERA AND BALLET THEATRE**

BASIC RESEARCH PROGRAM  
WORKING PAPERS

SERIES: HUMANITIES  
WP BRP 107/HUM/2015

*Iuliia O. Papushina<sup>1</sup>*

## **IS OPERA ATTENDANCE FASHIONABLE? THE CASE OF PERM OPERA AND BALLET THEATRE**

This paper considers fashion as a factor of theatre attendance. The research setting is the industrial city Perm with approximately one million citizens. Perm opera and ballet theatre found in 1870 is “Russia’s third ballet Mecca, after Moscow and St. Petersburg”. Series of in-depth interviews, content-analysis and analysis of discourse provide “corroborative evidence”. The research is based on fashion value framework, which regards fashion guided behaviour as a function of shared values called fashion values. The literature review generates insights about the role of fashion in high culture consumption and arguments pro applicability of the fashion values framework for theatre attendance. The data comes from 23 in-depth interviews with visitors and non-visitors of Perm opera and ballet theatre. The research develops the set of indicators of fashion awareness in context of theatre attendance. The results shows that institutionalized cultural capital and occupation in cultural industries matter for fashion awareness of a particularly participant. So far, it is supposed education and occupation play more important role as an explanation of fashion awareness than class does. The ways for future investigations are discussed.

JEL Classification: Z110

Keywords: high culture, consumption, fashion, audience, cultural capital

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<sup>2</sup>National Research University Higher School of Economics. Management Department. E-mail: yupapushina@hse.ru

## Introduction

The paper contributes into development of existing knowledge about patterns of cultural consumption by investigating fashion appeal of opera and ballet attendance. The fashion appeal as a factor of visitor choice rises as soon as high culture experiences commercialization and employs marketing technics in order to attract visitors. Although already decades researches have been understanding fashion as a collective selection [Blumer, 1969, p. 283], they still rarely imply the notion of fashion for analysis phenomena and processes outside of wardrobe and accessories choice. Historians report how important ostentatious theatre attendance as a social scene used to be in the nineteenth century [Muller, 2006, p. 168], but sociologists ignore this issue.

The paper aims to fill partially this gap addressing to fashion as “the whole social pattern of distinction and adaptation” [Gronow, 1993, p. 98]. The research combines the view of fashion as a system, which communicates certain meanings between culturally constituted world, consumer goods and individual consumers [McCracken, 1986] and cultural capital theory [Bourdieu, 1984, Dimaggio, Mukhtar, 2004] in order to develop the theory of theatre visiting as a fashionable practice. The research introduces a value framework, defining fashion as a mechanism of social regulation found on fashion values [Gofman, 2004].

The research is a qualitative and explorative one as the given aspect of theatre attendance is relatively little investigated. The data comes from a series of in-depth interviews both with visitors and non-visitors of Perm Opera and Ballet Theatre. In order to provide triangulation of source and methods [Creswell, 2013] content analysis and analysis of discourse are conducted. The resources of documents for content-analysis and analysis of discourse are materials from the theatre’s official web site and discussions from the theatre’s group in the social network site “VKontakte” and the site 59.ru.

The paper is structured as follows. The Section 1 is the literature review where the author speculates from different theoretical perspectives on a potential contribution of fashion into cultural consumption patterns. Here also value framework is explained (Section 2). Methodology, data description and discussion of the research’s limitations go next (Section 3). The Section 4 describes results. Then discussion part goes next (Section 5) where the author interprets the results in the theoretical context of cultural consumption research. Finally conclusion summaries the content and sketches the directions for future work.

## THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Current literature describes cultural consumption as a function of free possible arguments: homology, individualization, and omnivore/univore [Chan, Coldthrope, 2005, p. 194]. Holbrook et. al introduce the similar classification: 1. boundary-effacement effect; 2. omnivore effect; 3. class based distinction effect [Holbrook et. al, 2002, p. 345].

The homology argument following and developing Bourdieu's classical approach [Bourdieu, 1984] claims that cultural consumption corresponds to social class. The consumption of high culture, particularly opera and ballet, belongs to highbrow cultural pattern [Katz-Gerro et. al, 2007, p. 153]. Due to formal education and family influence, higher class members are more competent in arts. It allows them to understand works of arts in art's own terms [Bourdieu, 1984, p.44]. So far, they avoid confusion and misunderstanding [Rossel, 2011, p. 85].

