

Yuliia Siusel

**The Role of the Educational Environment in the Formation of Students'
Consumer Tastes**

The introduction. In the modern conditions of the developed consumeristic culture the substantial transformation of the consumption occurred, which led to the change of the structure, motives and the role of the phenomenon together with the deepening of its communicative-symbolic function. New pluralistic socio-cultural space, at first glance, seems to be not enough structured, chaotic, however, the new models of consumption and forms of consumer taste, which are largely based on the individual motivational factors, still remain dependent on the external social conditions (socio-economic, cultural, educational, political), that dominate in a particular society.

The actuality of the analysis of the approaches to the concept «consumer taste» is determined by a number of factors. Firstly, the modern social relations require to consider the consumption as the peculiar process, that goes beyond the framework of the economic sphere and finds its significant role in all socio-cultural practices. Secondly, such socio-demographic factors as age and level of education are important preconditions for the everyday consumer practices. Thirdly, the consumer tastes of the modern youth are predetermined by the active involvement of the latter into the symbolic communication with the help of social networks.

In Ukraine the studies concerning the consumer tastes are not attended, unfortunately, by the large-scale applied research due to the lack of awareness of the need to finance such processes by the native enterprises. Therefore, the actual question of justification of the

modern models of consumption of Ukrainian students on the basis of the formation of their consumer tastes arises.

M. Shulga comes to the conclusion, that for the Ukrainian society, which started to focus on Western values, and which at the same time is the poor society, the processes of consumerization acquire relatively European samples of the canons. Not having the appropriate wealth to engage in the real Western consumer marathon on goods, original brands with the orientation on prestigious fashion centres and their products, a significant part of Ukrainian citizens compensates all this together through the second-hand, often engaging into the consumer crediting.³⁰⁷ More active propensity to the consumption is almost the same for the different in material opportunities stratum.

In other words, even people with the same income may consume in a completely different way. In this sense, education and taste are the components, that significantly (if not decisively) impact on the consumption character of the individual. Therefore, in social aspect the consumer taste is organically linked with the problem of completeness of education.

Theoretical basis. Consumer taste is the ability of the consumer to understand, distinguish and evaluate the consumer qualities of goods and services on the objective and subjective levels. The consumer taste is explicated not only in the consumer activity of the individual, but also in the process of perception of those or other goods and services and is realized in the daily consumption of the people. Consumer taste is the form of the consumer consciousness and depends on the concrete individual, as well as on the certain social field and concrete people.

Consumer taste is the organic integrity and rational-emotional assimilation of the reality. Therefore, consumer taste – is the ability, which harmoniously combines social (creation of the image, formation of the identity) and natural (satisfaction of the physiological needs) essence of man.³⁰⁸

Summarizing the diversity of existing approaches to the definition of the concept “consumer taste”, we must distinguish several conceptual directions in the research of this phenomenon. In the framework of the first direction, economic, the consumer taste is considered to be the exogenous variable and is not clearly explained in the framework of the economic theory.³⁰⁹ Autonomous «economic man», who acts in the role of the consumer, has

³⁰⁷ М. О. Шульга, *Дрейф на узбіччя. Двадцять років суспільних змін в Україні*, Київ, 2011 (M. O. Shulga, *Drift off the road. Twenty years of social change in Ukraine*), (Kyiv, 2011).

³⁰⁸ C. Campbell, *The Romantic Ethic and the Spirit of Modern Consumerism*, (London, 2005).

³⁰⁹ F. Ackerman, ‘Foundations of Economic Theories of Consumption: Overview Essay’ *The Consumer Society : Frontier Issues in Economic Thought*, (Washington, 1997), pp. 149-159.

the clearly defined needs, which in fact are not limited with anything except the resources available to the individual. Such consumer is guided first and foremost by two factors: price changes and the changes of his own income.³¹⁰

Here we may also include the marketing approach to the understanding of the essence of the consumer taste. Indeed, on the one hand, marketing may be considered as a kind of activity, that is directed to the study of the consumers' tastes and on the basis of the latter, builds the concept of the goods promotion on the market. On the other hand, the marketing faster forms these tastes. The famous theoretician J. K. Galbraith assesses the degree of the impact of the marketing instruments and technologies this way: «The consumer indeed may still believe that his actions are in line with his own ideas concerning the satisfaction of his own desires. However, this idea is superficial and approximate, as well as is the result of the illusions formed during his desires' management process».³¹¹ Of course, this point of view is rather extreme. We may hardly speak about the fact, that all the tastes and desires of the individual-consumer in the market society are completely controlled and managed by the marketing mechanisms.

