



THE IMPACT OF MARKETING ON CONSUMERS BEHAVIOR

How Consumerism Controlled Society

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Acknowledgment

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Abstract

Modernization has become accessible to all. There is no shortage of food, household appliances and even less shopping centers ... The economy is now based on overproduction of the superfluous and not on needs. Is this a good thing?

It is certain that we do not miss anything. However, the possibility of consuming so much becomes almost obsessive. With how prevalent advertising has become, the desire to buy became paramount. Buying as expensive as possible to appear richer is very common, and you want to be better dressed than your peers.

Trapped by advertising, the population is ready to pay a high price to belong to a different class. People are permanently solicited to buy goods and services through marketing strategies (Smart, 2010).

Actually, marketing is nowadays unavoidable in people's daily life. As a fact, we are exposed to 15.000 commercial stimuli every day created by this field (Pêtre, 2007). One of the most known and recognised stimuli by people is advertisement. Metaphorically, advertisement can be seen as the visible part of the marketing iceberg, which is part of our daily life. (emarketer.com).

Baudrillard (1970), a French sociologist, describes people's daily life as being governed by consumption through a multiplication, an abundance of products. He characterizes this phenomenon as being a consumerist society.

The Contemporary American Society Website says that consumerism is the belief that personal wellbeing and happiness depends to a very large extent on the level of personal consumption, particularly on the purchase of material goods. The idea is not simply that well-being depends upon a standard of living above some threshold, but that at the center of happiness is consumption and material possessions.'

The 1960s marked the first age of consumer society, when products corresponded to tangible needs. They were bought above all for their use value, the function they performed, and whether it improved the living environment.

Nowadays, people are constantly bombarded with advertisements urging them to buy things. Such advertisements promote not simply specific products, but also a vision of "the good life" and what it takes to be happy. Shopping is experienced by many people as an exciting recreational activity.

People go deeply into debt in order to buy things beyond basic necessities: a larger house, a giant television, a fancy car. These are all the hallmarks of a society within which consumption is at the center of life.

This paper aims to explore the nature and degree to which marketing affects consumption, and study the ways that people are manipulated into over-consumption, and analyze Say's law of markets.

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Introduction

Background

This study is the cumulation of years of interest in marketing and influence that started after watching 'consommateur pris au piege' (Trapped Consumer), a documentary on how marketers plan the isles of supermarkets in a way to encourage customers to buy more.

In supermarkets as in any store, traders have the same objective: to sell at any price. To encourage people to buy, there are formidable methods put in place without our knowledge. Without the customer knowing it, stores do not hesitate to manipulate their senses: music, visuals or perfumes...

The documentary stated that traders, large or small, have no shortage of ideas and techniques to encourage customers to fill their shopping bags such as:

- "Frustrate" visitors by showing expensive products at the start, then small, inexpensive products at the end to encourage impulse buying and gadgets.
- Psychological prices ending with 9
- The new baskets which have wheels to put more things in and not be limited to what you can carry
- Add "gadget" products (batteries) in the middle of other classic daily products
- Massify the goods (there are a lot of them, it's a good deal) to script the point of sale
- The shape of the furniture slows down the buyer, the circle slows down while the "right" encourages you to go faster

Everything is carefully studied to trigger the act of purchase. Nowadays, marketers use medical technologies to decipher the behavior of the consumer and to study their real desires. It's about catching his gaze or even, more incredible still, reading directly in his brain.

In 1803, John Baptiste Say stated that the production of goods creates its own demand and explained his theory as follows: "It is worthwhile to remark that a product is no sooner created than it, from that instant, affords a market for other products to the full extent of its own value." (J. B. Say, 1803: pp.138–9)

This view suggests that the key to economic growth is not increasing demand, but increasing production.

With this increased production, came increased consumption. This society is now criticized for being a 'consumerist society'. According to the Contemporary American Society Website: 'A consumerist society is one in which people devote a great deal of time, energy, resources and thought to "consuming". The general view of life in a consumerist society is that consumption is good, and more consumption is even better.'

So why does supply create its own demand?
 Is Say's law crucial to economics?
 Are we aware of the influence marketing has on us?
 How has marketing affected society and consumption over the years?
 And finally, what are the consequences of consumerism?

