Chapter Three

Theoretical Understanding of Consumerism and Consumption

Consumption derives from the Latin ‘consumere’, which means to use up entirely or to destroy. By contrast, ‘consummation’ meant to bring to completion (as in the old fashioned expression for sex: ‘the consummation of relationship’). In some languages, such as French, these two words have been rolled into one, so that the French word ‘consommer’ carries the dual implication of both fulfillment and annulment. This semantic ambivalence might be extrapolated to suggest that the English-language word ‘consumption’ entails both an act of destruction (which explains why it often seems to make more sense to speak of ‘consuming hamburger’ than ‘consuming a cathedral’), and an act of creation (bringing to a climax, rehashing a peak, achieving a promised fulfillment). Paradoxically, then, ‘consumption’ means both ‘destroying’ (using up) and ‘creating’ (making full use of it). Like the capitalist system of which it has become a fundamental part, consumption should be of as a form of ‘creative destruction’ (Clarke; Doel & Housiaux 2003:5).

Consumerism and Consumption of objects are inextricably linked. Marxist literature, has stressed that production and the relations of production are the primary mode for the making of social identity, which is incongruous to what the further discussion is all about. It is needless, to distinguish objective and subjective notions of needs and wants of these commodities. Finally, the wants/needs distinction, when cast in a non-materialist way, reproduces the pointless moralist discourse as does the notion of pleasure. In order to develop an analytically useful grasp on consumption, we need to get less idealistic and abstract. These commodity transform themselves into ‘positional goods’ (Baudrillard 1981:34) as well as ‘informational goods’ in our social lives....and hence are utilized as symbols much beyond their utility as signs (Bourdieu 1984:54-55).

Moreover, the wants of one era become the needs of the next. Mobile phones were a bourgeois luxury a decade back, however contemporary lives would be difficult without it. The stress, instead, is on the theory that consumption and consumerism are equal modes of
construction of class politics. However, this distinction between 'consumerism and consumption', when discussed can be highly misleading. It has not always been the separation between 'consumerism and consumption', like that between 'consumption and production', as a historically contingent and structured fact thus has not been subject to such implicit negotiations.

Consumerism is related with purchasing material possessions to derive personal happiness. To use the term 'consumption' is to emphasize the world of commodities and the way these are structured in our contemporary society. Consumers identify with the products that get associated with; hence, the culture knitted along with prospective consumers is consumer culture. The consumer is constructed by each side of the class barrier as an indifferent party who generally responds according to the price structure of the market. One cannot be manipulated by ever-increasing demands and so cannot be exploited as force of consumption. An attempt is made here to refute the comprehensive myth being upheld by academia as a whole of a consumer being merely a hedonist luxuriating oneself. In short, in certain respects we need to conceptualise the distinction between consumption and consumerism.

In this thesis, I have tried to analyse the distinction between consumption and consumerism, useful for building up the conceptual framework. Historically, consumerism emerged as a rhetorical outcome of global capitalism which is an essentially a product of western capitalism. The succeeding sections of the chapter would problematise the key aspects of our own history and redress them analytically. There have been loads of researches, debates and stimulating arguments centered on socio-cultural and economic foundation in academic as well as non-academic streams. The world of consumption has changed dramatically and new possibilities of culture of consumption have emerged that did not exist before. This expanded the scope and nature to delve deep into the epistemology of consumption and the locus of research i.e. the evolution of consumerism. There are certain assumptions drawn akin to the above background, as stated below such as the three way process:
Firstly, there is a need to draw a positive correlation between culture of consumption and contemporary lives.

Secondly, to unravel the political economy of goods with respect to maintaining standards and attaining necessities. Precisely, thereby, its utility expands much beyond their functional aspect to the social spheres of lifestyles.

Thirdly, to highlight the dynamics of market forces (advertisements and market itself), behind the commodification of these goods with the motive of creating lifestyles. Hence, push and the pulls processes of the market within the social practices.

With respect to this, I will try to offer a focused analysis of a specific blend as well as distinction between the two. In addition, my remarks are intended to provoke reflection and discussion on the ways we analyze contemporary consumerism. To accomplish this task, I shall first address theoretical ways of conceptualizing consumption. Ultimately that engages in a discourse of post-modernist and the classical sociological approaches which is more towards more materialist. I will, then utilize the theoretical observations to show the analytical virtues of history of consumption. Furthermore, it will elucidate as to how simultaneous affirmation and denial of a link between consumerism and consumption can help us to understand the role of design in shaping material objects. As a concomitant, the complicated relationship between consumerism and consumption can be used to understand the material lives of modem living.

3.1. Deconstructing Consumerism: A Postmodern Approach

The crucial feature of the role of modem consumer is the primary obligation to want to want under all circumstances and at all times irrespective of what goods and services are actually acquired or consumed.(Campbell 1983:282). There is this underlying assumption that consumption is not a rational calculation of economics however an obligation of the everyday living. This picture is certainly not a matter of irrational impulse, as some would analyse rather "an obligation to engage in 'want satisfaction' as an end in itself" (ibid: 284).
This type of epochal shift has become the focus of most social theories. The main item on its agenda are postmodernism, new times, the shift from Fordism to Post-Fordism, from organized to disorganized capitalism, from commodities and exchange value to commodity sign and sign-value (Slater 1987:174). In many critical contexts, consumerism is used to describe the tendency of people to identify strongly with products or services they consume. It is more explicit, when the consumed items belongs to commercial brand names and have appeal of status-enhancement, e.g., a high end gadget or luxury cars so on and so forth. A culture that is permeated by consumerism can be referred to as a consumer culture. Consumer culture is generally presented as destructive. On the contrary, consumerism is attached to overproduction of images creating the availability of an extensive range of goods and experiences, to be consumed, maintained, planned and dreamt about by the masses. This can be identified with impulsive buyers as different from shopaholics; who cannot resist spending money. Though, opponents of consumerism argue that luxuries and unnecessary consumer products are social signals that allow people to identify like-minded individuals through consumption and display of similar products. Yet, some believe that relationships associated with a product or brand names are substitutes for the healthy human relationships free from dysfunctional modern societies. They are part of the general process of social control and cultural hegemony in modern society.

Modern consumption is mediated by culture of consumption of commodities. Besides, the interrelationships observed between the buyer and the seller there are intra i.e. buyers in themselves, as well as, sellers amongst themselves also exist. The consumer’s access to consumption is largely structured by the distribution of cultural and material resources (time and money), which itself is crucial for the formation of social class and status. Thus, if consumerism is in vogue we need to ask several questions, ‘What is consumerism’? ‘How this ideology is seen and is really related to the consumption’, and so on and so forth. Furthering the discussion in a speculative vein there have been certain dispositions drawn such as:

1 Note: The above was in relation to the history tracing through the times and stating the common denominator between people through the medium of these objects and how they acts as a n agent to bind them and knit the tread of homogeneity amongst consumers of the same object. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Consumerism
3.1.1. Reinventing ‘Self’ and Individuality through Consumption:

Notions of self expressions and self development are obviously making rounds for its freedom of expressions and hard to realize that they are recent concepts. Thus, one way of following this doctrine of cultivation of the self is to consume in a certain specific way, Campbell calls this “specialist of the self” (Campbell 1983:288). The modern mindset desires to get everything available at one’s disposal and in one’s control; however, the postmodernist sees everything as coming and going, and foreseeable to change. In this regard, postmodernism only desires to escape the present time. The capitalist consumer culture trains us to disregard what we possess in the Present, and to desire something else in the Future. Consumerism does not permit to live in the Present, in the now but it is always looking forward to the Future. Moreover, a traditional mindset believes in the philosophy of ‘only one life to live’, so the hypothesis then is ‘to live life to the hilt’. These commodities or goods can have varied significance from one society to another. They can be anything from a luxury car, designer clothes, huge mansion, acquisition of expensive properties, high end watches, gizmos, jewellery, simply anything classy construction, stylish appearance, durability, better performance, advanced features and so on as compared to its counterparts. These kinds of goods serves dual purpose of flaunting their socio-economic status and also serves the purpose "to keep up with the Joneses".

Therefore, there is likely to be a distinction between the real consumption and the façade of consumerism. The whole catharsis is to questioning the negative connotation of consumerism in present context. The moot question, thus would be, whether one can really be against consumerism or is it merely to mislead others? in this fashion, individuals are encouraged to adopt a non-utilitarian approach to carefully choose, arrange, adapt and display a stylistic statement. Hence, it is immanent in the consumer culture to décor house, car, or furniture in order to express individuality and improved lifestyle. These are some of the conjecture taking into account while studying the popularity, or rather the inevitability of

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2The Encyclopedia of Word and Phrase Origins : Robert Hendrickson is the origin of this phrase as rooted in the popular comic strip of the same name created by cartoonist Arthur R. "Pop" Momand in 1913 and was used as trend catchphrase in many parts of the English-speaking world. It refers to the desire to be seen as being as good as one's neighbours.
consumerism ingrained amongst the masses. Leading it further towards mass consumption of symbolic production of goods in day to day practices.

3.1.2. Consumer Culture or Culture of Consumption:

The notion of consumer culture is clearly derived from the patterns of consumption. It retorts the assumption of a non-positive transcendence or a dramatic break with what was established as justified. The trajectory of the western world consumption and its development is located in its context of historical accounts. The key aspect here is to identify the formulation of the ways of a commodity getting popular keeping in mind the sensibilities of larger audience. And, how far do these pluralistic loyalties follow in our day-to-day lives? Most importantly, who are the carriers and the transmitters of consumer culture and how far has the idea of consumerism legislated itself? Thus, to what extent can we justify presuming consumer culture as granted for the study of consumerism?

Although, consumerism is a product of western civilization its traces can be found all over the world. In recent decades, not only has it gained popularity but has also transformed people’s simple living into extraordinary lifestyles. Mrs.Virginia H. Knauer, special assistant to the President for Consumer Affairs in the US, stated that the watchword for the new militant mood among American consumers is simply, "Let the seller beware," in comparison to the age-old *caveat emptor* or, "Let the buyer beware." Ensuing the spread of neoliberalism and capitalism, it acquired more currency in the twentieth century onwards. Basically, it is a theory of political-economic practices that champions private property rights, free markets, and free trade while deregulating business and privatizing collective assets. Ideologically these policies are often described as Reaganomics, and are often associated with supply-side economics (the notion that policies should appeal to consumers, rather than producers, in order to cultivate economic prosperity) (ibid). It is an extensive

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4 Neoliberalism refers to a political movement that espouses economic liberalism as a means of promoting economic development and securing political liberty. The movement is sometimes described as an effort to revert to the economic policies of the 18th and 19th century's classical liberalism. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neoliberalism)
elaboration of the meaningful association with the materialistic connotations of the word. Consumerism, the culture of consumption for its own sake, has long been recognised as a feature of late capitalism. It means something that oppresses and domesticates people, makes them dependent on the system by manipulating their desires, but nevertheless also empowers them with multiple choices and decision making. For example, in the post-fordist system, it is argued that the driving seat of capitalism is no longer occupied by the engineers and production managers or by manufacturing heavy industry but rather by the marketing directors and design consultants, the retailers and the producers of the ‘concept’ (Slater 1997:174).

3.1.3. The Politics of Consumerism vis-à-vis Consumption:

Most of us are consumers in our own right, and we all have our own ideas of consumption. However, “consumption” goes well beyond its meanings and the functional arenas. We commonly distinguish between necessities and luxuries, as former provides satisfaction and latter provides pleasure. Pleasure can be derived merely by thinking of certain items as food, clothing, lifestyle, but we get satisfied from actually eating, wearing and practicing lifestyles. Thus, this means that treating oneself with variety of cuisines, different styles of clothing and a roman holiday would combine pleasure with satisfaction. However, pleasure is relative in relation to the heterogeneous needs of consumers. While economics has great deal of ingenuity in dealing with the demand and the supply side of the commodity, consumption actually retains a richer set of meanings. The exchange that takes place between a buyer and a seller involves socio-cultural relationship, along with the fundamental economic exchange. This symmetry involves exchangers (sellers and buyers) and situates them in the market place, which is the domain of socio-economic analysis. The purpose is definitely to understand the politics of commodities vis-à-vis the consumer. The interpretation of lifestyle transformation and personality development is a move towards consumer culture.

