

Consumer Culture and Postmodernism

Prasidh Raj SINGH^{1 2}

Abstract:

Postmodernism is a variety of meanings and definitions, is used to refer to many aspects of social life from musical forms and styles, literature and fine art through to philosophy, history and especially the mass media and consumer culture. Post modernism is a slippery term that is used by writers to refer to several different things. Featherstone (1991) points out the term has been used to refer to new developments in intellectual and cultural theory. The suggestion that our subjective experience of everyday life and our sense of identity has somehow changed significantly in recent years. The view that capitalist or industrial societies have reached new and important stages in their development, the shift from modernity to post-modernity. Consumer culture is also play a vital role in the society, consumer culture may be defined as a day to day change in the taste of consumer behaviour. The term "consumer culture" refers to cultures in which mass consumption and production both fuel the economy and shape perceptions, values, desires, and constructions of personal identity. Economic developments, demographic trends, and new technologies profoundly influence the scope and scale of consumer culture. Social class, gender, ethnicity, region, and age all affect definitions of consumer identity and attitudes about the legitimacy of consumer centred lifestyle.

Keywords:

Postmodernism, Consumer culture, Modernity, Consumer identity, Ethnicity

¹ Prasidh Raj SINGH – Student at National Law University, Orissa India, Email : Prasidh_raj16@yahoo.co.in, Mobile no. +9583237911

² Paper presented at the International Scientific Conference "Logos Universality Mentality Education Novelty" organized by the Lumen Research Center in Humanistic Sciences in partnership with the Romanian Academy, Iasi Branch - "AD Xenopol" Institute, "Al. I. Cuza" University - Faculty of Philosophy and Social - Political Sciences, Iasi, State University from Moldova, Chisinau - Faculty of Law,"Mihail Kogalniceanu" University - Faculty of Law, Iasi, "Petre Andrei" University - Faculty of Law,Iasi, in 18-19 February 2011 in Iasi, Romania.

Postmodernism is a complicated term, or set of ideas, one that has only emerged as an area of academic study since the mid-1980s. Postmodernism is hard to define, because it is a concept that appears in a wide variety of disciplines or areas of study, including art, architecture, music, film, literature, sociology, communications, fashion, and technology. It's hard to locate it temporally or historically, because it's not clear exactly when postmodernism begins. Postmodernism seems to offer some alternatives to joining the global culture of consumption, where commodities and forms of knowledge are offered by forces far beyond any individual's control. These alternatives focus on thinking of any and all action (or social struggle) as necessarily local, limited, and partial--but nonetheless effective. By discarding "grand narratives" (like the liberation of the entire working class) and focusing on specific local goals (such as improved day care centers for working mothers in your own community), postmodernist politics offers a way to theorize local situations as fluid and unpredictable, though influenced by global trends. Hence the motto for postmodern politics might well be "think globally, act locally"--and don't worry about any grand scheme or master plan.

Postmodernism is also refers to the intellectual mood and cultural expressions that are becoming increasingly dominant in contemporary society. Postmodernism, which became an area of academic study in the mid eighties , is a term used to designate the era beyond modernity. In review, the Premodern (medieval) age was called the age of faith and superstition, followed by the modern age, the age of reason, empiricism and science. The postmodern age of relativity and, recently, the newest form of postmodernism, the age of holism and interdependence, followed. Respectively, the guiding metaphors are the created organism, the machine, the text, and the self-organizing system. Modernism has been introduced as a benchmark for the discussion of postmodernism, and two related terms, postmodern and postmodernist.

Postmodernism often bills itself as anti-philosophical, by which it means that it rejects many traditional philosophical alternatives. Yet any statement or activity, including the action of writing a postmodern account of anything, presupposes at least an implicit conception of reality and values. And so despite its official distaste for some versions of the abstract, the universal, the fixed, and the precise, postmodernism offers a consistent framework of premises within which to situate our thoughts and actions.

Abstracting from the above quotations yields the following. Metaphysically, postmodernism is anti-realist, holding that it is impossible to speak meaningfully about an independently existing reality. Postmodernism substitutes instead a social-linguistic, constructionist account of reality. Epistemologically, having rejected the notion of an independently existing

reality, postmodernism denies that reason or any other method is a means of acquiring objective knowledge of that reality. Having substituted social linguistic constructs for that reality, postmodernism emphasizes the subjectivity, conventionality, and incommensurability of those constructions. Postmodern accounts of human nature are consistently collectivist, holding that individuals' identities are constructed largely by the social-linguistic groups that they are a part of, those groups varying radically across the dimensions of sex, race, ethnicity, and wealth. Postmodern accounts of human nature also consistently emphasize relations of conflict between those groups; and given the de-emphasized or eliminated role of reason, postmodern accounts hold that those conflicts are resolved primarily by the use of force, whether masked or naked; the use of force in turn leads to relations of dominance, submission, and oppression. Finally, postmodern themes in ethics and politics are characterized by identification with and sympathy for the groups perceived to be oppressed in the conflicts, and a willingness to enter the fray on their behalf

Postmodernism rejects the Enlightenment project in the most fundamental way possible—by attacking its essential philosophical themes. Postmodernism rejects the reason and the individualism that the entire Enlightenment world depends upon. And so it ends up attacking all of the consequences of the Enlightenment philosophy, from capitalism and liberal forms of government to science and technology.

Postmodernism's essentials are the opposite of modernisms. Instead of natural reality—anti-realism. Instead of experience and reason—linguistic social subjectivism. Instead of individual identity and autonomy—various race, sex, and class group-isms. Instead of human interests as fundamentally harmonious and tending toward mutually-beneficial interaction conflict and oppression. Instead of valuing individualism in values, markets, and politics calls for communalism, solidarity, and egalitarian restraints. Instead of prizing the achievements of science and technology—suspicion tending toward outright host

Postmodern Openings

	Pre-modernism	Modernism	Postmodernism
Metaphysics	Realism: Supernaturalism	Realism: Naturalism	Anti-realism
Epistemology	Mysticism and/or faith	Objectivism: Experience and Reason	Social subjectivism
Human Nature	Original Sin; Subject to God's will	Tabula rasa and Autonomy	Social construction and conflict
Ethics	Collectivism: Altruism	Individualism	Collectivism: egalitarianism
Politics & Economics	Feudalism	Liberal Capitalism	Socialism
When and Where	Medieval	The Enlightenment; 20thcentury sciences, business, and technical fields	Late twentieth century humanities and related professions

Postmodernists do not attempt to refine their thoughts about what is right or wrong, true or false, good or evil. They believe that there isn't such a thing as absolute truth. A postmodernist views the world outside of themselves as being in error, that is, other people's truth becomes indistinguishable from error. Therefore, no one has the authority to define truth or impose upon others his idea of moral right and wrong.

Their self-rationalization of the universe and world around them pits themselves against divine revelation versus moral relativism. Many choose to believe in naturalism and evolution rather than God and creationism.

Postmodernism culture

If we understand where postmodernism is coming from and where it is going, we will begin to see its expressions in every area of our culture. In 1984, the year of Orwell's prediction, Francis Schaeffer stated, "Finally, we must not forget that the world is on fire. We are not only losing the church, but our entire culture as well. We live in a post-Christian world which is under the judgment of God." Ravi Zacharias, himself Indian born, observed, "What's happening in the West with the emergence of postmodernism is only what has been in much of Asia for centuries but under different banners." It is the postmodernist himself who wants to convince us that culture is neutral and has no moral connotations. But that is because a non-Christian culture does not believe in morality, at least to the extent that anything we do, think, say or observe has anything to do with right and wrong. Morality is relegated to the spiritual level which can only be highly personal and certainly not judged by our actions. Gene Veith comments, "For all its talk about culture, postmodernism lacks culture since the traditions, beliefs and morals that define culture are all disabled."

An Attack on Truth

Perhaps the most identifying mark of postmodernism is its flat denial of the possibility of truth. With its roots in existentialism, postmodernism maintains that truth is created by a social group for its own purposes and then forced on others in order to manipulate and suppress them. Postmodernism's main objective, therefore, is to "deconstruct" this build up of language and society (i.e. "culture") and liberate the oppressed from the oppressor. The postmodernist attack is quite different. David Dockery explains: Postmodernists would critique Christianity by claiming that Christians think they have the only truth. The claims of Christianity are rejected because of the appeal to absolute truth. Absolute truth claims will be dismissed by

The postmodernist for being "intolerant" –trying to force one's beliefs onto other people. Postmodernists have genuinely given up on the idea of absolute truth. Of course, the age-old response to such skewed thinking is, "How can you say absolutely that there is no absolute truth?" Postmodernists do not care about the apparent contradiction. The oppressive attitude has been disabled and that is all that matters. A typical statement by a "Repressed Memory Therapist" reveals this agenda, "I don't care if it's true. What actually happened is irrelevant to me."²⁴ One wonders how such "therapy" could ever help anyone.