The individualization argument puts under the question the leading role of social stratification for shaping cultural taste. It postulates leisure activities, gender, ethnicity, age, and sexuality "as alternative social bases of cultural differentiation" [Chan, Goldthrope, 2005, p. 194]. The individualization argument is underpinned by affluence and high commercialization of most aspects of life bridging cultural consumption research with marketing of performing arts [Ibid].

The omnivore/univore argument claims that "upscale people tend more than their more downscale counterparts to engage in or appreciate a broad variety of cultural activities" [Holbrook, 2002, p. 345]. It argues that marker of social class is not genres as such, but number and composition of the genres that are consumed [Garcai-Alvarez et al., 2007, p. 419]. Presenting the boundary-effacement effect Holbrook et al. describe the situation when "some things are liked or disliked by everybody" [Holbook et al., 2002, p. 346].

Although these arguments have appeared as competitive hypothesis, earlier papers demonstrate that these explorations are not mutually exclusive, but co-existing. [Holbrook et. al, 2002, p. 356, Katz-Gerro, 1998, p. 639]. So far, social class is still important for cultural consumption, but the factors belonging to the individualization argument are also significant [Holbrook et. al, 2002; Katz-Gerro, 1999; Van Eijck, 2001; Katz-Gerro, 2002; Katz-Gerro et. al, 2007].

Fashion is a sign phenomenon constructed within interactions between consumers, producers, mediators and distributors [McCracken, 1986, Gofman, 2004]. These interactions result in 1. prescribing fashion meanings to certain objects, standards and practices [Gofman, 2004, p. 17]; 2. collective selection of certain objects [Blumer, 1969, p. 283].

This selection is determined by shared values called attributive and denotative [Gofman, 2004, p. 18]. Fashionable objects and practices is endowed with both kinds of values simultaneously. Attributive values define fashion as such, whereas denotative values communicate external in respect to fashion meanings [Gofman, 2004, p. 18]. Attributive values are constant for an each fashionable object or standard, whereas denotative values vary widely according to values of certain social group or subculture [Ibid. p. 21].

This paper is focused on the attributive values of fashion that are constant for each fashionable object or practice. They are modernity, ostentation, universalism, and play [Gofman, 2004, p. 19]. Although A. Gofman was, perhaps, the first writer, who has proposed the system view of fashion values, he is not only one writer, who has paid attention to the value dimension of fashion.

Interest to the fashion value dimension occurs in different fields of social science including marketing, management and history of arts. Modernity as a process of endless changes is regarded as the most important feature of fashion by many investigators [Blumer, 1969; Svendsen, 2007; Aspers, Godrat, 2013].

Communicative function of fashion and positive attitudes to novelty are base for the value of ostentation. It supposes an object's or a practice's fashion appeal supports and presents an advantageous image or self-concept [Gofman, 2004, p. 27]. Abrahamson [1996] discovers the way in which organizations construct and communicate their progressive image and try to join to high reputation organizations club through adaptation of fashionable managerial technics.

In terms of fashion being universal means to overcome boundaries of states, social classes with their subcultures and lifestyles [Gofman, 2004]. Gronow describes another kind of universalism in fashion. It is based on the fact that fashion is "equally indeterminate in character and cannot be subsumed under concepts" [Gronow, 1993, p. 94]. He also notes inherited unfinished universalism of fashion rooted in distinguishing function of fashion [Gronow, 1993, p. 94]

Play contributes to the foundation of each major cultural phenomena [Caillois, 2007, p. 43]. Huizinga characterizes play as a free activity, be aware as unreal, not connected with routine and not materially benefited or useful for participants [Huizinga, p. 31, 1997]. It takes place in specially defined space and time according to certain rules [Ibid]. Common play encourages social unities distinguishing participants and constructing social boundaries between themselves and rest society [Ibid].

Fashion incorporates many features of play like more or less strict rules, usefulness, and interconnection with space of action. Gronow also notes disinterest of mostly participants in fashion novelty and transitoriness that makes fashion purely aesthetic pleasure with no usefulness or purposiveness [Gronow, p. 94]. To play fashion means to choose freely among numerous available objects and standards [Gofman, 2004, p. 28].

Earlier economists showed how fashion influences individual choice through following collective selection [Leibenstein, 1950, pp. 183, 189]. From author's point of view fashion serves as a mechanism connecting social values and an individual choice answering the question on "the conflict between the principles of individuality and sociability" [Gronow, 1993, p.98]. Besides the framework of fashion values allows opening "reasons of its [fashion's – Iu.P.] constituting dynamics" which were disregarded by classics, for example, Blumer [Gronow, 1993, p. 96].

