

# Dimensions of Taste for Cultural Consumption – A Cross-Cultural Study on Young Europeans

**Taru Virtanen**

Researcher, PhD Candidate

Economic Sociology/ Turku School of Economics and Business Administration, Finland

*Taru Virtanen is currently working in the Finnish Graduate School of Marketing (FINNMARK) in Turku School of Economics and Business Administration. The author conducts her PhD studies as a post-graduate in economic sociology and a researcher on cultural consumption patterns of young European adults. She is interested especially in age effects and cross-national comparative approach on the patterns of cultural consumption. The author has been teaching courses on economic sociology and theories of consumption.*

## **Abstract**

It seems, according to some preliminary studies, that there has been a change, which might also be taking place currently, in the ways of which traditional high cultural elements have lost their explanation power. Today's cultural consumption is determined by the breadth of activities participated as well as the quality of most participated items. Thus the consumption of cultural products must be looked as combinations or repertoires. These combinations form a set of patterns or consumer types, dubbed for example as *omnivorous*, *univorous* or *voracious*.

Here, the primary interest is to study consumption repertoires of young Europeans (20–35 years). Quantitative methods are applied to the Eurobarometer-data (2001) in order to find dimensions of taste for cultural products. As indicators of potential social distinction, traditional high and low culture consumption items are used. This article scrutinizes the structure of taste and its relation to cultural consumption patterns.

## **Keywords**

Taste, Young Europeans, Cultural Consumption, Choice Patterns, Cross-Cultural.

## **Introduction**

Cultural consumption has many rivals today when it comes to budgeting time. This has been seen as a consequent of post-modern consumption society, where consumption has become more entangled with all the social life. The argued emergence of 'new middle class' has led to situation where there is an opportunity for larger layer of people to choose among ever growing variety of consumption objects. There hardly is any struggle over material distribution, which makes choices even more salient and accessibility easier for all. (Katz-Gerro 2002.) Still, several arguments have been presented against the strong association between class and cultural lifestyle (Peterson and Simkus 1992; López Sintas and García Álvarez 2002; Sullivan and Katz-Gerro 2004).

While attending high arts has long been a significant means of distinction and a marker of one's social status, it seems that it has ceased to do so any longer. It has been showed that while status distinction have been clearly marked, taste for fine arts is not among those with universal recognition. This means, that even though most of the fine arts participants in fact tend to belong to higher status ranks in the society, they nevertheless represent only a minority of this status. (Peterson and Simkus 1992.)

Several studies on the field of sociology of consumption, cultural studies, management and marketing have shown classifications of taste patterns according to the quantity and quality of consumption practices. Peterson (1992) has for example presented renowned theories first about snob consumers, who have later on shifted to become omnivorous consumers (Peterson and Kern 1996) of culture. More recent writings introduce a voracious consumer (Sullivan and Katz-Gerro 2004), who by definition devours large quantities of almost anything worth aesthetic consumption.

Quite often cultural consumption is empirically analysed in the form of patterns. This helps to bring forward the predominant features of consumption and its objects, as well as consumers' relationship to those objects. When defining consumer this way by his cultural taste, we are interested in range of the consumption preferences. In addition to the consumption repertoire, we also like to know the relation between tastes and socio-economic features.

As Eijck (2000, 210) states, certain interests or schemes occur in all the combinations presented by distinct researches, and "that leisure activities are not independent but rather structured by certain interests that are in part specific for certain status groups." The tendency for all these studies is that they attempt to understand the relationship between various leisure activities and socio-demographic variables.

Peterson defines a pattern as a set of items, which has some kind of general, constant character even though the actual items within the pattern may change over time (Peterson 1983, 424). A pattern can be identified with its "intellectually coherent" feature that can be expressed "as a single system of beliefs and values." (ibid., 422.) Here, cultural consumption patterns of young Europeans are addressed. Using survey data, the effects and outcomes of consumption patterns for culture are explored by asking: (1) what type of cultural consumers there exist among contemporary European young adults? (2) what are the conditioning factors behind various patterns? A modified thesis on omnivorous consumption will be tested to some extent and the trends in contemporary cultural consumption field of young Europeans will be shed light on.