The Loss of Identity

If modernism proclaimed the death of God, postmodernism proclaims the death of self. As strange as that may sound to the remnants of a modernistic society who were born and bred on rugged individualism and humanism. The postmodern mind-set can have a devastating impact on the human personality. If there are no absolutes, if truth is relative, then there can be no stability, no meaning in life. If reality is socially constructed, then moral guidelines are only masks for oppressive power and individual identity is an illusion. The role-models for such culture become the homeless who choose to live on the streets instead of in shelters, the cyberpunks who live inside a computer in a virtual world where they really do not exist, the city gangs where identity is lost and rules of society are discarded, or the grunge kids who (while coming from wealthy enough families to afford nice clothing) wear the uniform of the “group” and lose their individual identity.

Origin of consumer culture

In a review of historical accounts of consumption and culture, Grant McCracken (1988) remarks that there is little consensus as to the origins of consumer culture. Consumer culture began in eighteenth-century England with the commercialization of fashion precipitating a mass change in taste. According to these historians, the new predilection for style fueled a demand for clothing that was mass-produced through technical innovations in the textile industry and mass-marketed through innovations in printing technologies that afforded wide-scale advertising.

Another historian, Rosalind Williams (1982), claims that the consumer revolution began in late-nineteenth-century France, when the pioneering efforts of French retailers and advertisers transformed Paris into a “pilot plant of mass consumption” through the Paris expositions of 1889 and 1900. Williams argues that the expositions significantly contributed to the development of the department store and the trade show, key factors in the development of consumer culture.

Finally, it may be less useful to identify the specific points of origin for the consumer revolution than to note patterns of cultural change that foretold the radical restructuring of society. He identifies three moments in history that undergird the development of modern consumer culture. The first was Elizabethan politics in sixteenth-century England, where Queen Elizabeth I introduced the use of objects to her highly ceremonial court to communicate the legitimacy of her rule. The second was the increased participation of the masses in the marketplace in eighteenth-century Europe. As more members of

the culture could participate in the marketplace because of the widespread prosperity of the industrial revolution, the marketplace expanded, creating an explosion of consumer choices. The gentry, the middle class, and the lower class perceived and adopted the social significance of goods and attempted to appropriate those significances for themselves. The third was the institutionalization of consumption through the emergence of the department store in the nineteenth century. The department store fundamentally changed the nature and the context of purchase activity as well as the nature of the information and influence to which the consumer was subjected.

Don Slater (1997) summarizes these thoughts by arguing that consumer culture began with a wide penetration of consumer goods into the everyday lives of people across social strata, that consumption was ignited through a new sense of fashion and taste, and finally that the culture was cemented through the development of infrastructures, organizations, and practices that took advantage of the new markets, namely, the rise of shopping, advertising, and marketing.

Defining consumer culture

Consumer culture is a system in which consumption, a set of behaviours found in all times and places, is dominated by the consumption of commercial products. It is also a system in which the transmission of existing cultural values, norms and customary ways of doing things from generation to generation “is largely understood to be carried out through the exercise of free personal choice in the private sphere of everyday life.” Furthermore, consumer culture is also bound up with the idea of modernity, that is, a world “no longer governed by tradition but rather by flux,” and in which “social actors who are deemed to be individually free and rational” holds sway. And finally, consumer culture denote an economy in which value has been divorced from the material satisfaction of wants and the sign value of goods takes precedence.

In consumer culture predispositions toward social emulation, matching, and imitation expressed through marketplace choices are accompanied by a penchant for differentiation, individuality, and distinction also expressed through marketplace choices. Together these motives drive the characteristically rapid turn - over in goods and services. These dynamics are often thought to have been triggered by the purposeful social engineering of marketers, advertisers and retailers have spread from roots in the fashion industry into all parts of social life

Four more crucial aspects of consumer culture include:

1. The pervasive and rapid circulation of commercial products, that is, things produced for exchange within a capitalist market, takes priority over and above things redistributed by governmental through the welfare state or exchanged among social groups through gift giving.
2. The relative independence of consumption activities from those related to production and the growing power and authority this gives to some consumers over market dynamics.

The special importance given to the use of consumer goods in the allocation of individual status, prestige, perceived well-being and quality of life.

There are many definitions of consumer culture. To begin, consumer culture should not be confused with two of its attributes: consumerism and materialism.

According to Yiannis Gabriel and Tim Lang (1995), consumerism has at least five distinct connotations. It is a moral doctrine, a means for demarcating social status, a vehicle for economic development, a public policy, and a social movement. Consumerism is defined here as the collection of behaviors, attitudes, and values that are associated with the consumption of material goods.

Materialism is another perspective that is prevalent in consumer culture. The term “materialism” also has a rich etymology. At the highest levels of materialism, possessions assume a central place in a person’s life and are believed to provide the greatest sources of satisfaction and dissatisfaction. While one might readily think that materialism is a good synonym for consumerism, materialism, at least as it is defined here, only covers a part of consumerism. Namely, materialism deals only with the social value of material goods.

Consumer culture, which subsumes both consumerism and materialism, has been studied from the perspective of a variety of disciplines, including communication, cultural studies, theology, sociology, psychology, marketing, anthropology, and philosophy. Regardless of the disciplinary approach, a central feature of consumer culture is the relationship between people and material goods. Generically, consumer culture is a social arrangement in which the buying and selling of goods and services is not only a predominant activity of everyday life but also an important arbiter of social organization, significance, and meaning.

Consumer culture in BRIC countries

BRIC literally refers to Brazil, Russia, India and China, but may include a number of countries with rapid economic development and growth in consumer culture, thus including countries like Turkey or South Africa. In all of these countries the emergence of powerful local brands such as the Murat, Mahindra, and Tata automobile brands in Turkey and India, respectively, and large local consumer markets is a big part of the story of global consumer culture in the 21st century.

In China, the spread of consumer culture has been fostered by the existence of strong consumer interest before the 19th century as part of an urban culture and a secular outlook (Stearns 2006). The appeal of “an almost fantasy like modernity” that promises some release from “customary hierarchies and constraints” (Stearns 2006, 109) has also fostered the dramatic expansion of consumer culture. Finally, economic reforms post 1979 have diminished state power dramatically and freed many consumers from political strictures on consumption.

As in other places, distinctive characteristics of consumer culture are emergent in China. Among these are the idea of consumption as a palliative to continued tight state control of political freedom and the media; the articulation of various local understandings of Chinese history and character in its branding practices, and the role of consumer goods in vitalizing China’s gift economy and in particular the web of interpersonal relationships often referred to as *guanxi* (Dong and Tian forthcoming; Latham 2006). Others have commented on the interaction between China’s one child policy and the special role of children in creating the more hedonically oriented Chinese consumer of today. The speed of development and the success of a one - child family policy has “plunged children and parents from all social strata into a consumer revolution. As a result, the proportional claims of Chinese children on their family’s financial resources are both larger and more uniform across economic strata than for children in earlier cases” of consumer culture.

In India, the growth of a middle class estimate to represent 30% of the population, or 250 million people is the big story of the early 21st century. Still, it is likely that no more than 100

million or so of this middle - class represents a consumerist segment. As in China, participation in consumer culture is associated with cosmopolitan values like modernity, democracy, and even liberation. Nonetheless, the majority of the larger group remains committed to a savings orientation; Indians tend to save 25% of their incomes and place their savings in cash accounts rather than consume financial instruments. Across the population about half of all discretionary expenditures are for important family ceremonial activities rather

than for the satisfaction of individual desires, indicative of the enduring role of family in structuring consumption practices in India. On the other, hand there is a huge aspiring class, perhaps as many as 260 million, striving to attain middle class status, with maybe 15 million joining the middle classes each year who may engage in bouts of conspicuous spending. The Indian middle class is also divided along the fault lines of geography, especially the northsouth divide, education, profession, especially differences between the private and public sector, class, and caste.

Role of Consumerism in Contemporary Society

In the good olden days the principle of 'Caveat emptor', which meant buyer beware governed the relationship between seller and the buyer. In the era of open markets buyer and seller came face to face, seller exhibited his goods, buyer thoroughly examined them and then purchased them. It was assumed that he would use all care and skill while entering into transaction.