The second direction in the research concerning the consumer taste may be conditionally called the sociocultural direction. Under this approach, the consumer taste is considered, firstly, in the context of the class structure of the society (P. Bourdieu, G. Becker), and, secondly, as the marker in the social hierarchy. Thus, according to J. Baudrillard the consumer behavior cannot be reduced only to the possession of the concrete goods (product) or service, it becomes a sphere of the human's self-expression, based on the development of consumer taste in the modern society.³¹² This view on the phenomenon of consumption is characteristic, first of all, for postmodernists, who emphasize the importance of symbolic, subjective experience as well as accentuate, that individuals create their own consumer tastes on the basis of their personal experiences.³¹³

P. Bourdieu considers the concept of «taste» to be the classified system of schemes. The scientist notes, that the tastes are not the result of natural, individual choice of the individuals. The tastes – are the result of social conditions and the aims (objectives) of the consumer choice reflect the symbolic hierarchy, which is conditioned by the social privileges

³¹⁰ J. P. Peter, J. C. Olson, *Consumer behavior and marketing strategy*, (New York, 2002).

³¹¹ cited: Ч. Сэндидж, В. Фрайбургер, К. Ротцолл, *Реклама: теория и практика*, Москва 2001 (Ch. G. Sendidg, V. Frajburger, K. Rotczoll, *Advertising: Theory and Practice*), (Moskva, 2001), p. 112-113.

³¹² J. Baudrillard, *Selected Writings*, (Cambridge ; Oxford, 2001).

³¹³ В. И. Ильин, *Поведение потребителей*, Санкт-Петербург 2000 (V. I. Ilyin, *Consumer Behavior*), (Sankt-Peterburg, 2000).

in order to sharpen the distinction between classes in the society.³¹⁴ Therefore, it becomes clear, that the cultural hegemony of the society's conventional tastes is carried into practice, and the consumption sphere is characterized by the influence of the dominant cultural tastes on it.

P. Bourdieu noted, that the hierarchy of tastes and goods in the sphere of culture correlates with the hierarchy of ownership in the field of economy and the hierarchy of power relations in the field of politics.³¹⁵ From this point of view, the one who owns a large amount of economic or cultural capital, «dominates» or tries to establish a hierarchy of his own taste and priorities for those, who have the fewer amount of the latter capital.

At the same time P. Bourdieu indicates, that taste, as classified system of schemes, objectively correlates through social conditionalities, that reconstituted it, under the certain condition: the individuals classify themselves and are not against of being classified, choosing various objects of consumption in accordance (conformity) with their own taste – clothes, food, drinks, leisure activities – that to some extent may be in line with their position in the social hierarchy. Hence the concept of «taste» has the same meaning as «habitus», which P. Bourdieu defines as mental structures, through which the agents perceive the social world. According to the French sociologist, habitus as «acquired system of schemes» generates the stable dispositions of production of classifying practices and at the same time the dispositions of their perception and evaluation.³¹⁶ These dispositions not only become the principle of classification of characteristics and giving them the special symbolic sense. They force the person to reconcile with these practices and their results, generating the «tastes». Habitus, in turn, is linked with the particular type of existence conditions of those or other classes, which are characterized by different amounts and structure of the economic and cultural capital.³¹⁷

The third direction in the research of consumer taste is the socio-psychological approach, under which much attention was paid to the consideration of the essence of human behavior. Thus, the representatives of the behaviourism direction considered the category «taste» to be the orientation, on the basis of which the individual performs the consumer

³¹⁴ І. Ю. Набруско, 'Споживання та соціальна стратифікація (деякі аспекти теорії П. Бурдьє)' *Вісник Київського національного лінгвістичного університету. Серія Історія, економіка, філософія*, Вип. 6, Київ 2002 (I. Y. Nabrusko, 'Consumption and Social Stratification (some aspects of the theory of P. Bourdieu)' *Bulletin of Kyiv National Linguistic University. Series History, Economics, Philosophy*, Issue 6), (Kyiv, 2002), p. 258.