All of these factors, along with Say's law or markets show that marketing is everywhere, and we're all influenced by it. People consume more and more, products are becoming less durable, and the supply creates its own supply now.

Purpose

Modern society is often criticized for being a society of consumerism due to people getting exposed and solicited by marketing everyday through different manners, such as advertising and influence.

The purpose of this thesis is:

- Prove that Say's law or Law of markets is crucial to economics
- To demonstrate how marketing is impacting the customer's buying behaviour, and whether it's the reason we've become a consumerist society
- Find out who's more likely affected by marketing and its influence
- Understand how marketing changed consumer's behavior over the years
- Find out how manipulation and influence impact the consumer's preferences (needs, wants, demands...), and the factors that lead to the buying decision
- To study the Impact of consumerism on society, economy, and the environment.

Structure

To answer our purpose and research questions, the thesis will be divided into six chapters:

- The first chapter is the Introduction in which I present the background, the research problem, the purpose of this thesis and the research questions.
- The second chapter is the Theory; here, I define more precisely the four main concepts needed to understand my thesis: consumption, marketing, influence, consumerism, before explaining my theoretical framework.
- In the third chapter, entitled Methodology, I present the methods chosen for my thesis, the cases used and how I proceeded
- The fourth chapter is the Empirical Material; here I report the findings from my cases and questionnaire.
- The fifth chapter is the Analysis, where I link my theory and theoretical frame with the findings from the previous chapter.
- The last chapter is the Conclusion, in which we answer our purpose, we present our contribution and suggest further research.

Literature Review

In this chapter, we define more precisely the concepts needed to understand the purpose of this thesis in depth. We start by defining consumption; then the psychology of the customer is explained, after that I go into detail about marketing and its role. Finally, the chapter ends with the theoretical model that summarizes the links between the different concepts.

1. Consumption

1.1. Definition of consumption.

Consumption, in the economic sense of the term, is the act of using or destroying, immediately or gradually, goods and services (a yogurt, a computer), in order to satisfy a need.

To consume food, for example, is to destroy it in order to satisfy the need for food. Consuming information is also, in a way, destroying it in order to integrate it into one's own cultural capital. Consumption is therefore motivated by the needs that an individual seeks to satisfy, with the help of a good or service provided for this purpose. It is also often referred to as consumer spending.

In the past, in a society which was predominantly rural, a large part of food products, clothing was made by households for their personal use. Self-consumption was the main form of consumption. Industrialization, urbanization, the increase in real wages, the diversification of needs have brought society into an era of mass consumption, multiplying products.

Consumption is one of the bigger concepts in economics and is extremely important because it helps determine the growth and success of the economy. Businesses can open up and offer all kinds of great products, but if we don't purchase or consume their products, they won't stay in business for very long! If they don't stay in business, many of us won't have jobs or the income to buy goods and services.

1.2. Types of consumption

Since consumption is not a homogeneous function, it can give rise to different classifications based on one or other of its characteristics:

- **Individual consumption and collective consumption**

A distinction is generally made between individual consumption and collective consumption:

In individual consumption, the good or service consumed is only by one individual, excluding any other individual of the same use at the same time (a pair of glasses).

In collective consumption, several individuals can consume the same goods or the same service at the same time (use of a motorway, for example), without the possibility of exclusivity and while satisfying the same need.

Collective consumption is generally non-market services produced by public administrations (certain collective services can however be produced by the private sector, such as clinics for example).

- **Final consumption and intermediate consumption.**

Final consumption, which is solely the responsibility of households (we speak of final household consumption), is made up of goods and services intended for the direct satisfaction of needs, as well as self-consumption, i.e. the consumption that individuals make of their own production (garden products, use of the homes they own, etc.).

Intermediate consumption, which is the act of companies (we speak of intermediate consumption of companies), concerns raw materials or semi-finished products that are destroyed, transformed or incorporated, during the production process, to achieve the final product. (the energy and flour used to make a baguette).

- **Market consumption and non-market consumption.**

Market consumption which concerns all goods, which are by nature marketable insofar as they are exchanged on a market at a price covering at least their cost of production.

Non-market consumption which mainly concerns services obtained free of charge or for a price lower than their cost price (metro ticket, for example).

