I. Social Construction of Consumer

A. 1920s Birth of Consumerism

1. Urbanization

2. National Markets

3. Industrialization

a. transformation of economy

b. Fordism

c. mass production of consumer goods

i. 40% of companies producing consumer goods

ii. radio, vacuum cleaners, washing machines, phonograph, telephone, refrigerator, waffle iron, popcorn popper, toaster

d. requires: mass production of consumers

B. Creating consumers: “Gospel of Mass Consumption”: economic, political and cultural project

1. Economic

a. higher wages

b. installment

c. advertising

i. proof: “World’s greatest adventure in advertising.”

ii. “art of making people want things”

` iii. creating a product

attractive wrapper or package

name brand

slogan

Other Products that many people started to use are as follows:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  |  |
| **Meals & Snacks:** | **Beverages:** |
| Planter's Peanuts | Hires Root Beer |
| Wheaties (1924) | Kool-Aid drink mix |
| Kraft cheese | 7-UP (1929) |
| Gold Medal Flour | Orange Crush |
| Kellogg's Corn Flakes | Coca-Cola |
| Oscar Mayer wieners (1929) | Dr. Pepper |
| Birds-Eye frozen vegetables (1928) | Pepsi-Cola |
| Del Monte canned foods | Welch's grape juice |
| Kellogg's Rice Krispies (1928) | Fruit Smack drink mix |
| Peter Pan peanut butter (1928) |  |
| Libby's canned tomato soup |  |
| Green Giant canned peas (1925) |  |
| Jell-O ice cream powder |  |
| Cracker Jack |  |
| Cream Of Wheat |  |
| **Other Products:** |  |
| Fountain Pens |  |
|  |  |
| Hallmark Greeting Cards |  |
| Cigarette Lighters |  |
| Dixie Cups |  |
| Sani-Paper Towels |  |

i. location

magazines and catalogues

department store window displays

radio (“technology that conquered living space”)

2. Culture: new lifestyle

a. advertising tied to new lifestyle

i. “modern” vs “old fashion”

ii. “consumer” vs “consumption”

b. popular culture

i. celebrities/rich

ii. conspicuous consumption

3. Political

a. political elite will govern

b. new role: consumer

C. 1950s: Constructing the American Dream.

1. American Dream

a. nuclear family

b. suburbs

c. consumerism

2. Social construction of the American Dream

a. government

i. suburbs

FHA and VA loans

super highways

ii. infrastructure

iii. education

iv. vocational training

v. propaganda

b. corporations

i. loans and insurance

ii. shopping centers

iii. middle class jobs

iv. credit cards

v. National City Lines

vi. advertising

F. Television and the American Dream

1. Television

2. advertising

a. directed at middle class

b. new techniques

i. little substance/entertaining

ii. visually attractive

iii. association of values

Marlboro

automobile

3. entertainment

a. domestic sitcoms

b. “Joneses”

G. Present: Saturation of cultural space

1. every where

a. 1/6th of US GNP

b. $500 billion

2. TV, Radio, magazines, newspapers

a. 1/3 of TV time and radio

b. 2/3rd newspapers

c. 1/2 to 2/3rds magazines

3. movies

a. advertisements

b. product placement

4. novels

5. sports events

a. stadiums, bowl games

b. scoreboards

c. announcements

d. stock car racing

6. public transportation

7. billboards

8. schools

a. Pepsi day

b. hallways

c. book covers 25 million Nike, Gatorade, Calvin

Klein

d. educational supplements

e. Channel One

i. 8 million teenagers

ii. $200,000 per minute, 1992 $115 million

f. Mail 3x in last 15 years

9. internet

a. Facebook

b. Twitter

c. LinkedIn

d. YouTube

e. Instagram

H. Success: Consumer Psychology

1. Primary means of identity construction

2. Traits

a. Unhappy: “I don’t have. . .” “I need . . .”

b. Anxious

c. “I” “I’ “I”

d. Pathological: can’t separate need from wants

I. Examples

1. 61% always lacking something therefore always look forward to buying something

2. "wish list"

a. exotic vacation

b. larger and better house

c. second house

d. new luxury car or SUV

e. swimming pools

f. bbqs

3. 27% dream about what they want

4. wants become “needs”

a. “new Joneses”

b. television

c. $150,000 per year (5%)

J. Consumerism and social control

1. deflects person from social role as citizen

2. eliminates class as basis of identity

3. cycle: work-spend-debt-work