The maxim relieved the seller of the obligation to make disclosure about the quality of the product. In addition, the personal relation between the buyer and the seller was one of the major factors in their relations. But with the growth of trade and its globalization the rule no more holds true. It is now impossible for the buyer to examine the goods before hand and most of the transactions are concluded by correspondence. Further on account of complex structure of the modern goods, it is only the producer / seller who can assure the quality of goods. With manufacturing activity becoming more organized, the producers / sellers are becoming more strong and organised whereas the buyers are still weak and unorganized. In the age of revolutionized information technology and with the emergence of e-commerce related innovations the consumers are further deprived to a great extent. As a result buyer is being misled, duped and deceived day in and day out. Mahatma Gandhi, the father of nation, attached great importance to what he described as the "poor consumer", who according to him should be the principal beneficiary of the consumer movement. He said "A Consumer is the most important visitor on our premises. He is not dependent on us we are on him. He is not an interruption to our work; he is the purpose of it. We are not doing a favour to a consumer by giving him an opportunity. He is doing us a favour by giving an opportunity to serve him."

In spite of these views consumerism is still in its infancy in our country, thanks to the sellers market and the government monopoly in most services. Consumer awareness is low due to the apathy and lack of education among the masses. No one has told them about their rights - to be informed about product quality, price, protection against unsafe products, access to variety of goods at

competitive prices, consumer education etc. What consumerism lacks here is education and information resources, testing facilities, competent leadership, price control mechanism, and adequate quasi-judicial machinery. The providers of goods and services have been reluctant to give due consideration to consumer interest protection.

In present situation, consumer protection, though as old as consumer exploitation, has assumed greater importance and relevance. Consumerism is a recent and universal phenomenon. It is a social movement. Consumerism is all about protection of the interests of the consumers. Consumerism is concerned with protecting consumers from all organisations with which there is exchanged relationship. It encompasses the set of activities of government, business, independent organisations and concerned consumers that are designed to protect the rights of consumers.

As commonly understood consumerism refers to wide range of activities of government business and independent organisations designed to protect rights of the consumers. Consumerism is a process through which the consumers seek redress, restitution and remedy for their dissatisfaction and frustration with the help of their all organised or unorganised efforts and activities. It is, in-fact a social movement seeking to protect the rights of consumers in relation to the producers of goods and providers of services. In-fact consumerism today is an all-pervasive term meaning nothing more than people's search for getting better value for their money. Consumer is the focal point of any business. Consumers' satisfaction will benefit not only business but government and society as well. So consumerism should not be considered as consumers' war against business. It is a collective consciousness on the part of consumers, business, government and civil society to enhance consumers' satisfaction and social welfare which will in turn benefit all of them and finally make the society a better place to live in.

Components of consumerism

There are various components of consumerism. First and foremost is self-protection by consumers.

Consumer must be aware of his rights, raise voice against exploitation and seek redressed of his grievances.

Consumers' consciousness determines the effectiveness of consumerism. It is the duty of the consumer to identify his rights and to protect them.

Voluntary Consumer Organisations engaged in organising consumers and encouraging them to safeguard their interests is another important element of consumer movement.

The success of consumerism lies in the realisation of the business that there is no substitute for voluntary self-regulations. Little attention from the business will not only serve consumers interest but will also benefit them.

Some businesses in India have come together to adopt a code of conduct for regulating their own activities. Regulation of business through legislation is one of the important means of protecting the consumers.

Consumerism has over the time developed into a sound force designed to aid and protect the consumer by exerting, legal, moral and economic pressure on producers and providers in some of the developed

Rising consumerism in India

Consumerism is used here in the sense of the development of consumer-oriented tendencies, marked by the availability of a variety of manufactured consumer goods and active advertising of the products in various media. Part of the rising consumerism in India may be cast in the general context of global tendencies in consumerism. Recent work suggests that global diffusion of consumerism has been aided by the expansion of multinationalism, the diffusion of telecommunication and satellite technologies, the general dissatisfaction with socialist political regimes, and emerging economic successes in East Asian countries. Certainly, recent moves in India echo these developments.

What is happening in India may also be described in postmodern terms. Indian development does not follow standard chronological sequences observed in some Western societies. Models of social change do not follow any known patterns of change. Modernist methods found in the conventional social sciences have limited value when the objective is to capture change in non-Western cultures. This is because modernist thinking is regimented, very rationalistic, and (pseudo)scientifically oriented. Postmodernist thinking accommodates nonlinear thinking and is open-minded when it comes to alternate or nonorthodox patterns. For example, some new technologies in India are diffusing faster than some old technologies. So, one cannot use the historical progression of the West as a model to study India. The Indian consumer scene is replete with what might be misinterpreted by the modernist to be contradictions and the juxtaposition of opposites (and therefore, non-natural), but in reality they represent highly symbolic modes of behavior, much of which must be understood within the Indian cultural framework.

In sum, I have identified 13 different factors to describe India as an emerging consumer society. Although these factors are not to be considered

exhaustive, they are representative of the movement of India toward a consumer-oriented society. The factors are:

- A burgeoning middle class, its changing values, and pent-up consumer demand
- Changing women's roles, women's labour participation, and the changing structure of the family
- Rising consumer aspirations and expectations across many segments of the population
- increased consumer spending on luxury items aided by past savings and the introduction of the credit system
- New types of shopping environments and outlets
- Media proliferation, satellite and cable television, and the thriving film industry
- Media sophistication and familiarity with English language among media people and a wide segment of the population
- High degree of consumer awareness and sophistication across different segments
- The emergence of travelling Indian consumers-immigrants in the United States and England, overseas workers, tourists, and professionals-and their exposure to worldwide consumer products
- Strong domestic consumer goods manufacturing sector
- Resurfacing of hedonistic cultural elements after centuries of dormancy
- Entry of multinational corporations into India
- The emergence of the rural consumer sector

Consumer culture in western world

The term “consumer culture” refers to cultures in which mass consumption and production both fuel the economy and shape perceptions, values, desires, and constructions of personal identity. Economic developments, demographic trends, and new technologies profoundly influence the scope and scale of consumer culture. Social class, gender, ethnicity, region, and age all affect definitions of consumer identity and attitudes about the legitimacy of consumer centred lifestyle

The intellectual roots of consumer culture date to seventeenth century Western Europe and the antimercantilist idea that domestic markets could adequately sustain national economies. By the 1770s, as early capitalist ideology and early industrialization took hold in England, a widespread culture of consumption arose. This early English consumer culture influenced life in colonial America. Colonists acquired English - made goods as markers of status

and respectability. Despite Jeffersonian Republican and religious protests against luxury and aristocratic emulation, the ties between gentility and commodity consumption grew after the Revolutionary War, especially as early industrialization and commercial and transportation revolutions made consumer goods more easily available and less expensive. These developments led white women in middleclass, urban communities to relinquish many familiar tasks of domestic labor, such as making soap. By the 1830s, consumption had become central to how middleclass women defined themselves as wives and mothers.

Consumer culture began to assume its modern contours after the Civil War. The explosive growth of industrialization and its accompanying techniques of mass distribution made the consumption of ready made goods possible on an unprecedented scale. Urbanization and population growth broadened markets for consumption. By 1900, department stores, mail order catalogs, and masscirculated magazines made consumer culture broadly accessible. As mass production pushed prices down, and as department stores offered cheap knockoffs of expensive goods, immigrants and working class Americans got their own taste of consumerism. Consumer culture had also expanded beyond its urban base. Mass magazines and catalogs kept the remotest corners of the nation abreast of new styles and merchandise.

Some Americans resisted consumerism. In 1899, the cultural critic Thorstein Veblen derided what he called the “conspicuous consumption” of luxury goods. Progressives both condemned the “profligate” consuming patterns of workers and immigrants and reacted politically when corporate monopolies, inflation, and unsafe merchandise threatened their own increasingly commodity centered lifestyles. Some, like Florence Kelley, sought to organize a consumer movement as a force for reform, but most middle class Americans simply took consumerism for granted.

The rise of national “brand name” products added a new dynamic to consumer culture. During the early 1900s, merchandisers began promoting brand names in order to gain leverage in marketing and distributing their wares. By the 1920s, much of this promotional work had passed to advertising agencies. Using dramatic graphics and carefully honed copy to associate brand name products with desirable personality traits and social values, advertising agencies became cultural arbiters of style and taste.