- **Consumption according to the nature of the goods.**

Material and non-material goods: material goods include all the physical, tangible, storable and consumed goods after having been produced, while intangible goods (or services) cannot be stored and are consumed at the same time as they are produced (a haircut, a movie screening).

- **Durable, semi-durable and non-durable goods.**

Durable goods are goods that are used several times and over a fairly long period (household appliances, hi-fi, car, etc.), semi-durable goods are goods that are used several times but have a fairly short lifespan (clothing, shoes ...) and non-durable goods are goods which are destroyed on first use (food, etc.).

- **Consumption according to the nature of the needs to be satisfied.**

- Clothing
- Housing, heating...
- Housing equipment
- Health
- Transport
- Communication
- Leisure, culture,...
- Other goods and services.

1.3. Consumption Determinants

Consumption is not limited to the act of consuming, it is also part of an economical, psychological, and sociological context. To consume is above all to satisfy a need. Studies of consumer behavior today make it possible to draw up typical profiles.

Consumption also means taking into account the way of life of society (changes in work, arbitration between working time and leisure time, the place of housing). Consuming is still the manifestation of a social sign (belonging to a group). Finally, consuming means analyzing the actions of companies (intended to influence purchasing behavior).

The determinants of consumption can be classified into 3 main categories:

-Economic factors: There are two economic constraints that individuals face that limit their ability to consume, namely the price of goods and disposable income. The question is to know how the consumer will classify his needs to be satisfied and make his choices, what relationship will be established between demand and the evolution of price and demand and the evolution of income.

-Sociological factors: Many sociological factors will be determined in the process of consumption. We can note in particular social class, age, lifestyle, imitation effect, socio-professional category, need for recognition, publicity, gender, family composition, etc.

-Psychological factors: The psychological factors are the factors that talk about the psychology of an individual that drive his actions to seek satisfaction. Some of the important psychological factors are: perception, motivation, learning, attitude and beliefs...

These 3 main factors are explained further in the next chapter.

1.3 Consumer behavior

Consumer behavior is the way of being, of acting and of reacting to a consumer directly accessible to external observation. Characteristic of a consumer's action and reaction to a particular situation, depending on a particular physical and psychological environment, behavior can be influenced by many stimuli (type of product, attitude and degree of involvement consumer, purchasing situation, influence groups and opinion leaders, fad ...), most often variable from one individual to another. To analyze consumer behavior, people are using concepts from various fields such as psychology, economics, biology, and chemistry.

Consumer behavior refers to the study of what causes individuals and organizations to purchase certain products and support certain brands. This area of study focuses primarily on behavior, motivations and psychology, which are influenced by the following three factors, according to Brandwatch:

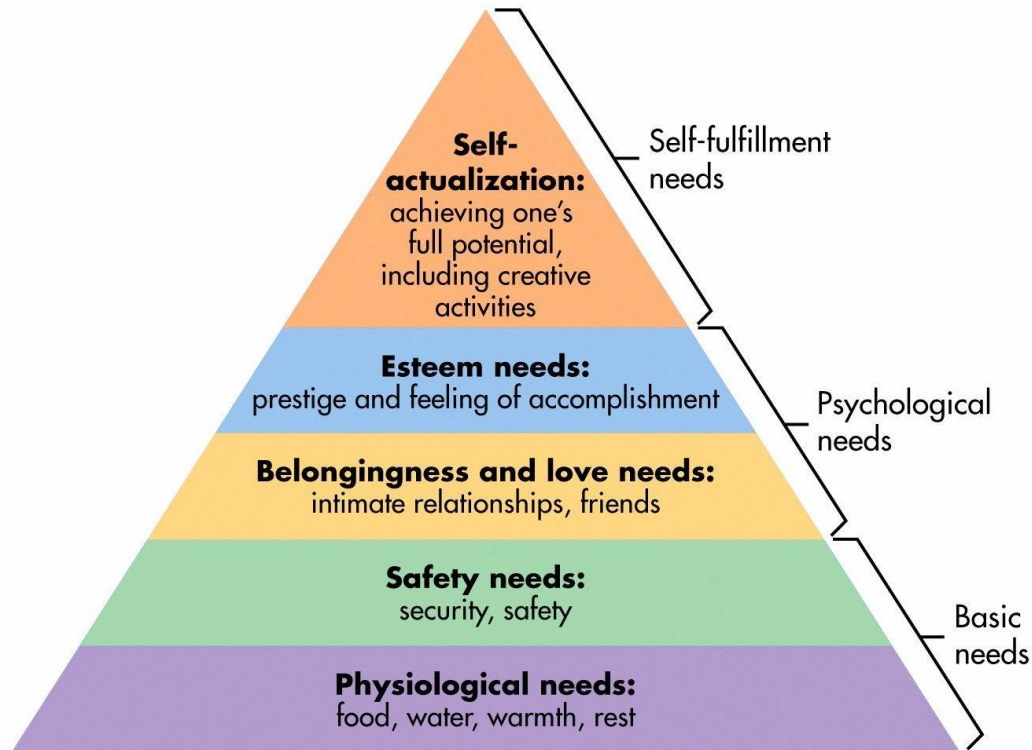
Psychological factors. The way a person responds to an ad campaign depends largely on their own perceptions, attitudes and general view of life.