³¹⁵ П. Бурдьє, 'Структура, габитус, практика' *Журнал социологии и социальной антропологии* 1:2, (1998) (P. Bourdieu, 'Structure, habitus, practice' *Journal of Sociology and Social Anthropology* 1:2, (1998), p. 74.

³¹⁶ П. Бурдьє, *Практический смысл*, Санкт-Петербург 2001 (P. Bourdieu, *Practical sense*), (Sankt-Peterburg, 2001), p. 102.

³¹⁷ П. Бурдьє, 'Структура, габитус, практика' *Журнал социологии и социальной антропологии* 1:2, (1998) (P. Bourdieu, 'Structure, habitus, practice' *Journal of Sociology and Social Anthropology* 1:2, (1998), p. 76.

choice in the conditions of a huge variety of consumer goods. The consumer taste is comprehended by the personality and directly impact on the process of buying and consumption behaviour of the individual as the system of his responses to stimuli (the «stimulus – response» model).³¹⁸

The structure of the consumer taste is characterized by such constituent elements:³¹⁹

- *cognitive orientation*. It includes knowledge concerning the properties of goods and services, general awareness concerning the benefits of goods purchasing, their distinctive, specific qualities, as well as the ways of making a purchase;

- *emotional (affective) orientation*. It characterizes the emotional attitude to the process of consumption all-in-all as well as separate products and their consumer properties; in particular, it is, that is expressed in the categories of taste, preferences etc;

- *assessment orientation*. This are the diverse judgments, opinions and ideas concerning the character and ways of consumption, that are explicated in terms of style, way of life.

In our opinion, the task of the educational influence in the university is the education of the young consumer, who is able to adequately assess the situation and other existing «actors», his own resources and capabilities, as well as even contrary to the determined impact of the system to realize his own interests and goals through consumption. The consumer of this category is called the «informed consumer».³²⁰ «To be the «informed» consumer does not mean the permanent searching for the best buying offer, although this is also the useful skill. To be the informed consumer means to be aware of the contradictions, to which the marketing and advertising push us, but nevertheless consume the goods in the predictable and unpredictable ways with the aim to express something of his own – the sense of his own identity as the distinction or the social identity as the sense of belonging to the group, based on the common tastes and values».³²¹

As M. Peterson accentuates, to be the «informed consumer» means to know about the S. Miles' «paradox of consumption»³²², i.e. to understand, that the mass media manipulates our tastes and desires, but at the same time to have the faith in the possibility to satisfy our needs and to mark our identity through the use of the goods. Contrary to the ideas of the

³¹⁸ G. Ritzer, *Enchanting a disenchanted world: Revolutionizing the Means of Consumption*, (Maryland, 2005).

³¹⁹ Л. И. Ростовцева, *Потребительская культура как регулятор поведения потребителей* (Москва, 2005) (L. I. Rostovtseva, *Consumer culture as a regulator of consumer behavior*), (Moskva, 2005).

³²⁰ M. Peterson, *Consumption and Everyday Life*, (London, 2006), p. 141.

³²¹ M. Peterson, *Consumption and Everyday Life*, (London, 2006), p. 152.

³²² S. Miles, 'The Consuming Paradox: A New Research Agenda for Urban Consumption' *Urban Studies*, 35:5-6/1998, p. 1001.

