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The Importance of Green Practices to Reduce Consumption

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ABSTRACT

In modern societies, growing consumption rates lead to the depletion of the planet's resources and the waste generation. This paper studies green practices aimed at reducing consumption, which were published in social media communities covering separate waste collection. First, we selected nine green practices regarding separate waste collection and classified them as adaptive and transformative. Adaptive practices enhance the adaptability of a society to the deteriorating environment without implying consumption reduction. Transformative practices involve reducing substance and energy consumption due to changes in collective and individual actions. Next, we collected 1987 textual posts of six communities of Tyumen region, Russia, published in social media platform VK, and found all mentions of the nine practices using content and hermeneutic analyses. Finally, we identified transformative practices, such as the practices of exchanging, refusing from purchases, sharing, repairing, and promoting sustainable consumption. The obtained results might help some decision-makers create conditions to disseminate the described practices and to introduce new social practices targeting reducing consumption. We show the possibilities of grassroots initiatives in the greening of society.

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KEYWORDS

environmental problems, green practices, waste management and prevention, social media environmental communities, reducing consumption, degrowth

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Introduction

The impact of the environmental crisis makes politicians, business people, public figures, and ordinary citizens revise the prevalent practices in a society (Lamphere & Shefner, 2017; Lazaric et al., 2020). To date, some policies on managing the environment have already been adopted both at the level of the world community and at the level of individual regions (17 Goals to Transform Our World, n.d.; A European Green Deal). However, many researchers are increasingly criticizing these policies by expressing doubts about the effectiveness of the ongoing changes (Measuring Progress, 2021), the society’s readiness to support political decisions (Evans et al., 2017), the adequacy of the government support for grassroots initiatives (Lazaric et al., 2020), the inconsistency of the national policy (Lenzen et al., 2018), etc. Criticism becomes especially harsh when it concerns the incessant growth of production and consumption. Some researchers note that people cannot indefinitely increase the production and consumption of goods, services, and resources because of the existing growth limits (Meadows et al., 2005) and the Earth’s system threshold (Steffen et al., 2018). Therefore, the consumption growth can be considered the principal cause for modern environmental problems and climate change (Kallis et al., 2018).

Since consumption is a driving force for modern capitalism, some researchers argue that a solution to environmental problems will be impossible without radical change in social practices (D’Alisa et al., 2015; Martin, 2016; Raworth, 2017). In this context, practices positioned as environmental, or green, can differ regarding consumption. Some green practices stimulate consumption by encouraging people to buy highly energy-efficient appliances. Others suggest reducing consumption, for example, by exchanging things. For instance, green nudging aims to make small changes in daily practices that do not imply a refusal to buy things (Exploring the Use of Green Nudges, 2021). On the contrary, the sharing economy assumes the joint use of things that makes it possible to abandon purchases and further results in reduced production (Martin, 2016).

The same dualism regarding consumption exists in the systems of practices such as the concept of sustainable development and the concept of degrowth. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) include the practices of saving resources and protecting the environment. However, they do not imply rejecting the idea of

economic growth. Moreover, the SDGs contribute to the economic growth in poor, middle-income, and upper-middle-income countries with the total population of six billion people (World Bank Country and Lending Groups, n.d.). According to the UN document *17 Goals to Transform Our World*, “ending poverty must go hand-in-hand with strategies that build economic growth” (17 Goals, n.d.), which will undoubtedly increase the resources and energy consumption several tens or hundreds of times (Kallis, 2015; Trantas, 2021). Conversely, the degrowth theorists, who justify the possibility of well-being without increasing the matter and energy flow between society and nature, challenge the idea of economic growth as the main indicator of social development and argue that ecological collapse is inevitable even with zero growth. The criticism of economic growth provokes the criticism of capitalism, GDP, and commodification, which is the transformation of any social products, socioecological services, and relations into any object of economic value. Therefore, the changes in social practices can affect not only resources saving or shifting to environmentally friendly technologies but also the social structure, as well as the speed and meaning of social processes. In other words, “the objective is not to make an elephant leaner, but to turn an elephant into a snail” (D’Alisa et al., 2015, p. 4). A significant variety of ideas about green practices and visions of the future puts a person in a difficult situation to choose an acceptable lifestyle and environment and makes researchers provide justification for distinguishing shades of green practices.

The consumption growth causes not only the depletion of the planet’s resources but also the waste growth. Deciding what to do with different things after their use can be a difficult choice in daily practices. The responsible disposal of used things is becoming an integral element of resource-saving practices. Thus, moving from the individual actions to the collective ones, society is placing increasingly high demands not only on the infrastructure for separate waste collection (Shabanova, 2019) but also on the waste disposal and processing (Ezhov, 2019), which the Russian waste management system does not meet. For instance, due to the crisis in the implementation of the waste management reform and absence of consistent measures to prevent waste generation as necessary conditions for ensuring the citizens’ environmental rights, the special meeting of the Presidential Council for the Development of Civil Society and Human Rights was held on March 20, 2019 (Obzor SMI, 2019). Overall, the meeting agenda included two items: what to do with waste and how to prevent waste generation. Given the continuous consumption growth, the problem of poor waste management is turning into a major social concern.