Personal factors. Demographics such as age, culture, profession, age and background play major roles in forming consumers' interests and opinions.

Social factors. A person's social groups affect how they shop, their income, education level and social class influence their buying behaviors.

2.Maslow's pyramid

Maslow's hierarchy of needs is an idea in psychology proposed by Abraham Maslow in his 1943 paper "A theory of Human Motivation" in the journal Psychological Review. According to Maslow, a person's motivations result from not being satisfied with some of their needs.



The work of Maslow classifies human needs in order of importance into 5 levels. This classification corresponds to the order in which they appear to the individual; the satisfaction of the needs of one level generates the needs of the next level. Maslow stated that people are motivated to achieve certain needs and that some needs take precedence over others.

Our most basic need is for physical survival, and this will be the first thing that motivates our behavior. Once that level is fulfilled the next level up is what motivates us, and so on.

4. Marketing

In this piece, I'll discuss how successful marketing campaigns are rooted in psychological persuasion.

4.1 Definitions

Philip Kotler is an American marketing author, consultant, and professor defines marketing as the activity, creative processes, and set of institutions for delivering, creating, exchanging offerings, and communicating that are valuable for clients, consumers, partners and overall society.

Additionally, the concepts that are inherent within the marketing context are applicable to all types of exchange, be it goods, personages, services, ideas or places that may occur between individuals, governments, for-profit and nonprofit firms, and NGOs. Marketing theories are developed from a firm-oriented perspective that was designed to include the exchanging dyad (Kotler, 2012)

4.2 Roles of marketing

As marketing developed, it took a variety of forms. It was noted above that marketing can be viewed as a set of functions in the sense that certain activities are traditionally associated with the exchange process. A common but incorrect view is that selling and advertising are the only marketing activities. Yet, in addition to promotion, marketing includes a much broader set of functions, including product development, packaging, pricing, distribution, and customer service.

Many organizations and businesses assign responsibility for these marketing functions to a specific group of individuals within the organization. In this respect, marketing is a unique and separate entity. Those who make up the marketing department may include brand and product managers, marketing researchers, sales representatives, advertising and promotion managers, pricing specialists, and customer service personnel.

As a managerial process, marketing is the way in which an organization determines its best opportunities in the marketplace, given its objectives and resources. The marketing process includes designing and implementing various tactics, commonly referred to as the “marketing mix,” or the “4 Ps”.

4.3. Marketing Mix (Four P’s)

Neil Hopper Borden popularized the idea of the marketing mix—and the concepts that would later be known primarily as the four Ps—in the 1950s. Borden was an advertising professor at Harvard University. His 1964 article titled “The Concept of the Marketing Mix” demonstrated the ways that companies could use advertising tactics to engage their consumers.

The four Ps of marketing or Marketing Mix are the product, price, place, and promotion of a good or service. They are used by companies to identify some key factors for their business, including what consumers want from them, how their product or service meets or fails to meet those needs, how their product or service is perceived in the world, how they stand out from their competitors, and how they interact with their customers.

6 principles of influence

Back in 1984, Dr. Robert B. Cialdini wrote a book called *Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion*. Since then, it’s been widely hailed as a seminal book on marketing—something everyone in conversion optimization should read.