Crossing lifestyles and cultural consumption researchers find behavioral patterns in cultural consumption which might be interpreted as corresponding with the values of fashion. Patterns differentiated by oldness and novelty in cultural products [Bevellance, 2008, p.213; Hanquinet, 2013, p. 808] might be interpreted as connected with the value of modernity.

Bourdieu explains exhaustively the significance of ostentation in cultural consumption. Consumption of high culture serves for constructing social boundaries and showing belongingness to certain social class [Bourdieu, 1984, p.272]. Another case of art consumption as conspicuous consumption is fashion appeal of Pre-Raphaelite art and design in the end of nineteenth century [Harvey et al., 2011].

Bevellance highlights the participants' recognition of local or global, national and international on cultural market [Bevellance, 2008, p. 214]. This recognition could be interpreted as participants' universal or particular orientation in cultural consumption.

The reasonable questions here would be about the way in which fashion appeal might contribute into existing explanations of cultural consumption patterns. In terms of the homology argument fashion might be considered as a part of boundaries building processes. Fashion appeal demarcates “traditional” opera and ballet audience from the one which uses opera or ballet attendance for ostentatious goals. This proposition is supported by long history of opera theatres as the places visited in order to see and to be seen. Opera theatres were a forum for social interaction, where occurred acts of social differentiating, cultural demonstration and political fight [Muller, 2006, p. p. 172-173, 177]. Much latter opera theatre is regarded as the place “for social ceremonies enabling a select audience to demonstrate and expertise its membership in high society” [Bourdieu, 1984, p.272].

The individualization argument might be benefited from fashion, because fashion contributes significantly in overcoming social and geographical boundaries [Gofman, 2004, P. 25 – 26, Harvey et al, 2001]. Certain cultural activities are diffused independently from an individuals’ class position due to fashion.

Although omnivore/univore argument is in opposition to both homology and individualization arguments it also can incorporate fashion. According to existing research omnivores are younger and more educated than other types of art participants [Stichele, Laermans, 2006, p. 58]. So far cultural activities marked by fashion meanings might attract omnivores’ attention and might encourage them to participate.

The previous research on cultural consumption identify the existence of the patterns which might be associated with the fashion values. These research analyses the factors mediating lifestyles, but not lifestyles and its characteristics as such. Therefore, analysis of the fashion values may extend our knowledge about the mechanisms of individual choice for high culture participation as a part of collective selection. In order to incorporate fashion into existing arguments it is necessary to develop the set of indicators of fashion appeal of art participation. It also can give detailed and nuanced understanding of patterns of choice for different social groups.

## **METHODOLOGY AND DATA**

As there were no attempts early to develop the scale of fashion values, particularly for art participation qualitative research is the optimal design in order to solve this task. The research

aims to answer two research questions: 1. In what way does fashion appeal work for opera and ballet theatre attendance? What kind of indicators should be used in order to identify and measure fashion appeal effect on visitor behavior? 2. What social variables might explain the variance in participants' narratives on fashion appeal of opera and ballet theatre attendance?

As earlier research emphasizes an important role of social context for analysis of cultural consumption [Van Eijck, 2001, p. 1164; Katz-Gerro et. al, 2007, p. 163], brief description of the research setting is following. The research setting is Perm Opera and Ballet Theatre attendance. The theatre is one of the oldest in the country. "It's official records goes back as far as 1870. Perm is known as Russia's third ballet Mecca, after Moscow and St. Petersburg. A renowned school of choreography operates alongside the theatre's academic ballet company. A great influence on the development of Perm as a centre of opera and ballet was the evacuation of the Kirov Theatre (now the Mariinsky Theatre) to the city from 1941 to 1944" [History]. The Perm Opera and Ballet Theatre has won the Golden Mask National Theatre Award on several occasions. In 2011 Theodor Currentzis was appointed as the theatre's Artistic Director. He has changed significantly the theatre's repertoire and its strategy of development. The case is relevant because the changes of repertoire and the theatre's marketing communications could change the perception of the theatre among citizens.

Fashion appeal of the theatre attendance is identified directly and indirectly. The direct indicator is an answer on the question "Is it fashionable to attend Perm Opera and Ballet Theatre?" and further explanation and argumentation of the answer. The indirect indicator is the presence of the attributive values of fashion through a participant's whole interview.

