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## American Consumerism And The Personal Identity

Do you buy items for your personal satisfaction of necessary needs or is there some other personal desire? Nowadays Americans buy items whether it be clothing, food, accessories to help the economy prevail. But is it really necessary for someone to buy a thousand dollar shirt just because of the name of the brand? Consumerism is anything that involves spending money on goods and services. "Consumers undoubtedly are persons, acting on choices (Restad 770)." With this in mind, consumers buy items from their own free will and preference that they have. When that one woman buys that thousand dollar handbag that they've been wanting, they did that because they had the choice to do so. In the United States, the way consumers spend cultivates the individual and can construct their self-identity based on social, economic, and cultural factors.

Humans are social creatures that correspond with their everyday life. There's interactions between friends, family, and even strangers. Having these interactions can be an influence to a person due to the way society has constructed us. Like seeing your close friends getting the new technological advances, buying the latest trendy clothes or even following this new diet that requires you to buy many grocery items. Americans often purchase things based on someone's social status like a celebrity. "The nation's masses craved only those products and lifestyles projected onto movie screens, pictured in magazines, or described on the radio, things that only the excesses capitalism could provide (Restad 773)." This shows that having a social status and advertising certain products is what makes the consumer desire the product even more. When they see someone that is a higher status than them, they tend to follow their footsteps and do the same thing. Their social status is what influences American consumers when purchasing goods. Throughout history the standards and norms that were happening took affect to what people can buy and not buy. Even though a shopping center is a public area for all genders and races, there is a sense of privacy towards the consumer when they purchase an item that expresses who they are as a person. Shopping became a transformation of expressing oneself especially towards women. During the nineteen hundreds women were just housewives and were dependent on the husband. Women were restricted from their independence which conflicted with their sense of identity. In the article "The Signs of Shopping" by Anne Norton, she talks about this housewife who took some time for herself even though that was not part of the norm back in the nineteen hundreds. However "She engages with women in an activity marked as feminine, and she enjoys it (Norton 89)." This quote shows that shopping gave women a way to express their femininity even though it was not part of the social standard. Being able to buy whatever you want allowed them to have a taste of their freedom of expression and be able to discover who they are as a person; not depending on a man to tell them how they should be doing things

Another factor that influences American consumerism is the economic standpoint one has. In markets consumption has a big influence with the economy in society. In McKevitt's article "Everything Now" he explains the relative happiness of people today has effects the wide variety of consumer choices by how much money they spend based on our wants and needs. McKevitt explains the difference when someone buys something they want vs need. "Needs are rational and permanent. We have always needed-and will always need-food, water and shelter (McKevitt 145)." This shows that people in today's society really need these items to be fulfilled

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physiologically. Advertisements are a good example of displaying products that are created for necessity but are rather displayed as a product that one needs, wants, and cravings. "Wants, are emotional, ephemeral and ever changing (McKevitt 145)." This shows that even though consumers do not need an item they want to have an item that makes them happy. It fulfills them emotionally and that relative happiness is what takes effect with the consumer's choices when buying items. Americans desire for the latest products-whether it being a brand new phone, purse, or clothes. The more money one makes the more choices there are to be able to purchase something that can be emotionally fulfilling. Being able to purchase items could help form the identity. The way an individual buys clothes, furniture, accessories etc. it allows the person to have a little test drive of how they want to be. It's like buying new experiences to mold the individual to who they're going to be like as a person.

Based on one's culture, being a consumer and buying products in America has an interconnection with the identity. Consumption is a daily role in the American society. From waking up and brushing your teeth with that specific toothpaste and toothbrush you bought, to the milk and cereal you're so used to buying for breakfast. Consumer culture plays a pivotal role with buying such goods and services and can formulate our personal identities. "We are living through a time of endless choices and unlimited convenience (McKevitt 144)." Personal preferences make up the identity. Consumers buy items to make themselves feel better which can construct the identity. For example, when women buy cosmetics or beautiful dresses; go into a weight loss program and buy healthy food, as well as buy a gym membership. These consumptions are a reflection of the choices one makes to make their persona look good for

society. The places that one goes to purchase something is a reflection of one's culture. According to Anne Norton who wrote the article "The Signs of Shopping" she stated that the mall was her favorite subject of the culture of consumption. "It is both a place of meeting for the young and one of the rare places where young and old go together. People of different races and classes, different occupations, different levels of education meet there (Norton 87)." There are many places for people to go shop and construct their identity for all races, genders, sexual orientations etc. Through consumer culture it could construct an individual's identity and show it by what they are consuming, since goods indicate the identity. In other words, people can construct their identity based on how they were raised with their culture and depend on it with their consumption.

All in all, self-identity can be a reflection based on the consumptions that Americans make through their social, economic, and cultural background. People receive guidance through social backgrounds like social media, advertisements, and even the people they are surrounded by. The financial standpoint that one makes all depends on whether a consumer can make purchases that allows them to have new experiences. And consumer culture has affected the way people make certain purchases because of the way people were raised in society. "Identity, as we now know, demands appreciation as a summation and interrelation of both discrete and collective experiences, as they have been lived in recent and far past, and as they exist within changing social contexts (Restad 770)." Consumption is a way of buying those demands, through goods and services, in any scenario and being able to get a collective experience. Which all depends if the consumer makes a choice when buying things they want to get or not. There could be a chance where the consumer could make a "wrong choice". This "wrong choice" can possibly cause an "identity crisis" towards the consumer depending on the extent of what they bought has affected them. But as the years go by, American consumption can be different to how it is today which can bring out a whole different aspect to self-identity.