The most significant aspects of this time were Cialdini’s “6 Principles of Influence,” Alex Birket gave an overview of 6 principles in his article on CXL.com:

Reciprocity. The idea of reciprocity says that people by nature feel obliged to provide either discounts or concessions to others if they’ve received favors from those others. Psychology explains this by stressing that we humans simply hate to feel indebted to other people.

Commitment (and Consistency). This principle explains that humans have a deep need to be seen as consistent. Once we have publicly committed to something or

someone, we are much more likely to go through and deliver on that commitment...hence consistency.

Social Proof. This is when people do what they observe other people doing (when uncertain, there is safety in numbers)

Authority. We trust authority figures and they are inherently more persuasive because of this (authority can be based on many factors – wealth, uniforms, status, etc.)

Liking. The more you like someone, the more likely it is you'll be persuaded by them.

Scarcity. When you believe something is in short supply, you want it more.

Chapter 3: Methodology

1. Strategy

In order to understand the views and perceptions of the use of marketing in everyday life (Marketing trends, influences, advertising, factors that lead to consumption...), a questionnaire was designed online using Google Forms.

The samples were stratified random, and the questions are close end ones, and anonymous. The participants didn't have to add their names.

Considerations for the target responders: The age doesn't matter, but the respondents will be divided in 2 groups, one with marketing experience and other with zero experience.

The second method is a case study done on Apple stores and the use of scarcity as a marketing and influence technique.

2. Purpose

The purpose of the questionnaire is to:

- Give an idea on who is targeted by marketing, and how consumers are ensnared by marketing strategies
- Demonstrate how marketing is impacting on the customer's buying behaviour, through his/her needs and wants; by manipulating and/or influencing.
- Have the responders recall some occasions where someone persuaded them with any of the marketing strategies from chapter 2?
- Understand how marketing changed consumer's behavior over the years, and how advertising became a part of our every day's life.
- Find out how manipulation and influence impact the consumer's preferences (needs, wants, demands...), and the factors that lead to the buying decision, and this will lead to the understanding of the consumer's psychology.
- Analyze the responder's perception of marketing (negative or positive.)

The purpose of the case study is:

- Analyze how scarcity, an influence technique, can be helpful in marketing.
- Prove Say's law is crucial to marketing
- Find the connection between marketing and the 7 principles of influence
- Answer the following questions:
 - What is the benefit for Apple in keeping its future buyers patient? And why is scarcity potentially a guarantee of success?

Chapter 4: Findings

Adolescents:

- The study of consumption by young people leads us to identify individuals by increasingly narrow age groups. Adolescents aged 12-17 exhibit certain common behaviors, financial means often limited to spending money and seeking recognition from peers. They seek to provoke and to distance themselves from parental authority. However, detailed behavioral analysis shows that between 12-14 year olds and 15-17 year olds, perceptions of the world of consumption are very different, not to mention gender-related differences.
- 9 out of 10 young people offer products to buy during weekly shopping. On this occasion, nearly 9 out of 10 young people spontaneously place products to buy in the shopping cart. In addition, the majority of parents (84%) say they accept them.
- At 15, this role is even reinforced. Thus, clothing and cosmetics are gradually establishing themselves. 9 out of 10 have a mobile phone and one in four have a computer at home.
- While the main purchasing manager remains the mother of the family, two in three young people now have to make purchases alone and one in three young people with her family.
- The teenager is also a major buyer. At 12 years old, with his pocket money (on average, 24 euros / month), the teenager buys games, DVDs, CDs, clothes and magazines.
- At 15, his pocket money has increased (on average, 37 euros / month) and he regularly buys clothes or general food, DVDs, CDs and K7s and more.
- Clothes, DVDs, CDs and K7s, gifts and mobile phone cards are the most frequent purchases of girls; boys are more willing to buy general food and (video) games. One in ten young people buy cigarettes with their pocket money
- Rarely used to pay for small daily expenses, pocket money is used by adolescents for pleasure purchases (clothes, (video) games, CD-DVD-K7s, gifts or GSM cards or sweets, cigarettes and drinks.)