Therefore, one platform is incapable of unfolding too much about consumerism. The commodities are supposed to be consumed only for their use-value but they are purchased
with other motives too. It indeed refers to some kind of false needs, or a complete set of new needs created in the garb of consumerism, becoming determinant in purchasing. The theoretical accounts have been characterized either on accounts of consumers being foolish actors in the drama of capitalist-profit making business or they are at their free will offered sovereignty in their platter. But aren’t we blindfolded to believe that these trends setup a complete new base of false needs for the consumers? Especially, when companies become bankrupt spending ever-greater amounts on their advertising strategies to convince their widespread consumers. For example the strategically launched (Sahara Airlines became Jetlite) otherwise economical airlines had got dumped or either are overtaken by these shark companies, suggests, that matters are not quite so straightforward. Therefore, consumers are neither mute followers of the manipulation created by the big business nor are entirely at their free will.

In terms of these polarized debates, a third way between the two extremes exist: consumers are neither instilled with ‘false needs’ nor entirely rational and ‘free to choose’. Consumer capitalism seems eminently capable of generating ‘new needs’ that are not so quite real. On the hindsight, new objects seem quite capable of becoming increasingly indispensable in changing patterns of modern living. Paradoxically, then, consumers may be forced to choose rather than free to choose: ‘freedom of choice’ is a ‘freedom’ that bears the hallmark of ‘necessity’ for fully paid-up members of the consumer society (Clarke; Doel and Housiaux 2003:133). However, one might analyze the conflicts and complementarities between production and consumption. Thus, by the 1920s it was clear that a new social and cultural phenomenon, consumerism, had emerged.

3.1.4. Consumerism is Proportional to the Income:

There are things that can be bought by wealth such as cars, house, fine clothing etc, which are the benchmarks to decide one’s position in a modern society. Henceforth, solidarity would be fleeting, stabilizing only at times when doubts rise over the ability of capitalism to deliver the goods promised by the consumerist ideology. There is proportional
relationship between income and consumption practices. Moreover, gender meanings are reinvented to define exclusively men as producers and married women as consumers.

There is also a tendency of the demand growing for 'high end goods' proportional to the increase in the income of the consumers. These luxury goods also elevate their status symbol subject to their availability, supply, affordability and equally good substitutes. Once the bourgeoisie is done with its' fancy, the trickle down effect is passed on to the vertically placed layers of the society. Analogically then, consumerism spreads in the fashion of Sanskritization and Westernization (Srinivas 1950), a vertical mobility is observed. In which, by mere imitation, one move upwards in the ladder of hierarchy. In a way, it is not important what you want but rather important who you want to be. Basically, it is the process to define the purchasing capacity of an individual which measures the acquired wealth of consumers. There are multiple reasons to trigger the purchase such as:

- **Snob effect**: This is related to the preference for goods because they are different from those commonly preferred; in other words, for consumers who want to use exclusive products, price is quality (Wikipedia 14hr 1200,29.10.08).
- **The Bandwagon effect**: This happens when the preference for a good increase as the number of people buying them increases (see network externality).
- **The Veblen Effect**: This is a method to display the wealth of the possessor and its purchasing power.
- **The Counter-Veblen effect**: This occurs when the preference for goods increase as their price falls.

None of the above effects in itself predict what will happen to the actual quantity of goods demanded (the number of units purchased) as prices change—they refer only to preferences or propensities to purchase. The actual effect on quantity demanded will depend on the range of other goods available, their prices, and their substitutabilities. The effects are anomalies within demand theory because the theory normally assumes that preferences are independent of price or the number of units being sold. They are, therefore, collectively referred to as *interaction effects*. The interaction effects are a different kind of anomaly from
that posed by Giffen goods. The Giffen goods theory is one for which observed demand rises as price rises, but the effect arises without any interaction between price and preference—it results from the interplay of the income effect and the substitution effect of a change in price. Lest one believe, however, that the negotiations occur on an equal basis with all things being equal. On the other side, despite a current consumer interest. The same process of rationalization of productive forces, which took place in the nineteenth century in the sector of production, is accomplished, in the twentieth century, in the sector of consumption. Having socialized the masses into a labour force, the industrial system had to go further in order to fulfill itself and to socialize the masses (that is, to control them) into a force of consumption. (Baudrillard 1988[1979]:50)

So, the above statement does not only serve the system by producing but also by consuming. The above connotation explains quite a lot about the study being conducted in relation to the ambivalence drawn which perhaps is infuriating to the researchers' mind. This has been a heated debate across disciplines—sociologically, economically, anthropologically and culturally. The chapter begins with an overview of the distinction between consumerism and consumerism and moves on to discuss the multiple theoretical approaches that aim to explain its rapid growth, the social emulation and its development. The focus of this chapter is on those approaches that have been most influential in the development of consumer studies. The aim of this chapter is to examine cultural consumption as a mode of communication. The account begins with an assessment of two influential sociologists, Baudrillard and Bourdieu. The discussion then moves on to the works of Mary Douglas and Baron Isherwood, who propose that goods are used as a symbolic means to communicate with others. Succeeded by an introduction to the inspirational work of Pierre Bourdieu, who demonstrates how consumption is used as emulsifier in making of social differences. The work of these two and its relation in the present times along with the other debates dealing with its approaches is the substance of the study.

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Consumption and consumerism is related through a conceptual thread in the ways suggested by Baudrillard (1988). Consumption is actually the production of identities- an "economic" act is simultaneously a "cultural" one. In Baudrillard's postmodernist analysis, the specific juxtaposition of image-artifacts is a meaningful conglomeration of meanings, whereby, it constructs individualized meanings to the masses. Consumerism is the radical phase of the contemporary times. The purpose is to examine various theories that exist to aid in explaining the dynamics of the consumption in the market place. 'Modern consumption' has generally been theorized as an activity in itself whereas, 'postmodern consumption' has most commonly been subsumed within the theorizing of identities (Paul 1998:927-951). It is only with the emergence of postmodernity, that consumer culture became central to the diagnosis of social relationship at the highest levels.

From a Marxist perspective, it is the wage-relation (not industrial mass production); it is capitalist relations of production (not its technical forces) that produce the consumer. Albeit, these theories are useful in many respects they are found to be too narrow in their scope as they pay little attention to the effects of technology and market structure or conversely they pay too much attention to the other factors explaining consumption. However, to define the evolution of consumer culture is a vexing historical problem in recent years. Some historian trace it in the purchases of crockery and clothing in eighteenth-century London, while others argue that it emerged in the earliest years of European settlement, among both the colonizer who purchased goods to enhance their comfort and status, and the Native Americans who amassed decorative wares in trade. In this welter of conflicting claims, we would do better to posit the cultures of consumption and work towards delineating their characteristics of emergence, continuities, and transformation. 'Consumerism' became a universal phenomenon after the Industrial Revolution, or more so with the advent of the Second World War, also because study on various issues of consumerism was encouraged. For Campbell (1987), modern consumerism denoted general orientations to the accumulation of goods, the display of consumption and an unceasing search for innovative experiences. Though, at that period of time, consumers' choices were
generally seen as a process of social positioning, whether explicit or implicit. Contemporary consumerism is recognized with possession. There are positive correlations that can be drawn from the above theoretical study on consumerism such as;

- Consumerism has been universal and global in present context.
- Consumerism is the ubiquitous fact and the central concern of modern living.
- Consumption is more than what utilitarian approach suggests and interferes in other social domains of public life.
- Consumer culture is the ancient form of consumerism. It appeals to everyone as per their potentials.
- The freedom to choose and the freedom of being are the twin benefits of the consumerism. It provides consumer sovereignty.
- Consumerism promotes to adopt the achieved status. It involves an attack on autonomous and institutionalized system. It is no longer given or ascribed as compared to the feudal society where social order and identity dictated consumption patterns. Hence, it acts as a liberal ideology winning the majority.
- Consumerism is more about negotiating identity and power relationships.
- Consumerism makes one feel autonomous by using up commodities. It is unique and is doomed to make repetitions acted without pretensions.
- Consumerism is a culture of diversity, stylistic imagery and simulation.

From the above perspective, consumerism upholds a talismanic image, a cultural imagery that incorporates relativism, and fragmentations. It can be understood as a dissolution, which further opens up spaces beyond the boundaries of the real and the modern. Such images themselves represent a wider appeal for new markets and symbolic goods. Subsequently, much current theorizing focuses on consumption in relation to identities through investigations of how meanings are created and transferred. Thus, consumerism is less a drive to possess goods as part of a process of social competition, than, to construct an independent identity through consumption activity. Thus, they need to be incorporated into a synthesized approach for this study. This approach needs to acknowledge four different aspects that can affect consumption in a market. First, the application of theoretical
formulations of consumption. Second, to analyse the effects of the patterns and the external factors on consumerist tendencies. Third, its relationship with the social systems. Fourth, the need to incorporate theories and test it accordingly.

Consumerism is ubiquitous and ephemeral. "It is arguably the religion of the late twentieth century" (Miles 1998: 1). This entails the twofold story, with the tricky term known as 'consumption' and consumerism, involving more than what it states literally. Thus, the origin of consumerism (focusing on consumers) is examined first, followed by an examination of the effects of other modes of operation on consumption (as is advocated by corporate institutionalist theories). Consumption theories are generally approached from the vantage point of a particular social science. As a result, "each theory lumps together great bundles of disparate goods which are bent collectively to follow the contours set out by that particular theory. Commodities that differ in important respects are typically subsumed under the catch-all term, 'consumer goods' (Fine & Leopold 1993:21). The "contours" followed by each grand narrative may differ, for example, economics explain consumption in terms of utility maximization, sociology often does so in terms of class emulation, etc. As a result, they seldom explore the "contours" of other theories. Contextually, approaches focus on reflexive, mutually constitutive relationships among consumers, suppliers and consumption sites (streets, markets, shops, galleries, homes) dealt in detail.

The starting point of this thesis is that most of these theories have many relevant aspects, but each on its own is inadequate to provide a credible, holistic view of consumption. Thus, becomes necessary to ignore the useful aspects of other theories. This is akin to the literature on the consumer society in the western world. Most commentators approach the market with respect to a particular discipline (not necessarily consumption-based), and those who do acknowledge different vantage points of the market rarely make an attempt to link them formally. There, thus, exists a gap in the literature to place these perspectives in a holistic context. In 1995, one group of historians came to a consensus that, consumption should not be understood as a "field" in historical studies but rather as "a prism through which many aspects of social and political life may be viewed."(Strasser 2002:755-777).
In the modern world, it has become cliché to suggest that we inhabit, are even victims of, a 'consumer society'; that 'consumerism' is rampant; that we are dominated by 'consumer culture', having passed through a 'consumer revolution (Op.cit. Fine & Leopold 1993:62). This quote suggests that the concept of a consumer society has many connotations, but lacks concreteness in its arguments. In fact, surveying the literature on the topic of a consumer revolution does not allow one to arrive at a succinct, neatly defined concept. They suggest that the lack of concreteness in defining a consumer society can be attributed additionally to the fact that the concept is usually used in a supporting role in aiding the explanations of other phenomena. In other words, its assumptions and connotations, however blurred, are assumed to be almost common knowledge, and little focus is given to the actual concept itself. In generic, 'consumerism' alludes to the change in attitude and behaviour of the masses towards the notion of consumption. “Consumerism describes a society in which many people formulate their goals in life partly through acquiring goods that they clearly do not need for subsistence or for traditional display”(Stearns 2001.ix). Obviously, consumption has existed for as long as life has existed, but consumerism is a more recent phenomenon. As such, various studies have been conducted in tracing the origins of consumerism, mostly pointing to eighteenth century England. Of particular importance, is the study conducted by McKendrick and others (1982), which pioneered a shift in focus from production to consumption. Following their developments is the study conducted by Campbell (1987), which elaborates on specific cultural and political causes used in justifying a focus on consumption. To place McKendrick and Campbell’s studies in context, it is illuminating to describe consumption prior to Britain in the 1700s; this makes apparent what exactly the early history uncovers.