The data comes from 23 in-depth interviews with the theatre visitors and non-visitors recruited by snowball method. The interviews last from forty to ninety minutes. The research was conducted from December 2014 to June 2015. The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analysed with Atlas.ti. Six of the participants are men, rest 17 are women. Six are students of different higher educational institutions. The participants' age varies from 19 to 60. Three participants graduated professional secondary school, the rest have university diplomas. One has scientific degree.

Although the concept of validity in qualitative research "is not a single, fix or universal" [Golafshani, 2003, p. 602], triangulation is wide acknowledgeable strategy to validate qualitative data and procedures. Triangulation is the strategy of validation when "use of multiple or different

sources, methods, investigators, and theories to provide corroborating evidence” [Creswell, 2013, p. 251]. Here the triangulation of theories is achieved by using homological and individualization arguments as adding and competing theories. The triangulation of source and data is provided by analysis of discourse and content analysis of official and unofficial communications of the theatre and about the theatre. The official communications are represented by the texts from the theatre’s official web site. Most of these texts are pieces from national and local papers and magazines. The massive includes 98 pieces covering 2014 – the beginning of 2015 and few the artistic director’s interviews. Content-analysis method was applied for the official theatre’s communication. The unofficial part of spectrum is represented by discussion in the theatre’s “VKontakte” group and the site 59.ru. The unofficial part of the spectrum was analysed qualitatively.

The procedure of content-analysis is count of words and phrases referring to described values of fashion. The massive is divided according to a topic of publication and a type of publication. Analysis of unofficial part of the spectrum is less formalized, as it deals with the Internet discussions. A coder classifies all judgement into negative, positive and neutral group, then analytic interprets their content in terms of the value fashion framework.

The given research design has several limitations. The most evident limitation is size and nature of the sample. The sample hardly represents current social structure of Russian society or even structure of the theatre’s audience. Consequently, the results can not be extrapolated outside the sample. The second limitation is determined by number of topic included in guide of interview. Because of time limitations it is impossible to discuss during the interviews in details all topics linked with three main arguments explaining cultural consumption, so the guide is organized around the homological and individualization arguments. The third limitation is influence of the situation of interview on the participants’ answers. Some probability of socially desirable answers is real for this kind of method.

## **RESULTS**

### **Operationalizing the values of fashion**

The first research question was to operationalize the values of fashion in order to develop a scale suitable for quantitative estimation of fashion effect on visitor behaviour. According to the number of shared fashion values the participants were divided into two groups (Fig.1, p. 13),

less and more fashion aware. Less fashion aware participants are ones who mention less than two fashion values. More fashion aware participants are ones who mention three and more values. The indicators of the values of fashion for theatre attendance are represented in the Table 1.

**Table 1. The set of indicators of fashion value**

| The value of fashion | Indicators  |
|----------------------|---|
| Modernity            | Staging, repertoire, youth and men  |
| Ostentation          | Expected cultural benefits, marketing communications, the leader's personal brands  |
| Universalism         | Cosmopolitanism, egalitarianism, variety of repertoire, ticket deficit  |
| Play                 | Festive atmosphere, excitement, break of routine, interaction with singers and musicians, play with styles and traditions |

### **Modernity**

The key role of the modernity value is supported by the data. Modernity is a distinctive feature of the theatre for the fashion aware participants. "It (the theatre) has not stayed in the yesterday" (man, 40). The counterpart of a modern theatre is a theatre-museum that stores traditions carefully, but doesn't look alive. Modernity might have different representations in the theatre: repertoire, a director's methods and techniques, and the artistic director's personal brand. "To me, he (the artistic director) just matches the time which we are living" (woman, 34). "Well, I like new performances with futuristic set design...it's worth to see. Generally the theatre doesn't stay on the same place, it is in progress. That's wonderful modern decision to sell tickets through the web site" (woman, 22). "I would say it (the theatre) is modern. Modern, but with respect to classical heritage, that's the way I would define it" (woman, 50).

The value of modernity turns out to be connected with contemporary art theme. The discussion about repertoire is organized around acceptability of scandal and provocative means of impressions including political connotations, sexual scenes and unconventional scenography. Generally, the participants criticize the usage of these kind of attractors in opera performances, but some of them, mostly cultural industries practitioners, agree that it helps to promote performances and to sell tickets.

