Chapter Two
Sociology of Consumerism: Towards a Theoretical Exploration

"In modern world the production of consumption becomes more important than the consumption of production"

(John Lukács)

Witnessing the significant rise of consumption over production in the present social context, this study tries to understand in depth the rise of the consumerist culture. This leads to a historical study of the gradually growing importance of consumption over production process along with an understanding of the socio-economic factors leading to the rise of consumerism. It also focuses on the existing theoretical orientations prevalent on consumerism as a new phenomenon. So on one hand we have the Classical theorist's over indulgence on production in comparison to consumption while on the other hand there are the postmodern theorists' preoccupation on consumption. Even though there exist several streams of thought on 'consumption', this study will take on those thoughts which are directly relevant in understanding the current field of study.

2.1 Rise of 'Consumerism' as a Concept

The present world is consumer centric - our actions and emotions are all governed in some way or the other, by our identity as consumers. This is also reflected in the increasing engagement of the academic and media profile of debates surrounding consumption and consumer culture, which indicate that the world is undergoing rapid change. The relation between the social and economic aspects of society has undergone changes both at the global and local contexts and several reasons have been accorded to these changes. Of these, some of the eminent ones include factors like the near-universal adoption of the neo-liberal market policies, the growth of the multinationals, the global spread of media and information technologies, and the globalisation of production
revealed in the displacement of Fordism\(^8\) by Post-Fordism\(^9\). Coupled with these, there has been demise in the state regulations and the increasing predominance of the free market economic policies dominating the global market that encouraged nations to develop into a global consumer society (Corrigan 1997; Miles, et.al 2002). There lies a certain difficulty in defining the term consumerism because of its broad encompassing character, which often leads to its generalisation and subsuming under the broader concept of globalisation. Nevertheless, a definition of the term remains a pre-requisite for further engagement. So in understanding its characteristic features, there results in the evolution of the term. Marketing orthodoxy thus links a range of commodities and their associated cultural and symbolic capital to more or less coherent lifestyle images (Slater 1997; Miles, et.al 2002).

The global denunciation of consumption in Classical and Critical Theory tends to assume implicitly or explicitly, the superiority of production over consumption. However, there also exists another viewpoint whereby consumption is seen more in the light of life-enhancing use and enjoyment of commodities. It can be said without doubt that contemporary consumerism is driven by diversity and choice, which is based on an emphasis on difference. There also exists alongside a conscious and deliberate promotion of material goods, which is seen as reflectors of status symbol of particular segments of society. Theoretically, there has been an expansion, regarding the conceptualization of commodity forms, which has broadened to include sign and symbol value from being confined to only its economic sphere. This broadening of the concept has been seen as a reaction against the economic deterministic theoretical orientation practiced by the Marxists. Consumption is also viewed as a communication where, through the act of

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\(^8\) Introduced by Henry Ford, it refers to the methods of organizing production in advanced industrial societies. Although the fundamental reference point of both the terms Fordism and Post-Fordism is the production process, the terms are also used as a way of conveying associated social and political consequences.

\(^9\) It referred to new economic possibilities opened up by the rise of developments in the area of microchip technology, computers and robotics in the production and exchange of information and commodities. The major associated social and economic changes related to this work includes the rise of the white-collar professionals with technical, managerial and other service oriented employees; feminization of the labour process; dominance and autonomy of large scale multinational corporations in a global process of capitalistic production and most importantly the promotion of types of consumption around the concept of individually chosen lifestyles, with an emphasis on taste, distinctiveness, packaging and appearances.
consumption, one conveys one's feelings to others (Corrigan 1997). However it would be presumptuous to associate consumerism with unfettered individualism while defining 'self', as there are other factors influencing it. Thus it can be claimed that the study of consumerism has several dimensions which collaborate in the construction of its meaning.

Consumerism is thus defined as "the belief that goods give meaning to individuals and their roles in society". So Gross (2000) explained how consumerism has been able to dominate and triumph in the present condition because of its principles which encourages individualism, liberty and democracy each of which, in turn, are values professed in the modern society. Contrastingly consumerism is also seen as a way of life, which is dedicated primarily to the possession and use of consumer goods. As a result, the consumers fall into the vicious trap of 'commodity fetishism' where they try to find their 'souls' within every product that they purchase, consume and use. But the question that is raised regarding this explanation is whether every consumer who is engaged in consumption falls into the vicious trap of false consciousness. This may not be the case, as there exist individuals who are creative and whose growth and development undergo the act of consumption. So consumption can be seen as a rational life-enhancing activity that increases the buyer-power and fulfills genuine human needs. Rather than denouncing commodities and consumption per se, one should rather discriminate between valuable and worthless commodities on one hand, and dehumanized, fetishized consumption and life-enhancing consumption on the other (Kellner 1989b, pp: 161).

Review of theoretical contributions made by different schools of thought, focuses on the shifts from a production-centric study to consumption-centric cultural study where individual construction of identities emphasizes on pleasure and development through the act of consumption. This new cultural study, which has

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10 Bourdieu, in his work "Distinction: a Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste" (1984 reprinted in 1996) also talked of this where he explained how possession of goods signify an association with a particular status. Meaning thereby that commodities can be associated with a reference group for whom the particular commodity has a particular meaning.
11 It means that a person's identity in the social construction of 'self' is based on other defining criteria like gender, kinship, age and ethnicity apart from consumerism.
12 This definition was given by Gary Gross in "An All Consuming Century: Why Commercialism Won in Modern America" (2000), which was cited in Moss (1962 referred 2007 re-print); pp xxiii.
13 Ibid.
developed since 1970s, can be distinguished from the previous stage of state monopoly capitalism, or Fordism (which was rooted in mass production and consumption) based on a new capital and social order. This new culture was described as ‘Post-Fordism’ (Harvey 1989 cited in Kellner 1989a) or ‘postmodernism’ (Jameson 2003), which was characterized by transnational and global capital representing difference, multiplicity, and intensive consumerism in a society characterized as an informative society. From this perspective, the proliferating media culture, postmodern architecture, shopping malls, and the culture of the ‘postmodern spectacle’ became the promoters and palaces of a new stage of technocapitalism, the latest stage of capital, encompassing a postmodern image and consumer culture. This new culture which has invaded society is based on the contradictory forces of homogeneity and heterogeneity, global and local, impinging on each other, at the same time coexisting peacefully or producing a new dimension of its own. The evidence of this is seen in the development of fast-food joints, malls etcetera which create a new worldwide, homogeneous global culture. With the breaking down of the boundaries and globalisation leading to the expansion of the consumer markets, there has been an increasing complexity in the pattern of consumption. A consumer product crosses the national boundaries and intermingles with the local cultures of the nations leading to the development of the patterns of hybridity. The postmodern consumption pattern mirrors and transforms the consumers across the world. Thus in this new postmodern cultural study, the emphasis is on individuals who are given a wider choice of cultural materials, corresponding to a new global and transnational capitalism, with a much broader array of consumer choices, products, and services. This study emphasizes on a new social order, which is based on proliferation of consumer needs and desires. The new hybrid culture which has developed, is said to characterize an intense flow of products, culture, people and identities which are said to possess new concepts regarding the global and the local (Appadurai 1990). The main feature of the postmodern consumption is not the collapse of certain traits but the emergence and expansion of multiple consuming patterns. So, while modern society is characterized by stable hierarchy of patterns of consumption, postmodern society on the other hand, is based on

14 Globalisation is seen as a strange amalgamation of both homogenizing forces of sameness and uniformity and heterogeneity, difference and hybridity, as well as contradictory mixture of democratizing and antidemocratizing tendencies (Kellner 2002).
heterogeneity of the same. There also existed a distinction between the relations between individual identity and the object consumed. Interestingly, in modern society, the subject (the consumer being) encounters the object (products) as distinct and distanced from itself. In contrast, in postmodern consumption, the consumer renders products as a projection of herself/himself (Firat and Dholakia cited in Poster 2004, pp: 416). Therefore in modern consumption, the acquisition of the consumer objects leads to the enhancement of status, while in postmodern consumption it establishes the identity of the consumer.

If one traces the historicity of the development of the consumer culture, one finds that the twentieth century has witnessed a new trend in the consumer culture. The remarkable aspect is that in this new trend, there has been a development towards more openness and greater accessibility of the middle class individuals in the access of consumer goods. The rise of this new trend has been made possible with some new changes that were taking place in society such as urbanization, globalisation, formal education, and the gradual dilution of traditional social relationships. All these contributed to the development of the new consumer society where commodities took on a new kind of symbolic significance. So there is the existence of social class, which is characterized by people sharing requisite set of goods and services, which is dynamic in nature. This dynamic nature is referred to as competitive consumption (Schor 1999). There prevails a reference group, which acts as the guide/role model for consumption to those groups emulating them. Since 1980s, with the rise of the new consumerism, the nature of consumption has become more aggressive in nature with the reference group becoming vertically elongated, aspiring to achieve the lifestyles of those situated far above them in the hierarchy. Thus the workplace became the reference point instead of neighbourhood, which was earlier the site of consumption comparisons.

The rate at which this new consumerist culture is penetrating society and the long-term effect that is being created with the unlimited nature of spending, has often been a matter of serious concern among the theorists. On a global basis, with the aspiration gap becoming ubiquitous and expanding, consumer culture has intensified

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15 Though consumption has symbolic significance in all societies, however in specific to consumer society, it plays the role of establishing personal identity and social position.
spending which might at one point lead to the collapse of the global economy. However, at present the focus of this study entails an understanding of this culture per se.

Having discussed the theoretical background of 'consumption', it becomes imperative to understand how cultures, as envisaged by the anthropologists, encourage people to engage in the accumulation of commodities. Modern society is composed of people, who are engaged in creating a vision of the world designed to maximize production and consumption of goods. These people ( advertisers, marketers, various agencies) have helped in the creation of a culture where everyday activities are centred round commodities and where shopping is seen as a therapeutic activity. However the question that arises is how this universe of the consumer and the consumer culture is created.

Consumer societies are an historical phenomenon; however, the change from a production-driven to a consumption-driven society was not a natural process. There were several factors behind the rise of the consumer culture. The main aspect was that this change was an integrated one which affected the philosophy or the mind-set of the people. Consumer society was predominantly defined by the expansive consumption values that were shared by the entire society. Collectively, these values comprised what many scholars would term as "culture of consumption" (Fox and Lears 1983; Leach cited in Fullerton and Punj 1997). Thus, where the dominant outlook towards life was based on self-denial and where propensity to 'save' was the norm, change of that kind of society into a consumerist society required not only a structural change but also a change in the value system of the society.

2.1.1 Factors leading to the rise of consumerist society

The growth of the consumer society was conceived by the modernist, with the separation of production from consumption and with the simultaneous development of a parallel body of knowledge\textsuperscript{16}, which examined consumption as a socio-cultural process. Some of the key elements contributing to the emergence of consumerism

\textsuperscript{16} This body of knowledge consisted of the contributions made by people from various social fields like sociology, anthropology, and history.
included a general rise in productivity, rising personal incomes, and an increased leisure
time. This growth was triggered off by several aspects, which are highlighted below.\textsuperscript{17}

\textbf{One} of the major aspects which can be distinguished in the consumer
society, was the rise of the centrality of consumption. As referred to in the earlier section,
consumption was no longer seen as subservient to production. Rather, it was seen as a
decisive force behind the rise of modern capitalism, its dynamism and social structure.
There also rose a marked distinction between the natures of domain of production-
consumption. Consumption was seen as a part of the private domain; while production
became associated with public activity. This resulted in a gendered distinction of the
public-private domain of production-consumption. Male dominated the public sphere of
production, while female took the charge of consumption considered as a private activity.
This was portrayed by the notion of the existence of a “dichotomous relationship between
Mr. Breadwinner and Mrs. Consumer”\textsuperscript{18}. Due to the shift in aspirations from the work
sphere to the consumption sphere, consumption increasingly became the central activity
in life.

\textit{Secondly}, the construction of the consumer society was said to take place
through various public discourses and practices made by the media as well as marketing
initiatives by the advertisers. The development of marketing techniques successfully
helped in the conversion of the consumers into shoppers. A major transformation was
recorded in the meaning of goods and how they were presented and displayed. Display of
the goods helped in defining the bourgeois culture. The values, attitudes and aspirations
of the bourgeoisie were reflected through goods, which in turn helped in shaping and
transforming them (Miller 1994). In this context, the development of the retail chain
stores, departmental stores, arcades and finally the shopping malls became the primer in
guiding people in the matter of consumption of goods and services. The role of the
advertisers in the creation of consumers is also noteworthy. These advertisers helped in
shaping and creating needs for the consumers and transforming the needs into desires and
wants. Advertisers followed by the marketers helped in the creation of an anxiety and

\textsuperscript{17} It should be noted that these factors are mentioned on a random basis and does not reflect any causal
relation with each other. However there definitely exists certain continuity between them.