3.3. Pre-Modern Stage of Consumerism:

There have been a continuous enquiry of past and present as well as origin and development of consumerism ranging from emulation to capitalist manipulation under the lens up till now. In eighteenth-century, England experienced its first consumer revolution tied to industrialization dated from 1750 to 1775. It arguably, produced cheap and abundant goods for a large middle class eager to ape their social superiors. Briefly stated, the consumer
revolution in England during the 18th century predated the advent of industrialization as well as the advent of mass production. McKendrick presents masses of evidence to demonstrate that all the marketing, merchandising, and advertising techniques that we may think of as unique products of 20th-century (Yankee cupidity, planned obsolescence, loss leaders, fashion magazines, massive advertising campaigns, fancy showrooms, conscious pandering to the elite) were in fact invented by English businessmen in the 18th century. For the first time stockings and underwear were found in the wardrobes of even modest folk, who also began to own such fashionable accessories as pocket watches and fans. Household furnishings changed too. The bed and its linens no longer dominated inventories as the middle classes acquired new types of furniture (sofas, bookcases) and decorative accessories (mirrors, clocks, tea and coffee services). Lately, however, theorists ruled out the dominance of England and strongly credited to the American Society for the aforementioned exemplary outcomes. Stearns, notes the primary barrier to the development of consumerism prior to 1700 as being consumerism's incompatibility with the dominant value systems at the time. These value systems can be divided broadly into religious value systems (taken up in great detail by Campbell) and traditional value systems, which had a primary focus on the community rather than the individual. Distinct from Campbell's study, Stearns spans many major belief systems at the time, all of which had to define or redefine their attitudes towards consumerist tendencies with the rise of international trade and merchant travels. All of Buddhism, Christianity, and Hinduism were generally "suspicious of any devotion to material goods" (ibid:34). Islam was consistent with merchant activity and approved of profit making; those wealthy in Islam society were obligated to distribute their wealth. However, "as with all major (in the sense that one can consume air, or food, for example) religions, the real purpose of life was salvation, not enjoyment of material goods" (Op.cit. Stearns 2001:4).

Nonetheless, early signs of consumerism were apparent among the upper class. Two essential differences between consumerism in this pre-modern era and consumerism in the modern consumer society are that 1) the participants were limited to an elite few, and 2) new items were not consistently generated. Stearns notes that among those lacking wealth, termed

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6 Clocks, for example, were front stage, while the abundant cheap pottery that replaced scarce, expensive tinware in kitchens was backstage. Weatherhill, Lorna. 1988. Consumer Behaviour Journal.( 9) pp-28-38: "Consumer Behaviour," 204-7
“ordinary people,” the primary obstacle blocking consumerism was the availability of luxury goods. Even those goods that did infiltrate their lives (e.g. via traveling merchants) were not consumed in a consumerist fashion. Salt, the most abundant good, was used primarily for meat preservation rather than flavouring. While some peasants had more wealth than others, they would usually buy more land for future security. Often surplus goods were contributed to community works. Many were afraid that excessive material consumption would draw too much attention to the individual which was “inappropriate in terms of group and sometimes religious norms” (ibid: 10). In sum, society (societies) before 1700 blocked the rise of consumerism by their “beliefs, the gap between rich and poor, [and] the organization of manufacturing and trade”. These observations points out how modern society has changed to accommodate a consumerist ideology into which the music industry and so on.

The most fruitful studies of early consumerism relate to the consumerist experiences that developed during the industrial revolution. McKendrick, Brewer, and Plumb conducted the pioneer study. The idea of commodity fetishism is popular in the present day for example, as advocated by Schor (1999), and these studies provide the roots of this concept. The idea of a ‘consumer revolution’ during this period, is frequently disputed on the grounds that consumer behavior is inadequate on its own to provide an account of consumption occurrences. For example, the emergence of sugar, tea, tea sets, and silk to the wealthy in various societies gave rise to the development of “consumer sectors” in certain major cities. Various other studies of that period have pointed out the salience of other features in explaining the rise of consumption.

3.4. Consumerism in the light of Sociological Tradition of Classical Thinkers:

Throughout history, Durkheim, Marx and Weber denied the existence of secluded individual in a society. Perhaps they all defined masses structurally in terms of their relationship to the society means of production and their placement in comparison with others. The Durkheimian perspective stressed on the collective and thereof symbols and rituals which embody sentiments. He emphasized, that societies experience moments of collective ferment and enthusiasm. Such moments are, however, difficult to sustain both over
time and across the span of social groups within a differentiated society (Durkheim 1974:92). Marx and Weber established the orientation of the class formation with consciousness. Marx believed strongly in what he called dialectical materialism that everything is material and change takes place through the struggle between classes. Marx’s concept of class generally assumes a fundamental division between the bourgeoisie and the working class, (proletariat) the two opposing groups of people similarly related to the means of production. Whereas, Weber adds new dimensions by introducing status and political power in the model. The model implicit in the tradition of sociological theories is indispensable for any analysis of modern societies, which focuses on production and exploitation. This triggered the development of a certain sense of emancipation in their own might. In order to realise class consciousness through class struggle and revolution, workers organize themselves for political action. Classes are constituted by the relationship of groupings of individuals to the ownership of private property in the means of production. Marx does not indicate that such states have a dictatorial political form, but rather that they rule in the interests of a particular class. This yields a model of class relations, which is basically dichotomous [since some own and others do not, some work and others live off the fruits of those who labour]: all class societies are built around a primary line of division between two antagonistic classes, one dominant and the other subordinate (Giddens 1971:37). Subsequently, the following sociological tradition of academic discourse between the classical and postmodernist theories on consumerism have been discussed further.

3.4.1. Karl Marx on Consumerism:

However, the actual historical development of capitalism has not borne till then, at least in the advanced industrial societies; though, arguably such a polarization has occurred on an international scale. Karl Marx would have had gone berserk dealing with the upcoming issues of commodification, classification and various needs confronting masses with the issues of capitalist world in those times. In those days, consumption was not a topic taught in sociology degrees; our attention was firmly on the debate about social structure and how economic system shaped social institutions such as education, the family and the state. Social structure was seen as being determined by the current state of mode of production. It was the
developing class relations of late capitalism that had brought about the specific social structure found in the industrialized, advanced, western countries like the United Kingdom.

The main bond of the worker and the social order of late capitalism was through the 'cash nexus'; the money paid in wages for commodified labour. The 'cash nexus' was capitalism at work; producing goods efficiently, rewarding labour with increasingly high wages but no industrial or political power. Under capitalism all things have a price and all things can be bought. The goods that were produced had to be sold and the workers got the wages for producing goods. In present times, the possession value is more than the utility value or exchange value holds significance. Thus, money was the universal necessity for capitalism. Under the international currency standards, the measurement of spending money changes drastically. The division of labour and mechanization of labour also standardizes jobs as well as the workforce. Thus, replacing workers like cog in the wheel proves the famous dictum of Marx. This is not a problem when profits are high and the economy is growing. During the times of good economic conditions; wages will increase as well. In turn, the profit margin on labour will decrease leading to layoffs and increased unemployment. This will cause small businesses to collapse and wages to once again decrease. Moreover, at this point, consumption will have fallen because there is less disposable income. Companies will again hire more of these standardized workers who will work for lower wages because they are unemployed. This will again increase the capitalist profit and the cycle begins again. History is dialectical, and will lead to a revolution that will cause capitalism to fall. In the economic analysis of capitalism, Marx is further intrigued by the process of alienation of the worker who produces but is detached- are simply salaried and cannot be associated with the things they manufacture. A process where they are estranged from the commodity and can only claim association by buying it from the market. This painful process of dissociation is termed as 'fetishization of Commodities'. Accordingly, the working class will take over the means of production and bring into being the final stage of society that being communism. Nevertheless, Marx had high hopes from his working class that would undermine the forces of capitalism in the long run. As it is consumerism, it is just a part of the bigger picture and

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7 Dant Tim, Consumption: Sociology caught in the 'cash nexus'. http://folk.uio.no/potnes/Dant.pdf
has complex connotations which Marx failed to speculate. Thus, it is time to state Marx, that it is consumption and not production, as the central tenet of contemporary consumerism.

3.4.2. Max Weber on Consumerism:

A parallel can be drawn from then to now, for the workers detachment from the production of commodities vis-à-vis the power of possession. However, the actual historical development of capitalism had not borne, until the revolution occurred on an international scale. On the contrary, Max Weber believed in the relationship between workers and the management rather than have’s (bourgeoisie) and have not’s (proletariat). Competition, among status groups, which, are organised around modes of consumption, are more important than struggle among classes (1948). Weber had a different perspective on why and when capitalism came about. Weber’s model has three level explanation of association such as status to social order, class to economic ranking and parties to the political order. Weber believed that people with a certain status had a certain lifestyle that set them apart from others. This dimension of political rank refers to one’s standing in a collectivity or organization whose action is oriented toward the acquisition of social power. Each order is affected by one another. Status marks the people exclusively in a close knit community akin to the mechanical solidarity for their social positioning in the society. The same status group may comprise of both people with and without property. Status honor normally emerges from a specific lifestyle that is expected of all who are members of a particular group. This means restrictions on social relationships (marrying the right people and being seen with the appropriate people). Weber notes that political membership or class situation has always been a common source of status groups. In the present times there is existence of strong community liaisons for marriage, business, recognition as well as acquaintance. Class status more than anything has dominated the contemporary scenario for lifestyle, basically conditioned by one’s economic situation.

Thus, Weber’s model permits stratification based on the monopolization of material and ideal goods and opportunities. This is based on the fact of possession of or ownership as a positive trait of a status group members entitled to own or use these goods and
opportunities. However, right were denied to the group, and therefore to acquisition of
certain rights as a dignified members of the society. Weber’s theoretical orientation is more
apt in considering the eligibility criteria of a member fitting into the materialistic
interpretation of consumer society.

All things being equal, the possibilities of upheaval of a class from nowhere simply
credited to the economic qualification can be ruled out. In order to proliferate such social
actions, there must prevail proper cultural and intellectual conditions. Besides, the nature of
the contradictory market situation would have to be relatively transparent to all. Weber notes
that there is class conscious organization where (a) there are no groups between the real
adversaries, (b) large numbers of persons are in the same class situation, (c) it is technically
eyasy to organize those in the common class situation, and (d) where the goals of the class are
well understood, and this understanding is led by those outside the class (intelligentsia)(

According to Weber, ‘class situation’ is ultimately ‘market situation’. Marx and
Weber both witnessed the struggle of acquisition of goods. Marx, is beneficial in analyzing
the relations of production (sellers), however, Weber as an advocate of the consumers for the
consumption of goods presents a contrast. Thus, status groups are stratified according to
principles of their consumption of goods represented by specific lifestyles.