In the theatre setting the modernity value might be represented also by new performances or revision of well known shows. The majority of participants is not welcome to new version of

well know operas or ballets, whereas they are much less critical about production of the operas or ballets that they haven't seen before. The fashionable aware participants are much more welcome to new repertoire or revisions of old performances compared with the ones who are less fashion aware.

According to the participants' narratives, there are social groups, which serve as important marker of social interest to a cultural institution. These groups are youth and men. The presence of these groups in the theatre is recognized as a positive deviation and a marker of significant changes.

### **Ostentation**

Our observations demonstrate that to claim fashion appeal of the theatre attendance is not the same as to share the value of modernity. The participants who don't share the modernity value emphasize the value of ostentation. Fashion as communication is shaped by the need to see and to be seen. With biological nature of human being, urbanization and urban lifestyle make ostentation especially important for masses.

Ostentation value concerns to wide range of interactions between the theatre, Perm urban community, and the theatregoers. It plays a noticeable role in narratives of both groups of participants. There are different subjects included into communication between the theatre and public. Firstly, the theatre interacts with Perm urban community by means of public relations and advertisement. The participants highlight a superior status of Perm Opera and Ballet Theatre among other local cultural institutions. Probably, this status and the theatre's fashion appeal mutually enhance each other.

Secondly, the artistic director and the deputy manager keep in touch with the urban community as individuals and "personal brands" through media and the theatre's official web site. Their life style, personal histories and manners of behaviour are means of communication alongside with verbal ones: "...it's enough to look at Currentzis once to be interested, I think. Even disregarding his interviews or something else, just because he is so much controversial" (woman, 34). Artistic director's personal brand is also connected with modernity. His brand is constructed by appearance, dressing, manners, and his reputation of "a young genius" and "a rock star in his heart": "Courentzis – is a genius, young, calfless, with new hairstyle every time. I don't know, may be girls go to see his hairstyle and to admire the way in which he waves an

imaginary conductor's baton" (Man, 38). The artistic director's personal brand makes considerable contribution in the construction of the fashionable image of the theatre.

Thirdly, the most evident role of the theatre is space for social representation [Muller, 2006]. The participants' benefits from social representation differ according to a point of reference. The first type of benefits is determined by the need to show socially desirable personal qualities like kul'turnost' [Kozlova, 2005, p. 213], maturity, keeping abreast of news and high intellectual level: "I have to skill in talk, but if I lie around a sofa all day and watch TV, another words waste my leisure time, I won't be able to keep the ball rolling" (woman, 45), "Well, this way they (people who attendance the theatre – Iu. P.) can show that they are smart, educated and, I don't know, spiritually reach, that they are not some lowbrow" (woman, 22).

The second type of the benefits is organized around the participants' referent groups. They meet the level of their surroundings or to exceed surroundings or to support the reputation or status: "...the third place, yes, is visited by elite. Where representatives of upper class of the city see each other, where they give each other the cues that they are highbrow.... (representatives of upper class – Iu. P.) don't have to open mouth. If you come (in the theatre – Iu. P.), you have already demonstrated your level of cultural consumption, but if you come to some there else and proudly tell something, everyone will say "mmm"" (woman, 45), "...for example, during breaks I tell my students that I listened to a certain opera...and they ask me about recommendations: What would I prefer? Have I visited a certain performance? Is it interesting? Is it worth to attendance?" (woman, 30). These types of the benefits are not exceptive. They can co-exist inside one participant.

The participants differentiate themselves from the people who are guided by their peer-group pressure in their attendance of the theatre. They smile at normative component in the attendance of ostentatious visitors and these visitors' lack of cultural capital and opportunities to appreciate a performance and music. Altogether it means that ostentatious opera or ballet attendance is socially denounced practice not acknowledged publically.

### **Universalism**

The value of universalism explains the attitude to Me and Other [Dubin, 2007, p. 312]. In terms of fashion spatially or culturally distant object or standard is positively perceived [Gofman, 2004, p. 26]. For opera and ballet consumption the value of universalism takes follow forms.

Cosmopolitanism or another words “Embeddedness into world cultural space” opposes to Local, Permian: “I think it (the theatre’s performances – Iu. P.) influences me because the team rise the problem to create not just locally distinguished product, if you understand, what I mean, but distinguished product essentially. I went to the theater in kinda Perm, but found myself in the auditorium, when a performance is starting, I realize, I’m not in Perm, I’m somewhere in Europe or in some other place” (man, 40). During the 2000<sup>th</sup> the positive estimation of the Other, meaning mainly West, has been replacing rapidly by the favour of the Local [Dubin, 2007, p. 313]. According to the data this trend is not true for the participants as it is for Russian population in general. Development of live stream technology is also the indicator of universalism, because it allows to consume the theatre’s performance despite of a listener’s place of residence, overcoming geographical boundaries and distance.

