Research Paper
Impact of Consumerism on Personal Identity

Consumerism is known to have an influence on the personal identity of the consumers through a number of ways. For instance, the advertisement and the concept that a manufacturer uses in its brand often have an impact on the user. The consumers might want to be like the character that a specific product's advert uses. Besides, the consumers might want to be associated with the larger group that is using that specific product. Such a target market might be successful, young or even beautiful; hence, the consumers will strive to attain such a status by using that specific product. More specifically, the essay will evaluate the way that consumerism develop identity by encouraging self-value through the sense of feeling young, masculine, successful as well as beautiful while using a number of examples. Later, it will evaluate how women are using unconventional ways to achieve what the society and the manufacturers portray as young and beautiful. The extravagant consumer behavior is another approach that consumerism has led to. Lastly, the consumers are using certain products to appear resistant to the social values. Although consumerism encourages self-value, it also makes some users to hate themselves and facilitate extravagance and a sense of resistance from the values of the society.

In most cases, consumers tend to attach certain behaviors in their consumption patterns that become habits in the end. These habits also go a long way into shaping the user's personal identity as well. For instance, most of the products that the consumers purchase tend to increase a sense of self-value since most of the products match their needs. Some manufacturers tend to associate their products with being young and classy (Espejo, 23). Hence, they target a certain consumer group and even use such groups in the advertisements associated with such groups. For instance, Sprite tends to use such tactics in marketing their products because they want to associate with the young people and the activities they undertake (Thaler, 55).

It is a common scenario to find Sprite associating with the likes of Hip Hop and Basketball. Such an approach helps in the targeted consumers feeling young as well. In the process, of feeling young, the consumers will reject the older generation preferences and create new aspects and activities associated with the younger persons. In fact, the manufacturers that are establishing brand loyalty at an earlier stage are more likely to progress as life proceeds. They might even decide to shift the theme of the product as the consumers grow. For instance, they might introduce an activity typical of adolescence and early adulthood as time proceeds. In return, they will continue to purchase the product because it makes them feel young and classy. This group of consumers will feel more like a cult or following that honor their brand as a god. One such example includes Apple that has created a mass following in the technological market. That sense of unity among the consumers of a certain product creates a culture that each will strive to follow.

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Apart from feeling younger, other manufacturers associate their products with masculinity thereby encouraging most people to purchase the products. However, the consumers will be blinded by the idea of masculinity while ignoring any other impact of the product even if it is harmful. A common example includes Marlboro and their advert of the Marlboro Man that gained prevalence in the US (Thaler, 40). The advert that had a typical cowboy character often associated with masculinity because of their expertise in running ranches and handling the livestock. Such activities showed that a real man was clearly a cowboy; hence, the Marlboro brand using their cigarettes to appeal to the male market segment. In fact, the advert led to more men using the Marlboro cigarettes because they wanted to feel masculine enough like the cowboy depicted in the advert. In the end, the Marlboro attached a sense of masculine to themselves just like the advert illustrated. At the same time, manufacturers tend to associate class with some of their products to appeal to a certain group. For instance, the SUV manufacturers are known to target the family persons mostly in the middle or high class. Hence, most of the adverts on the SUVs will illustrate a family ready to enter the vehicle heading to a family vacation or something of that sort. Such an advert will convince a father to purchase such a product because it cements the family values such as love, respect, and unity (Kukathas, 52). It also portrays the issues of class since not all persons can afford such a vehicle. In this process, the product will be a sign of success and pride in the society. Furthermore, the father is the one that will feel more proud since he is having a family, significant income and a loving wife. The achievement and aspects associated with such a product increase self-value since one feels successful.

Certain products as well tend to associate with the feminine aspects as well as beauty to attract a large number of consumers. In such cases, the manufacturers know that most women have self-esteem issues especially in terms of beauty. Hence, they will strive to create products that will improve their natural beauty by incorporating various aspects to make them feel more beautiful in the process. The makeups, as well as other skin products, are often a way to target the young girls who have self- esteem issues and want to look beautiful and younger at the same time. As such, these skin products help in making even the older women feel younger since it hides stretch marks, wrinkles and any other birthmarks that might make them seem older (Acred, 36).

In such, scenarios, even a lady that thought she was ugly at first, will have the courage to walk and talk in front of a crowd without any doubts. Hence, it is clear that the skin products help in improving the self-esteem in ladies and making them feel younger since being older is often associated with ugliness as well as mental decline. Based on such factors no one loves to feel older; hence, they will persist in buying such products thereby profiting the manufacturers in the process. In fact, the manufacturers tend to use a certain celebrity in the products to urge the users (Acred, 44). The consumers, on the other hand, will strive to use the products to be beautiful or younger just like that specific person. Their persistence in looking like the celebrity leads to the manufacturers amassing more profits in the process. In summary, it is clear that these skin products make women feel younger and beautiful even if they are not. In the process it improves their self-esteem and they do not worry about beauty issues since such products settle that.