3.4.3. Weber and Campbell on Consumerism:

An interesting parallel between Campbell’s romanticism and Weber’s protestant
ethics of consumerism is drawn. Campbell, however, tries to understand why consumers
actually consume in the way they do in a more ‘idealistic’ way. Just as Weber tried to
complement Marxist approaches by studying development at the level of ideas (certain forms
of Protestantism). If for Weber, the development of capitalism was tied to inner-worldly
asceticism and self-denying activity, for Campbell the development of consumerism was tied
to consistent self-gratifying activity. Weber’s famous metaphor striding into the market-place
of worldly affairs become further transformed in modern society of consumer market place
romantically attached with other complexes. Weber, believed the role of ascetic Protestantism ethic that led to accumulation as a duty to God. He found a large explanation within the difference between Protestants and Catholics. “The only way of living acceptably to God was solely though the fulfillment of the obligations imposed on the individual by his position in the world. Nonetheless, Protestants felt that they could determine the status of their souls through their calling. This was his calling”. As Protestants worked in their callings, the amount of success that they achieved was a sign from God as to the predestination of their souls. Whereas for Catholics priests, the power to forgive you of your sins was prime (Weber 1930:60-80). Protestants also believed that their souls were predestined to go either to heaven or hell. For this reason, Protestants developed a wonderful work ethic. However, they were not allowed to spend the money that they earned. Instead, they saved and invested it. Weber found this to be a strong evidence that, “One’s duty in a calling is what is most characteristic of the social ethic of capitalistic culture, and is in a sense the fundamental basis of it” (ibid:10). Weber also found that this work ethic was strong throughout all economic classes no matter what their individual callings were (ibid:10). Marx, had an opinion of the division of labour opposed to that of the Weber’s notion of specialization of occupations and increased development of skills, which in turn caused an improvement in production. The division of labour therefore serves the common good (ibid:35). Whereas, Weber opines that the process of standardizing labour, workers themselves become part of the product and thus, “Labour produces not only commodities; it produces itself and the worker as a commodity” (ibid: 71).

However, through the commodification of man and his labour, capitalism also causes the commodification of human relations. The most useful contribution to this study was conducted by Campbell. It offers an illuminating analysis of the emergence of the romantic ethic in the late eighteenth to that of the early nineteenth century. The melancholy of consumerism is that it is deconstructed to the core of individualism and selfishness. It is an ideology where everyone is interested in personnel benefits as in “what will I gain” along with the pleasure and emotional attachment of symbolic gains. This formed the basis of his theory of modern autonomous imaginative hedonism, in which he believes most people gain pleasure simply by the act of imagining consumption. The very romantic association with the
commodities was an exaggerated version of the Weberian model of the ethics of the protestant to act greedy for more money and hence to consume more. Campbell's romantic ethic help us comprehend, why consumers are consumed with consumption, and use their imaginative skills to comprehend, and desire to achieve in reality is shaped up. So Campbell tries to approach consumerism by the assumption of certain ethic working behind increasing consumption. A common point is that, they both represent break from tradition. It has nothing to do with human nature but, just as production is linked to the protestant ethic, similarly consumption can be linked to the Romantic ethic.

In order to explore the dynamics of modern consumerism, he differentiates types of hedonism: traditional and modern. Campbell subsequently argues that a commitment to Romantic principles facilitated such a transition. The model of traditional hedonism, based upon concepts of need and satisfaction, involves the hedonist extracting pleasurable sensations from social and cultural interactions. The centrality of the body and bodily stimulation is reinforced by Campbell's listing of traditional hedonistic activities: 'eating, drinking, sexual intercourse, socializing, singing, dancing and playing games (Campbell1987:76). Here, pleasure and fulfillment are achieved through immediate and direct, tactile and sensory experiences. It is an 'exceptionally difficult exercise' (ibid: 112) to gain direct pleasure from the imagination. Secondly, modern hedonists have gained the capacity to autonomously control imagined emotions. Pleasure is sought through this process of 'emotional management' rather than through tactile sensation. Mental images are constructed and then consumed 'for the intrinsic pleasure they provide'. In modern, self-illusory hedonism, the individual is much more an artist of the imagination, someone who takes images from memory or the existing environment, and rearranges or otherwise improves them in his mind in such a way that they become distinctly pleasing. No longer are they 'taken as given' from past experience, but crafted into unique products, in which pleasure is the guiding principle. In this sense, the contemporary hedonist is a dream artist, the special psychic skill possessed by modern man making this possible (ibid: 77-78). Having identified self-illusory hedonism as the spirit of modern consumption, Campbell turns his attention to exploring the cultural ethic underpinning or animating this spirit. This seduces the emotions and senses resulting in feelings, such as romance, spiritual contentment, joy,
pleasure, excitement, and "adrenalin rush" in particular. The fact that the rise of consumption has led to rise in consumerism is something remarkable.

It is claimed that Romanticism is a prime facilitator of modern hedonism's condition, and by implication, modern consumption. However their values, beliefs and lifestyles lead Campbell to insist that the Romantics 'brought about a state of affairs generally conducive to modern consumerism' (ibid: 208). Also, emphasized the commonality of mankind, the sense in which all men shared a common status leading to possession of common rights' (ibid: 285). The reactionary discourse, against the disenchantments of the external world highlights the historical significance of Romanticism. The objective is re-enchantment of the individual psychic world. The Romantics' philosophical framework espoused an emotionalist world view, the 'cult of the self' being at the forefront of human existence. Not only did a Romantic ethic initially create the capacity for modern hedonists to consume imaginatively, it arguably led to the self-centered legacies of Romanticism. It has continued to renew the spirit of consumerism ever since.

Yet, it is the specificities of modern hedonism, for Campbell, which paradoxically account for the inevitable failure of material goods to live up to the imaginative capacities of the individual. Paradoxically, the more proficient one becomes at creatively imagining emotions and sensations, the more likely it is that 'real' consumption fails to deliver a comparable intensity of pleasure. This establishes a cyclical pattern of consumer frustration in which actual consumption is typically a disillusioning, dissatisfying experience. The implications of this cycle of desire and disappointment for the market economy are tremendous. In their quest to experience the dramas of their imagination in reality through the medium of material goods, modern hedonists are ceaseless.

Lists of the key features of high culture, embodied by Romanticism are: "The ideal of self-expression... The freedom of self-expression... The idea of genius... The rejection of general or rational causality... 'Cosmic self-assertion'... The social alienation of the literary man... The hostility of modern society to talent and sensitivity... World-weariness and 'the horror of daily life'...(Campbell 1987:289)". Thus, it is argued here that Campbell's
formulation is not strictly a backlash against neoclassical consumer theory (as he would have it), but instead that the two theories point towards each other and require more formal links. Additionally, it seems to hold Romanticism as ubiquitous among the people of the time.

But the most important aspect of Campbell’s study to this thesis is the conceptual link between consumerism and Romanticism, in that it essentially allows for the recognition of the difference between what a commodity is, physically, and what it can represent to the individual. Essentially, it allows for the assignment of use values to commodities beyond what they materially represent. It transforms the function of a piece of music from the purely musicological to the social, cultural, psychological, and political aspects of society.

To highlight various social factors that contributed to the spread of consumerism, it suggests “people saw in consumerism, a means of expressing their individual essence” (Op.cit. Stearns 2001:29-30). These use-values, can be assigned by the individual through their imagination, or they can be assigned to the commodity by social and cultural forces (or producers), and interpreted by the individual’s imagination, essentially appealing to (or not) their imagination. As such, the origins of our so-called ‘Consumer Society’ are sought. The approach, thus, advocates an analysis of the role of factors playing in the market, using historical analysis to illustrate. It is asserted here that, by applying this approach, the effectiveness of the birth of consumer society can be placed in context.

3.5. The Modernist Theoretical Approach to Consumerism:

We are all part and parcel of the consumer society. Most of the people constantly worry about how others will judge one’s appearance; and how one can leave a lasting impression. This might sound useless to some and interesting to others. Subsequently, one consumes on a day-to-day basis, but is unaware of the complexity of consumerism. The above parameters were the transmitters, dispositions to express the taste, fashion, art, lifestyle practices despite apparent individuality and distinctive lifestyle. As we move forward with some peculiar insight into its subsections as follows:
3.5.1. Birth of a Consumer Society:

The economic prosperity of England in eighteenth century opened up world of fashionable goods to ever more social classes, and it is at this historical point that locate the beginning of consumer society (McKendrick 1982:19). One can observe the mass consumption as opposed to that of elite consumption of sixteenth century. As observed by Stearns, there was a consumer society before 1700, witnessing the spread of consumerism from an elite few to the masses. This is typically thought to have occurred in England during the Industrial Revolution. Their argument centers on social emulation, which they attribute to Thorstein Veblen, calling it ‘the Veblen effect.’ The key to their argument is that the consumer revolution was a result of the spending patterns of the middle classes. And, thus, the emulation that drove the revolution was that of the middle class aspiring to become the aristocracy: “Servants mimicking their masters are an age-old phenomenon, one rank in society being eager to join a higher group is just as old,......London as a centre. He viewed wealth as the basis of social honour and prestige, and he believed that emulation and display were primary determinants of peoples’ consumption patterns” (Veblen 1899:53). On similar lines, Miller, considers that consumer culture was identified with an exploitative, alienating, modern, capitalist culture, and was regarded as embodying selfish, dehumanizing and materialist values. He adds that these groups of rebels were ‘a critique’ in which work on the ‘popular’ dealt with consumerism as a form of resistance against a traditional, elitist culture and the society, which it represented (Miller 1995:98). It has now been asserted that advertising and consumer culture were, at least during the 70s, responsible for the creation of gaps between each layer of the society especially concerning the youth class.

Though, the above concept seen as mundane today, Veblen was the first to write in social terms about the phenomenon of ‘keeping up with the Joneses’. He suggested two ways in which people could demonstrate their wealth, and coined them as “conspicuous leisure” and “conspicuous consumption” (ibid: 33). The former refers to how individuals spent their
leisure time flaunting their possessions. The main aim of this, in Veblen’s time, was to demonstrate to other people that an individual possessed enough wealth not to have to work (ibid: 37). Conspicuous consumption is more useful in modern times where even incredibly wealthy people often work. It refers simply to the purchase of status goods, or the purchase of excessive amounts of goods. For a critique of the methodological weaknesses of Veblen’s work, Campbell (1987) argues that Veblen is more commonly recognized for his role as a radical critic than as a theorist. As conspicuous consumption was by no means new in then political system” (Mckendrick, Brewer & Plumb 1982:22). In this respect, taste formations was, essentially led by upper classes, and filtered down to the middle classes through the process of emulation. This is also fundamentally the idea of the ‘trickle down’ theory expressed originally by Simmel (1904), who explained changing fashions by the fact that as the lower classes (at least, lower than the upper class) adopted the styles of their ‘superiors’, so the upper classes sought new styles so as to distinguish themselves from the middle class with the growth of the metropolis. Analogous, to what was earlier discussed Simmel, related fashion to the fragmentation of modern life, the neurasthenia, the over stimulation and nervous excitement which accelerated. The modern individual is confronted by a feverish change of fashion and bewildering plurality of styles (Simmel 1904:135). The local and traditional way of consuming was being loosened by the extra-local and new ways by all sorts of magazines and salespeople found their way across English province. Fashion meant repeated purchase of goods hence mass consumption appeared for all social classes. Thus, historically, is a new way of looking at goods as signifiers of social status than use-value. The above explanation focuses on the two inferences that can be drawn for the understanding of consumer culture:

Firstly, fashion is seen as a mark for a particular social category. Secondly, the stylization of household objects is also seen as the stylizing icons. Simmel’s project of stylization of everyday objects and beautification of life corresponds to that of the aestheticism of Britain and Jugendstil movement of Germany.