## Taste

Statements about (good/bad) taste usually reveal the social code to which both the classifier and the classified belong (Baudrillard 1998). The social code is the source for cultural values, and it can be seen reflecting the legitimate way of appreciation. Code is a social structure in which the hegemonic strata usually define and set the prevalent good tastes. This is why the object of cultural consumption pattern is very fluid, as values and legitimate taste (taste worth appreciating) are set in different settings by different opinion leaders, norms and cultural determinants.

Taste assumptions goes logically down the social ladder so that those who have more volume on their capitals (both economic and cultural) are assumed to dominate thus also have a dominant taste, that which is considered to surpass all forms of tastes. Members of dominated classes have on the other lesser volume of capital and thus they are assumed to have a taste orientation of middle-brow or popular. Middle-brow or popular orientation is "a preference for less legitimate cultural goods or practices lacking prestige". (van Rees et al. 1999, 350.)

## The 'Omnivore Thesis' and its Variations

A thesis introduced by Peterson and his colleagues (Peterson 1992; Peterson and Simkus 1992; Peterson and Kern 1996) has been widely adopted in the research of cultural consumption in the western world (Katz-Gerro 1999; van Eijck 2000; López Sintas and García Álvarez 2002; 2004; Emmison 2003; Sullivan and Katz-Gerro 2004). The so called omnivore thesis includes also other types of consumers, classified by their taste, such as snob or univore. In order to gain greater fitness the thesis has also been extended with modifications, such as a thesis on voraciousness (Sullivan and Katz-Gerro 2004).

The omnivorousness is "a standard for good taste" (Peterson 2004). Omnivore refers to broad range in taste for leisure activities as opposed to univore's much more narrow and monotonous taste. The consumers on the top of status hierarchy are found to be quite multi-liking thus they are called the omnivores instead of previous snob. In sum, high status groups do not participate in high-status activities much more than others, but they do attend more on all kinds of activities.

The omnivore appreciates a wider variety of cultural genres, thus the taste is developed in an open and welcoming direction, whereas members of low status occupations seem to be more limited in their liking of cultural activities (Peterson and Simkus 1992; Peterson and Kern 1996, 904.) According to findings, a typical omnivore is then a member of higher status group, who in addition to consuming only the "higher" products associated with the group has also understanding and taste for other, "mass" or "popular" cultural products. Thus, they have developed liking for both highly classified and popular cultural genres (López Sintas and García Álvarez 2002). It has also been argued after the discovery of the omnivore type that it indeed has become more widespread over the period of 1982 and 1992 (Peterson and Kern 1996).

How should the inactive be called, those, who do not attend but only one or few activities at best? Peterson and Simkus suggest calling them univores, since the questions dealt only highbrow leisure activities. Thus, the univore might be more active in other, less high and more popular, perhaps, domains of leisure consumption. (Peterson and Simkus 1992.) On the other hand, López Sintas and García Álvarez (2002) have applied the omnivore thesis in classifying Spanish into classes according to their lifestyle. They define non-consumers simply as 'no cultural consumption class', whereas other classes are popular class, highbrow class and omnivore class.

Exclusive taste derived from ones status in class and/or status hierarchy is the essence of snobbish taste and its expression. In this sense, snob is fundamentally what Bourdieu describes in *Distinction* (1984); snob bases his ways into rigid rules of exclusion (see for example López Sintas and García Álvarez 2002). Snobs are a specific type of univores, namely high-class ones (Peterson and Kern 1996, López Sintas and García Álvarez 2002). Their liking aims solely at high cultural performing art, such as music genres which represent the higher end of the "aesthetic spectrum" (Peterson and Kern 1996, 900).

Sullivan and Katz-Gerro (2004) present a voracious consumer typology, which reflects mostly the quantitative dimension of leisure consumption. The preferences of a voracious consumer are not based only upon the breadth of cultural tastes but rather upon the extent of participation. Voracious consumer can thus be defined being insatiable in his consumption.

Sullivan and Katz-Gerro (2004) aspire to show a consistent pattern of voraciousness on a time scale and also to situate this new concept within the theoretical discussion of cultural repertoires and cultural boundaries. In sum, the voraciousness shows as the individuals with high levels of

all the capitals also engage in a greater range of out-of-home leisure activities. Even though the time pressure of the society is becoming high, the pressure of conducting all the possible activities becomes more vital. (Ibid.)

Sullivan and Katz-Gerro (2004) have argued that the voracious consumer is a product of today's changing pace of life and leisure. They further argue that an omnivore and a voracious consumer share many relationships when it comes to the explanation of their cultural consumption patterns. Whereas the omnivore has been analyzed almost to the core, the voracious behaviour has gained little attention. It though seems to be a relevant and existing consumer type.

