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ПРОФЕССИОНАЛЬНОЕ СООБЩЕСТВО ПЕТЕРБУРГСКИХ МОДЕЛЕЙ: СТРУКТУРА И ИДЕНТИЧНОСТИ

Аннотация: В данном исследовании рассматривается один из сегментов креативной индустрии — профессиональное сообщество моделей. Основное внимание в ходе эмпирического исследования уделено тому, как модели рефлексируют относительно специфики структуры своего профессионального сообщества, женской и мужской карьеры, ее основных элементов и практик (на примере Санкт-Петербурга). Источником первичной информации послужила серия интервью с представителями модельного бизнеса, которые имеют трудовой контракт либо работают на фрилансе. На основании эмпирических данных изучены профессиональные биографии моделей, их близкий социальный круг, взгляды на типичные черты мужского и женского образов в модельном бизнесе. В ходе исследования были выявлены две основные стратегии в профессиональной идентичности внутри модельного сообщества: индивидуализация карьеры посредством самовыражения и адаптация к социальным и профессиональным нормам посредством самообразования.

Ключевые слова: профессиональное сообщество, модельная индустрия, гендер, репрезентация, модельная карьера, ценности, социальные нормы

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Introductory remarks

Despite the fact that the Russian economy only relatively recently outlined the prospects for the development of the creative industry at the state level, some institutions successfully functioned during the Soviet period. The specifics of Soviet fashion consisted primarily in the fact that formally the process of fashion production was controlled by the state and it is not by chance

that the socialist type of fashion is distinguished in the history of fashion of the USSR period. At the same time, everyday fashion often went beyond what was officially accepted and what was shown on the catwalks of Soviet fashion houses or on the covers of Soviet magazines. With the collapse of the Soviet country, almost all social institutions, including fashion, were transformed. The models of Soviet fashion houses were replaced by models who, since the noughties, were actively recruited into the international modeling business. In fact, at the beginning of the noughties, the term “model” came into use, which denoted those who represented this professional community.

It should be noted that the main characteristics of models as a professional community in the context of an actively developing creative economy are still debatable. There is almost no research on the structure of this community, the specifics of a career in modeling, their norms and values. At the same time, the creative industry in modern Russia is one of the priority areas of development and requires study in terms of the emergence of new professions, institutions and the functioning of the former ones.

The traditional plot when considering any professional community is its socio-demographic characteristics, career trajectories, and social identities. For this study, it is important to distinguish between the male and female segments in the modeling business, when models who go to the catwalk do not just show clothes of a particular brand, but present a male and female image in action. Designing masculinity and femininity in the Russian fashion industry is a process influenced by social and cultural norms. This process has not been sufficiently studied and therefore this study seems promising.

On the impact of social context on gender reflection

In the social sciences, it is common to define gender as a social construct [1]. In this sense, the process of constructing gender is influenced not only by society itself and by cultural norms, but also by individual social communities at the micro level. Often, gender is determined by individuals themselves, their view of their own appearance, style, and character. The construction of masculinity and femininity is a form of performative act, since a person himself creates an image for society, according to which he is subsequently perceived.

The formation of gender identity is influenced by socialization, cultural norms, and mediatization. Socialization plays a crucial role in shaping gender identity, as individuals internalize gender roles and expectations imposed on them by family, peers, and educational institutions [2]. Cultural norms and social expectations can also influence the process of constructing gender

identity, as people behave in conditions dictated by prevailing ideas about masculinity and femininity.

Examples of gender identity formation are parental roles, where mothers are traditionally expected to be gentle and caring, while fathers are expected to have a strong character and financial support for the family. Gender behavior and interaction are ways in which people should present themselves to others in different social contexts [3]. In fact, gender identity is formed and fixed in people through various norms and practices, and fashion, among other tools, can be considered as one of the main ways of self-expression.

Gender demonstration represents the ways in which people express their gender identity through various behavioral patterns, gestures, and external signs. Gender demonstrations are also shaped by social norms and expectations, as well as power dynamics. The way people display their gender identity is influenced by cultural interpretations of what it means to be masculine or feminine. This process is influenced by the historical and social context in which people are located [4].

Modern research has also contributed to the already established understanding of the term “gender” and related terms. Risman and Davis conceptualized gender as a social structure in their works. They draw on a wide range of empirical studies to explore the causes and consequences of gender differences. Their conceptual model consists of three levels of analysis: individual, interactive, and institutional [5]. Other scientific work also advocates the perception of gender as a social structure, focusing on relational, intersectional, and biosocial approaches [6].