Some Russian researchers have become engaged in discussing possible solutions to the waste management issues, including waste recycling (Lopashenko, 2017; Zolotarev, 2015), institutional developments for waste management (Ermolaeva, 2019), rethinking waste as new sources for non-industrial economic growth (Zemskova, 2017), and implementing the international experience (Latypova, 2018). Some researchers have studied the citizens’ involvement in functional public practices at the institutional level and the private sector (Ermolaeva & Rybakova, 2019), the factors and the conditions for Russians’ engagement in separate waste collection practices (Shabanova, 2019). However, the citizens’ practices attempting to solve these issues

have not been investigated in terms of the consumption growth and have not been seen as adaptive and transformative yet (Balsiger et al., 2019). Adaptive practices enhance the adaptability of society to the deteriorating environment and climate change without implying consumption reduction. Transformative practices aim to reduce production and consumption of goods, services, and resources and the waste generation.

The purpose of the article is to identify the green practices aimed at reducing consumption, which were published in social media platform VK¹ communities covering separate waste collection. First, we selected nine green practices regarding the topic of separate waste collection and classified them as adaptive and transformative. Next, we collected the textual posts of six regional VK communities that organise various waste management practices and found all mentions of the nine practices using content and hermeneutic analyses. Finally, we identified transformative practices aimed at reducing consumption in the obtained data. Thus, we focused on three research questions:

- (a) Which practices regarding the separate waste collection are adaptive and transformative?
- (b) What practices are mentioned in the Tyumen online communities covering separate waste collection?
- (c) How common are the citizens' practices aimed at reducing consumption in the selected online communities?

This study will contribute to the understanding of what social practices are promoted in the communities covering separate waste collection, and whether these practices can affect the incessant consumption growth, which is the principal cause for environmental problems. This study will explain how the society of one region, such as Tyumen region, Russia, has been transformed under the influence of the environmental agenda, including the concept of low carbon development (Rasporiazhenie Pravitel'stva, 2021). Knowledge about the transformations of social practices and values of local societies, which put pressure on Earth systems, competing with the geological forces in the Anthropocene era, is a necessary condition for climate stabilization (Steffen et al., 2018) and achieving climate neutrality. Top-down reform projects are not radical enough to drive transformation processes, and they often limit public participation (Trantas, 2021). This study will show the possibilities of grassroots initiatives in the greening of society.

Theoretical Background

This study was framed by the scientific discussion around the Anthropocene as a term that asserts the importance of human activities for the future of our planet (Blok & Jensen, 2019; Clark & Carlisle, 2020). These activities are related not only to such significant actors as corporations, states, and institutions but also to ordinary people who make daily purchases, use transport and household appliances, and develop certain values and traditions in children.

¹ VK (short for its original name VKontakte) is a Russian online social media and social networking service. <https://vk.com> VK™ is a trademark of VK.com Ltd.

To explain social phenomena occurring in the Anthropocene Epoch, this paper focuses on practice theory (Bourdieu, 1990; de Certeau, 1984; Giddens, 1979; Schatzki, 2002; Volkov & Kharkhordin, 2008). Practices are organised sets of actions linked into broader complexes that form the “main field of study of the social sciences” (Giddens, 1984, p. 2). Many existing social practices, for example, waste management practices, have been reshaped in a new context due to the environmental agenda. The waste generation and the practice of dealing with waste disposal can be considered as a universal and historically permanent sphere of social activity (Brednikova & Tkach, 2008). Some studies have covered the historical aspects of waste generation (Barles, 2014; Oldenziel & Trischler, 2015). For example, for a long time, the consumption of secondary raw materials was perceived as a means of reducing the production cost and imports and improving the position of countries in the international market. Additionally, this consumption acted as an incentive for the emergence of a new industry in cities, obtaining economic benefits for different countries (A History of Waste Management, 2013). However, the waste management problem was shifted from national to international by the end of the 1980s, affecting global aspects of soil, water, and air protection (Zamiatina & Fesenko, 2011). Since then, social practices of waste management have been transformed, and the search for adequate solutions to the global problem of waste growth has begun.

According to de Certeau’s (1984) everyday life theory, the transformation process of social practices can be carried out both at the level of strategic practices and at the level of tactical practices. The examples of strategic practices are practices of the state and institutions attempting to solve some environmental problems. Tactical practices are capable of escaping from regulatory prescriptions in different ways, making “innumerable and infinitesimal transformations of and within the dominant cultural economy in order to adapt it to their own interests and their own rules” (de Certeau, 1984). Therefore, at the tactical level of daily practices, emerging problems lead to non-trivial solutions, which are necessarily inconsistent with the prevailing socio-economic structure (Buck, 2020; Siragusa & Arzyutov, 2020). Today, the potential of tactical practices is used to overcome the contradictions between society and nature, which citizens and NGO are trying to eliminate through suggested practices. In this paper, the practices harmonizing the relations between nature and society are called green.

Daily green practices regarding waste management or prevention have received considerable researchers’ attention who see these practices as an important resource for the greening of society (Lamphere & Shefner, 2017; Lazaric et al., 2020). One of these practices is separate waste collection to foster sustainable behavior (Lazaric et al., 2020), which is legally fixed in many countries. Separate waste collection influences a person’s decision to choose products in recyclable packaging or minimal packaging by studying the labeling and information on the packaging (Hobson & Lynch, 2016). The selection of products that can be recycled in the future is part of the zero-waste strategy, which also involves composting waste, reusing, and other recycling methods (Hobson, 2020).