There evolved the need to investigate the evolution of symbolic production and the movement of the late eighteenth century. Within this consumer revolution, McKendrick
makes reference to a leisure revolution, which sparked involvement in many activities such as theatre, dancing, sport and music (McKendrick, Brewer & Plumb 1982:282). The middle class again sought to emulate their social superiors in mimicking these activities, and so production of commodities facilitating these activities became directed toward the middle class. The tendencies towards emulating, equalizing individuality, and differentiation have been central to the study. McKendrick's main point of departure from prior studies of this era is that it was this drive of the middle class to emulate the upper class that essentially allowed the success of the Industrial Revolution. It provided the appropriate mode of consumption in the form of emulation. According to this view, it was in fact the population's increase in propensity to consume that led the Industrial Revolution. Apart from its status as pioneer, this study is useful in that it brings back Keynes' theory of 'paradox of thrift' thereof, that supply creates its own demand as a motive for increased spending during the Industrial Revolution. Put simply, the concept means that if everyone decides to save, consumer spending will fail, causing total demand to slump, along with total income, which will ultimately mean that people will have less to save.

3.5.2. Consumption Springs from Romanticism and Consumer Ethic:

It has not always been thus, the above leads exclusively on consumption practices. However, here we try to understand why consumers actually consume in the way they do in a more 'idealistic' way? The sudden surge in emulation leading to actual consumption, for which McKendrick, posit certain factors are not consumer-related. They refer to the arrival of the prominence of the wage system and the progress made by advertising and sales techniques (ibid: 22). As such, their view of the consumer revolution resembles as much a dependence of the Industrial Revolution on the consumer revolution (which they strived to argue) as it does vice-versa. The importance of this study recognizes that a propensity to emulate had been present, but it increased during the period, evidenced by the ease with which people embraced emulation. Fine and Leopold faults McKendrick's line of argument because of its narrow scope. Campbell's final assessment of McKendrick's study is that, it in fact, does not provide any explanation of why the increased propensity to consume occurred, nor does it provide sufficient insight into modern consumerism generally. It provided
evidence of the changes in behaviour necessary for suggesting changes in attitudes, but fundamentally failed to account for the actual changes in attitudes (Campbell 1987:23). 

Campbell’s standpoint is that we live now in a hedonistic society obsessed with pleasure seeking as one of life’s primary functions. The cause of this hedonistic pursuit dates back to the consumer revolution. Prior to the consumer revolution, the British middle class predominantly followed a particularly rigid sect of religious Puritanism called Calvinism, which severely discouraged the “spontaneous enjoyment of possessions whilst also restricting consumption, especially of luxuries” (ibid:103). The public’s propensity to consume was, thus, minimized by this asceticism. Discontent with the rigidities of Calvinism came a new Puritanical sect, the Cambridge Platonists, who advocated that “religion was a matter of deep moral conviction with humility and charity counting for more than ritual or dogma.”(ibid: 113). Hence, people were compelled to act out of pity or charity in order to express their virtue, and it became humdrum for these acts to take the form of consumption. People realised that they obtained pleasure out of performing good deeds, or buying things for others, and began simulating these acts for the sake of selfish pleasure, and not for the virtue of religion. With the advent of the ethic of sensibility, defined roughly as a hypersensitive expression of emotions, particularly that of shedding tears, virtue became associated with dramatic weeping, as opposed to acts of benevolence.

Campbell goes on to explain that it was an aristocrat, the Third Earl of Shaftesbury, who made the major link between virtue and aesthetics: “Following the classical association of goodness and beauty, Campbell claimed that the virtuous soul must necessarily be characterized by harmony with the consequence that there is beauty in goodness and goodness in beauty.” Since virtue became a quality of aesthetics, a lack thereof was referred to as the person having bad taste. Due to the difficulty of instantly judging the degree of someone’s virtue by his or her actions, a more practical way of doing so was by judging the degree of someone’s aesthetic appreciation. This marked a major shift towards the consumption of luxury goods as a display of virtue (ibid: 151). The same fear that had always driven the Puritans not to consume ‘frivolously’ now drove them to consume voraciously: the fear of not displaying virtue. In order to defend the philosophy of feeling, those who advocated it through the doctrine of Romanticism, claiming that the insincerity expressed by
people in the era of sensibility did so because of a duty to customs and etiquette, and these concepts became scapegoats for sensibility. Romanticism as a philosophy requires too much space to debate here. Campbell summarizes the essence of the doctrine succinctly by viewing it more as a cultural movement on par with the Renaissance, and as a way of feeling. Quoting Gauderfroy Demombynes, “romanticism is a way of feeling, a state of mind in which sensibility and imagination predominates over reason; it tends towards the new, towards individualism, revolt, escape, melancholy, and fantasy”, to which he adds: “dissatisfaction with the contemporary world, a restless anxiety in the face of life, a preference for the strange and curious, a penchant for reverie and dreaming, a leaning to mysticism, and a celebration of the irrational” (ibid: 187). The Romantics saw the individuals as a distinct and autonomous being—the uniqueness rather than generalisable side of the individual. The idea was to seek out newer and more diverse forms of gratification. And this was clearly a non-traditional kind.

It, thus, had much of its focus on imagination, and viewed art as the main way of awakening this imagination. Earlier, Weber stressed the perseverance of status groups to maintain the lifestyle and social distance by closing off the opportunity to others on the account of protestant ethic of religion. In this age of Romanticism, finally, pleasure became a medium of moral expression. Thus, pleasure as the primary reason for doing something was seen as virtuous. What is significant here, for Campbell, (ibid: 193), is a teleology: because people had such a preoccupation with the pursuit of pleasure. Romanticism devalued the appeal and the significance of utilitarian notions of comfort. Campbell believes that it is this ethic of Romanticism that has been carried forward into the present, which underlies the modern spirit of consumerism, and is able to explain the modern hedonistic society. Campbell takes Weber’s framework to apply cultural approach, in which an assumed affinity between a particular ethic and spirit gave rise to psychological impulses, directing an individual’s everyday life (ibid: 8). An important outcome of this historical study as Campbell asserts, is that people fundamentally gain pleasure from the act of imagination. An obvious inadequacy of Campbell’s study is its single-minded focus on consumerism, paying no heed to mechanisms of production, distribution, circulation. Stearns points out that “The eighteenth century also saw the rise of strict new religious movements, such as Methodism
and Pietism, which focused sharply on the spiritual side of life and discouraged vulgar display” (Op.cit.Stearns 2001:19). Though the focusing on consumers alone is obviously shortsighted, it is valuable in that it provides the polar opposite of what most studies of the time produced, focusing on the production end of the spectrum.

A pioneering study conducted by McKendrick, locates the origins of such a culture to eighteenth century England. It suggests that largely the middle class, emulating aristocracy, supported the Industrial Revolution. Campbell’s (1987) study of the same period highlights a change in peoples’ attitudes towards consumption ultimately recognizing the ethic of Romanticism, which has persisted to the present day, as supporting a consumer culture. Akin to this, McCracken’s theory of displaced meanings, in which he asserts that people associate commodities with certain unattainable ideals, thus fuelling demand for those commodities. In this context, it is reconnected to the fact, that consumerism is not related to an individual but works closely with system of objects. While the above theories place a biased emphasis on consumers, Galbraith and the Frankfurt school place a similar bias on the role of producers in the market. They assert that it is producers who control consumers’ wants and stimulate a demand based on false consciousness. While these theories appear to be at odds with those discussed above, it is asserted that Campbell’s and McCracken’s theories provide the basis for these assertions, and thus they seem to point towards one another for a complete analysis.

3.5.3. Consumerism from Fordism to Post- Fordism:

Indeed, the working class received no more than thin promises of more goods and rising living standards in return for the draconian conversion of production to Fordist techniques. The rhetoric and incitements for increasing production and productivity, symbolised by new payment schemes, therefore made clear the link between mass production and mass consumption. Productivism and consumerism became inextricably linked. At the core of the logic rested a flaw: while it was in the interest of all employers to pay their workers well in order to have sufficient incomes to buy the mass-produced goods, it was explicitly not in the interest of any individual employer to do so. From a financial perspective the strongest incentives were, of course, to pay employees as little as possible. Keynesian
strategies in the 1930s and British Labour incomes policies after 1944 tried to address this problem through state intervention, but they only went far enough to stave off working-class demands for more thoroughgoing social and economic restructuring. Suffice to decipher consumer culture way back in eighteenth century; let's take the discussion further to understand consumerism. As the Fordism era is enough evidence to understand mass consumerism. It provides a critique of various existing consumption theories. Its starting point acknowledges connotations of consumerism and consumption contingent with that of a consumer culture, or a ‘mass culture’. Neoclassical economic consumer theory is discussed at length due to the dominance of this paradigm in the wake of economic hegemony. The theory assumes the doctrine of consumer sovereignty, defined generally as “the part played by consumers’ demand schedules in settling the flow of production under a capitalist system” (Fraser, 1939:544). From this doctrine, many simplifying assumptions assert that characterise neoclassical comparative-static analysis arises.

A historical critique of the doctrine is given, focusing on the work of Fordism and post-Fordism theories of the early nineties. British theorists have been more thorough in analysing the advent of multinational capitalism, describing the effects of a transition from “Fordism” to “post-Fordism.” “Fordism” is a summary term for the system of mass production consolidated by Henry Ford in the early decades of this century. Fordism required elaborate central planning to standardise tasks and parts, to analyze discrete tasks, and to arrange tasks in a sequence on an assembly line, and it used an authoritarian hierarchical management structure to ensure that the plan was followed. After its initiation in the United States (Ford installed the assembly line in his Dearborn factory in 1913), Fordism soon spread to other industries and also to other nations. Probably the most committed convert to Fordism was Lenin, who based Soviet industrialisation on the Fordist principles of central planning, hierarchical organisation, and large-scale production. Because establishing an assembly line and mechanising part of that line requires a large initial commitment of capital, Fordism is predicated on mass consumption in order to be profitable. Mass consumption in turn requires elaborate systems of distribution and an economic climate that produces steady demand. For Fordism to flourish, nations had to build infrastructures and manage markets with a degree of hierarchical control similar to that used by corporations to manage workers.
Large variations in consumer demand, such as the slackening of demand during the 1930s, could be catastrophic for Fordist industries. It was not until the application of Keynesian economics following World War II that the Fordist economic era realised its potential. The United States and other Western governments actively managed the national economies to promote stable economic growth that enabled ongoing mass consumption of mass-produced goods.

The triumph of Fordism proved to be short-lived. By the 1960s, the Fordist model started getting to be eroded by transnational competition and by more diversified and volatile markets. West Germany and Japan grew to be major forces in the world's markets, and multinational corporations began to shift production overseas in search of cheap labour. The Keynesian solution of increasing the money supply brought inflation that threatened steady economic growth. These weaknesses in Fordism were exposed in the sharp economic downturn caused by the Oil and petroleum embargo corporation following the Arab-Israeli War in 1973. The old-style factories of the Rust Belt in the United States declined rapidly in 1970s, and economic growth was concentrated in the Sun Belt and in areas where high-tech, computer-based companies were located such as the Route 128 corridor around Boston. Those industries that remained were forced to become more sensitive to consumer demand following the lead of retailers.8

The term for this development in the discourse of business management is *flexibility*. In post-Fordism the work force becomes flexible in several senses: (1) core workers were flexible since they were trained to do varied tasks including some assigned to supervisors in Fordist management; (2) peripheral workers are flexible because their numbers can rise and fall according to the specific needs of a company; (3) the entire work force becomes geographically flexible as production is dispersed across regions and national boundaries; (4) production becomes flexible as it responds to specific consumer demands. (5) Besides shifting the work force away from manufacturing to service occupations in Western nations, thus eliminating many high-paid working-class jobs and creating many low-paid jobs, Post-

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Fordism has also shifted many of the risks of capitalism onto these low-paid contract workers, who have few benefits and little job security.