Access and variety refer to the openness of the theatre to different social groups. The participants do not regard the theatre as elite and close space: “To me there are completely different categories of people (among theatergoers – Iu. P.). They don’t belong solely to upper crust as I used to think. They are entirely different people...” (woman, 22). Participants also point at new social groups attracted to the theatre by new repertoire. Another empirical indicators of Access and Variety are a wide range of available repertoire items, combination of classical and modern repertoire.

### **Play**

Ludic aspect of fashion makes a bridge between fashion and art and represents fashion as an aesthetic phenomenon [Gofman, 2004, p. 27 – 28]. By definition theatre is the space of play, but indicators of playful spirit in the theatre varies significantly depending on a participant’s level of expertise. Not expert participants note festive atmosphere, excitement, a break of routine and interaction with signers and musicians: “...or they sign on the balcony or in the lobby or run nearby or go through the audience to the scene. It is playing and the audience lives this – very interesting” (woman, 60). Expert participants can identify the play with styles and traditions while a certain performance is going.

There is one indicator, which is out of the value fashion framework, but it is one of the oftenest mentioned by the participants: “The tickets are rapidly sold, it means a lot of people strive to get inside” (woman, 22), “But generally the theatre is very popular, and performances for kids and for adults, they,...in all, in New Year session there were sold all tickets to any

performances. A-l-l ticket to a-l-l performances. Even to “Snow Maiden”. They were sold” (man, 40). It is a ticket deficit which force people to plan visit to the theatre in advance.

### **Fashion awareness: age, education, gender, and occupation**

The second research question was to identify the social variables explaining the variance in participants’ narratives on fashion appeal of opera and ballet theatre attendance. Theoretically participants could share from zero value (no fashion appeal) to four values of fashion. Only 6 participants of 23 answered “No” to the direct question “Is the attendance of Opera and Ballet Theatre fashionable?” According to the number of shared fashion values the participants were divided into two groups (Fig.1). The number of shared values is not connected directly with acknowledgement of the theatre’s attendance fashion appeal or frequency of attendance.