\textsuperscript{18} See in Grazia, De: The Sex of Things: Gender and Consumption in Historical Perspective’, cited in
Roberts, Mary Louise (1998), ‘Gender consumption and Commodity Culture’. 

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restlessness among the consumers for possession of things that were 'new' or 'up-to-date'.

Thirdly, there resulted in transformations of certain institutions helping in the growth of consumer culture. These institutions, which included the cultural institutions, financial institutions, educational institutions and the family, changed their meanings and functions in order to promote the consumption of commodities. This was further helped by the political institutions, which actively took part in the rise of this consumer culture. For instance, in case of India, it was the government who facilitated the development of the consumer culture with the opening up of the economy through liberalization and globalization. Another step towards the creation of the consumer culture took place with the provision for increasing the purchasing power of the consumers. This was possible due to the expansion and consequent development of the service sector. In India again, the new economy was centred on the computerized information-processing systems and telecommunications which led the way to a post-industrial society of white-collar and high-technology prosperity, thereby generating a new set of skilled labourers. Thus the creation of jobs at BPO (Business Process Outsourcing)\(^\text{19}\) industry and the Information Technology sectors resulted in an increase in the standard of living, by providing greater purchasing power to the people.

Fourthly the changing perception towards money was a major catalyst in the spread of the consumer culture. What transpired was a change in the attitude and perception of the people from a general abhorrence of debt to the acceptance of credit as a part of modern consumer society. This new culture was based on the culture of indebtedness. Baudrillard (1998) too points out that the 'credit' buying facility leads to an

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\(^{19}\) The BPO industry, which is an offshoot of the Information Technology sector, has attained significant growth in recent years, which has led to the rise in employment opportunities to a number of educated youths coming from the middle and upper income classes. The BPO refers to the outsourcing of one and more business processes along with technological structure supporting it. This industry though majorly deals with the handling of calls from existing organizations and/or prospective customers, yet has more complex and technical processes like insurance underwriting, payroll processing and management — functions which need specialized skills and training. As an offshoot of the IT industry it gives employment opportunities to ordinary mainstream graduates who belong to the urban middle class in India. More more information on this refer to the chapter on "Business Process Outsourcing Potentialities for Employment Generation" in *Globalisation, Economic Reforms and Employment Strategy in India* by Gupta; S. C (2006).
increase in the cash nexus\textsuperscript{20} - a specific feature of consumer society Dant (2000). Within the consumer society, the issue of money is linked to debt as well as credit; to the judgment of values, to the use of credit cards and to the relative expenditure of incomes on different types of goods. The credit mode of payment has not only facilitated the nature of payment by making transactions simpler but also promoted spending, by providing access to consumption even when there is a scarcity of cash. Studies reveal that with the expansion of the bankcard there has been an increase in the compulsive buying behaviour of the consumers\textsuperscript{21}. As the logic of the credit is based on ‘buy now, pay later’ strategy, hence wherever it is extended, it results in the outflow and increase in the money volume, leading to an increased purchasing power. It thereby becomes an essential aspect for growth of economy and consumerism\textsuperscript{22}. Credit increases consumer debt while creating a “mass market” for consumer goods, which acts as a facilitator in the development of the economic growth (Robbins 2005). India too has witnessed a strong credit growth in recent times\textsuperscript{23}. Credit cards, through their power to command other consumption markers, help in acquiring objects rather than simply utilizing them. Through the usage of credit cards, there develops the observable trend of the lifestyle building and lifestyle signaling. Their usage helps in the attainment of specific lifestyle objectives, which are based on consumer driven urges. They communicate a particular lifestyle of the user, which is portrayed through his/her act of acquisition\textsuperscript{24}. Credit cards are also seen as facilitators of consumer emancipation, as with the possession of the

\textsuperscript{20} Cash nexus is a concept that states the centrality of money relationships underpinning social relations especially in capitalist societies.

\textsuperscript{21} The study by James A Roberts and Eli Jones, (2001) on Money Attitudes, Credit Card Use and Compulsive Buying among college Students in American has established the fact that there exists a positive correlation between the increase in the compulsive buying among the college goers and the expansion of the credit card.

\textsuperscript{22} However it should be followed by a supporting financial service, which would look into the limits of the interest rates and the lending laws.


\textsuperscript{24} Thus the possession of a credit card gives the user an access to a particular lifestyle, which becomes a perquisite for entry into the act to consumption. It often is used to signal the ability to compete in the consumption area.
same, there is an amplification of the purchasing power of the consumers. They offer functional, palliative, and hedonistic benefits. At the same time, the unlimited use of credit cards, results in growing consumer indebtedness and it precipitates the vicious cycle of the ‘Debtor’s prison’. In spite of the paradox of empowerment and impediment, one cannot negate the importance of credit cards in facilitating the rise of the consumer culture.

Fifthly, there was a transformation of the spiritual and intellectual values within the society, which facilitated the adoption of this new culture. A transformation of the society from one that emphasized asceticism, self-denial, practical utilitarianism and savings to one that was based on consumerism, was not an easy task. What was desired was a change in the intellectual value system of society. With the other intervening factors like globalization and liberalisation, which opened up the Indian society and economy to the western value system, there was an adaptation of a new value system based on leisure, compulsive buying and individual fulfillment. Commodities were not merely seen to function as the means of physical satisfaction, but rather they seemed to possess a therapeutic character. They became a source of satisfaction and a vital means of self-expression. Products became the means to maintain parity with others, helped in enhancement of self-concept and ascribed identities to others. Hence, commodities like clothes and perfume are associated with meanings like love and appreciation, while the purchase of an automobile, on the other hand, symbolizes security and comfort for the family. This means that goods possess different meanings for conveying the buyer’s emotions. Consumerism is said to rest on principles, which claim that happiness, and success are reflected through the purchase and consumption of certain types of goods and services. The insatiability of desire has become the norm in postmodern society.

Lastly, another dimension which fostered the rise of the consumer culture is the concept of “choosing self” (Slater 1997, pp: 59). The rise of the process of individualization was a result of a shift in the social processes like industrialization and urbanization. Both these processes not only helped in opening up the economy to the onslaught of an array of goods and services but also helped in penetrating the core of the

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25 This is a process whereby the construction of the identity of an individual is no longer based on the fixed set of characteristics determined by birth and ascriptive aspects, rather is based on the reflexive, ongoing individual project which is shaped by appearance and performance.
social units like family. This in turn, gave an individual the choice of choosing his/her own products, thereby giving the freedom of choice and opportunity. This therefore developed a particular ‘taste’ and ‘lifestyle’, which became embedded in the individual’s social code of behaviour (Bourdieu 1984 reprinted in 1996). Social theorists have also questioned this much-valued ‘freedom of choice’ by pointing out an increasing gap between the right to choose one’s life and the ability to control it (Baudrillard 1998, Bourdieu 1984 reprinted in 1996). Apart from these factors, there also exist several intervening factors, which have aided the development of this kind of culture. Some of these factors include structural changes like the movement of the population from the rural to the urban areas, increase in the number of nuclear family or even factors like explosion of innovations not only for the creation of new products but also new commercial initiatives. This followed significant changes at the level of structure and ideology apart from the socio-politico-economic levels which helped in the rise of the consumer society.

For the postmodernist on the other hand, the logic of production (order, coherence, systematic and scientific thinking) was no longer the criterion for evaluation of consumption. The process of consumption rather, was liberatory and paradoxically combined with the ‘real’ and ‘imaginary’. As a result, the meaning of consumption encompassed both material and symbolic aspects. Thus objects consumed, did not have any inherent function or value, which could be separated from their imaginary nature thereby dissolving the barriers between the material and the imaginary, the product and the image. Hence, a Mac Donald burger was not merely a food item for consumption but an image of hamburger consumed all around the world.

What is required is to understand the significance of the consumer goods, which should not be seen as only having utilitarian character and commercial value of its own. The significance of these consumer goods also lies in their ability to carry and communicate cultural meaning (Douglas and Isherwood 1978). In order to develop a theoretical understanding of consumer goods, it was felt that the meaning should be

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26 Nuclear family refers to a household consisting of father, mother and their children. George Murdock defines family as a social group characterized by common residence, economic cooperation and reproduction. It contains adults of both sexes, at least two of whom maintain a socially approved sexual relationship, and one or more children of their own or adopted by the sexually cohabiting adults (Jary and Jary).
understood in transit as cultural meaning perceived in a continuous interaction between
different social worlds. These meanings are drawn from a culturally constituted world
and transferred to a consumer good and are further interpreted by an individual consumer
at his/her personal level (McCracken 1988; Certeau cited in Poster, 2004). Consumption
becomes possessed by the consumption of images, and society transforms into a society
of spectacle. Thus the age of postmodernism can be also called the age of symbol and
spectacle (Debord 1992; Appadurai 1990). Another feature is that this spectacularization
of the consumer culture knows no boundaries and so acquires a global character.

2.2 Classical theorists vision on modernity, capitalism and human needs.

This study deals in large measure with the various approaches to the study
of modernity which is provisionally understood as the modes of experiencing that which
is ‘new’ in ‘modern’ society. The pre-occupation with the concept of modernity is
prevalent in the works of several theorists be Durkheim, Marx, Weber or even Simmel.
Interestingly, each of them in his distinct way has sought to investigate and thus adopt a
critical stance towards that which is ‘new’ in ‘modern’ society as reflected in the cultural
manifestations. Hence, a study of the works of some of the major classical theorists like
Marx, showed consumption as a social need induced by capitalism. Thus to quote Marx
on his views on consumption in “General Introduction” to the Grundrisse:

"Consumption, as a natural necessity, as a want [Bedürfnis], constitutes an internal factor [Moment] of
productive activity, but the latter is the starting point of realization and, therefore, its predominating factor
[übergeifendes Moment], the act in which the entire process recapitulates [verläuft] itself. The individual
produces a certain article and turns it again into himself by consuming it; but he returns as a productive
and self-producing individual. Consumption thus appears as a factor [Moment] of production".

(Marx cited in Miklitsch 1996, pp: 20)

Marx thus coined this desire to consume as none other than “commodity fetishism”27.
Though he did not negate the humane desire to dress up and eat well, for him these

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27 The term was coined by Marx, in his work on political economy, Capital (cited in Frisby, 1985), where
he explains it as a state of social relationship which arise in complex capitalist market system, in which
social relationships are defined by values which are placed on commodities. Thus Commodity fetishism in
the parlance of Marxism represents ‘negation’ or effacement of exploitation as well as affirmation of
economic difference (Miklitsch 1996, pp: 16). Later on this concept was also prevalent as a major theme in
the works of the later theorists like Sigmund Freud, George Lukács, Guy Debord, and Jean Baudrillard to
name a few.
activities were mere animal functions. Weber, who has been classified as one of the major theoreticians on the theme of modernity, provided a classical social theory of modernity, which centred around the process of rationalization and its consequences on the individuals. His treatment of modernity is limited to grasping the important changes that result in the experience of capitalism. Weber too, in his work “Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Capitalism” (1958) referred to consumption as hedonism, pragmatically placed in the service of religious beliefs about salvation. He was not adverse to the acquisition of things or the accumulation of wealth, but rather was against the enjoyment of these possessions. So the emphasis on ‘work’ with a disdain towards unstructured leisure pursuit created a philosophy, which was a complete contrast to the spirit of consumerism. Even Durkheim was so pessimistic about the concept that most of the contemporary criticism can be traced to his philosophical contribution. It was believed that if modern society, especially the economy, unleashed the consumer’s boundless desires, it would result in the destruction of the moral order (Slater 1997, pp: 74-77). It was however Simmel who was the first classical theorist to talk about the sensuality and novelty which guided consumers’ behaviour while shopping. He also acknowledged the new trend of the consumers’ inconsequential behaviour, which was visible among the shoppers. Thus, to conclude, it would not be wrong to say that none of the classical theorists could offer any empirical demonstrations on their notions about consumption. Their theories were based on the generalized, anthropological observations to support meta-historical ideas. The third problem faced by the theorists studying consumption was that consumption was categorized under the domain of applied research. This was basically because of the fact that since1930s, applied sociologists and psychologists dominated consumer research. As there was a marked distinction between the academic and applied research, any crossover was not encouraged. Hence, studies involving consumption became restricted in nature thus losing its encompassing character. However, in more recent times, with the blurring of this divide, the introduction of a multidisciplinary approach to the study of the concept became prevalent. Nowadays, the study of consumption goes in for a more complex understanding of how men and women use consumption to construct social relationship. For the sociologist, the study of consumption became challenging as it was entrusted on one hand, to the study of the
structural changes in the economy, infrastructure and society creating a system of mass consumption; while on the other hand, it focused on grasping the individual changes in values, attitudes and behaviour that resulted in the development of the consumer culture. This broad framework allows one to regard consumption as an institutional field, i.e. a set of interconnected economic and cultural institutions, which are centred on the production of commodities for individual demand.

