

## CONSUMERISM AS A BEHAVIORAL GUIDELINE OF MASS SOCIETY

*У дослідженні автором запропоновано розгляд специфічних особливостей споживацтва як провідного орієнтиру та поведінкової моделі в різних сферах життєдіяльності; особливий акцент робиться на співвідношенні цього поняття із проблематикою масового суспільства.*

**Ключові слова:** суспільство споживання, споживацтво, масове суспільство, маса, стандарт.

*В данном исследовании автором предложено рассмотрение специфических особенностей потребительства как ведущего ориентира и поведенческой модели в различных сферах жизнедеятельности; особый акцент делается на соотношении этого понятия с проблематикой массового общества.*

**Ключевые слова:** общество потребления, потребительство, массовое общество, масса, стандарт.

*The analysis of the characteristic features of the consumerism as leading mark and behavioral patterns in different spheres of life is suggested by the author in this research; the main stress is done on the correlation of this concept with the problems of mass society.*

**Key words:** consumer society, consumerism, mass society, mass, standard.

Researchers and scientists when comprehending the social changes which are brought about by scientific and technological revolution (the emergence of mass media, mass deployment of social movements, the rapid development of science and technology) produce adverse effects caused by the process of «mass-making». They see it in the development of science and technology, industrial mass production, emergence of new communication media, and finally the emergence of a new type of «mass person» formed with all the «mass» components.

Mass society, while maintaining its essential features, acquired specific characteristics in the so-called democratic regimes. Since the mid-twentieth century, such societies have traditionally become known as the consumer society. Analysis of the connection between the phenomenon of mass and the concepts of consumer society and consumerism (as attributive characteristics of person's social and political behavior) is the main issue of this research paper.

The article purpose is to identify the role of consumerism in the intensification of mass aspects in modern society.

It should be noted that this paper focuses precisely on the emphasizing of specific concepts «mass» and «consumerism» in modern political thought.

The study of these issues were conducted by various researchers, but in this case we are interested in works of Hannah Arendt, Herbert Marcuse, J. Baudrillard, S. Zizek, Jose Ortega y Gasset, E. Fromm, Karl Jaspers et al. The leading Ukrainian and Russian researchers who initiated a critical analysis of the issue are V. Khachatryan and M. Chabanna et al.

The issue of mass society is explored in details in the works of Jose Ortega y Gasset, particularly in his defining work «The Revolt of the Masses» (1930). He wrote that in contrast to earlier times, now mass determines the story that caused the most difficult crisis in Western Europe. The average person who feels «like everyone else» and knows that he is pretty mediocre, «always has the insolence to assert and impose to everybody his right to mediocrity» [1]. According to Jose Ortega y Gasset, the person of mass is infantile and irresponsible with the endless thirst for consumption. And the most important is that the person of mass misunderstands deeply the values of civilization thanks to which he exists.

J. Baudrillard considers mass as agentless amorphous entity that ignores and absorbs rational meanings and messages of the social system, thereby destabilizing and ultimately destroying it [2]. That social system collapses because of the mass irrationality, which is the result of this system.

Herbert Marcuse analyzed the trends of existence of European civilization. He attacked the leveling of cultural meanings as they were transformed into a consumer product [3].

Herbert Marcuse denies the interpretation of person as an abstract subject. The main thing for him is looking for real vital principles of human nature. As a result, he work out the concept of «one-dimensional person» – a servant of the consumer society, which is alienated from the deep meanings of humanistic culture. Herbert Marcuse describes dangerous tendency of unrestrained spread of consumption, which absorbs culture, transforming it into a consumer product side by side with the goods and services [4].

Most authors, saying the «mass society», along with the mass production and consumption are talking about the same rights and obligations, the existence of mass organizations and mass motivation of social activity and the prevalence of «mass culture».

Researcher M. Chabanna defines mass society as a society of atomized individuals, which are inherent desire for uniformity, conformity, uncritical, avoidance of responsibility, the need for external control, etc. It is important to note that the psychological traits of members of mass society should be investigated only in the aggregate, given their combination and correlation, while some of these features can be inherent in individuals in non-mass society.

The Soviet encyclopedia defines the mass society as a concept of non-Marxist sociology, and philosophy that is used to describe a number of specific features of society associated with industrialization and urbanization, standardization of production and mass consumption, bureaucratization of public life, the spread of mass media and «mass culture».

For sure the author should clearly avoid negative evaluation of this phenomenon. So characteristics of processes of mass society, according to M. Hevesi, have also positive aspects. Mass society united by a growing number of people in a single society, with all the inherent spiritual values. Overcoming of the class antagonisms doesn't negate the differentiation of society within a unity.

In general, mass society is a theoretical model that describes the social changes caused by modernization (especially urbanization, development of media democratization policy, etc.) that is actively developed in the 1920s and 1960s.

According to a large number of researchers, mass society appeared in the first third of the twentieth century. And its flowering accounted for 50-60 years of the twentieth century. Basics for his appearance were laid in the nineteenth – early twentieth century.

The emergence of mass production and consumption was under the great influence of increasing wealth in western countries. Consumer demand has become a powerful engine of the economy. It could be satisfied only with the introduction of mass production technologies (production of standard products which is based on the frequency of production operations and production process as a whole).

