

Dreams and Needs Factory. Strategies of a consumer society

**Fábrica de Sueños,
anhelos y necesidades.
Las estrategias de la
sociedad de consumo**

ABSTRACT

JEL Classification:
M37, M39

Key words:

Consumption,
advertising strategies,
marketing, culture
and communication

This article explores the main strategies that have come from the heart of consumer societies which, by means of commercial communication, marketing and publicity, have shaped a particular kind of citizen. Consumption shifted from satisfying people's individual needs to a much more social and cultural level where imitation, status and new ways of integration in the social structure are closely related to consumer goods and services. Obsolescence, fashion, planned chaos and hedonism are some of the main strategies that are analyzed in this research..

RESUMEN

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Palabras clave:

Consumo,
estrategias publicita-
rias, marketing,
cultura y comuni-
cación

El presente artículo explora las principales estrategias surgidas en el seno de las sociedades de consumo y consumistas que mediante la comunicación comercial, el marketing y la publicidad han configurado un tipo de ciudadano particular. El consumo trasladó su eje de la satisfacción de necesidades propias de las personas hacia un plano mucho más social y cultural en el que la imitación, el estatus y las nuevas formas de integración en la estructura social están íntimamente relacionadas con los bienes y servicios que se consumen. La obsolescencia, la moda, el caos planificado y el hedonismo son algunas de las principales estrategias que se analizan en la presente investigación..

Introduction

The prestigious French economist **J.B. Say** coined a phrase which later became known as “Say’s Law,” and states:

“People will automatically and anxiously consume everything that their nation’s economy may produce.”

However, we should not forget that the period of time when J. B. Say came up with his consumer behaviour law was characterized by the lack of products in markets. This lack was so significant that even basic commodities were difficult to find. According to J. B. Say, production had to be linked to fair distribution so that it could satisfy the social needs.

Thus, outside his thinking lay any kind of consumption based on the cultural meaning and symbolic value of merchandise as a reflection of personality, status or social class. If everything that national economies were able to produce was consumed it was simply because the national economies were unable to produce even the minimum in order to sustain the population.

Technological advances meant greater efficiency in the production of merchandise. The use of new methods of production, new energy sources and assembly lines to organise work contributed to the creation of mass production.

For the first time in history the conditions under which J. B. Say had formulated his famous theory had changed. Production was able to turn out even more merchandise than what the actual market demanded, which in turn logically resulted in excess stock and the need to encourage people to buy up the merchandise.

According to **V. Packard**², in a market saturated with products, such as consumer society markets where two fifths of the items we possess are purely non-essential or luxuries, new ways that offer benefits must be started in order to keep the

economic system working. This author points out, and rightly so in our opinion, that a system of consumer capitalism soon requires:

- A system of replacements sales.
- Selling more of a product to each family unit.
- Having a system which can permanently think up new or improved products.
- Making other items that people do not have and which therefore may be consumed.

This all leads to an awareness of the fact that consumer capitalism must always be on the lookout for ways to promote consumption, and creating new needs in consumers to be satisfied by buying products is vital for the economic system’s feedback. Consumption is the current driving force of modern economies, and to slow down consumption is to slow down the growth of the economy. In order to create more wealth it is necessary to consume more and more. If the wealth brought about by consumption is correctly redistributed it will gradually increase and so citizens will own more and more possessions and their sense of wellbeing will therefore increase. The logic of the new economic paradigm was clear: Consumption must grow on a permanent basis.

In order to achieve this infinite growth in consumption on the part of citizens, thereby keeping the whole economic cycle growing, advertising and marketing become absolutely necessary because they create the need to consume in order to satisfy the cultural, social and communication needs of the final consumer.

In the first stages of production capitalism we can observe a trend which, for the sake of a more perfect running of the system, would later give way to greater efforts to constantly offer new

designs of the same product. Thus, the same product is presented over and over as an improved version of itself rather than having to research and offer new and different products or services.

As **P. Mazur**³ rightly points out, the need soon appeared to create a public with as voracious and constant an appetite for consumer products as the machinery which churns out these items. Products coming off the assembly line have to be consumed at a similar pace as production in order to avoid costly and unproductive accumulation of stock and in turn the appearance of depressed markets.