The contribution of the theorists like Marx and Simmel on the study of consumption was based on Hegel's conception of modernity. Simmel had used Hegel's theory to develop a model on the abstract nature of modern culture, which is increasingly being based on the quantitative and abstract nature of money. He also focused his work on the increasing diversity in terms of the quantitative rise of material culture and its implications. For both Simmel and Marx, the progressive nature of capitalism was clear. However it was the former, who emphasized on the general impact of money and the impersonal relations. Also, both agreed that capitalism had reduced the obligatory ties of the feudal era and had laid the foundation of the modern concept of freedom. In Marx's analogy though, this freedom promised by capitalism is illusionary in nature, as there exists a deeper exploitation by the capitalist. Simmel on the other hand, in spite of acknowledging this alienation (which results due to the rise of abstract relations), sees it as an inevitable contradiction in abstraction itself, which plays the contradictory role of estrangement and freedom.

Marx's work was dominated by the single historical development of the Industrial Revolution. The witness of extreme exploitative degradation and trauma, which was produced by this new change, submerged the progressive implications of such transformations. Even though his preoccupation with consumption came on a secondary level Marx himself, in the opening chapters of his famous work Capital (cited in Frisby 1985), talked about commodity fetishism. Commodification for Marx, was essentially an ideological operation; a form of false consciousness which had the specific function of masking the labour relationships (read exploitation) from the (bourgeois) consumer. Interestingly, at the time of Simmel's writings, the image of the Industrial Revolution was less immediate than the overwhelming sense of its products. Simmel was more impressed by the extent to which mass consumption had become a feature of modern
urban life, expending the material environment beyond all expectations. He described this moment of modernity as new diversity and abstraction, which became evident with the expansion of the middle class and the creation of the distance from commerce and physicality of production.

Marx, is often considered as a hidden analyst of modernity, as his sole preoccupation with the base-superstructure model was based on the notion that modernity is a historical phenomenon. So Marx’s analysis of the dialectics of a society based upon commodity production was not merely sought to grasp what was new about the capitalist society; rather it was aimed at understanding the inner dynamics of that social formation which for him had historical precedence. So he radically characterizes the ‘new’ historical configuration of capitalism as one in which there exists constant revolutionizing of production with everlasting uncertainty and agitation. For him, this permanent sweeping away of all earlier fixed relationships with also the disappearance of the new formed relations leads to a situation wherein for the first time man confront the real conditions of their lives and their relations with their fellow beings which Marx envisaged as Communism. So in a capitalist society, the commodity acquires a ‘mysterious character’, which results in the fetish image. Marx accords the mysterious character of commodity form to the fact that:

"the commodity reflects the social characteristics of men’s own labour themselves, as the socio-natural properties of these things....As against this, the commodity-form, and the value-relation of the products of labour within which it appears, have absolutely no connection with the physical nature of the commodity and the material...relations arising out of this. It is nothing but the definite social relation between men themselves which assumes here, for them, the fantastic form of a relation between things".


The importance which commodity receives in the work of Marx is evident from the fact that it serves as the focal point on which he developed his analysis of capitalist system. Thus Marx says:

"A commodity appears at first sight an extremely obvious, trivial thing. But its analysis brings out that it is a very strange thing, abounding in metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties".

There are several approaches to the study on modern-day consumption, one of which was developed by contemporary Marxists. This approach tends to focus upon mass consumption as an instrument of capital for which the individual subject is created as consumer. Critical accounts of the mechanisms by which producers construct their markets are exemplified in this approach. Capital is shown as a creator of desires and needs, which in turn are satisfied by the development in the markets. Existence of these needs is accounted to the search of capital for greater profits. Thereby it reinforces the classical Marxist notion whereby consumption is seen as subservient to production. A modern twist in the Marxist critique of commodity has emerged with the application of semiotics. Though this approach is associated with structuralism\(^{28}\), semiotic analysts use the notions of representation and signification compared to the structural analysts, who are more concerned with abstract model on cognition and culture. Therefore in the works of Barthes (1972) semiotic analysis becomes an extension of the critique of the commodity and bourgeois culture.

Anthropologists on the other hand take an approach where tradition gains the central focus. One of the classic works, which was done in this area, was by the joint collaboration of an anthropologist and an economist - Douglas and Isherwood (1978) - who, in their work, portrayed goods not merely as products of utility or competitive status display but having a deeper significance as they reflect expressive and symbolic functions. These theorists tried to relocate consumption into the social process thereby creating an interesting convergence of economic and anthropological viewpoints. So, on one hand, it was believed that consumption could not be compelled, thereby indicating the freedom of choice that existed for the consumers - the consumer could be irrational, superstitious, traditionalist or even experimental. On the other hand, there was this

\(^{28}\)According to structural theory in anthropology and social anthropology, meaning is produced and reproduced within a culture through various practices, phenomena and activities which serve as systems of signification. The theorists talk of the existence of the deep structures by which meaning is produced and reproduced within a culture. The structuralist paradigm in anthropology suggests that the structure of human thought processes is the same in all cultures, and that these mental processes exist in the form of binary oppositions. It is proposed, then, that a hidden reality exists beneath all cultural expressions. Structuralists aim to understand the underlying meaning involved in human thought as expressed in cultural acts. Further, the theoretical approach offered by structuralism emphasizes that elements of culture must be understood in terms of their relationship to the entire system. As an analytical model, structuralism assumes the universality of human thought processes in efforts to explain the "deep structure" or underlying meaning existing in cultural phenomena. Structuralism is a set of principles for studying the mental superstructure.
viewpoint, which claimed that consumption started where there was an end of market. Therefore the study of consumption starts from the moment the material objects leave the retail stores and reach the hands of the final purchasers. Thus by the standard ethnographic practice, all material possessions carry social meanings, apart from their basic use of satisfaction of wants. Goods are thus seen to have additional meaning, which is, making and maintaining of social relationships. This aspect is not only prevalent in the modern society but also seen in traditional societies. Goods were thus treated as markers whereby with the consumption of each item, there results in a gradual construction of a classificatory system. In this way a stream of consumable goods build up a structure of culture. In other words, there is a gradual shift of focus from consumption of goods to a study of the culture that is developed in this process. Man, who is regarded as a social animal, uses goods as a means of communication with his fellow beings. When this is perceived in the context of industrialization, goods take on a different meaning whereby the main task happens to be keeping up with the exchange of marketing services, which leads to the development of a coherent, intelligible culture. The work of Douglas and Isherwood may be related to that Durkheimian pre-structuralist tradition which sees object as aiding in creation of a cognitive order based on social divisions. They argue that goods are used to create visible and stable categories of culture (Douglas and Isherwood 1978, pp: 59). A commonly faced criticism by these theorists is castigated as “sociability fetishism” (Sahlins 1976, pp: 120) in which the structure is often treated as both prior to and ontologically superior to its appearance in goods. However Sahlins’ own attempt to construct an approach to consumption was also subjected to such similar limitations.

29 The study of cattle in the lives of the Neur which was done by Evans Pritchard. Here the network of kinship ties which linked the members of the local communities was bought about by the operations of the exogamous rules, often stated in terms of cattle. The union of marriage was bought about by the payment of the cattle; while every phase of the ritual was marked by their transference or slaughter. The legal status of the partners was also defined by the cattle rights and obligations. In short, the Neur tend to define all social processes and relationships in terms of cattle. Thus their social idiom is a bovine idiom. The Neur. In the Political Institutions of a Nilotic people, pp 17-19, Oxford; Clarendon Press, 1940.
2.3 Changing character of capitalism from production to consumption—a historical study.

After a quick analysis of the evolution of the concept of ‘consumption’ and some of its complex manifestations, which is prevalent in the market behaviour of the consumers, it is now important to focus on an understanding of how consumption was represented in the modern discourse as an antithesis to ‘production’. This is surprising because of the fact that a deeper understanding revealed how both consumption and production had an equal power in the shaping of human lives in modern society. It was also interesting to note that those theorists who shaped the patterns of the modern thought had a difficult time in delineating production from consumption activity due to the fact that at every moment of production something was being consumed, and vice versa. Thus consumption emerged as an area of study among the social scientists in both theoretical and research-based settings (Miles and Paddison, 1998; Miller 1987). What transpired was a rejection of the dominant productivist vision of modernity in favour of the experience and formative role, which was played by the consumers. However, despite the contribution of several theorists on consumption, it was only during the 1980s that it gained a serious focus among the works of the social scientists. This was primarily due to the fundamental role played by consumption in the development of modernity.

To trace the historical significance of consumption in the context of the western societies, one would have to go back to the 18th and 19th century during which the consumer lifestyles started infiltrating the bourgeois realm. That was the time when the consumer revolution started in England when, for the first time, it was possible to identify a society where material possession was prized more for its fashionability rather than its durability (Benson cited Miles et al 1998.). This was followed by an increase in population. Thus the changes in the demand of goods and services were followed by an expansion of the marketplace, which began to cater to these consumers having an increasing purchasing power. The rise of colonialism was also explained as a consequence of the search for new markets.

It was with the advent of the industrialization, that one could trace the origins of the consumer society. The advent of this society was marked by a radical change that came about in the social structure, attitudes values and the belief systems.
Thus industrialization provided the backdrop for the study of the subsequent transformation into modern economic classes. This was the society which was built upon the thrust for novelty and backed by the economic system. It was in this new society that consumption, which came later, became a way of life for the majority of the population. Also, the rise of consumption was accompanied by the ‘mass culture’, which included both the media and consumer culture. Thus the post World War II saw the emergence and the growth of the process whereby the consumer society was superseded by the consumerist society. It could be said that mass culture became an integral part of the consumer society; a society where culture and aesthetic blended with production of goods so as to encourage the consumers in buying the same. The proliferation of this phenomenon led theorists in the 1970s to speak of this ‘mass-mediated culture’ and the rise of the ‘postmodern society’ as being one dominated by images and codes. This study of the changes in the socio-economic structures of the society was effectively captured by the Frankfurt School (Horkheimer and Adorno 1972), which referred to this new emerging society as the ‘mass society’. This new societal structure focused on urban dwellers who were exposed to a plethora of consumer goods.

It can be alternately said that probably, two landmark intellectual developments led to the explosion of interest on the study of consumption in recent times. The first was the rediscovery of the role of consumption practices in the process of social differentiation and its refinement of social thought. The other landmark was the emergence of cultural studies and the multi-disciplinary approaches, which were used in the understanding and analyzing of the use and meanings of the goods and artifacts in everyday life. The cultural studies engaged historical, ethnographic, literary and semiotic analysis to grasp those aspects of consumption, which were based on the aesthetic and emotional aspect of consumption rather than the utilitarian side of the same. Thus what emerged was a vast, complex sociological literature on consumption. It is this second aspect, which the study will focus on. The theorists faced a common practical problem while studying consumption. This problem was the vast nature of the topic, which overlaps into a multi-disciplinary area and transgresses the public-private sphere and it

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30 A society which was dominated by and based on the prediction of the market economy.
31 This is an advanced state of consumer society in which private affluence on a mass scale emerged as the dominant force in the marketplace.
becomes impossible to device a single analytical framework that would understand its multifaceted dimensions (Slater 1997). Another problem that plagued the study of consumption was that it was felt to be too mundane to capture the interest of theorists.