Accompanying the transition from Fordism to Post-Fordism was the breakup of mass culture as it was constituted earlier in the United States throughout much of this century into a pluralisation of tastes, styles, and practices. The formerly common experiences of popular culture for instance reading magazines such as Look, Life, and the Saturday Evening Post, listening to and later watching the programs of the three major broadcast networks, eating similar food, wearing similar fashions, and living in similarly structured male-headed families were closely tied to Fordism. Then, Look, Life, and The Saturday Evening Post ceased publishing as mass circulation magazines and got replaced by hundreds of specialised magazines devoted to hobbies, fashion, interests, and occupations. Many former viewers of the major networks have been diverted to the multitude of television channels available on cable or by satellite dish or they watched thousands of movie titles available on video. Even in small provincial cities, exotic items for consumption became commonplace: clothing from Africa, South America, and Asia, restaurants featuring food from India to the Caribbean, luxury cars from Europe and Japan, and collectible items from many parts of the world. The expansion of leisure time led to numerous new social movements ranging from Tai Chi and Kung Fu, to jogging and aerobics to yoga and massage to gourmet cooking and wine making to amateur magic and computer hacking. The worlds become a bazaar, from which to shop for an individual was seen as a way of certain ‘lifestyle’. Moreover, when, traditional religion failed to inspire, ‘New Age Religion’ encouraged to make up one’s own, selecting beliefs and practices from a smorgasbord of Western religions, including Christianity and Judaism, and of course oriental imports including Islam, Buddhism, Vedanta, Hinduism, Zen, Sufism, and other Eastern teachings (Lester1992:54).

Theories of Postmodernity, describe the fragmentation of the subject, but they work from a different line of reasoning that associates the fragmentary subject with the desires of consumption. What are consumed in contemporary Western societies is not so much objects, but images of objects, through which consumers imagine themselves as consuming subjects. Acts of consumption thus close the gap between subject and object but open the gap within
the subject. Because living consumers can never be self-identical with the imaginary consuming subject, the desires of the consuming subject are never completely fulfilled. The desire to consume is predicated on the lack of stable identity. Purchasing and using a consumer object is a temporary and an unstable attempt to occupy an imagined identity provoked by an image. Jameson sees the decentered subject of postmodern theory as a kind of epiphenomenon of the fragmented social subject of Post-Fordism or what he calls ‘multinational capitalism’. Jameson is one of the theorists who describe the breakdown of links between signifiers in Postmodernity as a kind of cultural schizophrenia. In “Postmodernism and Consumer Society”, he stresses that the schizophrenic “is condemned to live in a perpetual present with which the various moments of his or her past have little connection and for which there is no conceivable future on the horizon. In other words, schizophrenic experience is an experience of isolated, disconnected, discontinuous material signifiers that fail to link up into a coherent sequence” (Jameson 1984:119). The experience of flipping through television programming approximates the consciousness of the schizophrenic living in the intense, eternal present. The viewer watches a series of spectacles from around the world-bombs exploding buildings, sports heroes in the elation of victory, royal marriages, plane crashes, assassinations, rock concerts, ranting dictators, shuttle launches, hurricanes, scandals, earthquakes, revolutions, eclipses, and international terrorism—all issued in an economy of images competing for attention (ibid:146). Jameson proposes that if “theory” is to have a political project, then it will be to provide “cognitive maps” so that “we may again begin to grasp our positioning as individual and collective subjects and regain a capacity to act and struggle which is at present neutralized by our spatial as well as our social confusion”.

3.6. The Post Modern Approach towards Consumerism:

Modernity had at last reached its limit. Modern societies had reached ‘the end of the history and there could no longer be any prospect of ‘advance’ or ‘progress’ beyond (Scott 2006:220). However, some have witnessed a sea change in human existence and was marked by the entry of the western world to a new ‘post-modern’ milieu in the second half of the twentieth century. Postmodernism establishes the way things are rather than how we would
like them to be. It accepts consumption as an important feature of society. Unlike modernism, where we desire to change things as per our disposal and convenience. To the consumers themselves, consumption is less like a pleasure for its own sake and more like a pleasurable fulfillment of social duties (Douglas & Isherwood 1979:16). In addition, mass consumption is rarely the endless modernist round of pleasures and sensations. Thus, foreseeing future and taking it for granted is the attitude of postmodernism, although it has not been able to define itself quite clearly.

Consumption is a social activity characterized with differentiation of lifestyles. Hence, consumption patterns do not implicate that consumption is an individualistic activity. It is radically different from what one knows and so far is ill-equipped to deal with its epistemology known as “consumerism”. Symbolic consumption, in this respect, is a social and cultural event which centers on the exchange of symbols for what is consumed, and even more importantly is the way it is consumed. This conveys the message of ‘who you are’ and ‘how you wish yourself to be perceived by others’. The students learnt their ‘right answers’, needed to qualify the entry in the clubs and bars. The degree level unit in consumption studies becomes itself a ritualised sign of culturation- necessary for passing through an age grade and moving into the society, equipped to participate on both sides of the cash nexus, as wage labourer and consumer- knife or no knife. The central concern of this study rests upon the basic tenets of postmodernist analysis of consumerism in contemporary times. Some of them have been characterised as follows:

3.6.1. ‘Space’ as sites of Urban Consumption (Markets):

Spaces of consumption become experiential spaces, expressing individual experiences and related structures of feeling. In the urban public realm, it is not feasible to know each other by their name to have a feeling of togetherness. Quite on the contrary, people extract feelings of togetherness from (generalized) others, even more so when these (generalized) others differ completely from (significant) what one is accustomed to. These

differences are an essential part of identity construction and form an integral part of consumption. Consumption plays an increasingly important role in identity construction, in the identification with others and in so the identity construction of the self. The networked and coded hypermarkets become central spaces, as the rest of the city arranges itself as a ‘satellite’ around it. ‘The forms of the hypermarket and the satellite city are dedicated to creating a space of control that has taken its departure from the classical regime of surveillance which in itself become integrated into the interior design of the shopping centre’ (Clarke 2003:95). Consumption is an effective means to distinguish one’s personality intentionally and actively from others. Therefore, the context in which symbolic consumption takes place (the city and especially the city centre) in a social, cultural and physical sense is important. Two factors can be identified in this context, which in their interdependence boost the development of attachment, namely frequency and intensity. Frequency refers to recurring symbolic consumption. This indicates that the presence of leisure activities in cities facilitates functional value in conjunction with emotional value, which is in close connection with the presence of other social beings. Big events, like football matches, parades or the opening of a bridge or places where many people gather (like in shopping malls, concert halls or festivals) have a certain social quality that goes beyond the presence of just a lot of people. They are ‘cultural products’: “personal ornaments, modes of social display, aestheticised objects, forms of entertainment and distraction or sources of information and self-awareness” (Scott 2006:323-324).

In the macro perspective, social contacts in the domain of urban consumption can be intense, and highly expressive but temporary, partial and flexible. Consumption is considered something private with no collective gain. As discussed above, about the positive attributes, people make themselves feel good when they spend money and similarly feel good about the environment in which this takes place. People get in contact with local cultural identity and the local sense of place. There is even a chance that real social contact is involved in the consumer domain, possibly enhancing feelings of attachment to the context in which this takes place. Sociality, then, become an important part of consumption, because it seems to offer people ideas on how to change or form identity. It emerges where people gather with a common goal, share the same phenomena and similar feelings, and create a sense of
togetherness. It invokes a sense of belonging and communion. In this respect the emotional aspects of sociality like identification with local history, local sayings, feelings of pride with what is achieved in the city, or the presence of symbolic spots can enhance one’s attachment with the city and the city center. As a consequence, of this urban space (markets), and otherwise as well, consumption becomes a social event and not and act of solitude per se.

3.6.2. The Notion of ‘Self’ with Multiple Identities:

Apart from very early childhood, nobody has purely individual likes or dislikes. Instead, every choice is subject to social pressure, and ‘likes and dislikes have lost their innocence’. Images and identities are bound together, ‘just as respect and self respect (are)’ (Gabriel & Lang 1995:90). This is what Bourdieu ‘habitus’ in Distinction (1984), states the visible outcome of a person’s social identity, determined by fixed social structures of the society. The personnel identity can be formed in social context, with the aid of other individuals. In order to maintain the coherence of the ‘self’, identity has to adjust to all situations that he or she encounters. This is difficult, since the norms and rules of traditional social categories (caste, class etc) are of little value in late modernity. The terminology associated with contemporary patterns of consumption is much debated. There is an ongoing debate on the existence of postmodernism itself. It is termed by some as post-modernism or advanced capitalism. It constitutes an approach revolving around the notion of self, with multiple identities and group affiliations. Consumers seldom conform to stereotypes, and behaviour as culture, and context dependent. Furthermore, they propose that choice lies at the centre of the idea of consumerism, both as its emblem and as a core value. This approach is disputed by Baudrillard (1988), arguing that, at one level, consumers are in control of their choice decision, while being concurrently subjected to explicit manipulation through media exposure. It is suggested (Bocock 1993; Bourdieu 1984 [1979]) that consumption patterns are increasingly replacing class position and work roles, in terms of locating individuals in a social order. Interestingly, what these authors have in common is a questionable assumption that society as a whole has access to the means of consumption.

3.6.3. Reinventing Lifestyles, Aesthetics and Taste:
The term ‘lifestyle’ is usually understood as some sort of material expression of the individual identity. This also turns options into an ordered pattern of habits and routines. (Giddens 1991:81). Also lifestyles are fragmented, stylised practices that are in constant state of agitation without necessarily changing its order (Featherstone 1991:65). The receding importance of traditional social categories forces individuals to choose between different lifestyles and identities by themselves. ‘Individual here does not belong to traditional socio-economic divisions; rather, they are the ‘neo-tribal’ lifestyles and belonging to them depends entirely upon the individual’s ‘appropriate’ consumption style’ (Bauman 1990:205-07). Neo tribal groups are neither solid nor stable. Thus, they allow mobility for consumers to move freely from one group to another. Consumption taken as birthright and profession defines a person’s position and can be taken as an expression of desires, personality and individualism, perceptions and images also defining lifestyles and identities (Corrigan, 1997). However, it is perhaps not that simple. For example, in Veblen’s (1975 [1899]) view of the world, the basis of an individual’s good standing in society lies in pecuniary strength, which can be indicated in two ways: conspicuous leisure and/or conspicuous consumption(as discussed above). Commercial hospitality may fulfill both of these requirements. However, this will be a complex function regarding consumption of the associated products and services as a means of making and maintaining social relationships.

To generalize, the thrust can be summarized as being towards a situation where the consumer is increasingly being stimulated by perceived aesthetics rather than by functionality. It is the intangibles of products and services, and their association with style that enables a consumer to act out their desired socio-cultural role. This entails the valuing of symbol over substance, with media constituting and perpetuating illusions of a hyper-reality, interlinking reality and simulation, which routinely manipulates consumer desires, wants and needs (Williams, 2000). This can be clearly illustrated in the context of commercial hospitality wherein facilities are deliberately designed to create images of illusion, fantasy, and escapism, simulating a cosmetic version of reality through a mixture of substantive and communicative staging.
3.6.4. Reproducing Symbolic Images:

According to Dann (1998), the resulting sign structure is that of the commodity. What is consumed is no longer an object, but a sign of an object operating under rules of decorum, status, and prestige. It is the sign image of reality that is being promoted, rather than reality itself. Thus, functional or use value is transformed into a culturally significant symbolic value that assumes an economic exchange value (Corrigan, 1997). Experiences and experiential space are monetarised by the urban. This hypothesis would imply that a growing part of society becomes more post-materialist given long periods of material affluence. The post-material orientations acquired during socialization should also be rather steadfast, because they are claimed to be a rather stable value-system in contrast to more volatile attitudes. Douglas & Isherwood (1979) put forward the idea of consumption as essentially symbolic activity, which creates order in the mental world of individuals. Their idea has been widely accepted and applied. Under the impression of the above perusal and analysis, it is not just that postmodern theory should consider consumption more explicitly. It is also a question of whether the changes currently taking place in organisations and society are best understood as discussed above for consumption or not.