As a result, advertising becomes a key issue in the correct development of national markets and economies. These needs and desires must continuously grow in order to maintain the economic cycle rate of growth. In addition, advertising must be responsible for changing the buying behaviour of consumers so that they go from thinking that a purchase is made in order to satisfy an obvious need, to a new type of consumerism where the sale of products with attractive status satisfies unconscious anxieties instead of obvious needs. **A. Lucas'** thesis is along these lines:

“Advertising speech is an ideological speech. It interprets human beings as subjects who consciously or unconsciously try to impose a certain system of representations of the world and to attach them to specialized behaviour patterns that are submitted to the reproduction of the underlying social structure to that same representations¹ system”.

In light of this the mass media system, especially through advertising and marketing and other techniques aimed at promoting consump-

tion, such as public relations and corporate image development, designed strategies that led to a rise in sales. Among these we will highlight various premises that turned out to be especially significant in the shaping of consumption as we know it today and which contributed to moulding a specific type of citizen who has certain needs and desires, which ended up creating a whole consumer culture. To sum up, it is a way of understanding a world where both advertising communication and consumption play a major role.

There is always room for more

When markets start to become saturated and people do not buy merchandise as quickly as manufacturers would like, the race is on to find strategies that lead consumers to progressively buy more products. The first strategy that was started in the mass consumer society is as obvious as effective. It was simply to encourage consumers to buy more units of the product they were used to buying, but even more quantities than logic dictates.

The first strategy that came out of production and was brought to the public was to introduce colour and the concept of “matching”. This created the need to get more than one of each item in order to combine it with the rest of the products and to achieve the style and the fashion at that time by “matching”. A clear example of this is the impressive rise in the sale of coloured stockings for women, a new product to combine with each outfit, or the rise in the sale of spectacles which are now considered to be a stylish accessory that has to go with the outfit.

Soon, efforts to duplicate items in each household appeared, and once duplicated, each room should be fitted out. So, for example, once each room had a radio in it, the next thing was to have

¹ **Lucas, A.** (1990). “Fantasmática de la publicidad”. Cuadernos de Contrapunto. Buenos Aires. p. 65.

two televisions, and when most homes had acquired the second television it became fashionable to put another television in the kitchen too. This logic of multiplying the number of items in each home very soon required the introduction of a new concept: every family needed to have a second house and both had to be fully equipped.

At the same time another idea was introduced: the citizen of modern society was slave to having their own vehicle. Advertising was responsible for very successfully introducing the advantages of possessing a second car, the first representing freedom and the second social status.

Once the chances of consuming more than one unit had been explored, a second goal had to be presented to consumers: Modern day living requires that each product bought has to be bigger and bigger or more and more complex, and if it's both, all the better. This could justify a rise in the price of the products as, obviously, they could not cost the same as before, because they are bigger or more complex than before.

Progress through the spirit of getting rid of things

The plan to increase the volume of sales could not rise in an unlimited way only based only on the need to buy more and more things. That first idea had to be supplemented by creating a mentality that allowed people to get rid of things in order to replace them with new, more modern and more useful things. Publicity campaigns focused their messages on highlighting the idea that old things were not decent, they were ugly and old fashioned and modern citizens needed new things and instead of hanging on to obsolete things that tarnished the image of the owner.

This strategy went hand in hand with doing away with the cultural point of view of the marginal use of objects. Traditionally, in any country in the world, it was thought that products had to keep clients satisfied for a long time. This mentality came from the old idea of “waste not, want not.” The communication instrument at the service of manufacturers tried to eradicate this idea from the collective consciousness. Durability was a factor that was highly appreciated and consumers made an effort to take care of their products, so they would last as long as possible and they could achieve the greatest return on the price they paid for them.

Little by little the durability of consumer products was not a significant feature anymore and ended up cast aside in favor of the new design of modern disposable appearance. New products deliberately designed to be used only once started to appear everywhere, such as razor blades or products in containers specially designed so that part of their content was impossible to take out of the container and had to be thrown out, or throw away wrappings.