If we look at the fashion industry and its social communities, then the mention of the “fashion industry” does not only create a galaxy of well-known or aspiring fashion designers. The fashion industry is unthinkable without those who show clothes and turn out to be the main conductor of the ideas and ideas of great master models. Most often in this industry, models are most often perceived as a kind of beauty ideal that embodies the latest fashion trends.

At the same time, in the context of the need to comply with industry standards, models are assigned a set of responsibilities in terms of strict adherence to accepted beauty standards and constant control over their own bodies. This puts them under pressure and can be difficult, and in some cases impossible, to deal with. Patricia Soleil-Beltran argues that models are “gender myths” and “cultural icons” whose identity is constructed through the repetition of collectively defined gender standards and practices. This construct is influenced by a variety of factors, including body type, behavior, attitude, nationality, class, and race [7].

It is important to understand that beauty itself is a concept, the content of which has changed many times from ancient civilizations to modern times and involves finding a balance between objective criteria and individual perception [8]. The concept of the “beauty myth” created by Western society is a factor that restricts women’s freedom. This myth gives rise to concerns about weight, appearance, and the desire to fight aging [9]. This beauty myth has a permanent and harmful effect on people, creating risks of eating disorders, extreme diets, and a complex of physical and mental problems.

The media and fashion industry have a significant impact on women’s perception of their bodies, and only a few women express complete satisfaction with their appearance. The constant perception of flawless images in advertising leads to a sense of insecurity among women [10], moreover, they often take idealized images of celebrities as the norm and compare themselves with these images created by the media. Noticing the differences, women often experience dissatisfaction with their bodies [11].

There is also a certain aura of success around models, but it is often associated with negative stereotypes. For example, the fact that models are prone to deviant behavior, use drugs or alcohol. However, these strategies can be used as coping mechanisms, since models tend to exhibit risky behaviors (the desire for thinness) when it comes to appearance and compliance with the beauty standards created by the industry [12].

Fashion industry and social norms

For many years, fashion has served as a way of self-expression, a marker of social status and even character. Fashion has changed over time, acquiring more or less bold and vivid features in different historical periods. With the help of clothing, accessories and style in general, a person can tell about themselves without saying a word. Fashion is an excellent assistant in recognition and uniqueness, having a huge impact on people’s self-perception and gender identity [13]. It also serves as an identity-building tool, and gender norms significantly influence the design, marketing, and consumption of clothing. The fashion industry often reinforces traditional gender roles and stereotypes through its products and marketing strategies, as well as beauty standards and ideals [14].

However, it should not be overlooked that fashion influences the development of the concept of gender itself and its content. For example, more and more often we can observe more popular trends in gender-neutral fashion, an increasing violation of “generally accepted” stylization

norms [15]. Moreover, there is a shift away from a pragmatic view of fashion towards bolder and more creative models [16].

Cultural norms regarding masculinity and femininity have changed significantly in recent years. Of course, not only because of fashion, but also because of it, today women are perceived not only as weak and dependent — they are in a position that allows them to accept themselves, show their strength and power [17]. The analysis of scientific literature has shown that in general, the Russian fashion industry is most often considered not as part of a cultural project, but as a segment of the economic sphere. The research analyzes the development of fashion as a sector of the economy, new trends and vectors of its promotion [18], the impact of cultural globalization on the spread of mass culture, as well as the specifics of the development of the Russian fashion industry [19].

Only a small number of studies are devoted to new trends in the Russian fashion industry, its values and role in modern Russian society. In one of the articles, fashion is considered as a process of translating spiritual ideas into material models [20]. However, the issue of gender image, as well as the professional experience of Russian models, was not studied. Although some studies have addressed gender issues in the Russian fashion industry, they have mostly focused on the experiences of women models, the role of women models in the Russian fashion industry, and the pressures they face to conform to traditional ideals of femininity. There are not enough studies specifically studying the perception and experience of male models in Russia, as well as more modern ones, since most articles are devoted mainly to Russian fashion of the XX century [21] or the first decade of the XXI century, which also indicates a gap in research in this area.

Methodological tools of the study

This study is based on qualitative methods of data collection and analysis. This strategy is chosen because it allows you to study the experience of models and gives the researcher a deep understanding of certain practices being studied. In this particular case, the career trajectories of models, images of women and men among models are not so easy to measure, so a qualitative paradigm is the best option.