Another practice is collecting signatures for petitions intending to improve regulatory documents or existing social practices, which expresses people’s willingness

to change social practices in waste management. The practice of petitioning involves collective actions to affect actors, such as state or private companies (Balsiger et al., 2019). Citizens' petitions and requests to the authorities often aim to reform existing legislation and regulatory frameworks. Apart from reforming, it is essential to create new collective models of society including the promotion of a sustainable lifestyle. Some researchers highlight the current insufficiency of existing collective actions to promote a sustainable lifestyle because they have not led to sustainable behavior (Hobson & Lynch, 2016; Kallis et al., 2018). Balsiger et al. (2019) emphasize the importance of shaping an idea about "the collective as an actor of change". Therefore, it is important to create new images or models to show how social changes can cause social transformations, and how a community can participate in actions to promote sustainable or responsible consumption (Lamphere & Shefner, 2017).

One of these new models can be a circular economic model where waste is revalued as a resource through exchanging, sharing, repairing, reusing, and designing durability and maintainability of products from the moment of their manufacture (A European Green Deal, n.d.). A significant element of the circular economy is the involvement of people in exchange practices (Belk, 2014), which allow things to be used repeatedly and create conditions for developing alternative social practices of exchanging goods, ideas, and experiences (for example, bookcrossing or food sharing). Another important element of the circular economy is the practice of sharing when different people use the same things at different times. This practice stems from the observation that many things such as tools, washing machines, or cars are not constantly used. Therefore, people can reduce the production of some things by using them more intensively and rationally, e.g., by borrowing some necessary tools. However, the sharing economy can also stimulate consumption in the long term (Martin, 2016), thus these sharing practices should be evaluated in terms of environmental limits.

The uncommon practice for the modern world is the practice of repair. People find it difficult to imagine that they can not only recycle a thing but also restore its functions to increase product longevity (Hobson & Lynch, 2016) because of a wide use of disposable products and availability of new things at any time of the day. Therefore, implementing the practice of repair requires subtle social changes. For example, people might need repair training tutorials or repair manuals. People can open voluntary repair cafes where guests can have a good time and get advice and tools for repairing faulty things (Hobson, 2020). Another possible social change for developing the practice of repair can be slowing down social processes to find some free time for repairing by yourself, which is a time-consuming process (D'Alisa et al., 2015).

The next challenging practice to be implemented is the practice of reducing consumption that can be presented in two configurations of practices. The first configuration assumes the usage of this practice along with other practices. For example, the zero-waste strategy combines five practices: refuse, reduce, reuse, recycle, and recover (5R). Refusing and reducing consumption seem to be the most difficult of these practices since they involve changing people's worldview, responsibility, and self-control. Besides, their complexity also lies in their integrated

approach; each of these practices itself includes a set of practices that are not defined and legally prescribed, which makes people take a responsible choice of their behavior. In the second configuration, the practice of reducing consumption unites different practices. The example is degrowth, which means a process of political and social transformation aiming to reduce the energy and resources flow between nature and society while improving the quality of life (Kallis et al., 2018). Degrowth theorists believe that the capitalist growth paradigm cannot be changed in an instant. It is essential to update “basic monetary, fiscal, labor, and welfare institutions (working hours are reduced, new investment in clean sectors is offset by disinvestment in dirty sectors, debt interest is spent or socialized, redistribution of wealth is secured, and growth in relative goods compensates for the decline in material goods)” (Kallis et al., 2018, p. 308). Degrowthers emphasize that history contains many examples of societies flourishing without growth. In the modern society, some practices without growth can be individual downshifting, eco-initiatives, voluntary work, cooperative forms of production, and local currency. Obviously, the promotion of practices without growth is a difficult path of systemic changes in social practices, united by the idea of reducing substances and energy consumption, meeting the needs associated with self-realization, responsibility, and communication.

The idea of reducing consumption does not apply to all practices. Some practices involve the adaptation of the existing social system to the ongoing changes and do not imply a reduction in consumption. Others imply a reduction in the goods and services production and the matter and energy consumption. Using the distinction between practices regarding consumption, Balsiger et al. (2019) identified adaptive and transformative repertoires of environmental changes. The adaptive repertoire is reformist and corresponds to individualism and the paradigm of economic growth; the market continues to expand, offering people more eco-friendly products. One of these repertoires is the promotion of highly energy-efficient appliances. The transformative repertoire is a systemic change directed at reducing production and consumption. The implementation of these repertoires can be individual and collective. An adaptive individual repertoire can be demonstrated by turning off lights or buying energy-saving light bulbs, whereas the example of an adaptive collective repertoire is the recognition of the role of politics and legal regulation in achieving environmental goals and social change. Personal efforts to reduce consumption are made within the framework of an individual transformative repertoire, and a collective transformative repertoire comprises collective actions to change production and consumption systems, the transition to new practices and non-capitalist values.

Embracing the idea of the distinction of the repertoires regarding consumption (Balsiger et al., 2019), we applied this idea to the nine selected green practices classified into adaptive and transformative. Adaptive practices aim at solving environmental problems without reducing consumption, such as the practices of separate waste collection, studying product labeling, waste recycling, and petitioning. Transformative practices involve reducing the matter and energy consumption by changing collective and individual actions, such as the practices of exchanging, refusing from purchases, sharing, repairing, and promoting sustainable consumption.

Methods

To identify the green practices aimed at reducing consumption in the social media (VK.com) communities covering separate waste collection, the study was conducted in three stages.