However, all this waste also incurs a cost which the consumer, due to increases in prices, ends up paying. Many disposable containers are up to ten times more expensive than traditional ones and very often the efforts made to research and design the container are considerably greater than the contents themselves. Although it may seem a paradox, on many occasions the resources invested in research and development were very often aimed at finding ways to increase the sales of these products because they could not be used. Simple examples of this include the efforts made on research and industrial design so that lipsticks cannot not be fully used up, or glue pots with an attached brush which is too short

to reach the bottom so that a lot of the glue has to be thrown out without being used, or aerosols that do not spray out all of their contents.

Progress through planned obsolescence

The new society which has given consumption the role of being the driving force behind the economy requires that products, after a prudent time, become obsolete in the eyes of the consumer and the need to replace them for new ones appears. In 1936, **Kelley, L.** defended obsolescence as a resource in order to guarantee the correct functioning of the whole economic process when he stated:

“If merchandise is not turned out faster, factories will be paralyzed and the workers will be unemployed².”

Basically obsolescence usually means that the product has no longer any use, but this situation of no longer being useful may be provoked by several factors, the most obvious being that the product no longer works, or the fact that they look so old-fashioned that their owner does not want to use them anymore, in most cases because he or she does not want to be seen using them.

There are several types of obsolescence:

Function obsolescence · When a product is outdated because there is another product which does its function better.

Quality obsolescence · When a product breaks down, even if it is quite new, because that is the way it has been designed.

Attractive obsolescence · When a product that works fine becomes antiquated in the eyes of the owner, which makes it become a lot less desirable.

The issue is whether the planning of product obsolescence is an ethical practice. In a first analysis of the question, it is obvious that the main concern is about quality obsolescence and possible defects that may jeopardize the integrity and health of consumers, but even if these doubts are overcome, we should ask ourselves whether planning a short life for products is the correct, ethical and permissible way to do things.

Critics usually wax lyrical that it is deceptive and is an abuse of consumers' trust in market regulation and production. For its defenders the shorter life of products benefits the economy directly, and indirectly benefits consumers in the sense that, within a shorter space of time, they have access to new improved products and greater development and innovation which would be difficult to finance if the replacement cycles were longer. If products had a longer life, the market would become flooded much sooner than replacement sales could withstand a constant volume of manufacturing; this fact would imply that in reality the consumer would miss out on enjoying faster progress.

One way or the other, the truth is that in modern consumer societies, products that last forever are no longer attractive because there has been a change of mentality in consumers in that we are now more open to substituting merchandise in a continuous cycle of renewals which we associate with efficiency and modernity.

For years, industrial engineers have concentrated their efforts on the research and design of products which are better, lighter, more robust, more comfortable, cheaper to make, etc. However, the development of modern methods of consumerism introduces a new variable that is becoming progressively more important: time. The projects that engineers get from big companies now re-

² **Kelley, L.** (1936) “Durabilidad pasada de moda” citado en Packard, V. (1970). *Los Artifices del derroche*. Editorial Sudamericana. Buenos Aires. p. 71.

quire them to set a relatively shorter lifespan for products.

Planned obsolescence of attractiveness. Trends

In an effort to continue increasing the rhythm of product replacement and after exploring other forms of obsolescence, consumer societies did not take long to find a new formula with a similar or greater effectiveness to add to the ones previously mentioned.

It was a question of turning objects obsolete in the mind of the consumer, i.e. even though they were still useful their appearance made them look undesirable, old-fashioned or inappropriate. What was really going on is that replacement rhythm was so fast that it was hard to design new products which offered significant advantages in the use or quality of their functions, so markets had to be flooded with newer products and consumers had to think that new equals better.

This style obsolescence, some authors call it psychological obsolescence, happens when a product becomes obsolete because new versions of it appear with changes in design, materials or appearance. Sales of replacements finance the improvements in design, style and running function and they provide the opportunity to set better prices for the new products. Communication and advertising must convince the consumer that style is the key element in the desirability of the product. Once this idea is set in the minds of potential buyers, it will only take a change in the predominant style to achieve an increase in sales.

In order to be able to understand the whole phenomenon, we must keep in mind the cultural importance that the concept of the change had reached at that time and which now, in 2011,

some political mindsets seem to have rediscovered. This importance given to change led to industrial designers as well as consumers to be more concerned about concepts of style that made the change clear rather than about the intrinsic qualities of the product, which is why designers tended to succumb to extravagance while fumbling about for something new.