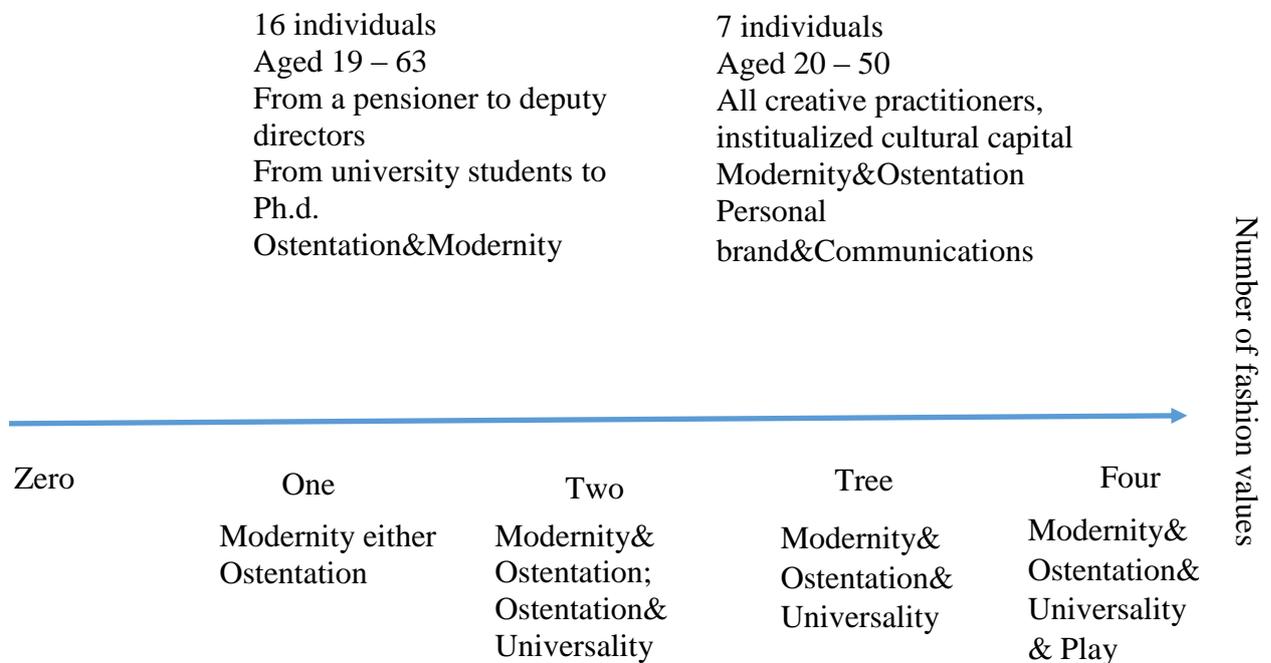


Fig. 1. The distribution of the fashion values among the participants

Fashion awareness is distributed alongside of values continuum with the poles of zero value to four values. The answer on the direct question about fashion appeal of theatre’s attendance is not a good indicator for number of the values of fashion shared by a participant. The diversity of participants in both groups allows assuming that fashion awareness is also not

connected with a particular level of education or frequency of attendance, but with occupation and institutionalized cultural capital.

The first group, less fashion aware, includes the participants mentioned one or two values. This group unites the participants with different education level (from scientific degree or university diploma through university students to secondary professional schools), wealth and occupations.

The second group, fashion aware, unites the participants who mention three or four of the values of fashion. These participants show significantly more detailed and deep suggestions about their experience from the theatre itself and about fashion appeal of the theatre. Here the participants' characteristics are more homogeneous. Three of seven participants work as cultural industries practitioners. One has diploma in music. Another words their high cultural capital is institutionalized, whereas in the group of less fashion aware participants institutionalized cultural capital occurs only once.

In terms of fashion values the groups differ in relative significance of modernity and ostentation values. The members of fashion aware group mention the value of modernity oftener than the ones of less fashion aware group. The members of the less fashion aware group mention oftener the value of ostentation.

The value of ostentation contains wide range of variations in terms of expected cultural benefit, which also vary with fashion awareness. So far, fashion aware participants don't regard attendance as the way to achieve to or to grow under their peers or subordinates. Simultaneously, they reflect carefully on the theatre's marketing communications and the artistic director's personal brand. Less fashion aware participants demonstrate as cultural benefits mostly socially desirable characteristics like personal maturity, high level of requests to leisure and to talking points, high awareness about urban news. They mention rarely the theatre's marketing communication or the artistic director's personal brand.

Students were analysed separately, because they are in process of constructing their cultural consumption. Perhaps, due to their transitional situation the value of ostentation is the oftenest mentioned value. The value of modernity is mentioned as much as five times less. The third important value except ostentation and modernity is the value of universalism. It refers to non-elitist status of the theatre's attendance. Egalitarian character is an important feature of the theatre attendance for many participant, but especially for students. Although young people are

perceived as the most evident audience of fashion, the results show that situation is not so straightforward. Constructing their selves students share mostly the values of ostentation and universalism, much less regarding the rest values.

### **The values of fashion in the space of criticism**

In order to triangulate the interview data content-analysis and analysis of discourse are conducted. The official communications are represented by the texts from the theatre's official web site containing mostly pieces from locals and national papers, magazines. The unofficial part of spectrum is extracted from the discussion in "VKontakte" group and in the site 59.ru analysed with interpretative analysis.

Content-analysis finds certain trends in the official part of discourse. The fashion values are more often prescribed to opera performances than to ballet ones. The values of modernity, universalism and play are prescribed with content of a performance. The ostentation value appears when the theatre's marketing activity or the artistic director is described. It occurs much less compared with the modernity value.

The attributive values of fashion play quite modest role for the discussions in "VKontakte" and the 59.ru site compared with the articles presented on the official site. Despite of it they occur and matter in the context of discussions about new artistic policy of the theatre management. In the unofficial discourse the attributive values exist as the object of criticism of artistic director who brightly represents them. The positive judgements about the artistic director include at least one of the attributive values. Simultaneously considerable part of negative judgements critics the attributive values like ostentation (the opposition is modesty, restraint), modernity, and universalism (the opposition is classic, Russian tradition, Russian opera).