At the first stage, having reviewed previous studies, we selected the nine green practices most often mentioned in connection with collecting, processing, and preventing waste and classified them as adaptive and transformative following Balsiger et al. (2019). Adaptive practices do not imply a reduction in consumption; therefore, waste sorting, studying the product labeling, waste recycling, and signing petitions can be considered adaptive. Transformative practices involve a reduction in the matter and energy consumption due to the changes in collective and individual actions. Transformative practices include consciously reducing consumption, such as rejecting purchases, exchanging, sharing, participating in actions to promote responsible consumption, and repairing.

The second stage included collecting data from VK, a social media platform popular in Eastern Europe, especially in the post-Soviet countries (Bannykh & Kostina, 2020). To select VK communities covering the topic of separate waste collection, we used the social graph constructed to cluster practices of VK green communities of Tyumen region, Russia, around some important topics for users such as animals, eco-food, eco-markets, and separate waste collection (Zakharova et al., 2021). Another essential selection factor was the availability of posts created from January 2021 to June 2021 when we were collecting data. Thus, six VK communities with the following IDs were selected: *mirotvorets_tmh*, *vtor_service*, *ecoteo72*, *krugovorot_eco*, *sortstation*, *ecoworld72* (currently inaccessible). All these VK ID correspond to the names of the organisations in Russian: “Miro Tvorets” (*mirotvorets_tmh*) meaning “peacekeeper”, “GK Vtorservis” (*vtor_service*) meaning “recyclable material”, “Ecoteo” (*ecoteo72*) representing Tyumen Ecological Organisation, “No! otkhodov v Tiumeni. Krugovorot” (*krugovorot_eco*) meaning “Zero waste in Tyumen. Circulation”, “Razdel’nyi sbor otkhodov v Tiumeni. Sortirovochnaia” (*sortstation*) meaning “Separate waste collection in Tyumen. Sorting”, “Ecoworld72” (*ecoworld72*), where 72 represents the regional code for Tyumen.

Although a common issue of waste collection unites these six VK communities, their activities differ from each other. “Miro Tvorets” and “GK Vtorservis” are both commercial organisations that buy recyclables and sell them to processing enterprises. However, while marketing recyclables is the main activity for “GK Vtorservis”, it is the secondary activity for “Miro Tvorets” that is mainly engaged in charity, helping people in difficult life situations and promoting eco-lifestyle. “Ecoteo” is the regional operator for solid municipal waste management providing waste collecting, processing, and disposal. Besides, it organises the delivery of municipal waste to three regional waste sorting plants and waste disposal to three landfills. Two voluntary organisations “Sortirovochnaia” and “Krugovorot”, headed by the same person, are interconnected with each other. “Sortirovochnaia” aims to explain and show the process of separate waste collection through different training programs,

whereas “Krugovorot” specifically informs people how to refuse to buy new things, reduce consumption, reuse things, recycle waste, and compost organic matter. The Ecoworld72 community does not have clearly defined goals of its activities. It shows reposted content, pictures, videos thematically related to nature, environmental protection, and separate waste collection. The number of the communities’ subscribers varies from one to two and a half thousand people apart from “Krugovorot” that consists of more than seven thousand subscribers.

After having selected the six VK communities, we collected their textual posts by using the application programming interface (VK API) and the Python programming language and then moved to the next stage of the research.

The third stage included analyzing the texts contained mentions of the selected nine practices. To exclude texts that did not have content relevant to the purpose of this study, content analysis was used. Then to identify references to nine practices, we read the collected texts independently using a hermeneutic analysis and discussed to reach agreement on the identified practices.

Results

The dataset comprises of 1,987 textual posts (Table 1) identified by the hermeneutic and the content analyses. More than two thirds of the posts in the studied communities contain at least one mention of one of the nine practices.

Table 1 shows the proportion of the posts containing any of the nine selected practices, which is calculated as the ratio of the number of the posts containing practice mentions to the total number of the posts in the community.

Table 1
Distribution of Posts in VK Communities

Characteristic	Community						Total	
	<i>mirotvorets_tmn</i>	<i>ecoteo72</i>	<i>ecoworld72</i>	<i>vtor_service</i>	<i>krugovorot_eco</i>	<i>sortstation</i>		
Number of subscribers (June 2021)	2,463	998	2,496	1,072	7,252	2,748	17,029	
Number of posts	187	445	17	105	1067	166	1,987	
Posts containing mentions of the selected practices	Count	167	101	11	86	828	123	1,316
	% within the total number of posts	89.3	22.7	64.7	81.9	77.6	74.1	66.2

Note. Source: Authors.

Table 2 demonstrates the results of the quantitative and the qualitative analyses of the selected posts. Relative frequency is the ratio of the quantity of mentions of a practice in a studied community to the quantity of all the posts containing mention of practices in a studied community. The number of the posts mentioning practices is the value taken from Table 1. In all the communities, the mention of the practices of sorting and processing waste are prevalent while the practice of repair is the least frequently mentioned.