This is how the concept of fashion becomes important in product design and sale of consumer products. Fashion is basically a cultural imposition. The strength of trends lies in the approval or disapproval that certain products or behaviours will have on the social environment. Thanks to fashion and cycles, it was possible to impose and create a need in the consumer. The example taken was women's clothes and its cycles of rotation. This principle tried to become widespread in the production and sale of all kinds of products.

It was necessary to make consumers want to get rid of those products that were still perfectly useful in order to replace them with others that were fashionable.

The short and sweet life of products for the home

In the mid-1950s we see that in the most developed countries, which had become the driving force behind the consumer revolution and especially in the USA, the lifespan of products for the home began to drop at an absolutely scandalous rate. In actual fact it was a process through which, clearly, durable consumer products ceased to exist due to a marked lack of rigor in their quality. Some studies⁶ at that time dared to measure the lifespan of new electrical appliances and compared them to those of a previous decade when technological progress was suppos-

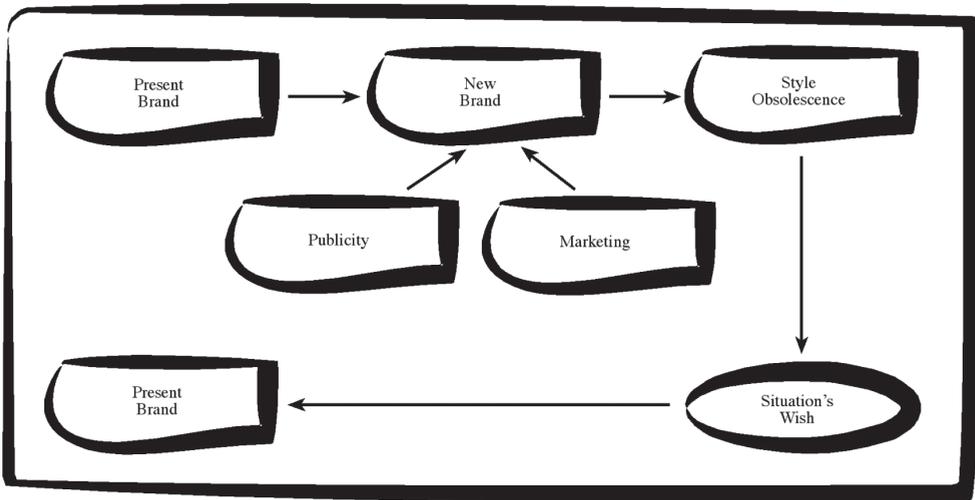
edly much lower. The result was simply scandalous. Kitchen equipment in the previous decade lasted seven years, some of the new ones barely managed to last three years.

The truth is that in some sectors products were being made only to the bare limits of operation. The quality of materials and the finish of products for the home diminished and this led to a shorter lifespan. The manufacturers' greatest concern was to make products with a shorter lifespan, instead of following the traditional idea of making products that lasted forever. However, they made sure the products worked fine during the period of guarantee so that they did not have to face expensive repairs nor have to replace the product. A symptom that shows that diminished quality was planned and encouraged from the industry itself can be seen in the race that, in the early 1950s, kept the manufac-

turers who were aware of these obsolescence policies busy trying to position themselves in the market of repairing their own products. Another strategy that was used in making markets for products for the home more dynamic was the creation of new brands that accelerated the aforementioned psychological or style obsolescence. Basically the introduction of a new brand worked in the markets according to the following scheme (*Chat 1. Own development*).

Products for the home also turned to design in order to achieve a more modern appearance. Kitchens and electrical appliances became full of buttons in order to look more complex. The goal was for electrical appliances to look more "scientific". It was actually purely a marketing strategy aimed at satisfying the ego of women from that era who were the only ones on the receiving end those goods. As we already men-

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tioned, the goal was for housewives to have better self-esteem insofar as they were the only ones who were able to make these complex items with so many buttons work, as well as get the best out of them.