However with the growing importance of consumption in the lives of the people, the theorists began to engage themselves in its study, which was initiated by Classical Theorists. Among the various approaches that were found in this study, an alternative approach was that which involved the notion of time. This approach talks about the problems faced by the consumer of goods where time comes in as a major factor in the purchase of the commodity. This approach is possible because of the continuous flux which society experiences with the changing historical conditions since the time Marx had conceptualized his theory. Thus, with the changing times there resulted in a widening of distance between the two predominant activities called production and consumption. Hence, there has been a reduction in the time spent in labour and a subsequent increase in the time spent in consumption. Consumers confront these abstractions of money at the time of purchasing goods and commodities. During the process of shopping, the consumers immerse themselves in the vast alienated world of products thereby getting detached from the process of production. Hence when the consumers buy a packet of tinned meat, they fail to imagine the labour which exists behind the final product. At the moment of purchase the consumers become alienated from the production process of goods. So after the consumer purchases the product, he/she re-contextualizes it in his/her own sphere of interpretation. In this respect, consumption as work may be defined as that which translates the object from an alienable to an inalienable condition. Consumption is often portrayed as private and individualistic and is also seen as the catalyst in production of social differentiation through taste (Bourdieu 1984 reprinted in 1996; Veblen 1970 reprinted in 1992). However consumption is often seen as an intra-class phenomenon used in establishing social cohesion and normative order. We can conclude from the above discussion that consumption is:
To summarize this view, it can be said that consumption is a structure, external and coercive over individuals, which takes the form of structural organization and is often understood as a collective phenomenon and as a morality. It is a coded system of signs, the use of which is mandatory as it is a means of communication with fellow beings. This leads on to the explanation that in the consumer world, it is consumption that is being consumed exemplified by the study of advertisements. When the viewers watch advertisements, they consume the message and signs involved in the same, thereby consuming consumption. Another aspect which comes out, is that through these various acts of consumption, the consumers try to project social status and good taste. Commodities used by the consumers are used as ‘markers’ of social position and cultural style, which they use vis-à-vis other consumers. These changes in the orientation from the production-centric to consumption-centric activities instigated several theorists (like Veblen, Baudrillard in re-focusing their theories as per the changing needs. Thus the Classical Theorists’ pre-occupation with production gave way to the study of consumption and conspicuous consumption. However, before indulging in the study of these changing theoretical orientations, a study of the historical rise of America, which promulgated capitalism, requires attention.

2.3.1 The growth of America as a consumer oriented society

Though Europe had been first in experiencing the changes resulting from the Industrial Revolution, it was America where the seeds of capitalism blossomed best and at a very rapid pace. As a result of the unfettered growth that capitalism gained, America soon established itself as a contender of world economic and political superpower. Though this work does not aim to trace the history of America’s rise as the superpower (Rosenberg 2003), a brief discussion on its development becomes necessary
keeping in mind the influence that this country has in the current socio-political and economic scenario, both globally and with respect to India.

The economy of America has been undergoing a series of fluctuations, thereby facing challenges from both domestic and international fronts, which were witnessed in the form of the Great Depression (which lasted from 1929-39), devaluation of the Dollar\textsuperscript{32} (around same time) in the international market and increasing unemployment. Though the growth of the consumer market in America’s economy is said to be a phenomenon of late 1990s, it had its initiative during the post World War II era. The post World War II witnessed an increase in the demand for the consumer goods. The prolonged denial of these goods during the time of the war had instigated such an increasing demand of consumer goods. Thus the consumer goods industries within America undertook mega projects in satisfying these demands, which led to an expansion of their markets. With the increase in savings during the time of war, there was unprecedented amount of liquid asset in the hands of people, which was used for the consumption of these durable items. Consumption spending was backed by an increased household wealth due to the spectacular stock market boom. This was followed by an increasing demand for American goods in the foreign markets. Even though America witnessed an increasing demand in the consumer goods, the economy again underwent a series of jolts from various factors like the Korean War in 1950 (which resulted in inflation in the economy), crises in labour-management relationships and an increasing dollar shortage. Despite the persisting hurdles in its development, the American economy embraced globalisation. Even though the pace was slow, the 1960s and 1970s witnessed an increasing number of American multinationals opening their branches in various parts of Europe. America had to face tough global competition amidst its own economic problems. It revised its market-based conservative strategy and developed a strategy which aimed at economic expansion through the process of corporate restructuring. However the situation changed from 1990s onwards, when America witnessed an increasing drive towards a rise in the spending of investment coupled with an expansion of information technology, leading to a shift in the economy from being production

\textsuperscript{32} Refer to article on The Roots of the Great Depression available in the website http://www.objectivistcenter.org/showcontent.aspx?ct=207&h=51
centric to consumption-centric. Thus America witnessed one of the longest eras of economic expansion in the 1990s that followed into the initial years of the 21st century. As the economic expansion of America continued in the 1990s, America witnessed the birth of a ‘New Economy’. The premise of this New Economy was based on technological innovations, newer job opportunities and on the growth of global markets. At the international front, specific to Asia, the rapid economic growth rates of some of the Asian countries in the 1980s and early 1990s resulted in the inflow of capital as they were the ‘new emerging markets’. The liberalization of the Asian financial system, led to a large amount of global capital flow into these Asian economies. India too, at this point, entered the process of liberalization and globalisation. The effect and impact of these macro processes will be taken up in details in the following chapters.

2.4 Construction of needs and conspicuous consumption

As discussed earlier, a shift in the theoretical approaches from production to consumption resulted in the study of consumption as a social phenomenon. These approaches were developed by theorists like Veblen and Bourdieu. Though there are several differences in both these approaches, interestingly there are some common central assumptions between them. Veblen, like Simmel had the opportunity to witness the gradual change which resulted in the development of what is commonly known as the ‘mass consumption’. Thus he talked of the society where conspicuous consumption was practiced, and hence over-consumption was a rule, rather than an exception. Though nowadays to many of us these phenomena are regarded as commonplace and natural; at that point of time these were regarded as new and, sometimes, shocking. Veblen was particularly interested in studying the consumption behaviour of the leisure class. In that respect, his theory was often criticized as being limited in scope, and failing to develop into a general theory. Leisure was being understood as an ability to be absent from work. For a particular segment of rich population, it was less wealth per se which was of importance, than wealth displayed as a conspicuous distance from the world of practical necessity. So it was not the traditional aristocrats who were being considered as a subject
of study, as they had always inherited estates and were not engaged in work\textsuperscript{33}. The target segment was the nouveaux rich. Veblen portrayed this class of people as being engaged in conscious creating of distance between themselves and the world of necessity, which was the foundation of their success and wealth. This class desired to emulate those segments of population for whom wealth was a natural attribute and for whom time and birth had provided them a legitimacy of their own. Veblen very successfully had been able to capture the strategies of the leisure class in a series of classic phrases and categories and exemplified them in details with masterful irony. He showed how the mere absence from work or possession of wealth was translated into highly exaggerated forms, which he termed conspicuous consumption and conspicuous leisure. These leisure classes had their own means of expressing their status and, according to Veblen, these were broadly categorized into two types. The first of these means was through the control over matters relating to taste. Good taste became associated with the expression of distance from the world of work, the practical or the natural world. It was regarded as ‘refined’ or ‘cultivated’ in being dissociated from that which could be regarded as ‘cheap’ (Veblen 1970 reprinted in 1992, pp: 112). This became extended through the process of emulation by which the lower groups in the hierarchy sought to copy the higher groups. To Veblen, this strategy was so fundamental in nature that he believed that this was prevalent since the origin of private property (Veblen 1970 reprinted in 1992, pp: 33-40). Veblen had not restricted his theory by considering wealth as the only factor in understanding the social hierarchy; rather he had also talked about “higher learning as an expression of pecuniary culture”. Despite his immense contribution to the understanding of the new culture called consumption, which had gripped the society, there were some criticisms, raised against him\textsuperscript{34}. Unfortunately, Veblen’s emphasis upon particular strategies related to very particular segments of the population, had tended to become generalized in popular accounts as the basis for understanding consumption per se (Douglas and Isherwood 1978, pp: 4).

\textsuperscript{33} By work it was meant as that labour activity where people are engaged in such productive economic activities which lead to capital accumulation.

\textsuperscript{34} One of the criticism on Veblen’s theory of conspicuous consumption has been regarding the fact that he has not clearly specified who the target audience is, what motivates the individual to undertake this action, and how he/she knows whether the action has been successful (Campbell 1995).
The main theme of Bourdieu’s multifaceted theory of culture was a system of symbol based on the reintegration of the economic and cultural dimensions of society. Taking from Weber, Bourdieu too felt that class and status were inextricably related to dimensions of life. Thus there was a serious attempt in relating how culture and consumption contributed to the reproduction of the class system of modern society. What distinguishes his theory from those of the Frankfurt School (Horkheimer, Adorno and others) was the fact that unlike them, for whom analysis was based on the abstract philosophical level, Boudieu’s theory on cultural tastes was based on empirical grounds. The common factor which binds both the theories of Velen and Bourdieu on consumption, is their emphasis on the area of taste as the key dimension, controlling the significance of ordinary goods. Bourdieu, took the theory forward from where Veblen had left it. He was able to conceptualize a theory which was not restricted to any particular segment but rather encompassed the French society as a whole. Bourdieu had accomplished this task by first delineating taste from essentialist doctrine of aesthetics, thereby making it a potential tool for the contingent historical analysis of society. The taste provides with a clue to its deep-rooted nature and becomes an expression of class position, as it reflects the choices of the consumers. So for Bourdieu, apart from economic criteria, the cultural capital affects consumption pattern. The cultural capital for Bourdieu is acquired through family, socialization and educational background.

Bourdieu uses both occupation and education as the two sociological criteria in mapping the differences in taste across the class divisions which are divided into upper, middle and working class. Taste is principally seen as a cause of ‘classism’. Bourdieu traces the source of the basic difference in taste to the different experiences of these classes in modern society. It was explained that a person drives his taste from the intimacy of his own working environment. So a person belonging to the working class background whose access to the basic means of sustenance and comfort is not guaranteed, has a respect and desire for sensual, and luxury products. Comparatively, a

35 The essentialism applies to group of theories making claim that scientific truth is discovered by determining the underlying nature of things and that things can be defined and explained by their core existence. There is primacy of essence which indicated that there exists a permanent, unchanging ‘real’ core which lies behind temporary, changing appearances.

36 It is defined as a kind of distaste the middle and upper classes feel for the vulgar in fun fairs, cheap commodities, and the contempt working people feel for the pretentious, cold and degenerate middle and upper classes.
person from a certain educational and economic strata, who has the certainty of obtaining the daily necessities, cultivates a taste based on the respect and desire for the abstract, distant and formal. So, it was concluded that the objective conditions are internalized through habitus as desire expressed in taste. Habitus is a system of durable dispositions that is socially conditioned by the objective structure of society. In the process of socialization, people in different class positions are exposed to different ‘material conditions of existence’, which give rise to characteristic ways of perceiving and being in the world. This deeply rooted habitus gives rise to all specific tastes in food, clothing, and so on. It is a generative structure that provides the unifying principle of specific practices in different cultural fields. Habitus mediates between material conditions and the observable practices.

The class structure of society becomes embodied in these habitus as the individuals are exposed to different material conditions of existence. For Bourdieu class distinctions are therefore based on the basis of different levels and types of capital, both economic and cultural. The three classes, as per Bourdieu, that society is composed of, include the bourgeoisie, the petite bourgeoisie and the working class. Due to possession of high volume of capital, the bourgeoisie are engaged in the ‘aesthetic disposition’, thereby removing themselves from the mundane economic necessities of life. The working class is concerned with the economic necessities which are natural and functional. Thus they are unconcerned with the game of distinction. It is, however, the petty bourgeoisie who is distinguished by the taste for the pretentious. They aspire to emulate the lifestyle of the bourgeoisie; they however fall short in capital and habitus.

Bourdieu’s concept of culture is reminiscent of Veblen’s concept where he talked of the concept of the life-styles as major indicators of differences among the classes. However Bourdieu had expanded the theory. Though Vebel had mentioned learning as an expression of pecuniary culture, for him legitimacy to wealth was by birth; while in Bourdieu’s work this legitimation system underwent changes, and got replaced by the educational system. Through education, the social differences were based on the criterion of merit rather than birth or wealth. Bourdieu, like other sociologists
(Goldthorpe 1980; Halsey et al 1980), thus used this criterion for the understanding of social mobility.