## Explanations for the Causes of Cultural Consumption

There seemed to be few issues that kept surfacing when explaining the consumption patterns regardless of the period of time or the angle of approach. One of the issues that need to be taken into consideration when studying taste related issues is class. Katz-Gerro and Shavit 1998 claim, that in post-industrial societies no single important factor determines one's cultural tastes. Whereas position in the labor market has seized to be the topmost definer of an individual, more stress has been laid on such characteristics as ethnicity, religion and gender. We can further argue that educational credential seem to play an important role in cultivating taste for cultural orientation.

Post-modern reasoning stresses other alternative determinants of cultural consumption patterns than the traditional approach of 'class and culture consumption', which has been criticized for over-simplification (Bihagen and Katz-Gerro 2000, 329). These options include complementary factors such as age, gender, ethnicity, and religious orientations to mention a few (cf. Toivonen 1992; Katz-Gerro and Shavit 1998). Solid evidence have been found in several studies across the western world that those who are well educated and have high status jobs are in fact more inclined to omnivorous patterns of consumption (Peterson 2004).

In Katz-Gerro's (2002) cross-cultural study, it seems that same variables affect the consumption of highbrow lifestyle in the same direction in all the countries, regardless of the social and other disparities. Older persons, the more educated, women, the more affluent, and urban residents tend to be leaning more towards the highbrow. There are some disruptions in the pattern in the case of some particular youngsters, which also makes age an important factor worth considering. The main determinant for highbrow cultural consumption is education along with classes fluctuating impact between countries.

Similar circumstances seem to influence on the omnivorous and voracious consumption. Both are equally tied up with educational qualifications, occupational status, age and gender, according to Sullivan and Katz-Gerro (2004).

It must be noted, that even though we often consider these differences to be caused by the so called elite-to-mass theory, even the highest status groups are not as excited by the high status genres as they are anticipated in advance.

## Method

The dimensions of taste, either snob, omnivorous, voracious or something else are discussed in the paper in the light of contemporary young adults in Europe. The aim is first to isolate tentative consumer typologies from cultural consumption items, and then to test whether these types conform or contradict the presumptions from previous literature. Based on the previous literature two hypotheses are proposed: (1) Cultural consumption patterns, and thus consumer typologies, can be isolated among today's young European adults (2) These patterns can be explained to great extent by education, gender and age.

What needs to be answered is the proportion of each type and how they are related to socioeconomic variables traditionally used in explanation. The effect of class is also disputed according to previous literature, so that will be tested, too.

As indicators of social distinction in this study traditional cultural consumption items such as going to ballet, concert, museums or reading books are used. The variables selected in the analysis form only a fragment of all possible items to be considered as cultural consumption (see Peterson 2004). This is partially due to the reality that there is a vast repertoire of cultural items which consumers can choose from in the contemporary commodity culture (Warde et al. 1999, 106). The analysis is carried out in the tradition of Peterson (1983), who first isolates the patterns of consumption and after that looks for the correlations they have regarding the social factors. The technique of analysis here is logistic regression. It helps in interpreting the impact of each single independent variable on consumption, and to some extent also an estimation of the impacts magnitude can be given.

## Sample

A Eurobarometer data covering the 15 member countries of the collection year 2001 is applied with logistic regression analysis in order to find out the relationship and dependency between single objects of cultural typologies. Eurobarometer 56.0 (Christensen 2001) on information and communication technologies, financial services, and cultural activities in respect of cultural consumption is used in the analysis. Consumers (4747 young adults) are reflected upon their socioeconomic characteristics such as education, occupational status (class), income, gender and age.

Consumption items. Cultural consumption patterns were measured with three kinds of variables. The first set of variables ("activities") asks the respondents "Did you go to any of the following cultural activities within the past twelve months?" The second set measures for respondents' general tendency for cultural hobbies ("hobbies"). The remaining variables deal with watching TV documentary programmes in general ("yes/no") and reading books for other purpose than work or education. All the items, along with their proportions are listed in the table below.