Frankfurt School concerning the convictions, that we assimilate in the way of life, which the socio-cultural field of mass culture and production dictate to us, we can «appropriate» things for our own purposes' realization, ensuring, thus, that the goods assimilate into our way of existence, and not vice versa.³²³

The formation and satisfaction of the students' consumption needs, of their interests and consumer tastes occur under the influence of the educational environment. Therefore, another key concept, which requires adjustments in our research, is the concept of the educational environment. This is the category of cognitive social pedagogy, during the study of which the researcher faces difficult tasks. The analysis of the scientific literature in the field of social pedagogics shows that the term «educational environment» is, first of all, the space of incentives that has impact on the student's personality.³²⁴

F. Znaniecki in his humanistic sociological approach insisted that the educational environment is the result of the activity of social group, as well as it prepares the human being for the life in society.³²⁵

The Polish researchers A. Przeclawska and W. Theiss³²⁶, point out that the educational environment is determined not only by the framework of classical training and educational institutions, but also by the local dimensions of the environment. The scholars write that the educational space is filled with the information, which is transmitted through the television, Internet, press, etc. If we add to the latter the mobile network, we'll get the image of the virtual reality, in which human exists. A lot of users have access to this reality, which suggestively impacts on their psyche, creating "...the world of fiction, which becomes more real world than the reality".³²⁷ Thus, we may determine the educational environment not only as the biosociocultural environment, but also as the information system, which interacts with the human with the help of the innovative technologies.

S. Kowalski after F. Znaniecki defined the sociological term of educational environment as following: «the particular social environment, which is created by the group for a person, who after the appropriate training (education) must become the member of it».³²⁸

³²³ M. Peterson, *Consumption and Everyday Life*, (London, 2006), p. 158.

³²⁴ Войцех Срочиньскі, 'Виховне довідлля: постановка проблеми', *Міжнародний науковий форум: соціологія, психологія, педагогіка, менеджмент*, Вип. 1, (Київ 2009) (Wojciech Srochyński, 'To the issue of the educational environment' *International Scientific Forum: Sociology, Psychology, Pedagogy, Management*, Issue 1, (Kyiv, 2009), p. 243.

³²⁵ F. Znaniecki, *The Method of Sociology*, (New York, 1968).

³²⁶ A. Przeclawska, *Pedagogika społeczna – kręgi poszukiwań* (A. Psheslavskaya, *Social pedagogy – research circles*), (Warszawa, 1996), pp. 100-101.

³²⁷ Ibid.

³²⁸ Войцех Срочиньскі, 'Виховне довідлля: постановка проблеми', *Міжнародний науковий форум: соціологія, психологія, педагогіка, менеджмент*, Вип. 1, (Київ 2009) (Wojciech Srochyński, 'To the issue of

The educational system in the theory of the author is the main cognitive category. It concerns the society as a whole, as well as the local social environments. The educational system consists of: 1) state education system, 2) the local educational system, 3) the education system of the specific educational institution (e.g. the University). It means, that the higher education institution may be considered as one of the components of the educational environment, which forms the consumer tastes of the students.

The important role in the author's theory plays the category of educational impact. S. Kowalski distinguishes four types of impact in the educational environment: 1) the system of educational institutions; 2) the system of accepted social values; 3) the system of social interactions; 4) the negative impact on the personality, i.e. barriers, which influence the development of the student.

The wide term of educational environment is used by sociologists, psychologists, and pedagogues. The latter refer this term to the interaction of different educational environments in the process of primary socialization (family, small social group) and secondary socialization:

- 1) the institutions of direct education – nurseries, kindergartens, schools, educational institutions;
- 2) the institutions of indirect education – the institutions of social care, health care, cultural institutions, mass media;
- 3) the means of public communication.³²⁹

The S. Kawula's theory of the educational environment³³⁰ is based on the concept of the needs of integration of the educational impacts, as well as it takes into account the principle of the perceivable and practical holism. According to the principle of holism, the different impacts of the educational environment must be evaluated, and the task of the pedagogue (practitioner) is to integrate them into the educational process. In this context the formation of consumer tastes of the student youth is analyzed through the concept of the educational environment.

Consequently, we adhere to the concept that the education is, first of all, conscious, purposeful, controlled, motivated, organized activities; i.e. social activities.³³¹ This activity in

the educational environment' *International Scientific Forum: Sociology, Psychology, Pedagogy, Management*, Issue 1, (Kyiv, 2009), p. 243.

³²⁹ Ibid.