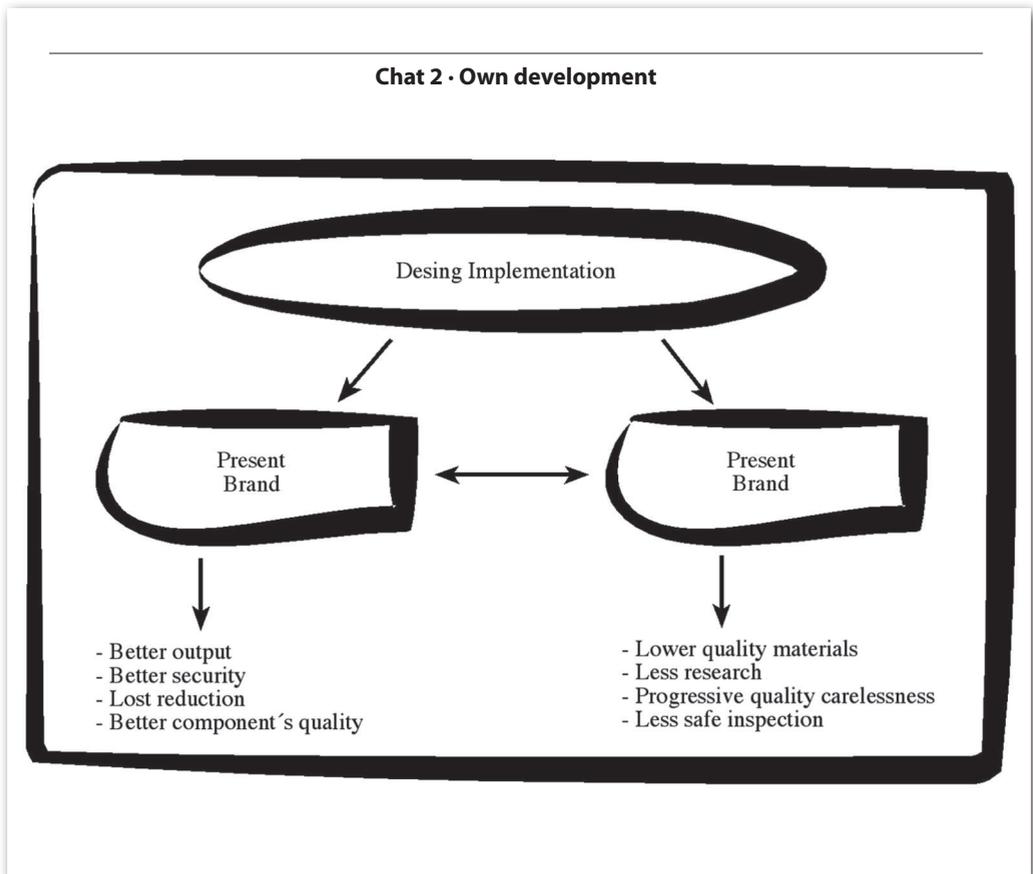
The problem behind this marketing strategy is that it turned design into a mere element of sale and it lost its traditional mission of being more concerned with the functioning of the product. This change in the orientation of applying the function of design, despite its apparent simplicity, is a very significant problem which conditions the whole production process.

The following chart aims to represent it graphically:

Repair business

The business of repairing is based on a double underlying assumption. On the one hand, as a result of the policies that led to obsolescence becoming installed in the sector of production, items were breaking down more and more often and closer and closer to the date of purchase. On the other hand, higher incomes had led to a rise in prices, the more the consumer paid for a certain product, the more they would be willing to pay to have it repaired.

The lucrative business of repairs was built on these two pillars. This business entailed a perverse logic for the consumer. In most cases, the repairs business fell to sellers themselves which



in turn gave them more volume of business. Temptation soon became a frequent practice. The more expensive a product was, the more profitable it was at the moment of sale, but furthermore, the more the consumer paid at the moment of purchase the more they would be willing to spend on its repair without argument.

The growth of the repair business was so spectacular that it ended up changing its own logic and it did not take long to create a consumerism whereby many companies sold their products practically at cost price just to guarantee the maintenance, repair and substitution of the product's parts. A clear example of this is the car industry.