Education. The variable measuring respondent's educational credentials is the age at completing full-time education. The measurement is rather coarse, but quite valid both in respect of differing schooling systems across the Europe, and since the years of schooling has been as direct reflection of the amount of cultural capital (e.g. Bourdieu 1984). The variable has four categories: age at completion 16 years or less; from 17 to 19 years; from 20 to 22 years; 23 years and over. The category including those, who are still performing their education, and thus they cannot yet be situated in any of the above-mentioned categories are represented in the class category of students. They have been included in the education variable by replacing their

current status as their equivalent achieved status in future, i.e. student aged 20 to 22 are included in category 3 and students older that in category 4.

**Class.** The variable was constructed in accordance with López Sintas and García Álvarez (2002), who have studied omnivorousness in Spain. The original construction is based on Erickson–Goldthorpe schema, but variations from it has been used in several studies on cultural consumption (Katz-Gerro and Shavit 1998; Bihagen and Katz-Gerro 2000; cf. Erola 2004, 201–202 for three-class construction). Here, 6 categories are used: (1) service for professionals and managerial positions; (2) entrepreneurs and self-employed; (3) employed non-manuals; (4) manual workers; (5) unemployed and economically inactive and (6) students.

**Income.** The variable is measured on the harmonized scale which cut respondents into four groups depending on their income. Eventhough the variable is constructed and applied for the whole sample and not just the sub-sample of young adults, the income is quite evenly distributed. A drawback in using this variable is the great amount (33 percent of respondents) of unattained information ('DK' in the table).

**Age.** Respondents in the sample range from 20 to 35 years of age. In order to explore some age-related issues, age group is divided into two when needed. The groups are: 20–27 and 28–35 years.

**Table 1:  
Proportions of the Variables Used in the Analysis**

Variables	Values	%	Dimension	Cultural item	%	
<b>Education (age at completion)</b>	23 – yrs	21.0	Activities	Ballet	13.7	
	20 – 22 yrs	23.0		Cinema	80.2	
	17 – 19 yrs	32.9		Theatre	29.7	
	– 16 yrs	22.1		Concert	41.7	
<b>Gender</b>	Male	47.6		Library	41.8	
	Female	52.4		Historical monuments	46.9	
<b>Age</b>	28–35 years	63.6		Museum	33.0	
	20–27 years	36.4		Museum abroad	21.2	
<b>Income quartile</b>	Highest IV	19.0		Hobbies	Archaeological sites	17.8
	Second highest III	17.0			Instrument	16.7
	Second lowest II	16.3	Singing		23.1	
	Lowest I	14.6	Acting		5.6	
<b>Class</b>	DK	33.2	Dancing		28.5	
	Service	12.5	Writing		19.2	
	Entrepreneurs	7.7	Photographing		37.1	
	Non-manuals	25.8	TV documents		61.1	
	Manuals	19.6	Read for leisure	52.3		
	Students	15.6				
	Unemployed	18.8				

Source: Eurobarometer 56.0 data (Christensen 2001.)

Taste typologies were empirically formed by classifying the consumers based on the amount (/breadth) of consumed cultural items. Thus, four categories presenting tentative type of 'vorousness' were constructed of both cultural activities and cultural hobbies, and finally of all the items. The first category, 'ostravorous' is rather interesting theoretically, since it is laden with some sort of marginality. The non-consumers were labeled as Ostravorous referring to

ostracism, which means that one has aversion towards all the cultural consumption items studied here. Those, who have not taken part in a single activity during the last 12 months or do not have a cultural hobby, fell in the first category accordingly. 10 percent of young adults regarding activities and even 44 percent when it comes to hobbies belong to this marginality. In case of all the cultural items the proportion of non-consumers is about 3 percent. Even though this group does not fit well into the discussion about univorous or omnivorous, it is a part of interesting social phenomenon worth considering.

**Table 2:  
Type of “Vorousness” Measured by Sum Variable of Cultural Activities  
and of Cultural Hobbies. (N = 4747)**

Activities	%	Tentative type of “vorousness” in activities	Hobbies	%	Tentative type of “vorousness” in hobbies
none	9.9	Ostravorous 10 %	none	43.6	ostravorous 44 %
one item	18.3	univorous 49 %	one item	20.5	univorous 35 %
2 items	17.1		2 items	14.2	omnivorous 16 %
3 items	13.8		3 items	10.8	
4 items	11.5	omnivorous 29 %	4 items	5.8	voracious 5 %
5 items	10.2		5 items	3.5	
6 items	7.6		all items	1.3	
7 items	5.9	voracious 12 %	Total	100.0	
8 items	3.3				
all items	2.4				
Total	100.0				