The results of content-analysis and analysis of discourse support two conclusions made above. First conclusion is about significance of the artistic director's personal brand for theatre's fashion appeal. The second conclusion is about repertoire as a vehicle of the fashion values. As official positioning of the theatre in local, national and international contexts is the highest quality of musical performance [the head of the theatre's PR-department, a personal talk], it might be suggested that fashion appeal of the theatre attendance is a by-product produced by journalists and public.

## Discussion

This research to depart from mainstream cultural consumption research in considering fashion as a factor of high culture consumption. The mainstream papers are focused on interactions between class belongings, social status, cultural taste, and leisure activities, disregarding the question “What values shared by an individual are linked his/her choice with certain collective selection?” Application of fashion as a factor of high culture consumption opens the way to answer this question and to use wider range of life style characteristics for explanation of patterns of cultural consumption.

The results demonstrate complex process in which mutually depended fashion values are constructed by different actors. The results point at contextual and dynamic nature of fashion appeal shaped during interaction between visitors, producers and mediators. Journalists, visitors, internet users, producers, and mediators operate with the values of fashion differently. Fashion guided behaviour is a kind of the ideal type one in Weber’s sense. So far, visitors may have different set of the fashion values and to be more or less close to this ideal type of “fashion guided behaviour”.

The findings of this research partly support the previous research, partly diverges with them. There are two most interesting divergences. The previous research usually describes opera and ballet as element of highbrow cultural consumption pattern belonging to older, more educated and female visitors [Katz-Gerro, 2007, Lizardo, 2006]. However the participants tend to highlight inclusiveness of this type of leisure activity. There are two potential competitive explorations of this result. Firstly, the participants might prefer to construct their image as egalitarian individuals who prefer accessible leisure activities. Secondly, these judgements are results of long term Soviet cultural policy which claimed accessibility arts for people.

The second most interesting finding concern to the cues used participants for making their judgements about the theatre and its attributes. Ticket deficit, men and youth play the role of indicator of appeal of the leisure activity independently from the participants’ fashion awareness. Probably, as well as citizens estimate the level of urban public places’ safety according to the presence of women and children, the participants take into account the presence of youth and men making them judgement about the theatre.

## Conclusion

The paper presents the explorative research aimed to extend current explanation of cultural consumption. The research is based on the fashion value framework, which regards fashion guided behaviour as a function of shared values called fashion values. The literature review generates insights about the role of fashion in high culture consumption and arguments applicability of the fashion values framework. The indicators of fashion appeal of opera and ballet theatre come from the series of in-depth interviews. In order to provide “corroborative evidence” there are used method triangulation as the combination of in-depth interviews, content-analysis, and analysis of discourse.

The first research question of the paper is about internal validity of the fashion value framework for analysis of high cultural consumption. The results allow concluding about internal validity of this approach in given context, because different data source and different methods provide corresponding data.

The data shows that institutionalized cultural capital and cultural industries occupation matter for a participant’s fashion awareness. For given sample it looks like the most fashion aware participants are cultural industries practitioners. In conformity with [Katz-Gerro et. al, 2007], the status variables, education and occupation, look more plausible as an explanation of fashion awareness than class variables.

Identification of the vehicles of attributive fashion values allows developing detailed list of theatre’s fashion appeal indicators. In turn, this allows developing a relevant scale for statistical estimation of the phenomena. Modernity and ostentation can be operationalized through repertoire, staging, marketing communications, artistic director’s personal brand, and expected cultural benefits from the theatre attendance. The value of universalism is constructed by the perception of the theatre as cosmopolite, available for different social groups and taking into account different musical tastes. The value of play is manifested through festive atmosphere of the theatre, a break of routine, interaction with singers and musicians, and the ritual of dating.

The research opens several directions for future work. Complex structure of the theatre’s fashion appeal witnesses about the necessity of multidimensional scaling in order to estimate statistically fashion effects on visitor behaviour. Obviously, the first direction is the survey research in order to test the scale estimating statistically fashion appeal of the theatre attendance

for different social groups. The survey could also analyse of interconnections between fashion appeal and existing arguments exploring cultural consumption. The third direction is bridge the values of fashion and personal values according to Shwartz scale [Schwartz et. al, 2012; Schwartz, 2014]. The last one is widely used in consumer behaviour research [Schwartz et. al, 2012, p. 663-664]. Therefore, the interconnection between sociological and marketing theory will be built.

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Iuliia O. Papushina

National Research University Higher School of Economics (Perm, Russia). Management Department. Associated Professor;

E-mail: yupapushina@hse.ru, Tel. +7 (342) 205-52-28

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