Some historians suggest that brand names, national advertising campaigns, the movies, and, by the 1930s, chain stores and radio led to a homogenization of American culture. But ethnic enclaves, unions, and competing values contributed to distinct cultures of consumption. During the 1950s, however, economic prosperity, suburbanization, and a Cold War emphasis on Americanism and idealized nuclear families undermined these

distinctions. With the advent of television and ubiquitous commercial icons like Holiday Inn and McDonald's, and the spread of shopping centers and malls, Americans absorbed a larger set of shared cultural references and consumer centered aspirations.

HOME OWNERSHIP. Foremost on the list of items that American citizens were told they needed was new housing, and the ideal housing, according to the standards of the time, was a mass-produced single-family home in the suburbs, residential housing construction after the war occurred at rates never before seen in the United States, with the federal government helping veterans buy homes with guaranteed loans and connecting the new suburbs to cities with an immense system of federally built highways. Between 1947 and 1953, the number of people living in the suburbs increased by 43%, and by 1960 62% of Americans owned their own homes.

AUTOMOBILES. Home ownership generated the need for many items, but few had more far-reaching effects than automobiles. With such a large proportion of Americans living in the suburbs, the ability to commute to work and shopping centers became essential, so a family car went from being a luxury to being a necessity in the 1950s. This was the birth of American car culture. Then, as now, a new car represented a substantial investment. The average income was \$3,216 a year, and the cost of a Ford was between \$1,399 and \$2,262—at least half of a family's annual income. (Interestingly, this ratio has remained about the same: in 2003 the median family income was about \$43,000, while a new car cost about \$21,000). Car ownership led to more travel, which spawned more business opportunities. Fast food restaurants allowed people to eat in their cars. Motels ("motor hotels") provided inexpensive places to stay (and park cars overnight). Convenience stores sprang up along the new highways, encouraging drivers to stop and shop while they were on the road. Even the camping and outdoor industry saw a rush to its products, as Americans purchased campers and other outdoor equipment and took to the road for family vacations. By 1950, 60% of American households had a car, and transportation-related expenses accounted for one out of every seven dollars spent by the typical American household. By 1999 the average American household had 1.9 cars, with those in the highest earnings bracket averaging 2.8 cars per household.

TELEVISION. Along with the widespread ownership of automobiles, the introduction of television into daily U.S. life represented one of the most important social, economic, and technological changes of the twentieth century. Television was promoted as a social equalizer that would, again, prove the superiority of American capitalism over Soviet communism. With such unprecedented access to information, U.S. citizens were predicted to achieve equality across all classes and social groups. In 1945 there were about 7,000

working television sets and nine television stations in the country, and in 1950, when the total U.S. population was about 151 million, 3.8 million homes, or 9% of all households, had television sets. By the end of 1952, the number of households with TVs had grown to twenty million, and there were more than ninety-eight television stations. In 1993, 98% of American households had at least one television, and 64% had two or more. Like automobiles, televisions were substantial financial investments for families in the middle of the century. A typical Philco Model 1403 TV cost \$199, while the higher-end Admiral Home Entertainment TV System cost \$549. Television commercials provided a new way to advertise consumer products in American homes, and advertisers were quick to recognize their effectiveness. In 1952 advertisers spent \$288 million to purchase commercial airtime, an increase of more than 38% over the previous year. By 2004 airtime for a single thirty-second commercial to be shown during the *Super Bowl* cost an advertiser \$2.3 million.

Consumer culture in India

India has witnessed some unprecedented changes in the last two decades on the economic and social-cultural fronts. These changes have primarily been fueled by the structural adjustment programs. The economic liberalization pushed in the name of 'free markets' has meant that multi-national corporations have free access to the Indian market and its cheap labour (Kurien 1995). These changes have significantly impacted both the consumer-culture as well as the mediascape of the country. Indians in the last couple of decades have witnessed an unparalleled proliferation of consumer goods and international brands.

Which is closely linked to economic liberalization. The period has also witnessed a decline of Indian brands and public sector undertakings, with international private capital increasingly taking roots. As the Indian economy becomes part of the world capitalist system, there is a shift away from building a self-reliant welfare state to a 'market' driven consumer goods economy (Kurien 1995, Mankekar 1999). This rising consumer expectation, created with the change in economic policies has led to the strengthening of the social acceptance of consumption, as it increasingly becomes means of defining social status.

The new economic policies enabled the middle class to consume goods that had recently been luxury items but were now perceived as crucial indices of upward mobility: household appliances, toiletries, packaged foods, and other consumer goods. Media as one of the prime movers of growing consumerism in India. There are three related changes in the nature and content of media that need to be highlighted here.

- First, there has been a several fold increase in the number of television channels in the country.
- Second, there has been an exponential rise in advertising expenditure in India.
- Third, and a related shift has been the altering of the programming or media content to suit the corporate interests

The biggest change in the last few years has been in the electronic media with a dramatic rise in the number of television channels across the country. Indian television, completely controlled by the government since its inception, gave way to cable television in 90s. All the cable television channels, which include names like Star, Zee, Sony etc., are controlled by private domestic or international capital. Though private channels are the biggest vehicles of the consumer culture in media, the state owned channel also witnessed a change in priorities in the 80s. In the initial years the state controlled television programming was a reflection of the paternalistic or welfare role it saw itself in. In the pre-liberalization era, 'Doordarshan' programs were marked by a special focus on education and themes socially relevant for the weaker sections of the society. The turning point in Indian television programming and advertising came in early 80s with the success of the 'Doordarshan' soap opera 'Humlog' and its sponsor Nestle. This 'success' led to the increasing commercialization of the medium and thrust away from welfare imperative. Subsequent programs and advertisements, especially with the rise of private and multinational channels, have been marked by the portrayal of upper/upper-middle-class lifestyle, which legitimizes consumerism and creates material wants (Mankekar1999). Analyzing changing Indian television programs and advertising over the last two decades argues that there has been an unprecedented rise in the consumerist content in the television programs. Interestingly, a glance through any of the popular channels reminds the reader of the famous statement of Horkheimer and Adorno, "in the most influential American magazines, Life and Fortune, a quick glance can now scarcely distinguish advertising from editorial picture and text". Most of the programs are set in rich-educated-urban class milieu. The images and stories woven around the themes of consumerist lifestyle create an 'ideal-form' of existence among

Viewers, which is marked by conspicuous consumption. This imagery sets up the discourse of consumption, and desire by the people to consume more and more. These representations demonstrate a close nexus between advertising firms and television programmers with television entertainment increasingly portraying urban, rich class with disposable income.

Consumer culture is characterized by greater desire to procure objects of consumption. There is *showbaazi* (conspicuous consumption). The society has

changed in the last few years. One person gets a bike then person next door has to get a bigger one. Kishore, who makes his living by working as a janitor linked the issue of rising consumer culture to television and asserted that. It (television) increases your hunger [for goods]. Children put pressure on parents and demand more goods. My son asks for a bottle Horlicks (health drink) and I have to buy. It puts financial pressure on us...Youngsters want to copy TV stars. Similarly, highlighting the role of television and its impact on changing consumer demand, Rani, a young working class home maker, opined that Children now ask for many more things. Whatever they see on TV, they want to own it...Earlier *dal-roti* (popular local food) seemed sufficient, but now that want rice, vegetables and sometimes even ask for Maggi (a brand of instant noodles marketed by Nestle). Hi-fi society which television shows plays a role in creating greater desire to consume. People around me want to dress up like those actors. They feel embarrassed if their clothes are not fashionable. This has increased competition amongst us. A similar sentiment was expressed by Mahendra, a middle aged male worker, who works for a local workers cooperative, and he described television as a source of "pollution." According to him, Earlier people were happy to live simple lives, but now they want everything. TV shows only elite lifestyle and it influences people by increasing their desire to copy and consume...TV is a big status symbol and people even go under heavy burden of debt to purchase it.

Another worker Alok, who makes his living by washing clothes, informed us that it was essential for him to own a television in order to find social acceptability with his relatives. He told us that he had to reduce the consumption of milk for his children in order to purchase a colour television set. Sunita, a working class home maker also told us that in order to buy television she saved money by reducing the family consumption on food and clothing. I saved by cutting down the household expenses. I reduced our expenditure on food and I did not buy clothes for myself and my children for a year. In summary, consumption is a significant aspect of the lives of these workers. They demonstrate a high level of desire to consume and to emulate upper classes. This subaltern group acknowledged that television played an important role in influencing their beliefs about the world around them. In particular, television is an important creator of needs and supplies them with icons and images about lifestyle to copy.

Postmodernism and mass culture

What is postmodernism? Why is it relevant to us

In order to identify post-modernism, the following, by no means exhaustive, set of summary points summarises some of the most salient features which writers about the phenomenon have chosen to emphasise.