This classification gives an overview of the tastes. For example, if one has participated up to three different cultural consumption activities during the past year we can either assume that he or she is univorous, snob or heavy-user. In the case of a univore the range of cultural repertoire is not wide but it might still be deep. This also applies to a heavy-user, who might turn out be an enthusiast of certain field, thus neglecting other items of cultural consumption, because of the sheer lack of time. In the case of a snob, on the other hand, there might be also signs of averse or reluctance (see more on antitaste Bryson 1996) towards the items, which are not taken part in. On the other hand, we can draw other kinds of conclusions on the based of one’s wide range of cultural activity. Then we can refer to voracious consumer behavior on the contrary to above-mentioned. Thus, the classification gives some hint, which still needs further examination.

**Table 3:**  
**Type of “Vororousness” Measured by Sum Variable of all Cultural Consumption.**  
**(N = 4747)**

All types	%	Tentative type of “vororousness”
none	3.2	ostravorous
1-3 items	29.1	univorous
4-9 items	51.4	omnivorous
10-17 items	16.3	voracious
Total	100.0	

In the table four different “vororousness” typologies are presented. These are only tentative suggestions, since the classification does not tell which consumption items are included into which typology, since consumers can choose their preferences randomly independently from one another, which is actually consistent with Peterson’s (1983) definition of cultural choice patterns’ character.

The classification might be somewhat ambiguous since we are not aware of the univore’s consumption pattern. In the strictest definitions a univore sticks to one sole activity and ignores all the others. Clearly some of our univores do not fit exactly into this definition. In addition, if we consider univorous consumption as middle-brow or low-brow or on the contrary totally focusing to snobbish objects, we have difficulty to come to this conclusion based on the table. The same quality issue regards also the omnivorous pattern. Thus, we must bear these limitations in mind.

After looking at the typologies and dimensions separately similar typologies are analyzed in tandem with each other. Dimensions of cultural consumption are studied in more detail for univorous and voracious consumers. We can argue that these dimensions are more than opposites for each other. The variables have been constructed individually in the case of activities, hobbies and all cultural consumption, and the constructions can be seen as continuums, which have dimensions of ostravorous and omnivorous in addition to the selected dimensions. Thus it can be seen worthwhile for shedding light for two separate cases of consumption dimensions.

Logistic regression on cultural univores is presented first, and then the same is applied to cultural voraciousness. Reference categories are as follows: for education, income quartile and age the lowest category serves as reference, for gender male and for class unemployed. It can be presumed based on previous literature that in the most cases the reference categories are if not the lowest, among the lowest participants of cultural consumption.



**Table 4:  
Univorous Consumption of Activities, Hobbies and all Cultural Items by Independent Background Variables, Logistic Regression Models with Parameter Estimates (Expβ), Unadjusted Effects (N = 4747)**

Univorous in...	N	Activities	Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	Hobbies	Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	All	Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>
<b>Age of finishing education</b>			<b>.069</b>		<b>.009</b>		<b>.119</b>
23–	997	0,33***		1,68***		0,15***	
20–22	1091	0,52***		1,36***		0,26***	
17–19	1562	1,05		1,41***		0,62***	
-16 (a)	1050	1		1		1	
<b>Gender</b>			<b>.002</b>		<b>.001</b>		<b>.004</b>
female	2489	0,85**		0,91		,78***	
male (a)	2258	1		1		1	
<b>Income quartile</b>			<b>.013</b>		<b>.001</b>		<b>.021</b>
Highest	901	0,89		1,19		0,67***	
Second highest III	807	1,40***		1,14		1,12	
Second lowest II	772	1,36**		1,10		1,41**	
Lowest I (a)	691	1		1		1	
<b>Class</b>			<b>.061</b>		<b>.003</b>		<b>.087</b>
Service	595	0,46***		1,26*		0,31***	
Entrepreneurs	365	0,85		1,04		0,82	
Non-manuals	1225	0,95		1,09		0,62***	
Manuals	929	1,52***		0,89		1,23*	
Students (a)	742	0,43***		1,01		0,22***	
Unemployed	891	1		1		1	
<b>Age</b>			<b>.000</b>		<b>.000</b>		<b>.002</b>
28–35 yrs yrs	2477	,95		1,08		1,16*	
20–27 (a)	2270	1		1		1	

Note: \*\*\* = p < 0.001; \*\* = p < 0.01; \* = p < 0.05; (nfs) = > 0.05; (a) reference category, value 1.