However, not all the adverts on beauty will have a positive impact on its users. For instance, some women might feel the pressure to look like the models depicted in the adverts. Often, these adverts use models that have the bodies that seem perfect based on the society. The society views the fat women as ugly while the thinner ones are considered more beautiful. This portrayal makes the fat women seek approaches that will make them seem beautiful. At the same time, the women in beauty adverts tend to have bodies with perfect body parts such as huge behinds and perky breasts. Such flawless body parts make the women take unconventional ways in achieving those body parts (Espejo, 64). For instance, some women have undergone plastic surgeries to have the perfect lips, chins or even the cheeks. The same women are resorting to extreme approaches to attain the perfect body weight. The scenarios have led to anorexia since they avoid food, or even force themselves to vomit to remove any food in their bodies since they do not want to be overweight. Some of the women have also opted for surgery that will make their saggy breasts perky again. Others undergo surgery to have implants that will increase the size of their behinds as well (Acred, 56). Such scenarios arise from the way that the women want to achieve the body image portrayed by the manufacturers of their favorite products. Such scenarios have seen the black women using bleaching agents since they think that being light skinned shows how beautiful one is. In the process, they even end up causing more damages to their skin since it might develop skin lesions and patches that will make that skin seem uglier. In summary, consumerism has led to low self-esteem issues in women since they want to achieve the unrealistic body image in the marketing of products.

The products that assert on prestige and social status tend to encourage extravagance among such customers. For instance, a lot of customers will strive to spend even when such products are way above their income level just because they want to feel as part of that group.

Earlier, it was clear that some products have created some sense of following among their customers. For instance, Apple and their many products, especially the iPhone portrays how people are ready to spend even on the expensive products. Apple continues to manufacture expensive products while offering premium services. However, that does not make their clients complain. In fact, they keep purchasing the products each time the company launches a new product as well. Such a scenario makes the clients be extravagant and keep purchasing such products even when they do not consist of the essential products that meet the primary needs (Kukathas, 58). They spend such huge sums of money on just luxuries. The same case applies to the SUV users and those that want to acquire such status associated with the product. This group of consumers will do anything to acquire such a vehicle since they want to appear successful, family loving and married. Some even acquire loans just to purchase the vehicles and struggle to repay such loans because of the higher interest rates that some with the loans (Espejo, 72). This kind of extravagance originates from the way that consumerisms tend to associate their products with certain products. Hence, the consumers are ready to do anything just to appear young and beautiful even if using the product does not meet such standards. Clearly, they are blinded with the concepts associated with the brand and fail to look at the negative aspect arising from their consumer behavior instead.

On the other hand, consumerism has led to some products serving the purpose of resistance from the social values that are agreed in the society. For instance, some consumers will use certain products that are somehow considered immoral by the conservatives in the society. A perfect example includes young people listening to Hip Hop music given that most parents associate such music genres with violence and women oppression (Espejo, 67). Hence, most parents will discourage their children to use such type of songs since it will lead to the children adopting such qualities that do not align with the moral values of the society. At the same time, bikers are known to be violent people and social outcasts since they are violent in nature and even drug dealers. As such, a certain group of youths might decide to purchase bikes and wear just like the bikers in a way to show resistance from the way the society expects them to behave. The same applies to ladies that will get tattoos in exposed body parts as well as weird body piercings since they want to associate with certain figures in the media. In this case, music videos, movies as well as adverts are often instrumental in incorporating the values in the minds of the young persons.

Through their consumption of the products, they end up feeling as if they are not part of the society and need to adopt certain practices to resist from the typical ways of the society. Apart from such practices, they might use alcohol, drugs and cigarettes since the society rates such products as immoral.

They will use such products as a sign of resistance. In fact, some consumers with self-esteem issue might resort to such practices since they want to have a sense of belonging (Kukathas, 78).

Hence, they will be ready to undertake anything as long as they feel part of something. In conclusion, although consumerism encourages self-value through feeling younger, beautiful and masculine enough it facilitates unconventional ways to achieve the unrealistic body images portrayed in the media, extravagant consumer behavior and act as signs of resistance. Such a scenario shows that consumerism shapes the personal identity of the product users in a number of ways. Hence, it is the consumers' responsibility to determine the positive and negative impact of the approach. In the end, the consumer will avoid the negative impact and work towards benefiting from the product in a positive way as opposed to the negative way. First, consumerism urges self-value since it makes the user feel what he or she wants to be. The Marlboro cigarette makes one feel masculine because of the concept in the advert (Thaler, 40). The skin products make women feel beautiful and younger even if they are not. However, the same consumerism makes the users have self-esteem issues since they want to achieve the unrealistic body images thereby leading to the users undergoing surgeries to insert implants in the breasts and behinds just to have that perfect body shape. The users even use certain products to show a sign of resistance from the social values since they want to belong somewhere.

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