Mass production, mass consumption along with mass culture, establish in society the dominance of standard. This society can be defined as a society of standard, which has permeated almost in all areas of life. In mass society, there are standard mass fashion, mass sports, standard forms of entertainment and recreation.

The standard is closely associated with technology; it's faceless and insignificant, democratic and monotonous. The standard extends to the different social spheres, despite the difference in person's income and their social positions. Standard permeates the society through the mass culture and especially the advertising and media. Popular culture is called «the industry of culture». This is a commercial culture that is closely connected with the sphere of the economy, built into the industrial or post-industrial society system and serves its purposes.

Mass culture provides the mass consumer and produces specific «consumer ideology», which includes the standard picture of a prestigious image and lifestyle.

In the context of the information society theory masses are large groups of people, which are disconnected, isolated from each other. They are brought together only with a community of consumption (goods, information, entertainment, fashion, etc.) and different kinds of mass activity.

Thus, mass society is characterized by the following main features:

- it's mobile and heterogeneous (large number of professions, formal and informal associations, amplifying all kinds of social movements and interactions, mixes of different values systems);
- there is no single system of education, the united outlook and ideology that can lead to the destruction of moral standards;
- a person who lives in such an amorphous society feels himself lonely and lost; the lack of firm support creates fear, anger and self-doubt;
- dominance of standard in life, production, consumption, in social and political behavior, despite the difference in income and social status.

Since the concept of mass is an integral part of theories of post-industrial and information society, the author proposes to consider the diversity of interpretations of the phenomenon of consumer society in social and political thought of the twentieth century.

S. Miles believes that consumerism increases the importance of consumption in people's daily life. It becomes for the person the only way of constructing his «Self-concept» [5]. The subject of J. Baudrillard's consideration is symbolic consumption, which is the language of communication between people. He defines consumption as a main social process in the socio-cultural activities of modern society [6]. E. Fromm believes that consumption's characteristics are conflicting (it reduces anxiety and concern, but it causes the person to consume more and more so that each consumption will soon cease to satisfied [7]).

Different researchers agree that the characteristics of the consumer society are the consistency [8], uniformity and unanimity [9], the erase of the differences between income, the type of consumption of different classes [10], the atomization of consuming persons [11], a wide distribution of mass culture as a factor of homogenization, cultural standardization [12] etc.

According to J. Baudrillard, consumer society is a society of learning to consumption, social training in consumption. So that is new and specific way of socialization, which appeared due to the emergence of new productive forces and monopolistic reorganization of the economic system [13].

Threatening trends which were noted by the researchers in the mid-twentieth century, transform nowadays into a kind of behavioral attitude. It is called consumerism and it spreads to different areas of life.

According to the works of Ukrainian researcher T. Chystilina, consumerism is not modern ideology because of the non-availability of any meaningful idea or far-reaching goals. Consumerism is more inherently

irrational behavioral attitude of the person that determines most of his actions [14].

With the increasing manifestations of mass society, consumption turned into consumerism, covering all areas of human life. A typical representative of modern civilization focuses on satisfaction and increase physical needs. And a society with its institutions by all means stimulates consumerism as desired behavioral orientation.

The process of endless and mindless consumption becomes a mechanism of alienation and exploitation, with total control for all individual life forms.

T. Chystilina considers that specific kind of impersonal new totalitarianism of some modern societies is realized through consumerism as mass behavioral ceasing which is initiated by socio-economic system because of its focus on benefit and instrumental rationality. Although consumer behavioral guideline is purely rational premise, but the process itself is essentially irrational [15].

Consumerism as a leading reference and a behavioral model in different spheres of life is characterized by the following features:

- there are no opposition and critical thinking;
- choice which proposed to person becomes almost limitless;
- consumption that overreach the physiological needs;
- advertising that replaces common sense (style and preferences are formed mainly by advertising and media);
- developed system of lending (consumer loans are the most popular);
- thinking and evaluation of consumer characteristics by brands (names that determine behavior of consumers in the market);

– as a result – there is apathy and disgust to consumption.

Manifestations of consumer society in our country are displayed in the society life in such a way:

1) Functioning of society according to social templates. The consumption is in the foreground (the possibility to buy a particular product or service is more important than knowledge, skills or intelligence.

2) Loss of style and originality. Person when thinking «like everyone» loses his style, uniqueness, ability to think on their own, substituting them with the standard values.

3) Repression of choice. Totality of consumerism the average person perceives as the obtusion of an external force and compulsion to unlimited choice.

Thus, consumerism can be considered in several senses:

1. Active unified collective behavior (behavioral model, guidance).

2. Particular system of values and moral standards.

3. Social and political institution (social practices that are sanctioned and supported by social norms and are important for the structure of society).

4. Instrument of coercion and violence by the modern society.

In general, we can assume that consumerism (as a behavioral model) is characteristic for mass society with so-called democratic regimes. Thus it can be considered as a peculiar form of repression and control that replaces physical persecution, coercion and total supervision of totalitarian societies. The prospects for further research on this subject consist in identifying and studying the intensity and specific manifestations of consumerism in the political life of contemporary Ukrainian society.

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