For Marx and Weber, production (organisations) was central to their theories to understand the predicament of society. In no way, does the present work wish to jettison that insight. However, for obligatory reasons in the current scenario, it is imperative to pay attention to consumption. This can be linked to emerging trends in the study of organisations regarding the managerial division of labour and the role of particular groups. However, we need to conceptualise the power effects of organizations in the sphere of consumption rather than setting that argument within a framework of production. As consumption is a significant domain of everyday life, it should not be considered only in terms of selecting, purchasing and using of goods and services but should be defined broadly. The socio-cultural significance of consumption should be recognised too. In contemporary society, consumers are active in attaching symbolic meanings to goods and services. By taking the discursive construction of this insight for granted the politics of contemporary consumption vis-à-vis significance of goods can be understood in the next chapter.
3.7. Baudrillard and Bourdieu’s Theoretical Formulation on Consumerism:

The formulation so far, however, rested on historical emergence of the phenomenon called consumer culture. The consumer culture is the product of mass production of the late capitalistic stage in the nineties. Emerged from the western societies, it has resulted into the vast accumulation of the commodities and consuming urban space. When we talk of consumer attitude and preferences, the amorphous categories owing to the dream sequences of multifarious imaginations comes into play. Here, we find an emphasis upon the blurring of boundaries between real and imaginary, coherent and vague, deconstructing of traditional culture, and a modern designing of the urban space is visualised. Nevertheless, we assume consumerism as larger than life in these urban spaces. The focus will be on commodities playing as signs (Bourdieu 1984), Simulations (Baudrillard 1988), Communication (Douglas and Isherwood 1979) and making sense of the entire study of consumerism in the present context.

3.7.1. Consumers Not as Active Agents:

This becomes central to the late capitalism where commodities act as signs and symbol transforming it into other worldly pleasures. Baudrillard rests his analysis on a systematic study of consumption and does not empower consumers or others as active agents in shaping their practices. The plinth of his study has nothing to do with a particular set of need for a particular object. Instead, needs with respect to individual are related to a system of objects i.e. consumption is governed by the whole system of objects working in order to satisfy. The truth is not that ‘needs are the fruits of production’, but the system of need is the product of the system of production, which is quite different matter. By a system of needs we mean to imply that needs are not produced one at a time, in relation to their respective objects. Needs are produced as a force of consumption, and as a general potential reserve within the larger framework of productive forces (Baudrillard 1988[1970]:42). In this perspective, one become consumers in a broad sense, not merely consumers of a particular set of objects. In other words, this is something applied to any object of consumption.
3.7.2. Baudrillard's Creation of Needs as a Result of the 'System of Objects':

Implicit in the above, is the suggestion, that we find ourselves in the realm of signs as we consume signs for general social ends and not specific objects to consume specific concrete ends. Needs, arise due to an outcome of an established system and not as a result of some simulated relation between an individual and object or object and objects. Baudrillard sees consumption as another logical step in the development of capitalism. "Needs and consumption are in fact an organised extension of productive forces" (ibid: 42-3). Beyond subsistence, however, consumption disciplines people to become consumers at their free will yet controlled by their innate dependence on society. Hence, the modern consumption deepens labour discipline, maintains class hierarchy and compels people to lead a proper life in order to become a member of the modern society. Thus, there is no scope under any conditions to manipulate consumers by its consumptionist demands and so cannot be exploited. According to Baudrillard, this is just another way of socialisation in a new world where consumption is synonymous with communication.

Contemporary consumer theories admit that, consumption is social activity by which symbolic meanings as well as social codes and relations are produced and reproduced (Baudrillard 1975). For Baudrillard, this phrase is apt 'we become what we buy' hence, to simplify one attains the identity of the commodity one associates with in due course of time. The sphere of symbolic has become primary in modern capitalism; the 'image' is more important than the satisfaction of material needs. Though, 'I shop therefore I am', is totally an idealist practice. In relation to the discussion made above, it clearly implies that it is ideas that are being consumed, not objects. Because it is an idealist practice, there can be no final physical satisfaction. We are fated to continue to desire consumer goods and consumer experiences.
3.7.3. Baudrillard's Idea of the Consumption of the Image as well as the Actual Object:

In these theoretical perspectives consumption is viewed as full of hidden meanings of creative work where everyday life and cultural patterns are actively produced and reproduced. The new paradigms of consumption, frequently referred to as postmodern paradigms, emphasise the idea of an independent, self-constructing consumer. According to these new streams of thought consumers are capable of self-reflection of their own preferences and actions. They are active in reinterpreting and accommodating signs to their own culture (Bauman 1993). At the same time there has been a shift in morality that is from the universal morality towards private morality. Each individual finds his or her own decisions and is personally responsible for them. The postmodern theorists further suggest that individuals are characterised by weak commitment, they are not committed to any single task but are partially interested in several issues, the interest shifting from one issue to another (Bauman 1993). Consumers are responsible only for themselves, and they are weakly committed to collective issues, such as ethics, environment, morality etc. Thus, a question arises whether responsible consumption is possible within the postmodern paradigm. The postmodern perspective provides, however, is an alternative to the excessive consumption of material goods. Since consumption activities are seen as surpassing reality, what is consumed are signs and symbols rather than material goods (Baudrillard 1988). Accordingly, consumption becomes a play by which symbols are created and manipulated. This is, according to Baudrillard, the world of 'hyper-reality'. The image of purchase as well as the actual act may motivate the consumer to obtain resources which facilitate consumption. Consumption resources are obtained through paid labour, which is more, and more a matter of creating real and imaginary consumption possibilities. The fact that symbols and ideas are consumed we may suggest that consumption goes beyond struggling for societal position.

3.7.4. Bourdieu's Concept of Consumerism in Consumer Culture:

Bourdieu (1984[1079]) examines the links between social classes and the practices of consumption in detailed and empirical way. This is in correlation as to how various consumer goods, ways of presenting food and eating meals, home furnishings and interior decoration
are used by socio-economic classes to differentiate their distinctive way of living. His argument has useful innovation of drawing a distinction between two types of capital: economic and cultural. Firstly, when we talk of capital it has to be economic capital; Second part examines the way in which individuals invest in cultural (or intellectual) capital in order to obtain a position in the social hierarchy (similar to Veblen ideas of investing time and money in a seemingly manner); looks at how tastes and preferences depend on membership of social classes. The significance of consumption for an individual has surpassed labour work, social divisions and hierarchies and are marked by consumers' life styles, consumption styles, and goods and services (Bourdieu 1984). Thus, the struggle for power and legitimated taste is active within the field of consumption in our society. It is possible to combine these two capital, so that, to mention four main possibilities, such as (1) high in both economic and cultural capital; (2) high in economic but low in cultural capital; (3) low in economic but high in cultural capital; (4) low in both. This enables us to see how particular sorts of lifestyles places oneself in a particular social group. Consequently, commodities play an important role in enhancing status and displaying the differential positions in the rearrangement of social order. It is created by consuming a particular combination of things in a particular way of consuming it, which marks one's social position. To illustrate, if someone asks you questions such as, 'what perfume you wear'? or something like, 'what sort of books you read'? One is probably looking for the key to unlock your position in social space. Through consumer practices we can make out the other cultural aspects of a particular social group to which one belongs. This is also because such practices do not occur in isolation but fits into more or less coherent combination of practices. These combinations, 'allow the most fundamental social differences to be expressed' (Bourdieu 1984[1979]:226). Furthering the discussion leads to the analysis that how certain commodities carry a sign of distinction? And why specific objects, for that matter, considered a sign and others lacks this distinction? Some general features stress the symbolic hierarchies, referring to the theoretical interpretations of Bourdieu and Baudrillard.
3.7.5. Reflecting Back On Baudrillard’s Science of Signs in Consumer Culture:

The major contribution will be from Baudrillard theory of ‘semilogy’ in which consumption entails manipulation of signs. A commodity in late capitalism has developed the capacity to take up a wide range of imagistic and symbolic associations which overlay their initial use-value to become commodity sign. He has detected the process as consumer-television culture producing an endless series of simulations marking a shift which leads to the loss of concrete reality. It becomes more noticeable in his later writings in which stress on commodity logic and the endless meanings of signs and simulations of the commodity transferred through the media produce a complete new social order. It is followed by a bizarre catharsis of metanarratives in which the social life becomes cultural with new sets of order and reality. The overproduction of signs reproduces social relationships different from the earlier orders of social stability. The culture of postmodern is the culture of consumer society. The crux is to explain the late capitalism- the post World Wars period influenced by the commodification of cultures. These symbolic hierarchies have opened up spaces to study the resultant commodity culture as well as the transmitters and carriers, and their relationship to consumption as symbolic specialists. This can be correlated with the set of environment surrounding person-broadly discussed as ‘habitus’ of Bourdieu.

3.7.6. Bourdieu’s Notion of ‘Habitus’ in Changing Lifestyles:

There is a need to consider what Bourdieu calls ‘new cultural intermediaries’ (Bourdieu 1984[1979]:97), which rapidly circulate information between formally sealed off cultures and the newly emerged communication channels of media, academia, artists and intellectuals. Particular constellation of taste, consumption preferences and lifestyle practices renders assistance to sustain prestige of cultural capital, mapping out the distinction in a strictly defined society. They promote and popularise the lifestyle to a larger audience and breaks down the traditions. This helps to collapse some of the old barriers and symbolic hierarchies, which were based on the distinction between high culture and mass culture. This habitus, the classificatory schemes and the dispositions of the group, refers to ‘the new intellectuals’ who adopt a learning mode towards life. They are fascinated
by identity, presentation, appearance, lifestyle and the endless quest for new experiences. Their quest for distinction via the cultivation of lifestyle, a stylised, expressive life, ‘makes available to everyone the distinctive poses, the distinctive games and other signs of inner riches previously reserved for intellectuals’. They actively promote and transmit the intellectuals’ lifestyle to a larger audience and collude with the intellectuals to legitimate new fields such as sport, fashion, popular music, and popular culture as valid fields of intellectual analysis (ibid:370-371). The *habitus* of the new petite bourgeoisie related with consumer imagery expands and carries the seeds of particular lifestyle in the society. This spontaneous decoding of one habitus by another is the basis of the immediate affinities which orient social encounters, by another is the basis of the immediate affinities (ibid :243). Thus, in this the social field of Bourdieu leads us to the consumption logic.

3.7.7. Bourdieu's Mobility amid Different Cultural Capitals Provides 'Consumption Logic':

Bourdieu seeks to map out the social field of the different taste in legitimated ‘high’ cultural practices such as museums visits, concert going, reading, as well as taste in lifestyle and consumption including food, drink, clothes, cars, novels, newspapers, magazines, holidays, hobbies, sports, leisure pursuits) Both culture in the ‘high’ sense and culture in the anthropological sense are therefore inscribed on the same social space. The oppositional and relational determination of the taste, however, becomes clearer when the space of lifestyle is superimposed onto a map of the class/occupational structure whose basic structuring principles is the volume and composition (economic and cultural) of capital that group possesses. To give examples of the resultant correlations- Those who have *high volume of economic capital* (industrialist, commercial employers) have a taste of business meals, foreign cars, auctions second home, tennis, water skiing, right bank galleries. Those who posses a *high volume of cultural capital* (higher education teachers, artistic producers, secondary teachers) have a taste of left bank galleries, avant garde festivals, Les Tempos Moderns, foreign languages, chess, flea markets, beach, mountains. Those *low in both economic and cultural capital* (semiskilled, unskilled workers) have a taste for football potatoes, ordinary wine, watching sports, public dances) (ibid: 128-129).
Above demarcations confuse the new inventions as well as the emergence of the new spaces in the market place. There can be as many conjectures as mentioned above in the contemporary times. This led to an emphasis upon distinction and differences which has been adopted and is the central focus of consumption practices, tastes and lifestyles. To mention few instances, there can be a blurring distinction between a possessor of cultural capital and an economic capital of consumption. Suffice to say that Bourdieu’s analysis of the French working class, who have to do with the choice of necessity while engaging with the traditional working class, does not hold true for the privatised fractions of the society. To make this more elaborate and concrete, the cultural groups (act as markers) and their taste reflects the class they belong. So far from taste being something bizarrely individual, ineffable and innocent, it seems to lie at the basis of social life, orchestrating it in a way that ensures harmony and social order, while at the same time reflecting social struggles (Corrigan 1997:32). Taste is a sociologically understood term that brings people together.