Table 2
Distribution of Practice Mentions

Community	Practice mentions								
	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9
<i>mirotvorets_tmn</i>									
Count	99	0	137	0	2	0	0	13	0
Relative frequency	0.593	0	0.82	0	0.012	0	0	0.078	0
<i>ecoteo72</i>									
Count	16	4	32	0	17	3	0	29	2
Relative frequency	0.158	0.04	0.317	0	0.168	0.03	0	0.287	0.02
<i>ecoworld72</i>									
Count	9	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	0
Relative frequency	0.818	0	0.091	0	0.091	0	0	0.091	0
<i>vtor_service</i>									
Count	68	1	14	0	12	8	0	10	0
Relative frequency	0.791	0.012	0.163	0	0.14	0.093	0	0.116	0
<i>krugovorot_eco</i>									
Count	412	25	181	25	72	108	3	236	7
Relative frequency	0.498	0.03	0.219	0.03	0.087	0.13	0.004	0.285	0.008
<i>sortstation</i>									
Count	36	20	111	0	3	8	0	11	2
Relative frequency	0.293	0.163	0.902	0	0.024	0.065	0	0.089	0.016

Note 1. Waste sorting (P1), studying the product labeling (P2), waste recycling (P3), signing petitions (P4), refusing purchases (P5), exchanging (P6), sharing (P7), participating in actions to promote responsible consumption (P8), and repairing (P9).

Note 2. Source: Authors.

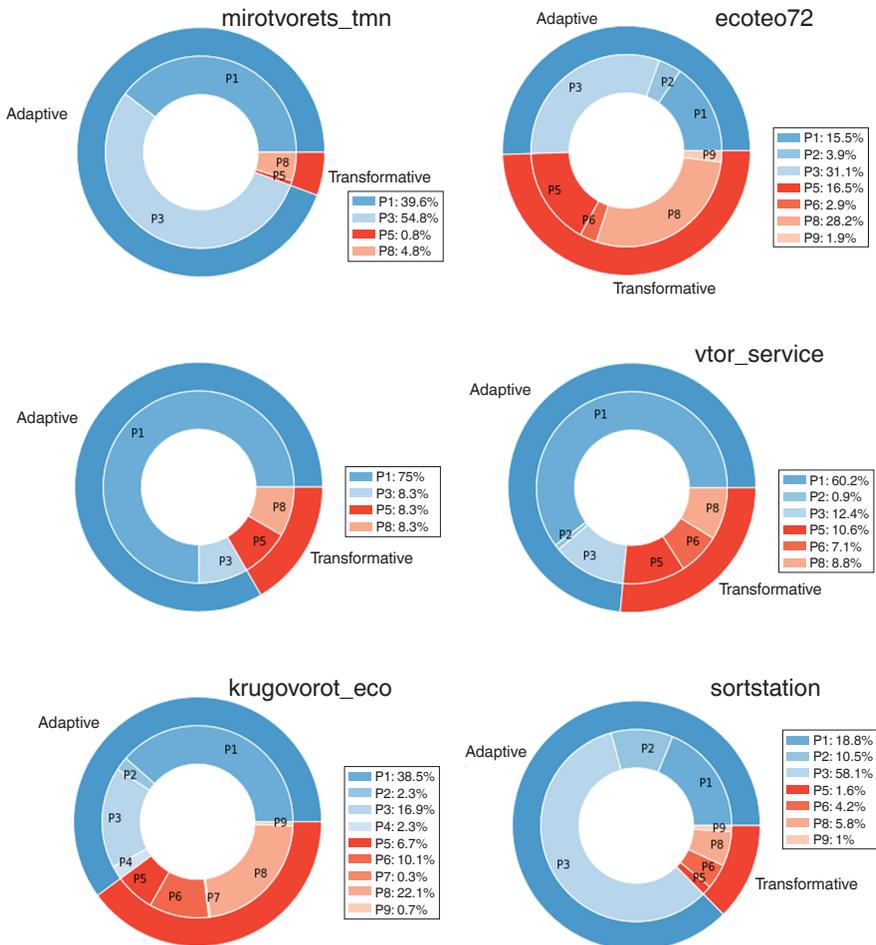
Figure 1 presents the distribution of the posts in the VK communities in the inner circle and the classification of the nine practices into adaptive and transformative in the outer circle.

Figure 1 shows that the content of the posts of *krugovorot_eco* is the most diversified in terms of the mentioned practices. Only this community contains the practices of signing petitions and sharing. Comparing to other communities, considerable attention is given to the topics of reducing consumption, exchanging, and participating in actions to promote responsible consumption. The least diverse content of the posts is contained in *mirotvorets_tmn* and *ecoworld72* that mention four practices. The most prevalent topics of the posts are separate waste collection and recycling. These topics are also of special interest in *sortstation*, *vtor_service* but the number of mentioned practices are seven and six, respectively. Like *sortstation*, the VK community *ecoteo72* has also seven mentioned practices but apart from the

topic of recycling, the prevalent topic is participating in actions to promote responsible consumption.

Most of the practices mentioned in the communities are adaptive; the percentage of the posts containing mention of adaptive practices varies between 94.4% and 51.5%. The most common transformative practices can be seen in *krugovorot_eco* and *ecoteo72*. In *krugovorot_eco*, the mentions of the five transformative practices represent 39,9% of all practice mentions, and *ecoteo72* contains four transformative practices representing 49,5%. Transformative practices are not often mentioned, for example *mirotvorets_tm* contains 5,6% of the total number of the posts, *sortstation*—12,6%, *ecoworld72*—16,6%, *vtor_service*—26,5%.

Figure 1
Distribution of Adaptive and Transformative Practices



Note. Source: Authors.