Trowler, 1996 identifies two key themes that can be associated with postmodernism.

Is that of a Society that has come after modern societies, which is information rich, global and composed of many, *sub-groups and cultures*.

The second theme sees postmodernism as a 'way of knowing the world, one which questions the nature of 'truth', 'reason' and even 'reality'. This is as I have already said, a relativist position, which denies that there are absolutes in any area of human knowledge. Following the phenomenological tradition in sociology, knowledge is socially constructed and reflects the social positions of the informer and informed.

It is Relevant to Us Because....

If society is information rich, the majority of information comes from the media.

The media is a key factor in the spread of 'global ideas' and information. Critics point to the USA as the main producer, which has in turn led to a form of cultural imperialism in the late 20th C. For example, Ritzer talks of the *McDonaldization* of society.

A response to the bewildering array of choice and diversity is to 'pick and mix' to suit sub-group and sub-cultural identities. So young, Japanese people may drive, 1950's American Cars, dance in the part to early rock and roll music and have elaborate Elvis, quiff hairstyles, while at the same time adhering to Japanese ideas of culture and style.

The media contribute to our knowledge of the world. More recent sociological approaches stress sees knowledge imparted by the media as fragmented, confused and overwhelming, stressing its relative nature. So a tabloid paper like *The Sun* can have a lead article attacking the role of porn in the aftermath of a brutal sex crime, opposite a 'page three lovely' barring all

The Cultural Significance of Post Modernism

According to Jameson and Baudrillard, with the decline of engineering and manufacturing in many advanced capitalist economies, the provision of the cultural and media services becomes a key economic sector. In the UK for example, the record industry is one of the leading export sectors of the economy.

Both writers argue that Marx has failed to appreciate the qualitative transformation, which occurs once cultural artefacts; signs and images become the most important commodities in the market. Jameson does not abandon Marx altogether; he acknowledges that it is still the drive for profit, which leads capitalism to invest in marketing, advertising and public relations and the other cultural or image industries.

Baudrillard, in contrast, moves such more sharply away from Marx, insisting that in order to understand the post-modern society we must develop a 'political economy of the sign' or image. The trading of signs or images, as opposed to things, is now the dominant pattern of market relations and the task must be to explore the codes, which govern such exchanges. It is semiology rather than economics which holds the key to understanding the principles or 'codes' governing such transactions, and it is the agencies of signification – advertising agencies, marketing consultancies, PR firms, and the mass media –, which play a crucial role in circulating these codes. For example, the 'designer labels' attached to jeans, shirts and coats all 'mean' something according to the code recognised by most young people.

For Baudrillard, we live in a world, which is 'media saturated', a world in which we are bombarded by media and advertising messages through multi-channel TV, globalised electronic and cable networks, a profusion of radio stations, newspapers and street billboards. Baudrillard argues that the consequences of this are profound. The 'codes' generated by the agencies of signification become our rules for organising our lives. So powerful are these codes that we lose the ability to distinguish between reality (for example, the real practical values of a commodity) and its image. Thus the post modern world is dominated by 'simulacra' literally, false or deceptive images, in which we no longer try to distinguish reality from image, the two blur together

Key Areas for Postmodernists

1. The breakdown of the distinction between culture and society.

Post modernism is said to describe the emergence of a social order in which the importance and power of the mass media and popular culture mean they govern and shape other forms of social relationship. The idea is that popular culture signs and media images increasingly dominate our sense of reality, and the way we define ourselves and the world around us. It tries to come to terms with and understand the media in society. The mass media, for example, were once thought of as holding up a mirror to, and thereby reflecting society, and thereby reflecting a wider social reality. Now reality can be defined by the surface reflections of that mirror. Society has become subsumed within the mass media. It is no longer a question of distortion, since the term implies

that there is a reality, outside the surface simulations of the media, which can be distorted, and this is precisely what is at issue according to Post Modernists. Linked to this is the idea that in a post-modern condition that it is more difficult to distinguish the economy from popular culture. The realm of consumption - what we buy and what determines what we buy - is increasingly influenced by popular culture. Consumption is increasingly bound up with popular culture because popular culture increasingly determines consumption

2. An Emphasis On Style at the Expense of Substance:

A crucial implication is that in a post-modern culture, surfaces and styles become more important, and evoke in turn a kind of 'designer ideology'. Alternatively, as Harvey puts it...'images dominate narrative'. The argument is that we increasingly consume images and signs for their own sake rather than for their 'usefulness' or for deeper values that they might symbolise. We consume images and signs precisely because they are images and signs, and disregard their questions of usefulness and value. Consequently, qualities like artistic merit, integrity, seriousness and authenticity, realism, intellectual depth and strong narratives tend to be undermined. Moreover, virtual reality computer graphics can allow people to experience various forms of reality second hand. These surface simulations can therefore potentially replace their real life counterparts. (Virtual reality sex for example).

3. The Breakdown of the Distinction between Art and Popular Culture:

If the first two points are accepted it follows that for post-modern culture, anything can be turned into a joke, reference or quotation in its eclectic play of styles, simulations and surfaces. If popular cultural signs and media images are taking over in defining our sense of reality for us, and if this means that style takes precedence over content, then it becomes more difficult to maintain a meaningful distinction between art and popular culture. There is no longer any agreed and inviolable criteria which can serve to differentiate art from popular culture. Compare this with the fears of mass culture critics that mass culture would eventually subvert high culture. The only difference seems to be that these critics were pessimistic about these developments, whereas, some, but not all-post-modern theorists are by contrast optimistic. One aspect of this process is that art becomes increasingly integrated into the economy both because it is used to encourage people to consume though its role in advertising and because it becomes a commercial good in its own right.

4. Confusions over Time and Space:

It is argued here that contemporary and future compression's and focusing on time and space have led to increasing confusion and incoherence in our sense of time and space, in our maps of the places we live, our ideas about the times on terms of which we organise our lives.. The growing immediacy of global space and time resulting from the dominance of the mass media means that our previously unified and coherent ideas about space and time begin to be undermined, and become distorted and confused. Rapid flows of capital, money, information and culture disrupt the linear unities of time, and established distances of geographical space. Because of the speed and scope of modern mass communications, and the relative ease and rapidity with which people and information can travel, time and space becomes less stable and comprehensible and more confused and incoherent. Harvey. Post modernism popular culture is seen to express these confusions and distortions. As such, it is less likely to reflect coherent senses of space or time. Some idea of this argument can be obtained by trying to identify the locations used in some pop videos, the linear narratives of some recent films or the times and spaces crossed in a typical evening of TV viewing. In short, post modern culture is a culture *sans frontieres*, outside history.

Global problem of consumer culture

The promise of consumer culture is central to the expansion of the new Asian economies, in particular China and India, which have staved off the possibility of a severe global recession over the last decade. Yet, this expansion of consumer culture means more goods, more air travel, more waste, pollution and carbon dioxide emissions. This dimension of the politics of consumption pushes consumer culture onto the international political agenda, with various national politicians seeking to engage in a tit-for-tat blame-game, or to deny the problem exists. Consumer culture, then is difficult to relinquish or scale down as it has become both a major source of industrial production and employment. In addition it is a key mode of legitimation, a visible sign of the economic success and standing of a nation-state. Curbing consumption is not a popular option which means politicians, seek out 'technological fix' solutions which will allow the economy to proceed at full speed, but somehow clean up or recycle pollution and waste. Hence, the interest in the development of nanotechnology and other new technologies which will allegedly produce waste-eating organisms, along with the interest in more efficient forms of power such as the hydrogen engine, or nuclear fusion energy. If consumer culture is central to the contemporary neo-liberal increasingly globally integrated economies of nation