In short, the repair business became one of the most notable features of the birth of modern consumer societies which rejected the idea of producing quality and durable products in favor of other products either with a higher rotation or which involved a series of consecutive acts of consumption for its maintenance. All this was favored by the following circumstances:

- There were many more things that did not work well, so there was more volume of business.
- Spare parts were much more expensive so that there was a profit margin for whoever sold or installed them.
- Faulty pieces became more and more inaccessible, so no matter how skilful the consumer was, they could not substitute or repair them because normally they required a specific tool in order to do so.
- The necessary spare parts were hard to get because the manufacturers did not distribute them, therefore they were guaranteed orders for substitution or repair.

- Manufacturers gave as little information as they could about the repair of goods.
- There was a tendency to encourage the consumer to substitute the faulty pieces instead of having them repaired.

Progress through planned chaos

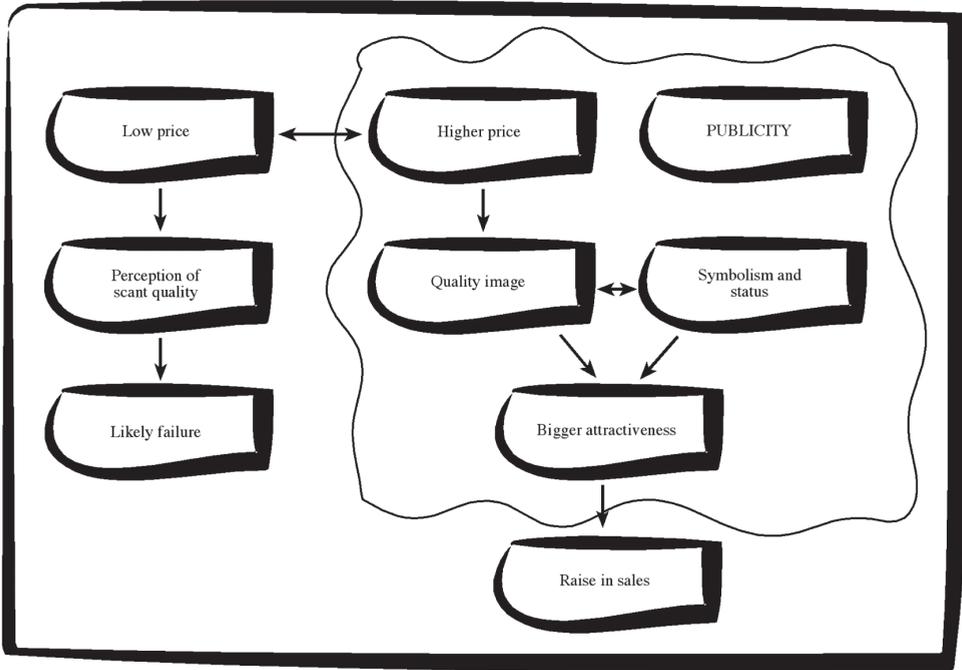
The globalization of consumerism in western societies had an unavoidable consequence. As a population with enough income and understanding of the market gained access to it, consumer capitalism managed to create certain levels of progress, which with more or less fair redistribution of wealth, contributed towards a progressive rise in people's income thereby also contributing towards an increase in the percentage in which this income could be assigned to consumption. All of this led to more leeway in applying commercial and communication policies in order to encourage consumption so that the system would not slow down.

The manufacturing price of products had hardly anything to do with the price the products had in the market. Prices were fixed bearing in mind strategic criteria such as the quality, development cost, communication and symbolism of the actual product. Obviously the relation between price and production costs does not fully disappear, but when fixing a price the psychological criteria of the consumer and the cultural criteria shared with the social group have more and more weight.

The role of advertising and other commercial communication techniques is therefore going to become increasingly important in setting the value of consumer items (*Chat 3. Own development, pag. 34*).

When societies lives in an abundance of products and merchandise the price becomes a

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secondary feature. The more abundance there is, the less they care about prices. The consumer society was settled in Spain a bit later than in other Western countries around 1960. In these societies the price of products lost its meaning in favor of the symbolic value of consumption. The image of identity and status, the sale of intangibles linked to the product and the cultural image of the items becomes more and more important.

Selling dreams

No matter how hard advertising agencies and salespeople try, all markets have a limit.

Consumer incomes are usually low and in particular limited. It is true that the new model of capitalism driven by consumerism had managed to create in a short space of time a wide range of potential consumers and it is also true that their income had also increased, however the time was coming when consumerism was reaching a culminating point because people were consuming everything they could afford.