Discussion

To identify the green practices aimed at reducing consumption in social media (VK.com) communities covering separate waste collection, we studied the posts of the six communities of Tyumen region, Russia, mentioning the nine green practices. Given the approach of these practices to consumption, they were classified into adaptive, such as waste sorting, studying the product labeling, waste recycling, signing petitions, and transformative, such as refusing purchases, exchanging, sharing, participating in actions to promote responsible consumption, and repairing. The targeted six VK communities represent two commercial companies “GK Vtorservis”, “Miro Tvorets”, the regional operator for solid municipal waste management “Ecoteo”, two voluntary organisations “Sortirovochnaia”, “Krugovorot”, and “Ecoworld72” with unclearly defined goals of its activities. The VK posts of all these organisations reflect the aims of their activities.

The content of the VK community of “GK Vtorservis” covers collecting and processing recyclables. The company buys waste paper, cardboard, plastic from organisations, offering transportation services of recyclables, and then sells recyclables to enterprises of Tyumen region and other regions. Thus, waste sorting as the adaptive practice is the key topic of the 68 posts out of 86. The transformative practices can be observed when the company emphasizes the advantages of its activities and declares their inclusion in a global context: “Recycle the things you do not need. You may not only get monetary profit but also help the environment. By recycling waste paper, you save three trees in a year” (GK Vtorservis, n.d.; trans. by O. Z. et al.). However, in general, the company’s activities are commercial and unrelated to environment protection that is why the company’s attempts to create a positive environmental image look like greenwashing (Raworth, 2017). K. Hobson (2020) notes that modern entrepreneurs often use the concept of the circular economy as a “buzzword” to promote their services or products especially if eco slogans are not supported by changes in business models and activities. The transformative practices can be seen in the VK community reposts about environmental events and initiatives arranged by other companies and in other countries and recommendations for the transition to a sustainable lifestyle without referring to the original source of information. For example, “Read a few facts, and you will immediately start sorting waste” (GK Vtorservis, n.d.; trans. by O. Z. et al.). Interestingly, all posts end with a pitch to use the company services.

Alongside “GK Vtorservis”, the commercial company “Miro Tvorets” also provides services for the purchase and transportation of recyclables, sold to processing companies. However, unlike “GK Vtorservis”, the company does a lot of charity work. Recently, the company has extended its social orientation targeting the field of waste sorting; the company actively works with the population, accepting waste paper, plastic, and glass. It helps neighborhood associations to organise separate waste collection in their yards, providing them with separate collection infrastructure and organising the recyclables transportation. Despite the dominance of the adaptive practices in the company activities, their role is significant for the greening of the region. Creating

a convenient infrastructure and using innovations in the building design are necessary to involve more participants in waste sorting, because the potential for an increase in the number of participants thanks to enthusiasts has been almost exhausted (Shabanova, 2019). Thus, the experience of such companies as “Miro Tvorets” is worth disseminating, and this company can be an experimental platform for piloting various environmental solutions. “Miro Tvorets” delivers recyclables to the place of their processing, which considerably increases the motivation to sort waste. Besides, the company organises outreach events and activities aiming at environmental protection within the framework of the transformative practices, although the VK page does not demonstrate company’s real participation in the greening of social life. The company informs about its activities, upcoming events regarding waste sorting and recycling in the genre of announcements in the VK community.

“Ecoteo” contains VK posts describing the technological processes of waste collection, transportation, and operation of waste sorting plants built as part of the waste management reform (Ermolaeva, 2019). “Ecoteo” introduces a new set of citizens’ daily practices within the framework of legislation and governmental strategic documents (de Certeau, 1984). The posts were created in the genre of news about the company’s activities, and they also give instructions on what kind of waste can be thrown into the company containers and on how to do it correctly. The activities of “Ecoteo” are illustrated in the context of some events to foster a sustainable lifestyle. For example, the announcement of the opening of a new waste sorting plant in Ishim, a town in Tyumen region, is accompanied by the comment: “Citizens of Ishim and Ishim district will work at the plant. This is an important event for cultivating waste management culture in the district” (Tiumenskoe ekologicheskoe ob’edinenie, n.d.; trans. by O. Z. et al.). This VK community contains the largest number of mentions of transformative practices (refusing purchases and participating in actions to promote responsible consumption), but this community only reposted some information as well as “GK Vtorservis” did. To add an ecological touch to the activities of “Ecoteo”, its VK page often informs about various environmental initiatives in different countries, though not in Russia mostly. The company sometimes invites Tyumen residents to participate in some environmental contests under a prerequisite of joining its VK community.

The two voluntary organisations “Sortirovochnaia” and “Krugovorot” have a lot of common content in their VK posts. It can be explained that both organisations have the same leader, and “Sortirovochnaia” separated from “Krugovorot” in 2019. “Sortirovochnaya” specializes in collecting recyclables from citizens, promoting the ideas of separate waste collecting and recycling, and training people to separate waste as a special set of practices (Zemskova, 2017). The organisation holds diverse events, highlighted in its posts. For example, the event “Eco-yard” includes several activities.

The event “Eco-yard” is going to the city center! We organise ecological activities in different areas of the city, so that many people will learn about separate waste collection and eco-friendly lifestyle... What are the New Year’s “Eco-yard” events?

-
- (a) A workshop on creating a wish card. Our volunteer will be waiting for you in the cafe “Saw fish”. She will explain the design of a wish card. To select pictures, we will bring magazines from “Sortirovochnaia”.
 - (b) New Year decorations exchange. Do not buy Christmas tree decorations. Borrow them from other people. Bring the things you do not use anymore, and choose the things suitable for you. If you bring any decorations, they should be in good condition.
 - (c) The photo zone with costumes. The charity shop “Laffka” will lend you costumes for the ecological carnival. Dress up, pose with our banner and recyclables, upload new photos on your social media and promote an eco-friendly lifestyle.
 - (d) Recyclables accepted. Find the attached file with a huge list of accepted recyclables.