states, and politicians' electoral success depends upon economic growth, to seek to constrain consumption becomes the unpopular and potentially unelectable option. As consumer culture globalizes, there is also the sense, then, of the planetary limits to consumption: that we are literally consuming the planet and our human future at an unsustainable rate (an argument made forcefully by James Lovelock. There has, of course, been a long history of attempts to shackle and regulate consumption and develop a more ethical and morally responsible attitude, at every stage of the expansion of consumer culture. There have been various forms of religious asceticism and Puritanism and secular forms of regulation. Over the last decade a clearer notion of the consumer-citizen has emerged with the citizen defined as having rights to be a consumer, and the consumer defined as having responsibilities to ask questions about the consequences, risks and planetary costs of consumption. For example, it was reported recently that there are calls to extend the energy efficiency labelling of 'white goods' such as fridges to other goods, not just in terms of output (energy running costs) but also in terms of 'carbon costs,' the actual input of energy expended in their manufacture. The comparison of different goods will provide interesting evidence and make for more difficult ethical judgements. Motor cars and personal computers are not too different on 'carbon costs,' contrary to the popular image of the former being a major polluter and the latter somehow being clean and benign. As has been emphasised in this book, consumption cannot be regarded as merely hedonistic, expressive and impulsive, however much this features in the advertising and lifestyle imagery. It clearly involves consumers in calculation, comparisons and research: in short consumer culture involves knowledge. Not just knowledge of cost-efficient goods and bargains, or that of the connoisseur or taste-maker who know their wine, décor, restaurants and travel destinations, but also (especially in the new middle class) knowledge of the ethical background of goods. Consumer movements not only seek to regulate the safety and advertising claims of goods, but also to circulate information about the ethical practices of companies (companies with good work practices outside the West, those which avoid cruelty to animals, etc.) and where to buy 'fair trade' goods which support local producers. This is not to say that the ethical gesture on the part of the consumer, is merely a cost, for it can also be displayed as a sign of virtue, of a particular form of ethically consistent conduct (see Featherstone, 1995), which is not immune from being classified by others as only another clever move in the unavoidable round of distinction games. Likewise 'good citizen' actions by retailers and manufactures, as we find in the announcements of 'carbon cost' labelling and emission controls by British supermarket and retail chains such as Tesco and Marks & Spencer in January 2007. The success in Britain and Europe in the late 1990s of consumer campaigns to persuade supermarkets to label the genetically modified content of

food and other goods, is an important episode in the politics of consumption, but by no means the final chapter. In addition, the intensification of circulation of information through the Internet, email lists, blogs etc., means that there is also greater knowledge about the manufacture of goods in the sweatshops of the Global South. The working conditions, low pay and lack of employment rights and protection of those who are subjected to the new forms of compound and indented labour, casts a shadow over the lifestyle advertising and brand images of everyday consumer culture goods such as trainers and jeans, turning hidden conditions of production into an ethical and political issue. The highly publicised protests against the World Trade Organization new rounds of global deregulation which occurred in Seattle, Cancún and other places, has also further politicised the act of consumption. These tendencies make people more aware of the network of dependencies, by which consumption is tied to global inequalities. This was one of the driving forces behind the World Social Forum, with its vision that 'another world is possible,' a viable alternative to neo-liberal corporate globalization. The WSF has sought to develop networks and dialogue between a motley array of labour, feminist, new social movements, charity and religious groups largely from the south to explore new forms of global public sphere and civil society participation and democratization . In short, consumption can no longer be seen as an innocent act, but as part of the chains of interdependencies and networks which bind people together across the world in terms of production, consumption and also the accumulation of risks. Yet, however much there is a perceived political dimension to consumption and cosmopolitan potential to unite people together through their common human condition in the face of global risks and planetary dangers, consumer culture has become too firmly established as part of the taken-for-granted value assumptions of the contemporary age for it to be easily modified, or discarded altogether. If there is an emergent global culture, Consumer Culture and Postmodernism consumer culture has to be seen as a central part of this field. An additional problem with cosmopolitan virtue, is that it can be seen as merely the advocacy of a particular version of cosmopolitanism, such as that associated with market trader cultures, or the European Kantian ideal, which doesn't sufficiently take into account Chinese, Indian, Islamic and other cosmopolitanism traditions (Featherstone, 2001; Cheah, 2006). There is no guarantee that the current international discussions about global warming and the need to regulate consumption will produce a consensus and concerted action. Diminishing expectations do not sit easily with consumer culture values. If, as in the current phase, the real income of workers in various parts of the

Western world, in particular United States, is threatened by the movement of jobs to Asia, notably Indian and China, then the right to

consumption, to be a consumer-citizen becomes a political issue of another order. It is in this context that people start to speak about ‘The End of the American Dream’, at a time when the United States economy fails to sustain growth in real income levels despite major productivity increases by workers. Certainly the international context is one in which the Washington Consensus, the world economic order which underpins the economic globalization which fuels consumer culture, is under threat. There has even been talk of a new Beijing Consensus, premised on the rise of China which could steer the global economy in a different direction (*The Economist*, September 16, 2006). This suggests that in the longer term, the capacity of the United States to sustain its global military dominance in the face of the rise of Asia and ‘the long war against terrorism’ becomes more problematic. The difficulties of continuing to hold onto its ‘state of exception’ status (Malik, 2006), to continue to seek to steer the world in line with US political, economic and cultural objectives in this new context, has the danger of producing within the United States a strong nationalism with civilizational and Christian religious overtones – what William Connolly (2007) refers to as The Christo-Capitalist Assemblage.’

The above mentioned threat to the capacity to sustain income levels in the working classes in the West in face of the relocation and migration of jobs to cheaper labour markets is driven by the dynamic of neo-Liberal economic globalization (Featherstone, 2001, 2006). The neo-Liberal pact which became established in the 1980s initially in the United States and Britain, which has subsequently become globalized, provided a package of welfare state cuts, governmental deregulation of financial markets and other bodies, introduction of measurable assessment, competition and league tables for government funded bodies such as universities, hospitals etc., along with low rates of income tax and the promise of economic growth. One consequence has been the widening of the gap between the rich and the poor within Western societies, but also globally too. According to a global study from the World Institute for Development Economics Research of the United Nations the richest 1 percent of the world’s population owns 40 percent of the planet’s wealth. The richest 10 percent own over 85 percent of the world’s assets, with over half the world’s population owning barely 1 percent of the global wealth. This is a world in which over 800 million people go to bed hungry every night (Randerson, 2006). That those at the top end of the scale are able to increase their wealth more rapidly than people at the bottom is confirmed by *Forbes Magazine*, which mentions that there were 140 billionaires in the world 1986, 476 in 2003 and 793 in 2006. Their combined wealth amounts to \$2.6 trillion in December 2006 – up 18 percent since March 2006. They not only have a greater capacity to increase their capital accumulation, but to retain a level of invisibility in national surveys, and of course national income tax payments (see Parenti, 2002; Venn, 2006).

This is the world given over to 'liquid modernity,' (Bauman, 2000) and 'the new capitalism' (Sennett, 1999, 2006), in which capital and capitalists are mobile and have a much weaker sense of attachment to place and responsibility

for local others. This diminished sense of local attachment has been referred to as 'the revolt of the elites,' (Lasch, 1996). At the bottom end, there are not only those who go hungry already mentioned above, but the dwellers in the expanding array of shantytowns in the urban areas and megacities of the global South. The 2006 urban population of 3.2 billion will expand to 10 billion by 2050, with almost all the growth in cities. Over 95 percent of this growth will occur in the urban areas of developing countries. This slum growth in the South, is most marked in Africa (Simone, 2004). The explosion of megacities outside the West, not only problematizes many of our assumptions about urban development, the 'slumification of the world' provides important challenges for consumer cultural analysis to understand different circuits of consumption. The other point to note about the growth in the number of billionaires is the example they set for consumer culture lifestyles. The *Forbes* website has a section on lifestyle with details of luxury homes (you can take a photographic tour of the homes of 15 of the world's richest people), most expensive cars, megayachts, most expensive private islands, and how to travel like a billionaire (private jet, helicopter etc.). Luxury, is of course no stranger to consumer culture, and indeed, the visibility of luxury outside court societies, in the merchant groups in Asia as well as Europe can be seen as an important dynamic in developing the concern for new goods and a fashion system which drew in other groups (see discussion in new chapter on 'Modernity and the Cultural Question' in this new edition; also Burke, 1993; Berry, 1994; Berg and Clifford, 1999). It has been argued that today, as the pull of place and local status hierarchies diminish, the visibility of luxury in the media becomes a more potent reference point for people. Certainly the lifestyles of the rich and upper middle classes attract attention and television provides endless programmes which revolve around the improvement and furnishing of a stylish home, purchase of a second home, holiday planning, cars, fashion, celebrity vents. The programmes endeavour to strike a balance between the interest in the lifestyles of celebrities, the new rich and the upper middle class, and the endeavours of 'ordinary people,' who seek improvement and transformation on a tight budget. The concept of transformation is still central to consumer culture, with magazines, advertising and television presenting an endless range of material on the transformation of lifestyle, living space, relationships, identities and of course, bodies (Featherstone, 1998, 1999). The body is presented as the central vehicle to the consumer culture good life: the source of pleasurable sensations which must be 'looked after,' (maintained, repaired and improved). Yet the body is also

understood in terms of its image, as the visible indicator of the self, hence the attention given to 'the look,' (presentation, grooming, style). Celebrities, the new rich and middle class are presented as enjoying access to a whole array of personal body services. In the television transformation programmes 'ordinary' young adults and middle aged people are guided through rigorous fitness regimes, cosmetic surgery, learning makeup and body grooming, clothing sense and deportment to fit them out as a new person able to 'look ten years younger' (Featherstone, 1982, 2007). Yet for the vast majority of the less affluent in countries like the United States and the United Kingdom, with obesity levels hitting the 20-30 percent band, to successfully engage in such transformation regimes can seem impossibly distant goals. At the same time it is possible to point to World Health Organization data which shows that obesity levels in France are less than 7 percent, and in Japan they are much smaller still. Clearly, we cannot assume there is a common global consumer culture with uniform effects.