According to Bourdieu, the basis of the ability of education to bring about the process of social reproduction lies in ‘cultural capital’. The possible reason for this relationship between education and culture is especially brought out in his article (1968). He explained how education became an important discriminating variable, as it provided a key to the translation of high culture by emphasizing the importance of attaining knowledge about abstract and esoteric subjects. What now occurred was a development of a distinctive cultural code, which gained exclusivity because of the difficulty in getting access to the devices for it’s decoding. These two factors in liaison created and reproduced a distinctive social hierarchy. The relationship between the cultural and economic capitals is not a smooth one and underlies a conflicting relationship. On one hand, there are the cultural capital holders who despise the money capital holders as their conspicuous expressions of wealth are seen to be an expression of high vulgarity. Likewise, the money capital holders regard the pretensions and esoteric forms of high cultural capital as parasitic and irrelevant. Thus society is seen to undergo a continuous struggle over the hierarchies based on wealth and knowledge. The concept of taste is applied to the understanding of the world of mass consumption. What makes Bourdieu’s work an advancement of the previous analyses of consumption, is that it accounts for the way whereby the goods not merely reflect distinctions, but are seen as instruments of the same. It indicates the power and importance of consumption as experienced in everyday social encounters and at levels of meta-social alignments. Bourdieu’s habitus is rooted in the material culture as in cognitive orders and social divisions and it provides the means for combining an approach to all three. It also accounts for the extraordinary ability of the buyers to select specific items among a consortium of goods, which will be appropriate to themselves, their family/relatives/friends. Bourdieu’s work keeps on the trends of modern social analysis, as he refuses to limit his theory to any single social attribute; rather he

37In both the books by Goldthorpe (et al) and Halsey (et al) that talk of the relative importance of ascription versus achievement, there is striking evidence that occupational returns to education are increasing over time, relative to the effect of family background. In both the books the study was based on the British society and reflected similar though process. (Goldthorpe et. al. (1980), Social mobility and class structure in modern Britain, and Halsey et al (1980), Origins of Destination: Family, Class and Education in Modern Britain).
uses multi-range factors including education, occupation combined with age, gender and expectations and the interconnections between these factors. Bourdieu’s theory on the study of consumption is looked upon as a major source for obtaining a better understanding of one’s own culture. Consumption for Bourdieu is thus “a stage in a process of communication, that is, an act of deciphering, decoding, which presupposes practical or explicit mastery of a cipher or code” (Bourdieu 1984 reprinted in 1996, pp: 02). So those who do not possess the cultural competence which is the ‘code’ that helps in decoding the meaning of cultural objects) cannot penetrate into the deeper meanings. As a result they can only understand the ‘primary stratum of the meaning’ which can be grasped on the basis of ordinary experience and thereby fail to decipher the deeper meaning of what is ‘signified’ (Bourdieu 1984 reprinted in 1996, pp: 03).

However, even Bourdieu’s work had some limitations of its own. The major criticism, was the lack of ethnographic method in the work. His dependence over questionnaire as a means of understanding was regarded as a model usually incorporated by the market researchers, and hence is said to lack the academic quality. Also, his work seems to lack an understanding of consumption as a historical phenomenon and has thereby failed to grasp modernity and its dynamic form, which is otherwise found in the works of Simmel (1971) and Berman (1983)38. Due to this, Bourdieu’s work fails to grasp the underlying differences among societies, thereby giving an ahistorical view and over simplying the subject and object. Thus his theory fails to provide a theory of either consumption or material culture as the form of modern culture. What is required is a study of consumption as a continually growing element of modern culture, which will play an increasingly prominent role in contemporary societies.

38 Berman M (1983) in his work, All that is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity talks about the modernisms of underdevelopment, which produce strange versions of urban modernity. He feels that modernity brings with itself an illusionary aspect, which bedazzles the onlookers thereby in the process concealing what is ugly. He refers to the town of St. Petersburg (Russia), which through its glamorous shopping complexes portrays a picture of grandeur and glamour thereby repressing its other side which is steeped in poverty and deprivation. Thus in its veneer of modernity the town tries to negate the presence of harsh truth of the existence of poverty and the peasant economy. The interesting fact is that Berman, from this study, tries to draw a broader conclusion whereby he tries to explain the mysticities of political and spiritual life in some of the specific cities of Third World namely New Delhi, Mexico City and Brasalia, suggesting how modernity of these places are distinctive and unusual.
Bourdieu’s theory ignores the cultural theory of the Frankfurt School\textsuperscript{39} which offers a powerful critic of Veblen’s theory of class cultures. Although the theorists belonging to this school of thought had drawn in from the Weberian and Marxian strains by inculcating the Weberian cultural legitimation with Marxian class analysis, they offered a different theoretical orientation. The Critical Theorists were among the first to develop a systematic critical reflection on the consumer society as the matrix for new configuration of contemporary capitalism, which provided new modes of social integration and control. The classical theory failed to establish a hierarchical relation existing between the classes; rather it had obscured them. They however, explained that culture helped in removing the distinction of class differentiation, burying them under an all-encompassing mass culture. This mass culture is offered to consumers as a substitute for satisfaction of the needs, which were denied to them when they were a part of producers in a capitalist society. As people from all classes take part in this mass culture, the major qualitative differences take the appearance of merely quantitative difference in the possession of similar goods (Horkheimer and Adorno 1972; Marcuse 1964\textsuperscript{40}). For the Frankfurt School of thought, culture is ideological not because it is the ‘expression of class standpoints’ but because “the existence of classes is concealed by the ideological appearances” (Adorno cited in Gartman 1991, pp: 427). So according to Adorno, it is the marketing strategies that create the cultural preferences among the strata. Markets are divided and subdivided by social variables and the market differentiates the products in order to cater to different segments. These differentiations are superficial in nature, as the goods retain the fundamental characters and thus are gimmicks of the marketers. The reason behind this is that the products are all produced on standardized methods leaving little chances to differentiate. Bourdieu explains that though the classes appropriate the same products, the difference occurs as different classes perceive them differently on the basis of their respective habitus. Frankfurt School of thought however negates this theory, saying that even when different products are consumed objectively by different classes, the method of appropriation is similar, thereby removing all cultural differences between classes. The Frankfurt Schools’ theory of mass culture was not without flaws. It fell for

\textsuperscript{39} The Frankfurt School, has contributions by the theorists like Theodore Adorno, Max Horkheimer and Herbert Marcuse on the cultural theory on consumerism. They were known as the Critical Theorists.

\textsuperscript{40} Herbert Marcuse (1964), One Dimensional Man, New York: John Wiley.
the fallacy of establishing a direct link between economic structure and cultural practices. The capitalist society requires a mass culture to hide class divisions in order to reproduce itself; however there also exists a continuous manipulation of culture to perpetuate domination, which is passively consumed by the masses. Despite the existence of certain limitations in both the theories proposed by the Frankfurt school and Bourdieu, it can be concluded that these theories attempted in describing a part of the late capitalist culture. Neither of the theories was able to grasp the totality, as both failed to understand the dynamic factor that mediates the relation of class to culture-class struggle.

Fromm (1990), who studied stages of development of Capitalism, saw the increasing predominance of modern market and regarded it as the central mechanism of distributing the social products. He explained that if the wealth of the nation corresponded to the actual needs of all its members, then the problem of distribution would not arise. However as needs were always greater than the sum total of the social product, it demanded a need for regulation on the act of distribution. Then came in factors like force, manipulations and the play of power by those who were in the dominant positions. Modern market has developed its own mechanisms of distribution which, under the disguise of self-regulation, carries on the same hierarchy in distribution. In the process what resulted was an alienated mass, who got estranged not only from the production but also from the consumption process. Fromm, who has been influenced by Marx, shows how money, which is used to acquire things, is a result of the effort used by man himself in the labour process. So the money which is acquired by man by using his capacities and skills, gives him the power to acquire objects. This alienating function of money is the root problem accordingly to Fromm. The incessant need for various types of consumption has made man "consumption-hungry" (Fromm 1990, pp: 135). Man buys and consumes commodities in abstraction, as a result of which he remains a passive and alienated consumer. Though man consumes what he bought, he does not actively participate in the process which results in his alienation from the act of consumption. Moreover, he lives in a society where his needs and tastes are manipulated and determined by the industry which also enhances this alienation.
2.5 Globalisation, consumption culture, market and the concept of global city as a spectacle

This section will focus on the works of the postmodernist and their perception on consumption. It has been examined that in most of the critical social sciences, consumption is seen as an aspect of the general problem of commodities. Goods are seen as being a part of the ever-growing problem of abstraction and differentiation. With the expansion of the objective culture, producing goods largely as symbols of wealth and fashion has led to the re-establishment of the oppressive social differentiations. Jean Braudrillard (1998) and the critics of post-modernism provide the explanations of the interchangeability of things, thereby indicating the reduction of human relations to this exchange cycle of style. By this argument, consumption is reduced to the nature of commodity and the consumers, to the process by which the commodity is obtained. These included people like Daniel Boorstin, Guy Debord, John Kenneth Galbraith, Henry Lefebvre, Herbert Marcuse, Marshall McLuhan, Vance Packard, David Riesman and Thorstein Veblen of commodity and the consumers, to the process by which the commodity is obtained. Baudillard’s work comes at a time when the importance of culture for the reproduction and expansion of capitalist societies was being perceived by various thinkers like Walter Benjamin, the Frankfurt school, Barthes and many others. His theory draws on from the works on the consumer society done by the other theorists.\footnote{These included people like Daniel Boorstin, Guy Debord, John Kenneth Galbraith, Henry Lefebvre, Herbert Marcuse, Marshall McLuhan, Vance Packard, David Riesman and Thorstein Veblen.}

2.5.1 Consumption as a process of signification

The set of classical social theorists influencing Baudrillard’s work was much the same as those affecting the theorizing of more conventional thinkers of the day. He based his work on the dramatic emergence of the consumer society after the World War II, where culture played a dominant role in the reproduction of the contemporary capitalist society. This theory came as an opposition to the Marxist ideology where culture, considered as an element of the ‘superstructure’, was seen as bringing in...
revolutionary social change. Hence, cultural sphere was found to play a direct role in the production and economic management. Baudrillard identified the emerging importance of cultural sphere and focused his work in the study of a wide variety of cultural phenomena (media, art, sexuality, fashion and technology) of social life which were themselves becoming forms of commodification and consumption. Thus Baudrillard distinguished the emerging stage of capitalism as different from the earlier stages, by the increasing importance of commodity culture within the production and social reproduction. What Baudrillard felt was that, in order to understand the fundamental dynamics of the neocapitalist society, it was essential for a deeper understanding of consumption which would only be possible with the development of a theory on consumption. In developing his own theory, Baudrillard comes out with a critique of the mainstream standard view, which conceptualizes consumption in terms of a rational satisfaction of needs with the aim of maximizing utility. Baudrillard on the other hand, posits towards a 'socio-cultural' approach, which stresses on the way in which society produces needs through socialization and conditioning thereby managing consumer demand and consumption. Thus, according to Baudrillard:

“The truth about consumption is that it is a function of production and not a function of pleasure, and therefore ... it is not an individual function but one that is directly and totally collective”.
(Baudrillard cited in Clarke1997, pp: 222)

Baudrillard felt that, even though consumption appears to be a pleasurable activity characterized by a sense of freedom, in reality it is tied in a different social logic which is distant from individual pleasure. Hence for Baudrillard, consumption that is based on this social logic is established on the basis of denial of pleasure. So it would be wrong to reduce the act of consumption to individual’s pleasurable activity and also to relate it to the freedom of choice. Baudrillard thus explains how consumption was a necessary activity, which was motivated for the capital production. This was because “it was a vital necessity for capital to have workers and producers transformed into active consumers...” (Baudrillard cited in Clarke1997, pp: 222).
Baudrillard (1998) in his work, studies the new world of objects, which are bound up with the explosive proliferation of consumer goods and services. He brings out the interplay of the subject-object dialectics within the broader framework, where the world of object has such power over the subject that it attracts, lures, fascinates and even sometimes controls the subject's perceptions, thought and behaviour. Baudrillard in his theory, tried to understand the contours and the dominant structures of the new system of objects, how they condition and structure needs, fantasies and behaviour. The methodology, which Baudrillard uses in his study, is a combination of the structuralist analysis of systems of objects with Freudian analysis of the hidden meanings in the life of the objects. Also interplaying is the Marxist ideological critiques of dominant ideological legitimation of the consumer society.

