# CHAPTER 1: CONSTRUCTING THE CONSUMER

## Consumer Thesis statements

* + 1. Thesis Statement 1:

American culture and Western culture, in general, may be characterized as the culture of capitalism, or more specifically consumer capitalism and American society may be characterized as the society of perpetual growth.

* + 1. Thesis Statement 2:

The core premise of the culture of consumer capitalism is that commodity consumption is the source of well-being.

* + 1. Thesis Statement 3:

The central roles on the culture of capitalism are the consumer, the laborer, and the capitalist, each operating according to a set of rules orchestrated and enforced by the nation-state.

* + 1. Thesis Statement 4:

The culture of capitalism and the society of perpetual growth require for their maintenance the exploitation of most of the world’s resources and peoples.

* + 1. Thesis Statement 5:

It is central to the successful operation of the culture of capitalism that the consumer be segregated or masked from the consequences of his or her lifestyle on the laborer, on the environment, and on the way of life of those whose degradation makes his or her life possible.

## Consumer Discussions

* + 1. Discussion 1:

The following post leads to a good discussion of today’s advertising methods and how consumers are created through targeted advertising.

In your textbook, you have been taken through the creation of the consumer over time. Dr. Robbins talks about such things as marketing and advertising (remember the discussion of the department store), the targeting of children as consumers, and how the culture of capitalism creates a system in which pride is based on possessions and financial success (a need to “keep up with the Joneses.” In our culture, our possessions tend to define us. In the past, shopping was done in stores which used the techniques discussed in the text to define what is “in” and what people must buy and own (the creation of wants) to be part of the culture.

With the increased use of the Internet for shopping, it is more difficult to influence shoppers because they spend less time in stores. All of the nicely designed displays are not going to influence the Internet shopper. A large segment of today’s population shops online. This has meant that the merchant had to reinvent ways to create consumers. How is today’s consumer created in comparison to the consumer creation talked about in the text? One might think that it would be more difficult, but there are probably no more innovative people than marketers. Children are targeted using technology instead of story books (remember the discussion of Kinderculture).

In your original response discuss a comparison of the creation of today’s consumer and the methods discussed in the readings. Try to find examples that illustrate. One example is the way in which Facebook ads actually target individual users of Facebook and tracks their interests based on sites they visit on the Internet, but there are many other ways in which consumerism is created.

* + 1. Discussion 2:

The following post allows for an informative discussion of social media marketing to create consumption.

Changes are occurring in today’s marketing strategies that may help to overcome the isolation of Internet shopping and help to abate the fears. It is called social media marketing. We know of the amazing growth of Facebook and marketing professionals have found ways to use this growth and are now using social media to market products. Those who are on Facebook have more than likely seen the “like a certain store, restaurant, etc.” It is amazing free advertising that reaches millions. If you see that your friends like and use an online store or service, do you think that you would be more likely to do so as well?

In addition, smaller local businesses are taking to Facebook and similar sites to advertise. Small restaurants may “invite” customers to lunch for the lunch special which they give on Facebook.

What do you see in the future for the consumer? How will these changes affect consumption as we know it? How does using social media to create consumers compare to the discussion in your text of the creation of the consumer.

## Consumer Assignments/Exercises

* + 1. Exercise 1: Do you have affluenza?

Take the quiz at <http://www.pbs.org/kcts/affluenza/diag/have.html> to test yourself and see to what degree you are affected with influenza.

* + 1. Exercise 2:

Take the quiz at <https://www.csmonitor.com/Environment/2013/0124/Think-you-know-energy-Take-our-quiz/consumption-rise> to learn about global energy consumption