Because the research method is qualitative, the total number of 20 in-depth interviews have been conducted with the chosen participants. This method of data collection was chosen in order to present the respondents' perception of themselves and their construction of their masculinity / femininity, to identify the elements of these strategies that they use in this

process. The interview format included both face-to-face meetings and online platforms. The study focused on the socio-demographic data of respondents, their career path, social barriers they faced, and the effects of their work. Most important for the study were the respondents' views on masculinity and femininity (not only in everyday life, but also in the fashion industry itself), their opinion about the fashion industry and its impact on society, and the formation of their own gender image. Some of the questions in the interview concerned how participants perceive their clothing style, behavior, past and present experiences related to gender identity, and determinants of social behavior. Some questions were omitted during the interview process if the participant gave very detailed answers to several questions at once.

Most of the interviews were conducted using online platforms, as models tend to have a busy schedule and / or contracts in other countries, which led to the organization of online meetings. All interviews were recorded with the consent of the participants. They were provided with the necessary information that did not affect their judgment (i.e., the purpose of the study, as well as the research question, were not discussed with respondents, only general terms were used), and they were also given the opportunity to stop the interview at any time. The duration of the interview ranged from 27 to 86 minutes.

Interviews were conducted among working models who were recruited based on a targeted sample, as well as the "snowball" method. Targeted sampling was used because participants were selected according to certain criteria [22] using social platforms and agency accounts or the models themselves on these platforms, and the "snowball" method was used when several models additionally provided contact information of other models they knew who might be interested in participating in such a study. The main criteria for selecting models were age (from 18 to 30 years), work experience and residence in St. Petersburg, employment at the time of the study (in an agency or on a freelance basis).

As a result of methodological procedures, twenty models were selected for further interviews. The age of the participants ranged from 18 to 30 years, and the sample was gender-balanced. Eight participants worked in a modeling agency, the rest chose contracts and independently determined their career, the experience of working as a model ranged from one year to ten years. Eight of the participants had contracts in other countries during their modeling careers, while others had experience working in St. Petersburg and Moscow. After collecting the interview data, they were decoded and further encoded using the topic coding method [23]. In this case, the respondents' responses were assigned to different subject codes for further analysis using Microsoft Excel.

Results of an empirical study

First steps in modeling career

Of particular interest to the study are the biographical data of respondents who took part in the study. They allow us to build a “prehistory” of the future model’s entry into the professional community and the modeling industry, to understand the social context in which respondents lived, what family they grew up in, and how their modeling career is perceived by relatives and friends.

Interviews show that most often models experienced skepticism or even hostility from their families or friends towards their work, since the model’s career is associated with a number of negative stereotypes that have developed in society. For many family members, modeling is perceived as a body trade, as models literally “sell” their image, body, and therefore themselves. Informants’ narratives include the idea that they have repeatedly experienced psychological pressure from the parent family and have heard negative assessments of their work. For example, most often the work of a model is associated with family members as something obscene and humiliating, when the body is sold and bought.

“My mother sees it as something very explicit and intimate. I’m not dragging her into this. Suddenly, she sees something somewhere. I try to reassure her that it’s all right. They paid money for it. It’s okay, I’m not a prostitute, honestly.” (Interview No 5, female, 19 years old, 3 years of experience, freelancer)

Informants rate the first steps in a modeling career as risky and often negative in their assessments of the close social environment. Some respondents mentioned the negative reaction of friends who initially did not take the modeling career seriously at all. Only after some time, when the models had contracts and constant filming, the inner circle formed respect for their work.

“When I was just starting out, they used to laugh at me at school. Bullied, called names. ‘You know, like, you’re stupid, right? Look at you, model’ <...> Because models pay a lot of attention to themselves, to sports, and constantly invest in themselves. Why is this considered something humiliating? Well, they tried to humiliate me for it.” (Interview No 4, female, 23 years old, 7 years of experience, freelancer)

Some respondents, on the contrary, mentioned endless support from family and friends, and even that their modeling career was an initiative of their parents. The models received not only support, but also understanding from their parents and close associates. For example, the process of work and its content became an object of respect, when each professional step was seen as a person and a manifestation of one's own "I".