Adults:

- Compulsive buyers are mainly women: 80% to 90% of cases. They are often over 30 years old. Their purchases mainly concern clothing, shoes, makeup and jewelry. More rarely on decoration products for the home.
- Men set their sights on cultural objects (books, records, antiques) but also on electronic objects or automotive equipment. It is difficult to measure the prevalence of buyers in the population. Figures are quoted, from 1% to 2%, but these are very fragile estimates.
- Even participants with marketing experience fall to the traps of marketing and buy impulsively
- All participants agree that buying decisions can be emotional and not only rational, and have previously bought a product in order to fit with societal norms.
- Despite being in debt, 70% of participants still find themselves buying things they don't need without realizing it.

- People are aware of the influence but still succumb to it
- Participants with marketing experience are less likely to fall in those traps

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Features (specs or information) appeal to logic, while benefits appeal to emotions. That's why benefits sell, they influence people via the power of emotions. Often we associate decisions with information. We like to make decisions when we have all the information and the context. Or, at least, that's how we think it works. But, it's not so.

Studies have shown that we make decisions based on emotions and then use logic to justify them. Antonio Damasio, a Professor of Neuroscience at the University of Southern California, conducted a study on people incapable of generating emotions. Through his experiment, he established that such people struggled while making basic decisions. This was a big discovery, as the subjects were otherwise absolutely normal and capable of processing information.

We have entered a new stage in the consumer society. Objects no longer meet collective needs but have become more personalized. They mainly aim to differentiate their users, and are chosen for their intangible nature, the imagination that they embody, often constructed by advertising. This indirectly illustrates this unconscious desire to consume as much as possible.

For several years, the production of household appliances has experienced real technical progress. Productivity was improved and more efficient. As a result, overproduction hit traders, which was not profitable. The government has sought a solution to this problem: to produce less robust machines, they will then be less durable. Thus, we, consumers, will be obliged to replace our equipment regularly.

The "consumer society" also encompasses that people will buy the same machine every two or three years. This will bring money to the merchants who can produce more so that their customers are satisfied and can consume. The need to replace becomes permanent. The renewal market is therefore one of the many factors in the desire to consume frantically.

The desire to spend becomes more and more serious. Young people are the main victims, and inequalities are increasing. The production is then accentuated and the traders rip off their customers who will renew their equipment frequently with great pleasure, and our government encourages us to consume as much as possible, which creates a real vicious circle that you can't escape unless people are made aware of the manipulation they're going through.

As Cialdini puts it, we're in the age of information overload. We don't have the time to process all of the information and then to make informed decisions. This incapacity makes us look for signals — signals that help us decide if we want to do something.

"We can focus too heavily on economic factors when seeking to motivate others toward our offerings and ideas," Cialdini added. "We would do well ... to consider employing psychological motivators such as those we have covered here."

Armed with these six principles of influence, companies can more adeptly navigate their potential consumers and convert more to sales. Marketing campaigns can influence consumer behaviors because they elicit reactions, utilize imagery and word associations, and cause you to feel emotions such as nostalgia and fear.

Just like commercials during your favorite television shows, they're highly undesirable. But, if you play persuasion techniques well, you can make the most of this exposure.

Cialdini warned against crossing the line between influence and manipulation, as the latter could spell disaster in the long run. "People, companies and marketers need to ask themselves whether the principle of influence is inherent in the situation – that is, do they have to manufacture it, or can they simply uncover it?" he said. "No one wants to be a smuggler of influence. Claiming to be an expert when they're not, exploiting power – those eventually will have negative consequences.

Say's law proves If a marketer is doing their job right, then marketing impacts consumer behavior by encouraging spending and swaying consumers' choices towards a particular brand. Marketing is actually a lot less important to consumers than one might think. By listening to marketing messages, the consumer has simply been persuaded, and not necessarily on the grounds of superior quality of the product.

The six Principles of Influence have been used for decades by businesses and marketers to get you, the consumer, to part with your hard-earned money. Since the explosion of ecommerce, Cialdini's six principles have been adopted there, too.

Apple uses the scarcity principle of influence to get their clients to buy their new products every time they come out despite the fact that these products aren't much different than the older version ones. This marketing strategy can prove to be positive by allowing the company:

- to promote a brand image and the selective aspect of the brand (not everyone can buy Apple products): a concept very close to luxury marketing.
- generate a fanfare around products with limited availability.
- to introduce higher selling prices and therefore higher margins, given the scarcity effect.
- to promote impulse buying (in excitement) or pre-ordering (due to a limitation of foreseeable stocks).