The possession of economic capital can lead to the production of the cultural capital. Thus a specialized professional can network and develop a taste of higher education for further development of his taste and the greed to be included in the high cultural capital category as well. Similarly, cultural category can work towards acquiring the economic capital for his future development. The relational dynamics of the field, in which new taste developed, is transformation. Thus, inflation results when lower group taste emulates or usurps the taste of the higher group and in a way move upward in the hierarchy. The introduction of a relatively inexpensive champagne, in supermarkets and stores such as Marks and Spencer, which will necessarily mean the upper group move on to more avant-garde pieces of music or purchase a new rarer drink or drink vintage champagne (Featherstone 1991:88). Therefore, the possibility of the democratisation of culture is likely in such classes.

However, the dominant group then acquires the rarest of the goods created out of artificial scarcity, inflation, cost, maintaining recognizable distance for that of the lower groups. In a way, satisfaction depends on the possession of the socially recognized and officially declared capital. The prestige accorded to the goods as per their cultural vis-à-vis
economic capital, also accounts for its convertibility rate in the exchange value. Also because, the cultural capital cannot be purchased in the market definitely enhances its conversion rate i.e. economic value.

There also exist modes of power and processes in which the cultural capital is hidden in the broader range of economic capital. Bourdieu points to three forms of cultural capital: it can exists in the embodied state (style of presentation, modes of speech, beauty, etc) objectified state (cultural goods like picture, books, machines, buildings, etc.) and in the institutionalized state (such as educational qualifications)

Thus, the above theoretical orientation does not correspond with the consumption practices and lifestyles but represent the autonomy of certain cultural practices analogous to its economy. This asserts the socially structured ways of 'consumption logic', in which goods are used to demarcate social relationships akin to the 'capital logic' derived from production. To speak, of the consumption of goods immediately hides the need to differentiate between consumer-durables (goods we use in maintenance and leisure, refrigerators, cars, hi-fies, cameras) and consumer- non durables (food, drinks, clothing, body care) and the shift over time in the proportion of income spent on each sector (ibid:16). The increasing symbolic value of commodities becomes the fundamental of the Baudrillard theory. On the contrary, the mantra of the consumerist attitude, is indeed the use-value vis-à-vis the sign value that reflects the everyday consumption of present times.

3.7.8. The Dual Play of Consumption Practices in Baudrillards' Postmodern Approach:

The aesthetization of everyday life refers to the rapid flow of signs and images which saturate the fabric of everyday life in contemporary society. The theorisation of this process draws much from Marx's theory of fetishism of commodities, which has been developed later by the Frankfurt school, Baudrillard and Jameson. For Adorno, the increasing dominance of exchange value not only obliterated the original use-value of things and replace it by abstract exchange value, but also it left the commodity free to take on secondary
use value, what Baudrillard was later to refer to as ‘sign-value’ (Op.cit. Baudrillard 1988:67). On one hand, it can be the real consumption; but on the other hand, it can also be the imaginative consumption of what exists as thoughts, ideas and ethereal things. There exists dual play of consumption of imagination as well as the necessary goods. Of course, these practices in themselves are not historically new. One finds examples of carnivals and museums of the nineteenth century in Paris, as well as Berlin, as described by Baudrillard. From this perspective, spectacular imagery and transformation into amazing spaces encourage a lively experience. This is captured in Baudrillard's description of the Beaubourg Museum in Paris, which facilitates masses which is further described as 'Hypermarket of culture'. He states, that people want to accept everything, eat everything, and touch everything by looking, deciphering and studying yet do not move them. The mass effect is that of touch or manipulation. The organizers (and the artist and the intellectuals) are alarmed by this uncontrollable impulse, for they reckoned only with the apprenticeship of the masses to the spectacle of the culture. They never anticipated this active, destructive fascination-this original and brutal response to the gift of the culture, which has all the semblance of housebreaking or the sacking of the shrine (Baudrillard 1982:10). The same can be said for two other features of postmodern culture: the transformation of reality into images and the fragmentation of times into a series of perpetual presents (Jameson 1984: 146). In many ways, masses are engaged in the complex interplay of signs and symbols in their built-in environment. Postmodern cities have become centre of consumption, play and entertainment, saturated with signs and images to the extent that anything can become represented, thematised and made an object of interest, an object of 'tourist gaze'. Then, it is expected that leisure activities such as visiting parks, shopping centres, malls, museums and galleries should show convergence.

3.7.9. Baudrillard Notion of ‘Hyperreality in Reality’ in Relation with Contemporary Consumer Culture:

In the end, a seamless rhetoric of the ephemeral experience of watching television signifies the perpetual involvement and addiction to the something new all the time. For example Baudrillard, talks of the ideal simulational world, where T.V. is the world hence,
T.V. provides the sharpest illustration of the above. The more television provides us with information, the less meaning we are able to grasp. Theorists often talk about the ideal-type channel-hopping MTV (music television) viewer who flips through different images at such speed that he/she is unable to chain the signifier together into a meaningful narrative, rather he/she merely enjoys the multiphrenic intensities and sensations of the surface of the images. This is referred as commodity-sign in which the commodity becomes a sign in the Saussarean sense with its meaning arbitrarily determined by its position in a self-referential set of signifiers. Thus, Baudrillard affirms that 'we live in everywhere already in an aesthetic hallucination of reality'. The death of the social, the loss of the real, leads to nostalgia for the real: a fascination with and desperate search for real people, real values, real sex'. It is reality itself today that is hyperrealist. Surrealism's secret already was that the most banal reality could become surreal, but only in certain privileged moments that are still nevertheless connected with art and imaginary.

The depiction of a post modern simulational world is based upon the assumption that the development of commodity production coupled with information technology have led to the 'triumph of signifying culture'. It, thereby, reverses the direction of determinism, so that the relation become saturated with shifting cultural signs to the extent that we can no longer speak of class of normativity and are forced by 'the end of the social' (ibid Baudrillard 1988). The above experience has a psychological dimension of fantasy fulfillment along with the social dimension to the role of the goods as communicators. Further the channel hopping is also termed as 'schizophrenia', as the breakdown of relationship between signifiers, the breakdown of temporality, memory, a sense of history. The 'schizophrenic experience is of 'isolated, disconnected, discontinuous material signifiers which fail to link up into a coherent sequence. Although he/she therefore does not know personnel identity and has no projects, the immediate undifferentiated experience of the presentness of the world, leads to a sense of intensities: vivid, powerful experience which bear a 'mysterious and oppressive charge of affect' (Jameson 1984:119-120). The tendency, therefore, is to produce a lifestyle, as stylish, dream-like, and fantasised on the symbolic structures of commodities. Arguably, the continuous flow of diverse images makes it difficult to chain together into meaningful messages; the intensity and degree of saturation of signifiers defy systematisation and
narrativity. So, art is everywhere, since artifice is at the heart of the reality. And, so, art is dead, not only because its critical transcendence is gone, but because reality has been confused (ibid 1983:151). It has been explained in relation to the art of modern cities like Paris ‘the capital of the nineteenth century’ (Op.cit Featherstone 1991:73). The above account is sufficient enough to move to the backdrop of reconfiguring class politics.

3.8. Consumerism Recreates Class Positions:

Despite its fleeting transitory beauty and ugliness of life, there are commodities, responsible in maintaining social relationships as well. They are used as markers, partly related to their physical consumption. In this sense, the consumption of high cultural goods (art, novels, opera, philosophy) is related to the ways in which other mundane cultural goods (clothing, food, drinks, leisure pursuits) are handled and consumed, and high culture must be inscribed into the same social space as everyday cultural consumption (Douglas & Isherwood 1929:146). Later, as cautioned, it entails a strict resistance of the lower class to ascend their status to that of the upper classes. In this way, it erects high admission barriers and effective technique of exclusion. Therefore, consumerism on one side is a way to impose uniformity in diversity and on the other side accentuates the divide between diverse classes of users/consumers. A reflection on Baudrillard leads us to the explanations on origin of nihilism pertaining to the logic of capitalism.

"Then the logic of commodity production has produced a particular reversal in which culture once determined, now becomes free floating and determining to the extent that today we can talk about the triumph of signifying culture, to the extent that we can no longer speak of class or normatively which belong to the prior stage of the system as people are reduced to glutinous mass which refuses to stabilize in its absorption, reflection and cynical parody of media images. It is neither manipulated nor manipulable”10.

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10 Baudrillard, Jean 1983. 'In the shadow of Silent majorities' (Ed.) in Featherstone, Mike 1991 Consumer Culture and Postmodernism. Baudrillard himself never used the word 'postmodernism'. The term was first used by Federico De Onis in the 1930’s to indicate a minor reaction to modernism. The term became popular in the 1960’s in New York when it was used by young artists and critics. Sage Publication London p-55.
This then affirms the end of the symbolic, as sign would be free to take on whatever associations of meanings- the accidental and bizarre juxtapositions of consumer culture. In effect, the practical reproduction of sign stabilises into a classificatory schemes vis-à-vis a coherent reality. The message embedded in the fleeting images makes sense via television, codes, advertisement etc. Contrary to the fact, that they are repetitions, yet rebel against any narrow stereotypical image. In order to involve the ‘other’ as if within, is the crux of consumerism. Thus, consumer culture is destined to disseminate worldwide. In this way, the entire connotation of the traditional cultural sphere has been overloaded with the overproduction of signs and images of mass consumption via the media and the market in the longue durée (long duration). Yet, we have to make sense of the terms discussed above as per the understanding of Baudrillard (Featherstone 1991:7). It is worth mentioning the term ‘postmodern’ as adequate to unravel consumerism of the late nineties, though that is not the focus of attention when discussing the emergence of the simulational world of Baudrillard.

Summing up:

Baudrillard therefore appears to produce a theoretical basis of the fatal strategy, without being able to argue it explicitly. If as Bryan turner argues, Baudrillard’s arguments suggests the need for a new theoretical vocabulary which ‘offers an alternative discourse by which the complexities of the new realm of postmodernity might be approached’ (Turner 1993:72). Consumption is a socio-cultural activity situated within a social environment, entailing interaction with other consumers. Consumption is thus not only about purchasing and consuming particular goods, but is also about producing and reproducing social structure. The empirical patterns of consumerism entail ideas about how to consume, what to consume, what consumption of certain goods and services means, and about the links between individual character and consumption behaviour. The contemporary consumer theories assume that an ordinary consumer is an active, critical and creative person. At the same time, consumption is viewed within the social and cultural context. The central idea is that consumers actively produce and reproduce culture in their everyday life. Consumers’ actions influence social and cultural conditions, and also the norms and structures which form the conditions where consumers must live. Environmentally conscious consumers are active
agents rather than manipulability objects. They have opportunities of resistance, and they have the survival strategies. Meanwhile, they have responsibilities. In addition, it is necessary that they become more committed to the quality of environment and conscious of the consequences of their decisions and actions. While theoretical framework has been discussed here, next chapter will deal with the active world of advertising and goods vis-à-vis their relationship with consumption.

In this chapter the basis of studying consumption practices through the lens of theoretical formulations has been well observed. This has also provided the foundational analysis of consumer culture and its related discourses.