Source: Eurobarometer 56.0 data (Christensen 2001.)

When univorous consumption of activities of the lowest education group are compared to others, there is not significant difference between the second lowest group, but the potential for the least educated to be univores is twice or three times bigger than of those with greater amount of education. Class has significance in univorousness as far as activities are concerned, as manual workers are even 1.5 times more likely to become univorous than the second least eager consumption group of unemployed. Age does not seem to have an impact on univorous consumption of activities nor hobbies. Gender has an effect in activities, but women and men do not differ in their pattern of being univorous in cultural hobbies consumption. The same relates also to hobbies and income quartile. Univorous cultural hobby consumption is mostly tied up with educational qualities. No other observed background variable gives any applicable distinction. The pseudo coefficients remain fairly nonexistent when it comes to hobbies.

Members of the service class are only ones who seem to be more likely more univorous in cultural hobbies than other classes when compared to unemployed. This is quite interesting

since service class is regarded as most potential omnivores. When it comes to activities and all cultural consumption, the service class is back to where it is expected to be, leaning more on other forms than univorous. This might suggest that cultural hobbies have a distinct inner logic of their own compared to other sets of items.

According to last paragraph we can state that those with the lowest amount of education are most likely to become univorous consumers. Also in all cultural consumption being older and being male are good predictors for someone to become univorous. Unemployed and manual workers are also more inclined toward univorous consumption, and after education class explains (12 % and 9 % respectively) the greater amount of variance between variables.

**Table 5:  
Voracious Consumption of Activities, Hobbies and all Cultural Items by Independent Background Variables, Logistic Regression Models with Parameter Estimates (Exp $\beta$ ), Unadjusted Effects (N = 4747)**

Voraciousness in...	N	Activities	Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	Hobbies	Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	All	Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>
<b>Age of finishing education</b>			<b>.080</b>		<b>.029</b>		<b>.109</b>
23–	997	5,82***		3,84***		6,87***	
20–22	1091	4,28***		2,88***		5,67***	
17–19	1562	1,67**		1,78*		1,91***	
-16 (a)	1050	1		1		1	
<b>Gender</b>			<b>.004</b>		<b>.002</b>		<b>.005</b>
female	2489	1,34***		1,23		1,33***	
male (a)	2258	1		1		1	
<b>Income quartile</b>			<b>.015</b>		<b>.015</b>		
Highest	901	1,44		0,63*		0,98	<b>.019</b>
Second highest III	807	0,59***		0,44***		0,57***	
Second lowest II	772	0,61**		0,49***		0,54***	
Lowest I (a)	691	1		1		1	
<b>Class</b>			<b>.083</b>		<b>.036</b>		<b>.095</b>
Service	595	3,90***		1,62*		3,03***	
Entrepreneurs	365	1,888**		0,95		1,48*	
Non-manuals	1225	1,49*		0,97		1,48**	
Manuals	929	0,63*		0,58*		0,61**	
Students (a)	742	4,00***		2,63***		4,41***	
Unemployed	891			1		1	
<b>Age</b>			<b>.003</b>		<b>.014</b>		<b>.007</b>
28–35 yrs yrs	2477	0,79**		0,53***		0,71***	
20–27 (a)	2270	1		1		1	

Note: \*\*\* = p < 0.001; \*\* = p < 0.01; \* = p < 0.05; (nfs) = > 0.05; (a) reference category, value 1.

Source: Eurobarometer 56.0 data (Christensen 2001.)

All background variables are significantly associated with voracious consumption. On the basis of unadjusted effects both education and class are strongly related to consumption patterns. The ones with most education and the students and members of the service class are most likely to become voracious consumers of cultural items. Income does not have quite as strong impact as presumed, but the cause for that might be with the variable itself (see variable description above). The education alone explains most the variation in voraciousness. According to pseudo coefficient of the determination (Nagelkerke Pseudo  $R^2$ ) 11 percent of voracious behavior on the whole can be explained by education, whereas class (9.5 percent), gender (0.5 percent) and income (1.9 percent) explain only a fraction of that independently.

When different dimensions of voraciousness are studied, distinct background variables play an important role.