Desperate times call for desperate measures. If the problem was that consumer could not afford to buy more, the easiest solution was to make this income grow. Thus, credit went from being a simple financial resource to becoming

quite a tool at the service of sales. According to **M. Altarriba**:

“Consumption is a reward. Purchases made on credit, the use of cards, turns the consumer into a complete being for a few moments.”³

However, this transformation did not end up being that easy, especially for countries like Spain, where the influence of the strict catholic moral and the belief that we are in this world to suffer and you had to earn things by the sweat of your brow, had over the years created a deep-set cultural idea that demonized credit and which was frequently associated with a disorganized life and people of ill repute. This same situation also happened in the United States where, albeit to a lesser extent, credit was a tool that the puritan moral did not appreciate either.

In the late 50s banks made huge efforts to change people's idea of credit. Financial markets, supported by advertising, worked on getting rid of the idea of asking for credit as being shameful or embarrassing. They stated that it was the opposite, asking for credit was a sign of decision, of self-confidence fruit of a spirit of enterprise that made people and the nations they lived in great. Credit is not begging, but rather an advance payment of the person's own purchasing power. Thus, banks trained their staff how to treat people asking for credit. They had to link credit to positive resources, show self-confidence, be cheerful and smiling, shake the applicant's hand strongly no matter how weak the offer of guarantee.

The development of credit and the progressive change in social and cultural understanding of

the tool boosted the growth of western economic cycles. In the 1950s, debt in the USA was so spectacular that in 1960 debts tripled people's income. Something similar happened in Spain in the 1970s. Logically the level of consumption rose significantly and it was proved that people buy much more when they do not have to pay large sums of money all at one time. Because of credit prices once again became less important. Credit are is essential in some markets such as construction.

Nevertheless, credit not only increased the benefits on the amount of goods that would be bought, but it also created a new kind of business. Many companies understood that sale on credit was a business itself. It is usually possible to get more profits thanks to interest on sales rather than from the sale of the product itself. Thus, the sale of dreams, as English people named the fact of people getting into debt in order to buy things, appeared.

Thus, credit cards became very popular because they were very easy to use, quick, and safe. They were also a symbol of status and wealth.

Hedonism for the masses

Hedonism means making an effort to achieve a global strategy that helps previous strategies to be even more efficient. It is about building a population mindset that is led by an intense desire to possess things and a yearning for momentary pleasures (*Chat 4. Own development, pag. 36*).

The support of a strong and well-developed advertising system and advances in communication in the new mass media turned out to be essential in change the cultural perception deeply ingrained in the Puritanism of the Anglo-Saxon world and in the Spanish Catholicism of Franco's regime in favor of a new culture of consumerism

3 **M. Altarriba** (2003) Antropología del consumo y cultura publicitaria. Todo lo que me gusta engorda o es pecado en *Consumo, publicidad y cultura*. Rey, J.(ed.) Fernandez, J.D. y Pineda, A. MAECEI Ediciones. Sevilla.

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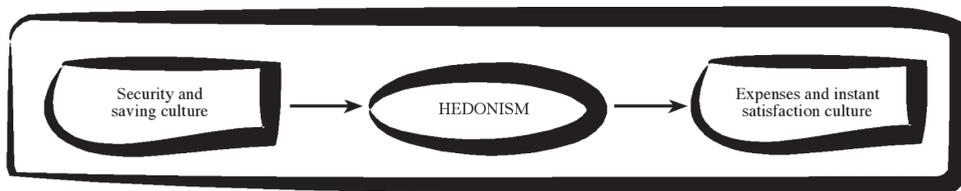
which meant people could satisfy some desires in this life instead of the traditional idea of keeping them for the next, by learning about the pleasure of having assets and services offered by the modern world.

The antagonism of Puritanism, which was set at odds with the new consumer vision as the driving force behind economic systems, was extravagance. Whether Puritanism meant sacrifice and restraint, extravagance meant to spend money without control and to buy things without second thoughts in order to satisfy oneself. All in all, hedonism is simply to encourage people to satisfy their own wishes so that sales rise.

