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# The Pizza Hut Phenomenon: Cultural Contradictions of Russian Capitalism

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Oral Presentation 1.5

THE PIZZA HUT PHENOMENON: CULTURAL CONTRADICTIONS OF  
RUSSIAN CAPITALISM

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In the West, our picture of struggling Russian capitalism is of a country full of enthusiastic “New Russians” who simply cannot get it right. Although the difficult transition from communism to capitalism has and will contain a series of stumbling blocks, it is superficial to assume that the struggles and mishaps are due primarily to lack of ability. While many Russians do embrace current reform efforts, a significant portion of the population does not welcome the new system or foreign influence. This is comically, yet accurately displayed in a recent Pizza Hut commercial featuring Mikhail Gorbachev and a group of Russians debating the transition to capitalism. The ad illustrates an entity at the heart of Russian culture which has produced a love/hate reception to Western business culture. Despite the vast amount of analysis and forecasting of Russian capitalism, undertaken by various fields such as business, economics, and political science, the most important and basic principle has been relatively ignored: It is all irrelevant if the Russian people simply do not welcome the new system.

A melding of numerous areas of study, this project will explore the following: First will be an appeal in expressing the importance of this issue and this intangible perspective in general. Second, it will explore Russian folklore in effort to understand Russia’s traditional perception of the businessman. Using Russian literature and recent media examples, it will address modern implications for the prospects of capitalism in Russia. This project intends to illustrate how influential a role the West will play in Russia’s future, and how much damage Western blind-spots have already caused.