The products nowadays carry a wide variety of symbols and signs. Their appropriation by the individual helps to shape the concept of self. These are more or less congruent with the self-image. Popular or sought after products are those whose image is consistent with a positive self-image. Those who are avoided are those whose negative image does not conform with a positive self-image. Those who are confrontational are products whose image is positive but incompatible with self-image.

Consumption is also a social sign, the sign of belonging or not to a social group. The social group is distinguished from the social category, it is not a simple collection of people united by common characteristics, it also presupposes the existence of relationships between them.

According to the article *Overcoming Consumerism* from (verdant.net) Consumerism is economically manifested in the chronic purchasing of new goods and services, with little attention to their true need, durability, product origin or the environmental consequences of manufacture and disposal. Consumerism is driven by huge sums spent on advertising designed to create both a desire to follow trends, and the resultant personal self-reward system based on acquisition. Materialism is one of the end results of consumerism.

Consumerism interferes with the workings of society by replacing the normal common-sense desire for an adequate supply of life's necessities, community life, a stable family and healthy relationships with an artificial ongoing and insatiable quest for

things and the money to buy them with little regard for the true utility of what is bought. An intended consequence of this, promoted by those who profit from consumerism, is to accelerate the discarding of the old, either because of lack of durability or a change in fashion.

According to Global Issues, consumerism causes landfills swell with cheap discarded products that fail early and cannot be repaired. Products are made psychologically obsolete long before they actually wear out. A generation is growing up without knowing what quality goods are. Friendship, family ties and personal autonomy are only promoted as a vehicle for gift giving and the rationale for the selection of communication services and personal acquisition. Everything becomes mediated through the spending of money on goods and services. Human beings who cannot spend become worthless.

“Many consumers run out of room in their homes to store the things that they buy. A rapidly growing industry in America is that of self-storage. Thousands of acres of good farmland are paved over every year to build these cities of orphaned and unwanted things so as to give people more room to house the new things that they are persuaded to buy. If these stored products were so essential in the first place, why do they need to be warehoused? An overabundance of things lessens the value of what people possess.”(verdant.net)

“Consumerism sets each person against themselves in an endless quest for the attainment of material things or the imaginary world conjured up and made possible by things yet to be purchased. Weight training, diet centers, breast reduction, breast enhancement, cosmetic surgery, permanent eye make-up, liposuction, collagen injections, these are some examples of people turning themes.”

William Rees, an urban planner at the University of British Columbia, estimated that it requires four to six hectares of land to maintain the consumption level of the average person from a high-consumption country. The problem is that in 1990, worldwide there were only 1.7 hectares of ecologically productive land for each person. He concluded that the deficit is made up in core countries by drawing down the natural resources of their own countries and expropriating the resources, through trade, of peripheral countries: ‘... Our consumption of goods obviously is a function of our culture. Only by producing and selling things and services does capitalism in its present form work, and the more that is produced and the more that is purchased the more we have progress and prosperity. The single most important measure of economic growth is, after all, the gross national product (GNP), the sum total of goods and services produced by a given society in a given year. It is a measure of the success of a consumer society, obviously, to consume.’

“ However, the production, processing, and consumption, of commodities requires the extraction and use of natural resources (wood, ore, fossil fuels, and water); it requires the creation of factories and factory complexes whose operation creates toxic byproducts, while the use of commodities themselves (e.g. automobiles) creates pollutants and waste. Yet of the three factors environmentalists often point to as responsible for environmental pollution — population, technology, and consumption — consumption seems to get the least attention.

One reason, no doubt, is that it may be the most difficult to change; our consumption patterns are so much a part of our lives that to change them would require a massive cultural overhaul, not to mention severe economic dislocation. A drop in demand for products, as economists note, brings on economic recession or even

depression, along with massive unemployment.” - Richard Robbins, *Global Problem and the Culture of Capitalism*, (Allyn and Bacon, 1999), pp. 209

We are currently consuming resources at an unsustainable rate, which is causing mass environmental destruction and social problems across the world. It is obvious that we need to reduce consumerism and change our current lifestyles, otherwise the planet we know will cease to exist.

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