Baudrillard describes the rise of this new social order, as a 'new technical order', 'new environment', 'new field of everyday life', 'new modernity', and new form of 'hypercivilization' (Kellner 1989a, pp: 9). He uses the term 'modernity' and 'modern' to describe this new environment and hence interprets the rise of the system of objects and consumer society under the sign of modernity. As discussed earlier, objects are the focal point of Baudrillard's analysis. However, it is also true that according to him, this 'new mode of living in the 'technical era' also calls for the individuals who are capable of manipulating objects, arranging them and producing systems of order which are themselves replicative of social models and systems. This technical order requires a technical language to describe the new system of objects and their relations, their organization into ensembles, structures and significations. Baudrillard thus explains how this new technical world of objects creates new values, modes of behaviour, and relations to objects and to other people. He explains how interplay of colour, material, form and style are combined to produce a new mode and style of living. The result is the construct of an entire new environment, based on a common sign system which is globally accepted. Baudrillard uses the semiological theories of sign in interpreting the structure of everyday life. According to Baudrillard, the system of objects leads people to adapt a new, modern world, which is a result of the transition from a traditional material organization of the environment to a more cultural one. One of the major contributions of Baudrillard's theory is that he points out the ways in which consumption, credit and
advertisements produce a new morality; a morality which is based on a consumerist (leisure) ethics of fun and gratification rather than a productivist (work) ethics. Baudrillard’s analysis of this new world begins with the description of consumption. According to Baudrillard:

"We are surrounded today by the remarkable conspicuousness of consumption ad affluence, established by the multiplication of objects, services and material goods, all of which constitute a sort of fundamental mutation in the ecology of the human species. Strictly speaking, these affluent individuals are no longer surrounded by other human beings as they were in the past, but by objects". (Kellner 1989a, pp: 12)

Thus for Baudrillard, everyday life is determined more by manipulations of commodities, messages and organizations of display of goods than by social interactions with other people. Consumption thus seems to become the focal point of Baudrillard’s analysis. This is brought out from his own word where he says:

"We have reached the point where 'consumption' has grasped the whole of life, where all activities are connected in the same combinational mode....... In the phenomenology of consumption, this general climatization of life, goods, objects, services, behaviours and social relations represent the perfected, 'consummated' stage of evolution which, though articulated networks of object, ascends from pure and simple abundance to complete conditioning of action and time and finally to the systematic organization of ambience, which is characteristic of the drugstores, the shopping malls, or the modern airports in our futuristic cities". (Kellner 1989a, pp: 13).

The early works of Baudrillard show the existence of a critical Marxist posture in the understanding of the consumer society. He suggested that consumption constitutes a total homogenization and organization of everyday life, which veils the material underpinning and the social labour producing the consumer society and its goals. Marx’s influence in the work of Baudrillard can be witnessed as he quotes from his work on *Contributions to a Critique of Political Economy* (1977). However, Baudrillard does not restrict himself to Marx’s philosophy; rather he extends the theory by adding cultural dimensions interpreting the consumer society as a system of signs. He explains the consumer mentality as a form of *magical thought*, which reigns over consumption and the consumers nurture the notion that possessions and display of the signs of affluence and prestige brings real happiness and social prestige. Goods, according to this formulation, function as symbols and individuals use them to establish a distinction between themselves and other individuals (Eid 1999).
Continuing with this viewpoint, Baudrillard extends Marx's theory on 'commodity fetishism', and points out how Marx had limitations in his theory. He explained that Marx had limited his theory by analyzing the commodity, primarily in terms of relationship between exchange value and use value thereby negating the existence of 'sign value', which the commodity possesses. Marx claimed that capitalists were concerned with the profits produced by the commodities rather than with the actual use of the same. So Marx saw commodity fetishism as a mode of perception whereby commodities are seen only as natural fulfillments of human needs and hence there is a negation of the social labour and the exploitation made in order to produce them. Commodity fetishism thus projects values onto objects that are socially produced, mystifies them so as to cover their social material underpinnings. Baudrillard however expanded this concept, whereby it was considered primarily as a process in which sign values are conspicuously consumed. Thus, fetishism of commodities is not to just a projection and investment of values in certain privilege goods but concerns fetishism of an entire system of social prestige and differentiation.

So for Baudrillard, the capitalist mode of production produces a system of fetished exchange values which include the use value and the sign value through which commodities are displayed in consumption. The question arises as to how these sign values are produced. They are produced on the basis of sumptuary operation connected to expenditure and social prestige. In this sense, sign values are linked to 'conspicuous consumption'. Baudrillard explains how the system of objects and signs produces homogenized, equivalent, rationalized and systematized needs for the world of objects that are same for everyone. However, this resulted in a tautological explanation, whereby the subject exhibited needs produced by the system and the system satisfied these needs,

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42 Marx uses this concept in his work *Capital* (1976), Vol 1, whereby it meant the conferment of 'naturalness' on material objects produced by human labour in capitalism when their character is really the result of social processes. Since commodities are the main form in which social relationships appear in capitalist society, this tendency to fetishism according to Marx is not surprising. However, this in turn also means that the social processes in terms of labour power and labour exploitation are hidden from the view.

43 The use value of the commodity meant the use and enjoyment achieved with the usage of the commodity, while the exchange value was defined by its worth in the marketplace.

44 This was a term coined by Veblen (1970, reprinted in 1992) to define the characteristic feature of the Leisure class. According to this definition, this class was engaged in consumption of goods and services not for their purpose of utility rather more in terms of projection of status and power. Bourdieu (1984 reprinted in 1996) later on helped in the further development of this concept when he dealt with the concepts of tastes.
reproducing them and thereby continuing the chain of consumption. Subjects are thus reduced to socially produced systems of need, while the objects are reduced to a homogenized system arranged in terms of sign values. Subjects are nothing more than 'productive forces'.

He criticizes the ideological claim, which talks about the overcoming of class in consumer society thereby developing a Neo-Marxian critique of the contemporary stage of capitalism. However, he argues against the notion that with the emergence of the consumer society "production is entangled with an order of consumption, which is an order of the manipulations of signs" (Kellner 1989a, pp: 14).

Rather at one point, Baudrillard criticizes Marx’s theory on capitalism whereby he explains the inability of Marx in conceptualizing the fundamental difference between the stages of early and later capitalism. According to Marx, the later stage of capitalism is merely an extension of market relations and commodifications. But according to Baudrillard, this stage is fundamentally different. It is marked by the rise of sign value and fetishism, meaning that under this new system, consumption and display becomes a central focus of value and thereby gains an equal importance like production, in determining the logic, nature and direction of social processes.

Aim of Baudrillard was to relate the two theoretical perspectives of the Marxian analysis and Structuralism in arguing that there exist two social orders: order of production and the order of consumption. For Baudrillard, consumption is constrained at two levels: at the 'structural' analysis where consumption is constrained by the constraints of signification. The other is at the level of 'socio-economic-political' analysis, where the constraints are operant. What results is the predominance of the structuralism over the Marxian analysis, which is prevalent in his inability to develop a theory of revolution. The code prevented real social revolution to take place, which is explained by the following analysis. In a consumer society the consumers are said to consume the signs (messages/images) rather than commodities per se. This means that the consumers should have the ability to 'read' the system of consumption in order to decipher what to consume. Commodities are related to what they signify rather than their use value. Moreover what these commodities signify is defined not by their use, but by their relationship to the entire system of commodity and signs. As there exists an infinite
range of difference in the system, hence there exists an insatiability of needs and desire among the consumers. The consumers are in constant search for difference in their nature of consumption with the others, which is illusionary by nature and adds to the nature of insatiability of wants. It is thus these reading of the codes which causes the individuals to be different from and similar to each other in the consumer world. Thus a sociological study of consumption for Baudrillard should entail the understanding of these deeper structures rather than the conscious social dynamics. This is because the constraints are found at these deeper structures where the messages are not being correctly decoded. He explains this by saying that through proper training (which may be through socialization or even passed through heredity), the upper class has a mastery over the codes, which the middle and lower class do not possess. As a result, these two classes have a fetish for objects and seek salvation through consumption of objects.

Among the other classical theorists, the influence of Emile Durkheim is seen in the work of Baudrillard. He focuses on the Durkhemian notion of the collective phenomenon of ‘social fact’ and interprets consumption as ‘collective behaviour’, ‘something enforced, a morality, and an institution’ and ‘as a whole system of values’. He also did not negate the involvement of the perspective of social control and group integration that was associated with consumption as a social fact. So from the Durkhemian point of view, consumption is not seen as an activity meant to give pleasure, but rather as an institution forced upon the consumers more as a duty. However there is a break in the Durkhemian concept in the study at the point, when consumption is referred to in the modern society. Consumption is also at a point, seen as a managed possession of consumer goods, an aspect of individualization and atomization, thereby bringing in the concept of distinction and differentiation instead of social solidarity. Thus the modern concept of consumption clashes with the inherently collective nature of consumption as seen in the works of the classical theorists. Despite the distinctiveness of the modern meaning conferred to consumption, Baudrillard is still influenced by the Durkhemian

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45 Baudrillard explains that by engaging in consumption, the lower class tries to compensate for their lack in social mobility.

46 By Durkhemian definition a social fact is any way of acting, whether fixed or not, capable of exerting over the individual an external constraint; or: which is general over the whole of a given society whilst having an existence of its own, independent of its individual manifestations (Durkheim, The Rules of Sociological Methods, 1895).
functionalism, in terms of the macroscopic orientation and functional analysis of consumption\textsuperscript{47}.

Structuralism also gained an important aspect in the work of Baudrillard while he defined consumption. For him the world of consumption was treated like a mode of discourse, a language. Like language, consumption is a way whereby the consumers converse and communicate with the fellow mates. It is in this respect that one can freely use the panoply of tools derived from structural linguistics like signs, signifier, signified and codes. In developing his theory on consumer culture, Baudrillard talks about the ‘logic of social differentiations’ where with the purchase and use of consumer goods, the individuals try to attend social prestige and position. He explains how the entire system of production produces a system of needs that are rationalized, systematized and hierarchized. So the consumers are induced into the world of goods and needs which act both as a means of differentiating oneself socially, at the same time integrating with the entire consumer society. This can be best understood, if one can view the objects of consumption as signs, while the consumer society as a system of signs\textsuperscript{48}. Consumption is thus seen as a process where there exist never-ending needs which are created and satisfied in the entire process. However, consumption cannot be viewed as primarily an activity which caters to need fulfillment; it is rather to be viewed as a social activity where the consumer, while buying the product, becomes a part of the entire system of the market and thereby consciously or unconsciously follows the normative behaviour of the society. Thus according to Baudrillard:

\textsuperscript{47} Baudrillard explains how the waste within the consumer society, which is considered as dysfunctional by the critiques, is in fact functional and indicates the positive use of the same. Again he uses the Durkhemian notion of ‘anomie’ with reference to Marian concept of ‘alienation’ where he explains various pathologies existing in the consumer society like the hippie culture.

\textsuperscript{48} Thus to explain this one can say that, the consumer who buys a LCD television, not only uses it as an equipment for his own enjoyment, but at the same time also cherishes the prestige associated with the owing of the product. The advertisements also play with this notion in inducing the sale of the products. For example, the advertisement of a certain television brand (Onida) where the television is referred as ‘neighbour’s envy owners’ pride’ reflects the above aspect beautifully.
"Consumption is a system which assures the regulations of signs and the integration of the group: it is simultaneously a morality (a system of ideological values) and a system of communications, a structure of exchange.... According to this hypothesis, as paradoxical as it may appear, consumption is defined as exclusive of pleasure. As a social logic, the system of consumption is established on the basis of the denial of pleasure. Pleasure no longer appears as an objective, as a rational end, but as individual rationalization of a process whose objectives lay elsewhere. Pleasure would define consumption for itself, as autonomous and final. But consumption is never thus....when we consume we never do it on our own (the isolated consumer is the carefully maintained illusion of the ideological discourse on consumption). Consumers are mutually implicated, despite themselves, in a general system of exchange and in the production of coded value”.

(Kellner 1989a, pp: 16)

Baudrillard thus sees consumption as belonging primarily to the part of the cultural realm and explains how it should be interpreted as a system of signs organized by codes and rules, rather than on the basis of ‘natural’ satisfaction of needs. Consumption constitutes a global arbitrary and coherent system of signs; a cultural system, which substitutes a social order of values and classification for a contingent world of needs and pleasure. Marketing, browsing, purchasing are all a part of the common language/code through which society communicates. So consumption is not an individualistic activity; it is rather a part of the entire system. It is not a free activity, but is bound by the constraints of production, which give rise to a system of needs and which by order of signification, determines the social prestige and position of an individual.

As discussed earlier, Baudrillard had the influence of Veblen in his understanding and extension of the theory of consumption. But unlike Veblen, Baudrillard who had taken the concept of ‘conspicuous consumption’ had not restricted its usage to a particular class category. He had alternately extended the use of the concept to the entire consumer society. For Veblen, conspicuous consumption is linked with expenditure, display, establishment of style, taste and the social power of wealth and is confined to the upper class. Baudrillard on the other hand, sees the entire society as organized around consumption and display of commodities through which individuals gain prestige, identity and standing. So the commodities have different sign values which indicate the prestige and social standing of the individual in society. Hence for Baudrillard, the crucial feature of consumer society is the proliferation of commodity sign through which the commodities take on an ever-new and changing significance and
for whom consumption is a way of life. Here, one finds the influence of Saussure (1971)\textsuperscript{49} in Baudrillard’s work, where he explains how commodity signs form systems of values in which one individual or good can be substituted for another. Thus Baudrillard develops further his theory on systems of needs, and suggests how commodities are structured into system of sign values governed by rules, codes and social logic.