Help your neighbors to learn about the “Eco-yard”: share the posts in social media. (Razdel'nyi sbor, n.d.; trans. by O. Z. et al.)

These announcements demonstrate different adaptive practices, such as waste sorting (Lazaric, 2020), recycling (Hobson & Lynch, 2016), and transformative practices, such as exchanging (Belk, 2014), sharing (Martin, 2016), and promoting responsible consumption (Lamphere & Shefner, 2017). “Sortirovochnaia” is not driven by motives of monetary profit, unlike “Vtorservice”, and there is no pitch to join its online community, comparing to “Ecoteo”.

The “Sortirovochnaia” online community also posts some reports and instructions for preparing recyclables. For example, “You decided to send your husband to give recyclables to the ‘Sortirovochnaia’. If he does not sort waste at home, you should prepare recyclables in advance and instruct your husband” (Razdel'nyi sbor, n.d.; trans. by O. Z. et al.). Detailed instructions are given to help avoid conflicts and misunderstandings because “the word ‘volunteer’ does not mean service personnel” (Razdel'nyi sbor, n.d.; trans. by O. Z. et al.).

Unlike the commercial companies that accept recyclables for a fee, “Sortirovochnaia” accepts recyclables free of charge, including rare types of recyclables, which the commercial organisations do not usually accept, such as toothbrushes, shaving machines, foil, bank plastic cards, CDs and DVDs, etc. Using the money received from the sale of recyclables, the organisation rents premises for collecting recyclables and organises delivery of rare types of recyclables to processors. Its main motto is “To help the city and the planet become a little cleaner”. Thus, the adaptive practices of this organisation are similar to “Miro Tvorets” aiming to develop the infrastructure for separate waste collection and involve citizens in environmental practices.

The activities promoted in “Sortirovochnaya” VK community have not only a diverse content but also multi-stage goals to develop new models of social life and business (Balsiger et al., 2019, Lamphere & Shefner, 2017). For example, the event “Let’s unpack Tyumen goods” sparked public interest, which was associated with the well-known slogan in Tyumen region “Let’s buy Tyumen goods” promoting local producers:

Dear friends, we are holding the first anti-award in the field of packaging “Let’s unpack Tyumen goods” in 2021. Let us see what producers, sellers, and cafes pack their goods into. We invite you to participate in the packaging audit. From February 17 to March 31, “Sortirovochnaia” accepts packages of Tyumen goods that meet ALL the following conditions: (a) clean; (b) the producer’s name and address are easy to read; (c) non-recyclable. From April 1, we will start analyzing the collected non-recyclable packaging and identify the main polluter among Tyumen producers. Using the results, we will inform these producers about the problem with their packaging and recommendations for its solution (Razdel’nyi sbor, n.d.; trans. by O. Z. et al.).

Thus, the event “Let’s unpack Tyumen goods” aimed at involving people in the adaptive practices, such as waste sorting (Lamphere & Shefner, 2017), careful studying the product labeling (Hobson & Lynch, 2016), and in the transformative practices, such as refusing from some goods (Kallis et al., 2018). It also raised producers’ awareness of significance of more eco-friendly products (Hobson, 2020).

Comparing to “Sortirovochnaia”, the activities of “Krugovorot” are even more consistent to foster a sustainable lifestyle. Interestingly, 426 posts out of 828 refer to transformative practices, as follows:

- reducing consumption—“Sorting recyclables allows identifying the problems; after the multiple recycling of a bag with plastic bags or a heap of plastic bottles, we become aware of using an eco-bag and a reusable bottle” (Nol’ otkhodov v Tiumeni, n.d.; trans. by O. Z. et al.);
- exchanging—“The meaning of this event is not to get rid of unused things but to exchange and refuse to buy new toys” (Nol’ otkhodov v Tiumeni, n.d.; trans. by O. Z. et al.);
- sharing—“Friends, we have created a community that will help you refuse to buy things for one-time use. The community ‘Things to Borrow’ will help you find a carnival costume for a child or a drill for the evening. Apart from borrowing, your things can work. For example, you can lend a ball gown sewn for one performance, a set of tools or board games” (Nol’ otkhodov v Tiumeni, n.d.; trans. by O. Z. et al.);
- participating in events to promote responsible consumption—“Delivering waste for recycling, helping nature and stopping increasing landfills are now easy because collecting recyclables is now held every week” (Nol’ otkhodov v Tiumeni, n.d.; trans. by O. Z. et al.);
- repairing—“Workshops: training how to make cosmetics by yourself, repairing clothes, small appliances, or shoes” (Nol’ otkhodov v Tiumeni, n.d.; trans. by O. Z. et al.).