"Everyone was very supportive of all my projects, especially when I had major publications in prestigious magazines." (Interview No 8, female, 22 years old, 6 years of experience, agency)

Thus, we can see that at the stage of choosing a model's profession, the close social environment treats this differently, and the range of assessments varies from support, positive, and sharp rejection. This is due not only to the social image of the family from which the model itself comes, but also to the stereotype that has developed in Russian society that this profession is not prestigious and does not have a positive reputation, which was confirmed by these interviews.

If we consider the first steps in the career of a model, the respondents mostly mentioned "typical stories" when their modeling career began thanks to friends who dreamed of becoming photographers and invited them to a photo shoot. Thanks to random photos on the web, future models often received invitations from agencies and then participated in major shows, working with brands. Some also noted that they were contacted on social networks by "agents" working in modeling agencies and looking for new faces.

"Often it was either on social media, or someone would just come up to me and say, 'You look great, try it, that's it.' Photographers, in my first serious job, when I was a waitress, would often come and call me and say, 'Here's an idea, if you're interested, come over.'" (Interview No 14, female, 21 years old, 4 years of experience, freelancer)

In addition to their peers represented by friends, adults (represented by acquaintances or parents) also became guides to the world of fashion. For example, photographing a child and posting photos on social networks often attracts the attention of not only relatives and friends, but also potential employers. In this situation, special attention is paid to the quality of visual content, and constant work on it often brought the family income in the future. Photos from the family archive turn out to be the initial point for a career when a future model thinks about her attractive appearance. At the

same time, without the support of a close circle (friends and family), the model rarely takes her first steps in the profession. This support, according to the data obtained, turned out to be important for both men's and women's careers in the modeling business.

“I remember when I was about 12 years old, she constantly photographed me on her podium. And she photographed me constantly at school events, on the street. And I always said it was all for the family archive. <...> And in the end, when I was 12 years old, I went to Facebook and there were all these photos, a lot of likes, and everyone was happy. Then I was angry, offended, but offered a compromise: ‘Let me do full-fledged photo shoots so that you can have photos in the so-called family archive, and you won’t take any more pictures of me.’ And that was our agreement. At first it was just for my mom, then it started to bring in money.” (Interview No 8, W, 22 years old, 6 years of experience, agency)

Thus, almost all participants in the study emphasized the importance of support from a close circle, the need for investment in maintaining their own visual image in social networks, the importance of forming a professional network in the face of photographers, retail companies (brands) and modeling agencies. Interview data show that there were no differences in the reasons for choosing a modeling career for men and women, since respondents of both sexes usually indicated similar reasons.

Professional difficulties and career barriers

A separate section in the study was devoted to what barriers the model faces in the course of his / her professional career and how he / she overcomes these difficulties. Analysis of the data obtained showed that in general, the model's work is emotional work, when the process of “turning on” positive emotions is almost continuous and the model sells not only its external data, but also its feelings. Emotional work is an activity where the model's work is paid most often at a fixed rate and emotions are a mandatory element of the entire work process. Among the social consequences of emotional work, researchers most often refer to burnout, alienation of the employee.

Almost all of the respondents in this study mentioned difficulties that they have faced or still face in their modeling career. Among the priorities, informants include the need to maintain positive emotions during the working day, when the employer strictly controls not only the appearance, but also the emotions of the model.

"It's also difficult to keep a smile on your face all the time, to maintain a social attitude, to spend energy on the fact that you have to be perfect, kind and sincere in front of everyone, and at the same time you can be in a bad mood." (Interview No 11, M, 20 years, 5 years of experience, agency)

The next important element in informants' narratives is their thoughts about the appearance of the model itself, which the employer often makes excessive demands on and this is consistent with the idea that models should represent an ideal image. They must be perfect in their external parameters, skin, and hair [7]. External attractiveness acts as physical capital for the model, when not only the employer in the person of the agency dictates the image of the desired, but also the close environment in the person of parents. Parents, according to interviews, are an important agent in the modeling career of their children. On the one hand, they can support them or, on the contrary, stigmatize the profession.

Appearance is considered as a working tool that can be improved, including by resorting to the services of doctors. So, one of the models in an interview mentioned that her mother wanted her to have plastic surgery to look more attractive.

"Her goal was to make me a better person. And she still insists on surgery. On the face. She says, 'let's change the nose, let's change the eyes, let's change something else, let's pull something up, let's remove something here'." (Interview No 4, female, 23 years old, 7 years of experience, freelancer)

In some interviews, informants mentioned that their bodies and looks are subject to control by the agency in which the model is employed. Often, it is the physical parameters and extra centimeters that cause refusal to conclude a contract, participation in Russian and international fashion weeks, and photo shoots.