Though Baudrillard’s work on consumption made some remarkable contribution in the understanding of the dynamics of consumption in the consumer society, it also had to face some criticisms. His theory on consumption was criticized for being one-sided theory as there became an overemphasis on the notions like sign values, thereby overshadowing the notion that commodities are also used for purpose of enjoyment\textsuperscript{50}. Another aspect for which Baudrillard had faced critics’ disapproval was that capitalism establishes social domination through the imposition of a system of sign values whereby individuals are situated within the consumer society and submit to its domination through the activity of consumption. The problematic aspect of the theory is that it negates that dimension of consumption whereby it might be seen as a sphere of self-activity; where the objects might be for usage of an individual’s own enjoyment instead of being always the source of locus of class domination where individuals submit to the distaste of capital and assimilate its values and practices\textsuperscript{51}. Baudrillard had however forecasted that such a criticism was coming up. So he mentioned that all needs, use values and consumption were entirely social construct, which were being controlled by the system of the consumer society. He negates the involvement of any human agencies, projecting that it is the objects which organize people’s life. Baudrillard makes

\textsuperscript{49} He developed the semiological theories of sign. For him language is a system of signs whose meaning lie in relations of difference. Thus the relation between the signified and the signifier is arbitrary both signifiers and signified, having the features of abstraction, equivalence and interchangeability. Hence for the semiologist, words are abstract concepts which can be brought together in linguistic structures according to specific rules of exchange. For further read on Saussure and his semiological theories of sign refer to Thibault, P.J (1997), Re-reading Saussure: The Dynamics of Signs in Social Life, London, Routledge.

\textsuperscript{50} Marx in his work Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts (1844), explained that the meaning of private property is the existence of essential objects for man, both as objects and enjoyment and as object of activity. Thereby it explains that for Marx the commodities had the potentiality of giving enjoyment.

\textsuperscript{51} The alternative approach is seen in the work of de Certeau (1988), “The Practice of Everyday Life”, where he showed ways in which consumption can serve the interests of self-valorization and can be used to serve the interests of the individuals and the oppositional group against the hegemony of the capital.
the mistake of assuming that the capitalist controls the consumer society and consumption only for the sake of profit maximization.

Another serious criticism that Baudrillard faces is about the notion of the 'code'. There exists vagueness in the concept. Though he claims that sign values are determined by 'code', he neither defines as to who produces it, nor how it is produced. There also exists a multiple use of the term which leads to further confusion. Baudrillard in his attempt to develop a theory of consumption based on the concept of signs, distances his analysis from the consumption and signification, from analysis of production and the logic of capital. Thereby he fails to draw upon the relations between the systems of production, distribution, exchange and consumption. For Baudrillard, unlike Marx, the primary needs and values in a consumer society were the primary determinants of social organization and behaviour but he never gave substantial evidences to prove his point of view.

Despite the criticism that Baudrillard's work had faced, it is noteworthy to explain that he was the first to talk about the increasing importance of the rise of the credit card system in the spread of the consumer society. The importance of the modern credit as the central force behind the rise of the booming consumer society was theorized at a time when it was in its rudimentary stage. This indicated his foresight as a theorist, in predicting and conceptualizing a change and a phenomenon ahead of his times.

### 2.5.2 The rise of the global economy and global city as a spectacle

The theory on modernity which was constructed by Simmel, and Benjamin deals with the new modes of perceptions and experiences both social and historical that were set up as a reaction to the upheaval of capitalism. Their central concern was the discontinuous experience of time, space and causality as transitory, fleeting or arbitrary - an experience, that is located in the immediacy of social relations, including the social and physical relationship of the metropolis and the relations with the past. The commodity form for these theorists, unlike Marx, does not merely symbolize social relations of modernity, but is a central source of their origin. Thus the
'phantasmogoria\textsuperscript{52}' of the world of commodities is precisely a world in motion or flux where all the values are transitory and all relations are fleeting in nature. According to Simmel, city is defined in terms of sociological consequences rather than by territorial constraints. So he says that city is not a spatial entity with sociological consequence, but a sociological entity that is formed spatially.

The deep ideological principles underlying the global economy are not so new. They include the primacy of economic growth, the need for free trade to stimulate this growth, the unrestricted 'free market', the absence of government regulation and voracious consumerism. Globalisation meant accelerated and more extensive spread of markets for goods and information and their more integrated worldwide production and distribution. Thus one finds that the process of globalisation has led to a corresponding decline in the role of the modern nation state in regulating the nature of growth of the political economy at the national level, especially since the multinational corporations, which are driven by market forces, have taken over. Economic reforms are being forced upon the nation states so that national economies can be 'restructured' in accordance with the external changes taking place in the global economy. Among others, one of the consequences of the new economic policy has been the adoption of the consumerist values and global cultural forms by the new generation. The change that has been witnessed is not just a superficial change but one which has brought about deep structural and value changes affecting people and relationships. The critics of globalisation however, have a very different view on this issue Rajagopal (1999), unlike the modernization theorists, believes that it is not necessary that globalisation will effect a homogenization of the world. He explains that in the process of globalisation, some of the selected features specific to a particular region gets highlighted, refashioned and reintegrated in the global cultural image. Moreover, the flow of goods and information across nations is more fluid in nature than people themselves. As a result, there occurs an uneven development whereby the cultures of consumption often remain intensely local. So it becomes important in understanding how globalisation accommodates itself to and reshapes within the cultural configuration of a new society by influencing the local forces

\textsuperscript{52} The term was adapted by Benjamin from Marx who used it to describe commodity fetishism. By that word Marx tried to convey the way the exchange value of the commodity functions to obscure the social context of production.
with the global forces on one hand and getting global forces being influenced by the local conditions on the other (Kellner 2002). In this encompassing global event, India was not a mere observer. The changes witnessed in the Indian society due to the processes of globalisation will be discussed in details in the subsequent chapters.

It is a common belief that globalization leads to the development of some common sets of cultural traits and practices. Thus the common usages of the terms like ‘Coca Colonization’ or ‘McDonaldization’ of the world indicate that global culture follows a global economy. The changes that were brought along with the spread of the market economy established by the multinational companies, pointed to the rise of the culture of consumption which was based on a common standardized image created by the advertisers. The creation of a global consumer has not been entirely based on the utilitarian nature of the products but rather on the sale of dreams of affluence and personal success which were constructed by the advertisers. The meaning of globalization is not a simple one. It is to be understood in a broader aspect whereby it encompasses every aspect of human life and society be it economic, social, cultural or political. In a narrower economic term, globalization means liberalization and free movements of goods, services, capital and finance across national boundaries. This study concentrates on the cultural dimensions of globalization whereby the researcher tries to understand the global culture of consumerism. There transpired a breakdown in the trade barriers to

53 Ritzer took up the concept of McDonaldization of the society in his book whereby he defines it as a process by which the principles of the fast food restaurant are coming to dominate more and more sectors of American society as well as the world. However it is not the expansion of these chains of restaurant that he talks about; rather he talks McDonaldization as a specific cultural type, which is based on four basic principles of efficiency, calculability, predictability and control. Among these four principles on which the working of the company is based it is the concept of predictability that attracts one’s attention. By this principle of predictability is the idea that is conveyed is that people prefer to know what to expect in all settings at all times. For both consumers and employees alike, there is a comforting feeling in the knowledge that McDonalds are the same the world other and that McDonalds ingredients, tools for food preparation and cooking etc. are uniform and unpredictable in any McDonalds which you may work in. As in Weber’s work, bureaucracies were to dominate modern society as they were the best possible solution to the growing problem of inefficiency in a more complex and unordered society, Ritzer, in his work, sees McDonalds as the paradigm of efficiency as consumers become more rational and expect more efficient behaviour from the social settings they encounter. So Coco Colonisation or McDonaldization brings with it the new cultural principles which are rooted in the western context and are thus are imposed upon the societies as an external factor which might not always be consistent with the local culture. McDonaldised society is seen as a system of iron cages in which all institutions come to be dominated by the same principles. Ritzer also goes on to say that sadly this concept of McDonaldization has come up as strong imagery to represent ‘America’. For further read: Ritzer George (2000) The McDonaldization of Society.

54 Theorists have talked on the inter-relation of the globalization of capital, decline of the nation-state and the corresponding rise of the new global culture Featherstone (1990), Lash And Urry (1994).
allow for free flow of wealth between nations, i.e. from a local and national economy to a global one. This resulted in the rise of a new society, which was based on the philosophy of consumerism and defined as an ideology and a specific way of life as is predominantly reflected in today’s society.

For the cultural theorists the city has long been the topic and resource for their enquiries, as a result of which it is perceived as a text, open to interpretation (Baudrillard 1998; Shields 1992). The place reflects an amalgamation of the processes of commodification, production of consumption and also place of consumption. It is a site of everyday practice and provides valuable insights into the linkages of macro-processes with the texture and fabric of human experiences. City has undergone transformation, which are evident in new constructions in recent times. Thus it will not be wrong to say that city has become the focus for cultural and socio-political manifestations of urban lives and everyday practices. The historical construction of city is no longer understood in its practical form, but interpreted as a place of cultural consumption. So the experience of the postmodern, post urban world assumes the form of immediate experience of the transformation of space-time. This lends sophistication to the city, transposing it the realm of simulations. In this aspect one can talk of the concept of ‘city as a spectacle’ which was developed by Debord (1992). He invented this new perspective on commodification where the final form of commodity fetishism was seen in the ‘image’. According to Debord, development of the concept of ‘spectacle’ refers to a new stage in the capitalist urbanization where there occurs a shift in the image-saturated society.

This society is dominated by advertisements, entertainments, mass media, and other cultural industries which help in defining and shaping the urban life thereby resulting in obscuring the alienating effects of capitalism. Debord gives a multi-dimensional definition of spectacle. However, the one which will be taken up in this study, involves the meaning where he explains spectacle as a “social relationship mediated by images” (Debord 1992, pp: 4). He further extended this concept to the phenomenon of reification, which results in ‘objectification’ of social relations and products that extended to

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55 Similar viewpoint is also reflected in the work of Gotham (2005, pp: 242) who studied the urban festivals in New Orleans, US and explains how these spectacles consist of hegemonic ideologies and dominant images through the use of advertisements and spectacular displays which seek to transform the built and social environment of the city into an aesthetic product symbolizing consumption, leisure and entertainment.
production and consumption of images. Individual here is a mere silent spectator of the view and experience of this ‘image society’; who is forced to consume images that are produced by others (who include the bourgeoisie) for the ulterior motive of profit making. Hence for him, the contemporary city provides the space for conflicts and struggles over the spectacle. There exists a juxtaposition of the two contradictory forces: of consumer exploitation as well as that of the collective resistance to this new culture within the confines of the city as a space. In the light of this context, commodification is understood to be less a matter of false consciousness and more of a whole new lifestyle which we call consumerism. As a result, commodification is to be perceived more as an addiction than as a philosophical error. This is further emphasized in the works of de Certeau (1997 cited in Poster 2004). In all his works the common binding theme that runs throughout is rethinking the concept of consumption in everyday life. He brings into attention how, with the introduction of the commercial capitalism, there results in a transformation of the visual landscape of urban everyday life. Thus in the following excerpt one gets a reflection of de Certeau’s conception of the modern city where he says:

“The modern city is becoming a labyrinth of images. It is endowed with graphics of its own, by day and by night that devises a vocabulary of images on a new space of writing. A landscape of posters and billboards organizes our reality. It is a mural landscape with the peptery of its immediate objects of happiness. It conceals the building in which labour is confined; it converse over the universe of everyday life; it sets in place artificial forms that follow the path of labour in order to juxtapose their passageways to the successive moments of pleasure. A city that is a real ‘imaginary museum’ forms the counterpoint of the city at work”.

(de Certeau cited in Poster 2004, pp: 412)

Having talked about the concept of city as a spectacle, the focus rests on understanding city as a place of consumption. If one wants to locate the evidence of rising consumerism, then city comes out to be the prime locus of consumption. This is mainly because it provides the space in which most commercial centres (shops, restaurants, cultural establishments, etc) are concentrated, as urban areas are considered the focal point of symbolic and economic exchanges. Also, the city environment is said to

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56 Consumption is viewed as transgressing to the point of becoming ‘addiction’ in the works of Reith (2004) where he says that addiction to consumption of commodities transforms freedom into determinism and desire into need. So in this stage rather than consuming to realize oneself, in his state of addiction, the individual is consumed by consumption, which is self-destructive. The consumer chooses to act while an addict is forced to do so.
be the forum for cultural impressions and expressions. So city can be very justly said to be the epicentre of dissipating symbolic messages and images which shape people's attitudes and behaviour. The study tries to observe the symbolic changes that a city undergoes with the rise of consumerism with reference to the development of the shopping malls as a site of consumption. This would not be possible without taking into account any specific section of people; hence the focus will be on understanding the urban culture and the culture of consumption vis-à-vis the new middle class. This is in view of the fact that the symbolic-intensive character of the middle class, which has already been mentioned, has made them the driving force behind urban transformation from production-centric to a consumption centric society (Lash and Urry cited in Clammer 2003; Featherstone 1991; Conroy 1998). This has also been made possible with leisure becoming the driving force behind the development of cultural amenities. Moreover, consumption as a phenomenon, has become place-bound, and is incorporated within the habitual practice of the individuals creating a distinctive lifestyle pattern which is of a collective nature.