Advertising, as we pointed out before, will play an essential role in the change of cultural reference, but it will also be responsible for creating desires that are satisfied by consumption, turning them into needs, creating a symbolic universe of meanings that increase the appeal of the products and, at the same time, will have to convince the consumer that not only does he deserve this pleasure but that also can and allow himself to give in to this pleasure by shopping. So advertising basically has a double purpose: to discredit the spirit of saving and to heighten the impulse to buy.

Marketing made up the bank holidays in order to provide the consumer with excuses to

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buy things. Christmas, Mother's day, Father's day, Saint Valentine's Day, sales, etc. are a great list of examples of good excuses to increase consumption.

Hedonism is also based on the concept of immediacy. The satisfaction of desires must be immediate in a world which in a few years has experienced a significant rise in the speed of processes. Industrialization, transport development and the new way of experiencing reality through the immediacy of radio and TV have ended up setting a new rhythm in people's daily lives. In accordance to this, satisfying desires should also be immediate or, at least, as fast as possible because the sooner a desire is satisfied, the sooner a new one will appear and this one will also have to be satisfied. Advertising reinforced its messages with formulas such as "instantly", "right now", "immediate delivery", etc.

Progress through population increase

The last link in the chain of strategies to encourage consumption is as logical as effective. The more consumers there are, the more consumption there will be. It is easy but effective, irrefutable.

Many critics expressed their concern for the direction that modern societies were taking due to the level of family debt, or the lack of guarantees credits were granted on, or the impossibility of increasing levels of consumption limitlessly. Meanwhile, defenders of capitalism used to answer these critics by stating the bare fact, even though it referred to the USA it could be transferred to any national economy, that every seven and a half seconds a new consumer is born, while on the contrary, only every thirty seconds some consumer says goodbye to consumerism by buying a coffin, not to mention the arrival of immigrants which means a constant

rise in the market and makes the perfect idea of an unlimited growth in consumption levels more likely.

More people mean more markets. The idea of numerous families is great for growing economies, so that a common element in policies, no matter what its ideological orientation, is encouraging the birthrate. If we think of Spain, the governments of Franco's regime established and advertised prizes for birthrate which, in the case of Spain, had the added economic advantage of replacing a population decimated by the civil war and it contributed to promote the delirious idea of the empire.

In a first approach to the idea of increasing the population and its economic repercussion in shaping consumer societies we can find that a rise in the birthrate directly implies encouragement for many and very different sectors. Raising the birthrate involves at least the need to:

- Build more houses that are fully furnished, so that they are a real home.
- Invest in new communication services.
- Build thousands of kilometers of road.
- Build new shopping malls and make those that already exist bigger.
- Start more factories that may produce more products.
- Start new transport systems.

Apart from the possibility of educating new generations of citizens in consumption who, with guidance, will assimilate more easily the new logic of market behavior. After all, it is much easier to form an attitude that comes from an existing opinion than it is to change a predisposition from negative to positive. The youngest population sectors are a much more inexperienced audience which is easier to persuade and much more

permeable to advertising campaigns and mass media messages.

When forming consumer societies, weddings became a totally desirable event for the smooth running of economies. Marriages meant the formation of a family that was going to have children and so they were going to bring future consumers. In addition, marriages implied not only great expense for the groom and the bride, but also for their families and friends. Marriages became an essential element in economic growth during the periods of settlement of the consumer societies. Economic policies made sure that the cultural rule in favor of marriages was kept. They also encouraged people to get married because the sooner people got married, the earlier they would have children and the better business would be.

All the above mentioned trends contributed to the settlement and the development of an economic model that, even with some peculiarities in each country, shaped the development of the western world at every level. It also encouraged the development of political systems that tended to converge in the present parliamentary democratic formula. It settled a mass media scene led by the same ways of working and supported by the same resource: advertising. Advertising has its foundation in the creative revolution of the 1960s and in the discovery of the importance of brand image and emotional orientation towards inherent drama.

Advertising took part in shaping a homogeneous culture which laid the foundations of globalization after the failure of the Eastern block and communism.

Despite the new challenges we face, and which we will deal with later, citizens of the 21st century find the origin of our culture in con-

sumer societies. The era of information and knowledge is determined by the previous stages among which the most important is the birth of modern consumerism.

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