"But I never got the contract. As a result, the director of my agency asked: 'What is your waistline now?' I said, '75,' and she said, 'We need to get to 73.' I have a friend there who also recently flew to Milan, I think in September. The same. They measured her hips, which was something like 92, and they said that if you don't get to 89 in two weeks, if you don't pass five auditions, you'll go home." (Interview No 18, M, 24 years old, 4.5 years of experience, freelancer)

Respondents mentioned the pressure exerted by the employer on the physical standards of the model. One of the consequences of pressure, according to informants, is the spread of cases of deviant behavior. Some of them may have problems, for example, with eating behavior, alcohol, caused by this pressure and dissatisfaction with their own appearance and / or body.

“You are ashamed to eat chocolate, you are ashamed to eat too much, you can literally have a shortage of money. This happens for many models. I just don’t know if it’s appropriate to say this, but many models don’t have the best lifestyle, maybe they are in a bad emotional state, because they are placed in a small apartment for eight people, and they have to interact with each other in some way.” (Interview No 11, M, 20 years, 5 years of experience, agency)

If the employer standards physical data, then the same data for other agents of this industry is an object for praise and high marks. For example, no show or photo session is complete without visual content that is reproduced by the photographer. The constant interaction between a model and a photographer is often accompanied by a violation of professional boundaries, when a male photographer sees a model primarily as a woman, and not a model. Especially sensitive for models are shots for brands that produce textiles and underwear.

“When some kind of shooting, where you are in underwear, and the photographer is a man, it becomes uncomfortable. <...> That is, when a man starts making inappropriate compliments to your body, well, in general, this goes beyond, as far as I understand, the fact that you work, and the photographer works, then you shouldn’t be distracted by these moments.” (Interview No 12, W, 18 years old, 6 years of experience, agency)

Labor practices are often irregular in nature and have a negative impact on the self-assessment of the model itself and the nature of work. Almost all informants in their interviews mentioned the facts of pressure from a potential employer regarding their physical fitness, the need to adjust their diet. Agencies place high demands on personal data, both for male and female models. Given that the modeling community is highly competitive for the workplace, each model faces double pressure. External agents primarily include structures and institutions for subsequent employment, while internal

agents include the model community, which turns out to be normalized, has its own order and values. As for the level of competition in the female and male segments of the modeling community, the study did not reveal any significant differences. At the same time, it is worth noting that traditionally the modeling community is dominated by women, so we can assume that competition in this female segment of the professional community will be much higher. Moreover, given that an early career in the modeling business, according to informants, does not bring high incomes, this becomes an objective barrier for men when choosing this professional trajectory.

*“In terms of work, it doesn’t make a lot of money, especially for men.”
(Interview No 18, male, 24 years old, 4.5 years of experience, freelancer)*

The opportunities offered by the modeling business are not always measured only in monetary terms. Working in the modeling business for participants in the process opens up such opportunities as participating in public events, getting free clothes or hair care services, and traveling.

Creating your own style and ways to express yourself

Turning to the strategies that models use to form their gender identity, it can be noted that in general, these strategies can include self-reflection and ways of self-expression. In the case of gender identity formation, models seem to use these strategies, as well as a strategy for adapting to certain social and work expectations. As noted above, representatives of the modeling community often face intense pressure over certain beauty regulations and cultural expectations that the fashion industry sets. This is manifested in rationing a certain weight, skin and hair condition, and following certain norms of behavior.

To meet these expectations and shape their gender identity in the fashion industry, models can use a variety of strategies. This may include adapting their appearance and behavior in accordance with accepted norms, whether it is conforming to traditional female ideals or challenging gender stereotypes through their appearance. Models use special mobile apps only for female models, which organize information about free services for models in the field of nutrition, sports and entertainment.

“Girls have a Beauty Passport app. You know where they can go to the gym, to a restaurant, to a club and get paid for it. Or eat for free.” (Interview No 18, male, 24 years old, 4.5 years of experience, freelancer)

During the analysis of the data obtained from the interviews, another strategy was revealed — self-education of models, when they follow the news from the fashion world, listen to special programs, and study at special courses. All this assumes that the model not only tracks the latest news from fashion shows and fashion house weeks, but also has a general knowledge of how the industry works.