The linking of city with consumption has historically been associated to the 19th century or even earlier. Changes wrought by modernity were varied and immense in nature and centred inexorably on the city. Works of major theorists like Baudrillard (1998), Simmel (1971) and Benjamin (1973 cited in Clarke 1997) show an increasing concern regarding the new image of the city. This resulted in a distinctive characteristic pertaining to the new city life which was based on increasing accumulation of material wealth as well as everyday urban experiences. Development of new social relations took place, which were engendered by the modern city. Thus "urbanism became a way of

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57 The change in the nature of the class was of an all encompassing nature which took place with the changing mode of production. For example in the American society the transformation in the class identities shifted when there was a shift of the economic production from the classical style of capitalism to a corporate form. As a consequence of that shift, the traditional middle class of landowners and entrepreneurs, whose position in the social totality was once anchored strictly by property ownership, now finds itself replaced by the 'new' middle classes of corporate managers and employees, whose social position derives strictly from income. The redefinition of the middle class identity was based on two criterions namely the income criterion which was too heterogeneous in nature (with added new occupations) and the shift to an income criterion that made the social prestige of the new middle class much more volatile and uncertain than their predecessors (Conroy 1998, pp: 74).
life\textsuperscript{58}. Simmel (1971) too, in his study of the nineteenth century city, commented on the changes which took place in the pace, rhythm, and transformations of the city life. He talked about the budding social relations and the transformations that took place in the social, physical distance and space. Thereby he brought out the fragmentary quality of the modern metropolitan city life coupled with the feeling of anxiety and strangeness\textsuperscript{59}. Benjamin (1973 cited in Zukin 1998) and Kracauer (1937 cited in Clarke 1997) emphasized on the structural transformations that were taking place in the public spaces due to the dominance of the process of commodification. Thus nineteenth century city life witnessed the development of growing private commerce, which was reflected in the growth of the Parisian arcades and departmental stores. From 1880s onwards, with the development of these sites of consumption within the city there resulted in changes in the concept of ‘city’ as a ‘place of production’ to a ‘place of consumption’. With the shift of focus from production-centric to consumption-centric activities, city spaces were increasingly reshaped and recreated to form new landscapes of consumption. Benjamin (1973; cited in Zukin 1998 and Lungstrum 1999) focused on one of these world exhibitions which had a distinctive architectural manifestation of modern life. He coined a special term called ‘phantasmogoria’\textsuperscript{60} meaning a place where one entered in order to be distracted. For Benjamin, phantasmogoria is a magic lantern show that merges with lights to create optical illusions. This phantasmogoric effect is not intrinsic to commodity form; rather it emerges when consumer goods are celebrated and displayed in shopping arcades, departmental stores or exhibitions. At the time Benjamin was writing, the malls as a place of consumption had not been a phenomenon. However, in the present day context, his notion of phantasmogoric can also be extended to the shopping malls. Coming back to Benjamin’s work, he explains how citizens visiting these places are overcome by a euphoric trance in which they share a dream of abundance and opulence. His concern for

\textsuperscript{58} Quoted by Louis Wirth (1938) in Urbanism as a Way of Life in the American Journal of Sociology, Vol: 4, pp 1-24. This was cited in Clarke (1997)

\textsuperscript{59} The notion of ‘stranger’ is brought out in the lecture by Zygmnt Bauman named “The City and Stranger” which he delivered on 7th December, 1994 in the Centre for Cultural Studies at the University of Leeds. This ‘stranger’ is a category, which is defined by its inevitable, imprecision: whereby it is neither friend nor enemy; neighbour nor alien. It is a concept spreading across both the ends. This concept of stranger is later beautifully brought out in the term flâneur, which will be taken up in the consequent chapters.

\textsuperscript{60} Phantasmogoric or Phantasmogoria is a magic-lantern show of optical illusions, rapidly changing size and blending into one another.
the social and political consequences of these ‘new temples of commodity fetishism’ was based on the behaviour he witnessed among individuals within the sites of consumption. Individuals seem to abandon themselves within these sites of consumptions to take on the attitude of pure reaction. So for Benjamin, modernity is composed of the world dominated by phantasmagorias that is based on image, illusions and pleasure. What distinguishes Benjamin from Marx’s conception of phantasmogoria is that whereas Marx links it to the concept to false consciousness, Benjamin says that false consciousness cannot adequately explain the dynamics of the term since people who go to visit these places choose to go with a conscious attitude and are aware of the deceptive aspect of the same. So phantasmogoria or the logic of spectacle is driven, not by oppression or deception, but rather by desire. For Benjamin, the arcades are to be viewed as spaces for shopping which embodied innovations in mass production of consumer goods, in technology of building/architecture, in display of goods and finally in strategies of creating and selling ‘dreams’. This new method of selling of goods through departmental stores allowed the buyers the access of sight, touch and smell which helped in revolutionizing the concept of market. The new space of consumption fostered a new urban culture which was based on “acquisition and consumption as the means of achieving happiness; the cult of the new; the democratization of desire; and money value as the predominant measure of all value in society” (Leach, cited in Zukin 1998, pp: 828). Also, the development of these constructions brought into the forefront a deeper meaning attached to the notion of public-private divide. Modernity, which engineered the gendering of the public-private spheres, failed to extend this division onto this public and private urban space. This debate is further activated in the postmodern commercial architecture of the shopping malls. The rise of the consumption culture in the era of modernity intensified further in the postmodern era.

Hence it has often been said that it was with the postmodern city that the realization of consumption contributed both to the changing form of the urban and social life as well as to practice within it. Though this does not undermine the era of modernity, it brings out the fact that it is in the post-modern era that the display of the practice of consumption is said to have reached its zenith through the construction and expansion of arcades, departmental stores, art galleries, nouvelle cuisine restaurants and finally the
shopping malls. Social theorists like Baudrillard, Benjamin and Simmel (cited in Shields 1992) who have worked on the relationship between the urban architecture and forms of sociability in the city, talk of the changing scenario from a socio-cultural perspective. The architecture of departmental stores and arcades had a lot of similarities with the constructions of the shopping mall in recent times. It reflected the same conglomeration of the new material and technologies – glass planes, cast iron, steel construction and dramatically coloured electric lights – which helped in the creation of a special atmosphere where a notion of flux, a kaleidoscope of motion, sound and image created a specific environment for the buyers. At this point of discussion therefore, the historical backdrop becomes a prerequisite in the understanding of the relationship between the postmodern city and consumerism.

The next stage, that is postmodernity, which began during the mid 20th century, witnessed the growth and shift of the ‘consumer society’ from the metropolitans to the suburban areas. Before embarking on this issue, it is necessary to understand the difference that exists in the notion of everyday consumption in modern and postmodern era. A shift from the modern to a postmodern era of consumption saw a shift from privacy, individualism, passivity and alienation from work towards an expression of one’s own identity through the process of consumption. The main trait that can be traced in the postmodern era is the emergence of the traits of multiplicity of consumption pattern. The consumption in modern era, which was characterised by stable and hierarchical patterns of consumption, dispersed into heterogeneity in the postmodern era. From a fixed idea about the nature of consumption existing among the various level of classes, there resulted in a fragmentation and expansion of the consumption pattern. So, instead of emulating the culture of the classes above, cultural capital emanated from the lifestyle, language and self-presentation of the benighted groups. Basically, the difference that exists between the two is more in terms of the relation of individual identity to the object consumed. In case of modernity, the subject (i.e. consumer being) interacts with the object (products) as a distinct entity and is able to disassociate from the same. However in postmodern consumption, the consumer renders products as an integral part of him/herself, thus becoming a part of the experience of being with products (Firat and Dholakia cited in Parker 2004, pp: 416). Through the consumption of the products, social
status is being represented in the modern era whereas in the postmodern era these products are used for expressing one’s personality. Thus, it indicates the deep penetration of the consumer goods into the lives of the consumer, so that it becomes a part and parcel of his/her existence. There is an unholy dependence on the commodity culture, which is found in the postmodern era. Thus the increasing dominance of consumption can be seen from the way in which it helps in the construction of self-identity. This is further complicated with the process of globalisation due to the fact that in modern era the consumption patterns were defined within the nationality code. But in the postmodern era, the consumption patterns are affected by the global forces. As a result, with the flow of products between national boundaries, there results in the intermingling of the local cultures with the global, thereby creating a hybrid culture of its own. This new culture has the elements of both the global and the local thereby creating a crossbreed culture characteristic of the postmodern society. Thus consumption patterns mirror and transform one another across the globe. What occurs is the development of a triangular relationship between globalisation, modernity and urbanism. Urbanism became a dominant structural quality of social life which emerged in the modern era. The fact is that the cultures of urban spaces are immediately and directly influenced by globalization and vice versa. Despite this fact, there is a paucity of study in understanding the relationship between the global cultures and urban cultures. So, just as urban cultures depend on the global forces in influencing the areas like consumption patterns and tastes, fashion, architecture and rise of new material cultures, similarly the global cultures also get affected by the urban cultures. Thus urban culture helps in contributing to innovative intellectual inputs as well as economic and technological innovations specific to that particular locale. Dialectics between globalisation and urbanism is important as it helps in the development of methodologies for the study of urban cultures. The reason behind this is the fact that with the continuous process of globalisation, there is a continuous dissolving of the local culture. As a result, the cities tend to lose the intrinsic

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61 Urbanization is the process whereby large numbers of people congregate and settle in an area, eventually developing social institutions such as businesses and government to support them. In general terms it refers to the migration of people out of rural areas into cities (Encyclopedia of social theory, ed by Ritzer, George).

characteristic nature of their own. A comparative perspective is required in understanding the interrelationship between globalisation and urban life. In this context, globalisation should not be understood only as an economic phenomenon; rather one should try to understand the effect it creates in the cultural and political dimensions as well. There are various levels at which the effects of globalization can be witnessed which are either opposed or integrated in everyday life. In the process, it creates a hybrid urban culture (Featherstone 1998; Appadurai and Breckenridge 1996; Tomlinson 1999 cited in Clammer 2003). A political understanding of urban transformation is important because firstly, the transformation is guided on the basis of who is located at the local level in a globalising society, who administers the social life of the cities; secondly, one has to see the relationship that exists between the cities and the states of which they are a part. This is specially required in the context of globalisation where the states themselves face the question of adaptability of the process. In reference to India, therefore, it becomes imperative to understand the political viewpoint of the governments at both the centre and at the level of the state of West Bengal (in view of the field work conducted at Kolkata). Urbanisation in India, like anywhere else, has helped in accelerating the growth rate of retail much faster than normal. Hence it has often been predicted by the economists that in recent future that is within a span of five to ten years the macro-economic forces will result in an increase in the modern form of retailing business in India. The sudden rise in this retail business is also coupled with factors like increasing urbanization and a rising income of the younger population. One of the positive aspects of the increasing population growth has been the increase in the percentage of younger population making India second after China, indicating the potential for enormous growth. The Table 1 and 2 shows the composition of the urban population in India in comparison to the other countries in the world and the domestic age composition of the population across the years.

63 The study was conducted by HSBC Global Research in May 2005 on "Jumbo Retail" by Rahul Bajaj and Matt Marsden.
In the world scenario (Table 1), India comes out to have the highest percentage of young population, bypassing China and other developed and developing nations of the world like Indonesia, US, Brazil, Japan and Germany. Thus with 53% of the population in the age bracket below 25 years, India gains the title of being the most youthful country of the world. Most importantly another positive consequence of the rising population is the fact that the population in the age bracket of 20-54 years is growing at a very fast pace. According to the Asian Demographic report as cited in the report by HSBC on Jumbo Retail, by 2010 the percentage of population in the above-mentioned age bracket will increase so much so as to be more than 50 per cent of the
Indian population. Considering these and several other features, the economists are positive that the retail business in India will continue its positive growth in the near future. What was called for at this point of time, was tapping the latent consumer class. The deepening of the markets and the changing lifestyle of the people were supported by the emergence of new public spaces in the urban environment. These spaces were in the shape of departmental stores, restaurants, and shopping malls.