³³⁰ S. Kawula, 'Dyskurs wokół przedmiotu pedagogiki społecznej' *Pedagogika Społeczna* (S. Kawulya, 'The discourse around the subject of social pedagogy' *Social Pedagogy*), 3/2006, p. 7.

³³¹ Войцех Срочиньскі, 'Виховне докiлля: постановка проблеми', *Мiжнародний науковий форум: соціологія, психологія, педагогіка, менеджмент*, Вип. 1, (Київ 2009) (Wojciech Srochyński, 'To the issue of

the environment, where the student lives, may consciously and unconsciously contribute to the formation of consumer tastes and to the regulation of students' consumer practices.

The empirical research and the interpretation of results. Sharing the methodological position of I. Nabrusko, who identified three basic models of consumption, which are considered to be characteristic for the Ukrainian population (demonstrative, habitustic, conformal)³³², we have done the secondary data analysis concerning the results of sociological monitoring conducted by the Institute of Sociology of NAS of Ukraine and the “European social survey” 2005-2007-2009-2011.

As the result of the secondary analysis of the data the segmentation of the student youth on consumer orientations was received. The superiority of the persons with economical (55,9%), non-demonstrative (43,3%), oriented on the practicality (49,7%) consumer behaviour was noticeable. An insignificant number of «hedonists» (the persons, for whom the cost and the necessity of the good by purchasing does not matter) (16,0%) and the «spontaneous buyers» (16,5 %) express the model of the free/unlimited consumption, that is immanent only to the well-off students, who have sufficient material resources.³³³

To find out whether exists a relationship between the identified models of consumer behavior, the consumer taste forming and socio-demographic, educational and economic characteristics of the respondents, the correlation analysis of the empirical data was applied. The *demonstrative orientation* of consumer behavior turned out to be partly dependent on the age, marital status, level of education and average monthly income of the respondents.

Conformal and individualistic orientation weakly depends on the age of the respondents. The same situation we may observe for the orientation on the novelty – practicality and for the *orientation on spontaneity*. Furthermore, the practicality of the consumer behavior depends also on the respondent's place of work and his (her) marital status. However, the explicated correlation is weak, and it is impossible to give it an unambiguous assessment. It is only clear, that the new, consumeristic models of consumption are mostly inherent in the young people.

the educational environment' *International Scientific Forum: Sociology, Psychology, Pedagogy, Management*, Issue 1, (Kyiv, 2009), p. 243.

³³² И. Набруско, 'Социокультурная роль денег в процессе потребления' *Социология : теория, методы, маркетинг* (I. Nabrusko, 'The sociocultural role of money in the process of consumption' *Sociology: Theory, Methods, Marketing*, 1/2011, pp. 147-155.

³³³ Є. Головаха, М. Шульга (ред.), *Українське суспільство. 20 років незалежності. Соціологічний моніторинг*, Том 2, (E. Golovakha, M. Shulga (eds.), *Ukrainian society. Twenty Years of Independence. Sociological Monitoring*, Volume 2, (Kyiv, 2011).

We must also say, that for the student youth also the creative model of consumption, which is the creative consumerism, is characteristic.³³⁴ We should also mention W. Thomas and F. Znaniecki, who identified three types of social character. The first – «*Philistine*» is the type of people, who are oriented on stability and prefer the traditional situations, as well as persons, who are conformists and actively oppose changes in the external environment. The second type – «*Bohemian*» – is characterized by the spontaneity of reactions and behavior, as well as easy adaptation to the new conditions. The last type – “*Creative*” – is able to active activities and disposed to the diversity, as well as is purposeful.^{335 336}

For the first time in the research of the Institute of Sociology of NAS of Ukraine the corresponding set of instruments was approved in 1997. The respondents were asked to identify themselves with one of the groups. Creative people characterized their state in modern conditions as the position «I actively joined the new life, I consider the market relations to be the natural way of life», and by this they demonstrated the strategy of acquirement.³³⁷

Creative consumer (12 %) – is the new kernel of the consumer society, due to which the hyper-consumerism is possible to be further saved. The model of creative consumption in the student's environment opens up the possibilities to invent and to expand the ways and variants of consumption.³³⁸

At the same time, consumption is the sphere in which the innovative practices, that are interesting in the aspect of social processes' prognostication, are matured, that is why the tastes of the innovative youth are oriented on creative consumerism.