“I also follow fashion shows because it’s beautiful. And at that moment, I followed them because I needed to understand trends, understand certain models, and so on.” (Interview No 4, female, 23 years old, 7 years of experience, freelancer)

A separate set of questions was related to how modern fashion combines elements from women’s and men’s fashion at the same time. This allows them to feel freer and less vulnerable to others. At the same time, most often respondents mentioned their desire to look traditional and further emphasize their natural beauty for women or a strong image for men. Some of the informants are conservative in their preferences and views and believe that women should only wear feminine clothes that better emphasizes their figure and feminine features.

“I’m quite patriarchal, and I think masculinity is something like responsibility, precision, a certain rigidity. That’s all. As for women, it’s always something like fluidity, softness, smoothness. That is, I have a stereotypical mindset in this regard, no matter how hard I try to change it in myself, somehow expand it.” (Interview No 5, W, 19 years old, 3 years of experience, freelancer)

One of the informants noted that her appearance never corresponded to her inner well-being. As a rule, she shows classic women’s clothing, but inside she feels strong and used to rely only on herself and solve problems on her own. It was not until she was older that she realized that she could dress the way she wanted and not be ashamed of it. She still feels uncomfortable, because her outer and inner worlds do not coincide.

“And I only recently began to understand that you don’t have to meet social standards, that you can dress brightly and be a clown. I realized this only recently. And it’s probably easier now. Yes, I can probably say that I follow some fashion trends, I understand whether I like it or not, but I still try to form my own style. Back then and here, I didn’t like to adjust to any

standards, but I just didn't realize it. I was young and afraid." (Interview No 4, female, 23 years old, 7 years of experience, freelancer)

Thus, the analysis showed that models in the Russian fashion industry use two main strategies to form their own gender identity, which models embody in the world around them. On the one hand, the key category for describing the first strategy is the concept of "self-expression", when one's own style and manners are a special object of their reflection. On the other hand, adaptation to the social and professional expectations of the modeling community itself, as a second strategy, is also becoming widespread. Most often, the process of adaptation occurs through self-education and assimilation of special knowledge about how the industry works.

Conclusion

The conducted research allowed us to determine how models in the Russian fashion industry build professional careers, what the practices of interaction within the modeling community are, how their gender identity is constructed, and what elements they use for this purpose. The results of the St. Petersburg case study showed that most often the careers of models for men and women do not differ. They received their first offers from their employer through social networks or close associates such as family members or friends. Their own friends who dreamed of a career as photographers and invited them to take amateur photos guided most of them.

An analysis of empirical data has shown that the fashion industry as an institution is fraught with many difficulties and exerts normalized pressure on those who work in it. Informants emphasized the formed mismatch between their expectations and real labor practices, which was reflected in the emotional pressure from the employer, the imposition of rules and regulations, low wages at the first stages, high competition among female models, and a small number of vacancies in the professional field for men.

As for the entry of models into the professional field, the interviews conducted showed that there are two main strategies for constructing gender identity: individualization through self-expression and adaptation to social and professional expectations through the assimilation of special knowledge. Using these strategies allows models to create an image that they create and broadcast to the outside world. Self-expression finds its expression

in the type of gender demonstration that a particular model chooses for itself. According to the study, the predominant type among female models is the conservative type with a focus on traditional canons of female beauty (softness, smoothness in movements, long hair, women's clothing and accessories).

In the case of an adaptation strategy, the model is usually forced to adapt and show flexibility under conditions of total pressure. The main element for adapting a model is special knowledge and a set of practices that help them build a successful career in the fashion industry. In this regard, models' arguments about the gender role in the framework of this strategy are typified and come down to the fact that fashion has a strong influence on the views and attitudes within the model community, often forcing them to rethink their beliefs and values.

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**PROFESSIONAL COMMUNITY
OF ST. PETERSBURG MODELS:
STRUCTURE AND IDENTITIES**

Abstract: This study examines one of the segments of the creative industry — the professional community of models. The main focus of the empirical study is on how models reflect on the specifics of the structure of their professional community, women's and men's careers, its main elements and practices (on the example of St. Petersburg). The source of primary information was a series of interviews with representatives of the modeling business who have an employment contract or work as freelancers. Professional biographies of models, descriptions of their close social circle, views on the typical features of male and female images in the modeling business, the level of competition were the most important for the study. The study identified two main strategies in professional identity within the model community: individualizing your career through self-expression and adapting to social and professional norms through self-education.

Keywords: professional community, modeling industry, gender, representation, modeling career, values, social norms

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