“Krugovorot” has made great efforts to boost adaptive practices. For example, its VK page contains many posts about the simplicity of separate waste collection: “Do not complicate the process of separate waste collection”, “We invite you to participate in the ‘Separate waste collection is simple’ contest”. The awareness-raising posts usually offer specific recommendations on what each person can do to solve environmental

problems (Balsider et al., 2019; Hobson & Lynch, 2016). For instance, the post about the ecological footprint suggests an answer to the question *How can we help the planet?* and includes some recommendations concerning the diet, studying product labeling to choose more eco-friendly products, energy conservation, and separate waste collection. The post about organic waste includes criticism of the disposer and recommendations on composting waste in an urban environment. These posts tend to encourage people to adopt a sustainable lifestyle, emphasizing the high importance of green values and the influence of the immediate social environment on the use of green practices (Lazaric et al., 2020). People, whose friends, peers, neighbors, colleagues support sustainable consumption regarding food, energy conservation, and waste recycling, are more likely to adopt such behavior and to join the group of the green consumers. Lazaric et al. (2020) assume that new consumer practices and preferences are expected to spread through informal communication and instructions in small local networks, such as “Sortirovochnaia” and “Krugovorot”.

“Krugovorot” online community also contains critical posts about the government policy or greenwashing: “If you are an organiser of an environmental event, focus on projects that will strengthen your organisation’s position as the eco-company not as a greenwashing company” (Nol’ otkhodov v Tiumeni, n.d.; trans. by O. Z. et al.). Such posts often include constructive proposals encouraging people to do some actions. For example, “We put forward proposals at meetings organised by the government of Tyumen region, prepare petitions, and communicate with the Tyumen Ecological Organisation” (Nol’ otkhodov v Tiumeni, n.d.; trans. by O. Z. et al.) The proposed activities are both individual and collective (Balsiger et al., 2019), invariably emphasizing the role of ordinary citizens and their communities, commercial and non-commercial organisations (Lamphere & Shefner, 2017). The suggested recommendations often center on the zero-waste strategy, becoming a guide for introducing new social practices as “sets of actions” (Giddens, 1984) that resist environmental challenges.

In general, the content of the VK eco-communities reflects the regional situation with waste collection and processing, which has developed since the waste management reform started in Russia in 2019 and can be described in terms of de Certeau’s theory (1984). Initially, strategic practices were focused on cancelling the existing system of separate waste collection in Tyumen, organised by small enterprises for recycling and manufacturing products from recyclables. Instead, a regional waste management scheme was introduced, which displaced grassroots initiatives and prevented citizens from participating in solving environmental problems. However, some tactical practices have been renewed and revitalized in the region, having all the features described by de Certeau (1984): mobility, flexible organisation, identity manipulation, opportunism. The voluntary organisations for separate recyclables collection are constantly changing the form of their existence, remaining mobile and flexibly responding to changing conditions. For example, they establish mobile recycling collection points, rent a warehouse for the recyclables collection and storage, and organise eco-yards and eco-taxi. The same features are demonstrated by commercial organisations involved in separate waste collection. For example,

the COVID-19 pandemic made “Miro Tvorets” expand its activities by collecting recyclables from citizens, first using mobile collection points, and later installing eco-boxes in yards. Due to these initiatives, citizens have regained the right to be active in determining their life positions and practices of dealing with waste (Brednikova & Tkach, 2008). The events promoted in voluntary communities often aim at creating new models of a sustainable lifestyle that have not been supported by official policies yet. For example, the topic of the circular economy model has been absent from the Russian environmental agenda for a long time. However, this model has been efficiently promoted by some voluntary communities, which can be illustrated by the example “Let’s unpack Tyumen goods”.

Thus, the six VK communities demonstrate adaptive and transformative practices. Adaptive practices are important for developing infrastructure for separate waste collection and promoting sustainable behavior by involving people in green everyday practices. Transformative practices often inform about existing green initiatives around the world, but these communities seldom organise exchanging, sharing, repair and recycling practices. Although the transformative practices are widespread in the voluntary communities, they are not regarded as a set of practices united by the idea of reducing production and consumption.

Conclusion

In this paper, we studied separate waste collection as a set of the nine green practices classified as adaptive and transformative regarding consumption. Adaptive practices do not imply a reduction in consumption; therefore, waste sorting, studying the product labeling, waste recycling, and signing petitions can be considered adaptive. Transformative practices involve a reduction in substance and energy consumption due to the changes in collective and individual actions. Transformative practices include consciously reducing consumption, such as refusing purchases, exchanging, sharing, participating in actions to promote responsible consumption, and repairing.

We analyzed green practices on separate waste collection described in the six communities on VK social media platform. In total, 1,987 posts of the VK communities contained the mentions of the nine selected practices. Most of the practices are adaptive; the percentage of the posts containing mentions of adaptive practices varies between 94.4% and 51.5%. Transformative practices are less common although these practices aim to reduce consumption, which is necessary for harmonizing the relations between nature and society.

It is important to note that the practice of reducing consumption is used along with other practices, but it is not the aim of these practices. In other words, the content of the studied communities does not demonstrate that the practice of reducing consumption has a unifying nature regarding other practices, and it can give meaning to other practices, as Degrowthers perceive it. Besides, the potential of reducing consumption as a requirement to change the entire social and economic system has not been unlocked yet. The transformative practices identified in the studied communities do not challenge the main value of the capitalist economy, the

incessant production and consumption growth, and the communities do not suggest alternative ways to organise social life.

This study will contribute to the understanding of what green practices are promoted in the online communities covering separate waste collection, and whether these practices can affect the incessant consumption growth, which is the principal cause of environmental problems. We showed how the grassroots initiatives can change social practices to reduce the pressure on the environment. The obtained results might help some decision-makers create conditions to disseminate the described practices and to introduce new social practices targeting reducing consumption.

Regarding the limitations of this study, we analyzed only the regional online communities covering waste issues. Thus, further study will focus on investigating a wide range of Russian ecological communities.

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