Thus, on the one hand, the consumption of Ukrainian students is oriented on Western values and acquires relatively European consumption canon. On the other hand, consumerism increasingly becomes the target of criticism and the consumption is often seen as the strategy of resistance.

³³⁴ В. И. Ильин, *Поведение потребителей*, Санкт-Петербург 2000 (V. I. Ilyin, *Consumer Behavior*), (Sankt-Peterburg, 2000), p. 41.

³³⁵ Энциклопедия кругосвет (Encyclopedia Krugosvet), (Electronic resource, Mode of access: http://www.krugosvet.ru/enc/gumanitarnye_nauki/sociologiya/ZNANETSKI_FLORIAN_VITOLD.html?page=0,2).

³³⁶ О. Злобіна (ред.), *Поведінкові стратегії населення як чинник модернізації (досвід емпіричного дослідження)*, Київ 2012 (O. Zlobina (Ed.), *Behavioral strategy of the population as a factor of modernization (empirical studies)*), (Kyiv, 2012), p. 124.

³³⁷ О. Злобіна (ред.), *Поведінкові стратегії населення як чинник модернізації (досвід емпіричного дослідження)*, Київ 2012 (O. Zlobina (Ed.), *Behavioral strategy of the population as a factor of modernization (empirical studies)*), (Kyiv, 2012), p. 124.

³³⁸ О. Злобіна (ред.), *Поведінкові стратегії населення як чинник модернізації (досвід емпіричного дослідження)*, Київ 2012 (O. Zlobina (Ed.), *Behavioral strategy of the population as a factor of modernization (empirical studies)*), (Kyiv, 2012), p. 120.

Educational environment is a social factor “lift” of the student, that forms an educated man who has a chance at career development and the benefits of competition for the professional and social status, which logically affects the material welfare and the appropriate consumption patterns students. Thus, one could argue about the dependence of the formation of consumer taste from educational performance of students.

Conclusion. So, we must distinguish the following characteristics of the consumption of student youth, which is the specific group of consumers:

- The pragmatism and independence in activity, orientation on its own strength and possibilities. The youth strives to decide what to buy independently and often is guided not only with the advices of the relatives, but also by its own chosen style or consumer tastes. The pragmatism of the consumer behavior is explicated in the desire to spend money “reasonably”, as well as in getting the maximum benefits and usefulness from the usage of things, that are purchased.
- Disposition to the impact of mass culture, norms and stereotypes, that is being imposed on mass media, fashion industry etc. Consumer tastes are often such, that are constructed artificially by the external sources of social impact, and, passing the interiorization, become the subjective views.
- Along with the striving for independence in decisions and actions, the youth to a great extent is disposed to imitation and inheritance of the fashion standards, as well as behavior styles. The fashion in general, as the specific sphere of modern mass consumer culture, is mainly oriented on the representatives of the youth, because the youth, taking into consideration its age and social status, is more inconstant in its consumer tastes and preferences and is open to the impact of fashion.

In the sphere of consumption the student youth inherits the social standards and the rules of behavior, that are characteristic for the whole society. Having the similar features in the consumer practices with other social groups, the youth, however, demonstrates some differences in consumer tastes, that are linked with the lack of life practice and knowledge, as well as with the lack of financial independence and striving to self-affirmation.

Today it is necessary to look for the new models, methods and techniques of formation of the informed consumer, who orients in the consumer society, the impact of which is becoming more and more tangible. It is because the market actors, who are better informed, have a greater capacity to understand the significance of their consumer actions and choices,

as well as are enabled in making better choices.³³⁹ Obviously, the pointed out is a challenge and gives an incentive for future research of the students' social actions in the sphere of consumption.

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³³⁹ A. Ferrarini Guido, J. Hopt Klaus and E. Wymeersch, 'Trading On-line and Consumer Protection' *Capital Markets in the Age of the Euro*, (Kluwer Law International, 2002), p. 133.

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