At the same time, if the tendencies noted by Reich (2006) with reference to the United States continue, then we can expect a further expansion of wealth in the top layers of the social structure and a shrinking of the middle layers, as well as shifts within the working class from manufacturing jobs to services. Specifically, he notes that symbol analysts (university educated knowledge professionals such as lawyers, engineers, accountants, journalists) have expanded to make up 20 percent of the workforce. But this group is suffering a decline in relation to what he refers to as the global symbol analysts (CEOs and CFOs of global corporations, and partners and executives in global investment banks, law firms and consultancies). The current tendency is a relative decline in income levels of the national as against the global symbol analysts, with the ones in the West facing greater competition from the expanding numbers of English-speaking graduates in China, India and other parts of the world. Most global symbolic analysts have been educated at elite universities and can work in English (unlike their national counterparts), as well as being at home moving around the circuit of global cities. They also help fuel the army of migrating service workers (cleaners, cooks, nannies, sex workers, many of them women) at the bottom end of the workforce. This latter group expands as a result of the outsourcing of service work from those in the middle and upper levels and includes the legions of maids who are on short term contracts with very limited employment rights (Cheah, 2007; Ehrenreich and Hochschild, 2003). These tendencies are producing a more complex global consumer culture. New levels of luxury are evident at the top end of the social structure with a good deal of celebration of the lifestyles and consumption patterns of the rich. But for those below, who watch the celebrity and elite consumption in the media, their consumption is more the consumption of dreams, plus the occasional purchases

of cheaper scaled-down luxuries. Financial institutions constantly bombard consumers in the United States, Britain and other countries, to sign up for easily accessible credit. Debt has long ceased to have the pejorative overtones it carried in 19th century moral tale novels. Asceticism, rationing and self-control do not fit well with consumer culture imagery of the good life. Credit became more readily available from the 1920s onwards in the United States as advertisers strove to overcome Puritan restraint and saving (Ewen, 1976). In the 1950s William White in his bestselling *Organization Man* (1956) reminded readers that 'thrift is now un-American'. Today, both national governments and individual consumers are encouraged to borrow excessively. Yet it would be a mistake to assume that this is a universal tendency on the one hand, or that economies or the planet can sustain an overall American-style consumer culture in the longrun, on the other. Certainly if we look at consumer culture in Japan it reveals a very different pattern, having a long history of sustained urban consumption and leisure with department stores, cinemas, dance halls, cafés, magazines and advertising developing in the 1920s (Tamari, 2006). Thrift and saving have always been central to modern Japanese consumer culture and it has proved exceedingly difficult to stimulate the economy with cheap credit, as attempted on a regular basis in the aftermath of the collapse of the 1980s bubble economy. This lack of enthusiasm for American-style consumption based on consumer debt and credit card spending, not only is evident in Japan and other parts of Asia, but also in France, Germany, and Italy and other Europe countries (Garon and MacLachlan, 2006). There is, then, a greater awareness today of the costs of consumer culture, of the unsustainable implications of the generalization of the United States model to the rest of the world. The expansion of the Chinese and Indian economies are already bringing home the prospect of the growing ecological footprint of this third of humanity (see WWF Living Planet Report, 2000 for discussion of ecological footprints and the 3.5 planets needed if everyone in the world consumed like Americans). Yet as we have already mentioned above, the 'crisis' is by no means guaranteed to be recognised as such by all, or agreement reached, or solutions proffered. Few people are willing to contemplate reigning in their own consumption, to sacrifice for others, either on a personal or nation-state level. Western economies may well be obsessed with a 'growth fetish,' yet it is hard to imagine a return to a 'stationary state' or move to a 'post-growth society' as advocated in the past by John Stuart Mill, Maynard Keynes and others (Hamilton, 2003). Certainly it means abandoning the obsession with realising the 'dreams of abundance,' which was central to twentieth century American society as it sought to leave behind forever the 'era of scarcity' (Lears, 1998: 453). Yet rather than abandon the notion of abundance, Lears (1998: 466) argues, we should

consider the cultivation of 'psychic abundance,' and 'seek to abolish time famine and to create genuine leisure by abandoning obsessions with Consumer Culture and Postmodernism productivity.' This takes us into the debates about the 'art of living,' and the various modes of care of the self, ethical conduct and 'sociality with things,' which could provide alternatives to our high material consumption, mobility and travel, way of life (Featherstone, 1992, 1995). Yet, not all consumption needs to involve the consumption of material goods, and not all fascination with new sensations and invention needs to be fed through the commodity market process. The Internet and new forms of communications technology have started to open up the potential for greater immaterial consumption (this is based on the notion of immaterial labour developed by Tarde and others; see discussion in Lazzarato, 2007; Terranova, 2007; Toscano 2007). When we read a book, we use, or 'consume' something which is still available for others and involves little additional energy or cost. Public libraries are institutions based upon this model, as are the various forms of free and commercial downloads of information, images, movies and data from the Internet. Consumer culture necessarily promotes ambivalence, it offers a world beyond scarcity and hardship, the dream of abundance, yet its modus operandi is through the commodity form, the calculus of monetary value. It encourages a calculating hedonism, a cost-benefit analysis of pleasure, time and other people. Yet it also encourages a calculus of public policies, the consequences of growth, along with the costs to other forms of life and the planet, of our actions

To summarize, there is, a yet, no agreed meaning to the term postmodernist derivatives, the family of term which include post modernity , postmodernization and postmodernism are often use in confusing and interchangeable way. I have attempt to outline and discuss some of these meaning. Postmodernism is of interest to a wider range of artistic practice of social science and humanities discipline because it directs our attention to changes taking place in contemporary culture. These can be understood in term of The artist, intellectual and academic fields (changes in modes of theorization, presentation and dissemination of work which cannot be detached from change in specific competitive struggle occur in particular field)

Change in the broader consumer sphere involving the mode of production, consumption and circulation of symbolic goods which can be related to broader shift in the balance of power interdependency between groups and class fractions on both inter and intra society level.

Changes in the everyday practice and experience of different groups, who as a result of some of the processes referred to above, may be using regime of signification in different way and developing new way of orientation and identity structure. It is apparent that in recent year we have witnessed

dramatically upsurge of interest in the issue of culture. Culture once on the periphery of social science discipline, particular in sociology.

Conclusion

At last I can conclude that the rise of consumerism with the help of consumer culture play a vital role in the modern society. Now a day the consumer desire was increases day by day related to goods and commodity. we also conclude that Consumer culture, which subsumes both consumerism and materialism, has been studied from the perspective of a variety of disciplines, including communication, cultural studies, theology, sociology, psychology, marketing, anthropology, and philosophy. The changing behaviour of the consumer is also a part of consumer culture, now a day consumer are more concern about different brand. The researcher also came to know that the television, media also play a vital role in contemporary society related to consumer culture. The Researchers have found that the vast masses at the base of the Indian economic pyramid are also affected by the spread of consumer culture. “Increasing desires to consume branded goods that are advertised through television is a consistent and recurring theme.” Moreover, “intertwined cultural processes of conspicuous consumption, normative change [imposing a link between consumer goods and morality], and [interpersonal] competition” mark narratives of low caste Indian consumers. On the other hand I also came to know that the human nature of postmodernism is social construction and conflict. Postmodernism is classical elements of style or by carrying modernist styles or practices to extremes with the help of consumer culture. Now a day with the help of postmodernism consumer culture was rapidly increased all over the world.