Income has a special feature when explaining this type of cultural consumption. Intuitively we would expect increase in income also to produce increase in consumption, but here income does not work in direct relationship with consumption intensity. Lowest income quartile is the most active one when considering voraciousness in case of hobbies or all the items. On the contrary, as far as activities are concerned higher income seem to have a positive impact on voraciousness, which is also the case with the lowest income quartile.

## Conclusions

In this article all 15 EU member countries of the year 2001 were analyzed as a whole. This method has both pros and cons. The advantage is to be able to include so many countries in one set of analyses, since the same questions were posed to all the respondents regardless of their country of origin. Thus, we can form a pan-European picture of the contemporary cultural consumption among the young. The lack of data has previously restrained the researchers from cross-national comparisons, which were not adequate in many ways. The data at hand allows comparative research design, but this does not come without cost. The special features of single cultural contexts can not be pointed out with this method. Since the analysis includes members from 15 countries and at least the same amount of cultural surroundings and their own norms and habits, it is quite impossible to portray in such a short presentation very extensively distinct patterns of each country. This is why some of the conclusions must be taken as broad generalisations and descriptive. Some suggestions has been put forward in author's previous writings (e.g. Virtanen 2004), but they required preliminary reduction of data, which lead to choosing only a few countries to represent a specific typology.

It seems that taste for cultural consumption is quite segmented in the European Union even among the young adults. There still seemed be some social boundaries, which are upheld with institutional and other factors that divide opportunities, or at least orientation towards consumption in quite seemingly manner. This is reflected in the patterns of consumption arranged by taste typologies. Taste typologies referred in this paper are constructed based on both the quality and quantity of consumer repertoire. Foremost the quantity aspect is studied here empirically, but quality is also referred with help of previous literature's definition on typologies origin.

At least in my study the univores are more likely to be part of lower strata or at least the ones with lesser amount of formal education. This suggests that univores here represent the definition as opponents to omnivores, and not the snob type who were the predecessors of

omnivorous discussion. Thus it can be assumed that snob consumers are lacking to great extent amongst today's young adults.

The analysis concentrated mostly on the voracious consumption, while it has regarded as a vital and less studied type of cultural consumer. In order to understand the voraciousness to its fullest, the amount of single items consumed would have been vital to include into the analyses, as well. Due to space limitations, this dimension of voraciousness will be addressed elsewhere.

van Eijck (2000, 211) argues that depending on the choice of the cultural discipline under examination relativity in terms of socio-demographics varies greatly. For example, audience for the high arts is quite homogenous whereas music interest wider spectrum of people with multiple backgrounds. Music is stated to be easily accessible (via tapes, cd's and media) and one can also choose the time and place for these kinds of activities (ie. listening to music, being a consumer of music, be it high or low in aesthetic value) in rather low costs, even. van Eijck's argument can be applied to this study also, as the analysis consists of young adults in 15 different countries, and as some of the variables used were out of the ordinary. The fluctuating importance of background variables on different items can be explained by the access thesis. It might be that other resources than those presented here prevent consumers from participating to certain types or dimensions.

As Peterson (2004) points, we need not overgeneralize existing results, because of their empirical embeddedness and thus their applicability in certain society at certain point of time. There is contradicting evidence that for example consumption of fine arts has differing meaning in different countries. (ibid.) Both Peterson (1983) and van Eijck (2000) suggested that we need to take several dimensions as well as patterns into consideration in order to finding out the essence of cultural consumption. As if this was not a challenge of its own, we need to focus in the actual items included in the potential patterns. Items of value are relative in terms of society, meaning that distinct items reflect distinct parts of society or distinct taste. We need to understand the embeddedness of those items in order to place them into any order or rank.

It still seems that class is a source of debate in the social sciences, and no unambiguous answers have been offered in the several theoretical and empirical studies. Also here class has no evident causal impact on all cultural consumption, but its effect is greater in some dimensions than others. Until class has proven to be non-applicable in explaining cultural consumption we need to take it into consideration.

Cultural consumption has many rivals today when it comes to budgeting time. This has been seen as a consequent of post-modern consumption society, but also broadening opportunities can be argued to be a cause of several other phenomena. According to the results, cultural consumption is indeed very versatile field of consumption. If cultural consumption is divided in patterns, distinct mechanisms seem to rule. Sometimes class has an important role, sometime gender. What remains quite stable is the importance of education. It seems that through education consumers are socialized to appreciate multiple aspects of culture.

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