References:

- Klages, M. (2007) *Literary Theory: A Guide for the Perplexed*. Retrieved from <http://www.colorado.edu/English/courses/ENGL2012Klages/pomo.html>
- McGregor, S. (2003) *Postmodernism, Consumerism, and A Culture of Peace*. Retrieved from <http://www.kon.org/archives/forum/13-2/mcgregor.pdf>
- Jameson, F. (1990) *Postmodernism and consumer society*. Retrieved From <http://www9.georgetown.edu/faculty/irvinem/theory/Jameson-PoMo and Consumer Society.pdf>
- Venkatesh, A. (1992) Postmodernism, Consumer culture and the society of the spectacle, in *Advances in Consumer Research* Volume 19, 1992 Pages 199-202.
- Baudrillard, J. (2007) *The consumer society, for a critique of the political economy of the sign*. Retrieved from <http://social.jrank.org/pages/1507/Jean-Baudrillard.html>
- Keum, H. , Devanathan, N., Deshpande, S. , Nelson, M., Shah, D. (2004) *The Citizen-Consumer: Media Effects at the Intersection of Consumer and Civic Culture*. Retrieved From <http://www.journalism.wisc.edu/~dshah/PC2004.pdf>
- Firat, A. , Dholakia, N., Vankatesh, A. (1993) Marketing in the Postmodern World, in *European Journal of Marketing* 29, 1 Retrieved From http://www.fearp.usp/~faaFirat_marketing.
- Sirgym, J. (1986) Self concept in consumer behavior: A critical review. *Journal of Consumer Research (pre 1986)*; Dec 1982; 9, 3; ABI/INFORM Global Pg. 287.
- Lack, T. (1995, October 14) Consumer Society and Authenticity: The (Il)logic of Punk Practices. *Personal Literature*, 290, 1113-1120.
- Jameson, F. (1991) *The cultural logic of late capitalism: Postmodernism or the cultural logic of late capitalism*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Hung, W. (2005) *Remaking Beijing: Tiananmen Square and the creation of a political space*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Ewen, S. (1976) *Captains of Consciousness: Advertising and the Social Roots of the Consumer Culture*. Retrieved from <http://www.umsl.edu/~keelr/010/ewen.html>.
- Featherstone, M. (1991) *Consumer culture and postmodernism*. London: Sage.
- Valkenburg, P. (2000) *Media and Youth consumerism*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam School of Communications Research, Aug;27(2 Suppl):52-6.
- Juluri, V. (2002) Music television and Inventions of youth Culture in India. *Television and New Media* Vol. 3 No. 4, November 2002 367–386

- Holt, D. (2002) Why do brand cause trouble? A Dialectical theory of consumer culture and branding in *The Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 29 (2002)
- Steve, C. , McLoughlin, D. , & Keating, A. (2005) “Individual and Neo-Tribal Consumption: Tales from the Simpsons of Springfield,” *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, 4 (5), 330-344.
- Ewen, S. (1976) *Captains of Consciousness: Advertising and the Social Roots of the Consumer Culture*, New York: McGraw - Hill.
- Featherstone, M. (1991) *Consumer Culture and Postmodernism*, London and Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Belk, W. (1985) Materialism: Traits Aspects of Living in the Material World, *Journal of Consumer Research*, 12(December), 265–80.
- Garon, S. (2006) Japan’s Post - war ‘Consumer Revolution, or Striking a Balance Between Consumption and Saving, *Consuming Cultures, Global Perspectives: Historical Trajectories*, Transnational Exchanges, John, Brewer and Frank Trentmann, eds. Berg Publishers, 189 - 218.
- Slater, D. (1997) *Consumer Culture and Modernity*, Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1997, 230 pages.
- Stearns, P. (2006) *Consumerism in World History: The Global Transformation of Consumer Desire*, 2nd edition, London & New York: Routledge.
- Dong, L., Kelly, T. (1996) The Political Use of Western Brands in Asserting Chinese National Identity, *Journal of Consumer Research*, 35 (September).
- Mankekar, P. (1999) *Screening Culture, Viewing Politics: An Ethnography of Television, Womenhood, and Nation in Postcolonial India*, London, Duke University Press.
- Bauman, Z. (1993) *Postmodern Ethics*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Malik, S. (2006) Global Sovereignty, in special issue on Problematizing Global Knowledge (ed. M. Featherstone, C.Venn, R. Bishop and J. Phillips), *Theory, Culture & Society*, 23(2–3).
- Randerson, J. (2006) World’s richest 1% own 40% of all wealth, UN report discovers, *Guardian*, 6 December.
- Parenti, M. (2002) The Super Rich Are Out of Sight, *Common Dreams.org*, 27 December.
- Venn, C. (2005) Appreciations: Jacques Derrida 1930–2004, *Theory, Culture & Society*, 22(2).
- Bauman, Z. (1990) Modernity and Ambivalence, *Theory, Culture & Society*, 7(2–3).
- Sennett, R. (1999) Growth and Failure: The New Political Economy and Its Culture’, in M. Featherstone and S. Lash (eds), *Spaces of Culture: City, Nation, World*. London: Sage.
- Sennett, R. (2006) *The Culture of the New Capitalism*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Lasch, C. (1996) *The Revolt of the Elites*. New York: Norton.

- Simone, A. (2004) *For the City Yet to Come: Changing African Life in Four Cities*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Burke, P. (1993) *Res e Verba: Conspicuous Consumption in the Early Modern World*, in J. Brewer and R. Porter (eds), *Consumption and the World of Goods*. London: Routledge.
- Berry, C. J. (1994) *The Idea of Luxury*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Berg, M., Clifford, H. (eds) (1999) *Consumers and Luxury: Consumer Culture in Europe 1650–1850*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Featherstone, M. (1998) Love and Eroticism: An Introduction, *Theory, Culture & Society* special issue on Love & Eroticism, 15(3–4).
- Featherstone, M. (1999) Body Modification: An Introduction, *Body & Society*, special issue on Body Modification, 4(2–3). Reprinted as a *Theory, Culture & Society* Book Series title; London: Sage, 2000.
- Featherstone, M. (1982) 'The Body in Consumer Culture', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 1(2) reprinted in M. Featherstone, M. Hepworth and B.S. Turner (eds), *The Body*. London: Sage, 1991.
- Featherstone, M. (2001) 'Consumer Culture', in *International Encyclopaedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences*. Oxford: Elsevier, 2001.
- Featherstone, M. (2006) 'Genealogies of the Global', in special issue on 'Problematizing Global Knowledge' (ed. M. Featherstone, C.Venn, R. Bishop and J. Phillips), *Theory, Culture & Society*, 23(2–3).
- Cheah, P. (2006) *Inhuman Conditions. On Cosmopolitanism and Human Rights*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Featherstone, M. (1995) *Undoing Culture: Globalization, Postmodernism and Identity*. London: Sage.
- Reich, R. (2006) 'The New Rich–Rich Gap', *Newsweek*.
- Cheah, P. (2007) *Inhuman Conditions. On Cosmopolitanism and Human Rights*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Ehrenreich, B. & Hochschild, A. (eds), (2003). *Global Women: Nannies, Maids and Sex Workers in the New Economy*. London: Granta.
- Ewen, S. (1976) *Captains of Consciousness: Advertising and the Social Roots of the Consumer Culture*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Tamari, T. (2006) 'The Rise of the Department Store and the Aestheticization of Everyday Life in Early Twentieth Century Japan', *International Journal of Japanese Sociology*, 15.
- Hamilton, C. (2003) *Growth Fetish*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin.
- Lears, Jackson (1998) 'Reconsidering Abundance: A Plea for Ambiguity', in S. Strasser, C. McGovern and M. Judt (eds), *Getting and Spending: European and American Consumer Societies in the Twentieth Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Featherstone, M. (1992) 'The Heroic Life and Everyday Life', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 9(1).

Postmodern Openings

- Terranova, T. (2007) Future Public: Hegemonic and Counter-hegemonic Tactics for Bioracist Times, *Theory, Culture & Society*, 24(2).
- Toscano, A. (2007) Vital Strategies: Maurizio Lazzarato and the Metaphysics of Contemporary Capitalism, *Theory, Culture & Society*, 24(5).
- McCracken, G. (1988) *Consumer Culture*, Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Williams, R. (2004) Consumers and Consumption, *Annual Review of Sociology*, 30: 173 - 97.
- Slater, D. (1997) Global Cultural Economy and consumerism. *Public Culture* 2:1-24.
- Gabriel, Y., Lang, T. (1995) Globalizing and humanizing consumer education. *Journal of the Home Economics Institute of Australia*, 10(1), 2-9.
- Garon, S., MacLachlan, P.L. (2006) 'Introduction' to Garon, S. and MacLachlan, P.L. (eds), *The Ambivalent Consumer: Questioning Consumption in East Asia and the West*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.