

The freedom of choice and today's consumer society



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The term 'consumer' is used to describe the way society is today, in the same sense as we lived in an industrial society before this. The life we live is based around the activity of consuming in many ways, so much that we have come to live in a 'consumer society'. When it comes to buying we like to believe we freely chose to buy that object, this means that we can buy something we want without any external influences. This essay is going to discuss the idea of freedom of choice in relation with today's consumer society.

The concepts 'consumer society and freedom of choice' will be fully explored. Then will be discussed the variety of ways in which a person can be influenced. Then I'll discuss the two concepts together to explore the claim that consumer society is characterized by freedom of choice further. The official definition provided by expectation's. Com states that a consumer society is "a society in which the buying and selling of goods and services is the most important social and economic activity." We all take part in consuming, whether its a necessity or just an activity.

We once lived in an 'industrial society, a place where we were defined by the job we had, now in the modern 'consumer society we tend to define ourselves more on what we own. 'Seduced' and 'Repressed' are two ways in which it is seen that many societies can be divided (Buena, 1988). Buena is a social scientist who believes that today's modern consumer society is not equal for all, but is split into two definitive groups, those who can afford the consumer lifestyle (the seduced), and those who can't (the repressed).

According to Buena, the seduced are those who are able to be admitted into the society " because they are able consume effectively in the eyes of others" (Withering, 2009, p. 27). On the opposite end of the scale lay the ' repressed', those who are unable to contribute to the increasing consumer society are seen to be part of this group. This would typically include those who are unemployed or have a low income. As mentioned briefly before the freedom of choice is having the chance to make a decision completely on own choice, without any external influences.

The official definition given by objectifications. Com is " Right to exercise one's freedoms in any manner one may choose except where such act may obstruct or prevent others from exercising their freedoms, put oneself or others in danger, or exceeds a statutory MIT. " We make decisions all day every day, on practically every aspect of the day, for example what we wear, what we eat for breakfast and even if today is going to be the day to sit down and do some studying or not. We have the freedom to choose the answer to those questions most days.

However there may be restrictions to any questions such as having to wear a particular style of clothes for work for example making the answer a limited amount. For some this may still show a freedom of choice on what to wear, yet for others it is seen as a restriction and little choice. There are many ways in which our freedom of choice' can be compromised by external influences. The largest of influence on our behavior being advertisements, they are all around us. Advertising is a big part of society, it is the way in which companies and franchises of all types to sell their products whether it be food, clothes, sports good or toys.

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Advertisements serve many purposes in the eyes of companies, they get to promote their business, products and in many cases the great prices they are using to gain more customers. Advertisement come in various forms including poster, TV adverts, billboards, internet adverts and more. The prices of products are also influence, especially offers; how many of us can say we didn't buy something we liked when it was at a low price or on special offer. This way of gaining business may not seem as a way in we lose the freedom of choice, but we are more likely to buy something of special offer than something at a higher price.

A third influence when it comes to the average person shopping it that of the opinion of another. Many people value the opinion of a friend or family member, particularly when shopping whether its for food or clothes. Going out shopping is a large part of lives that questions whether we have to freedom to buy what we wish. However with so many advertisements, opinions and offers around us how can we be sure. Both freedom of choice' and ' consumer society are individual concepts that work well together, but in what sense is the question.

Do we truly have freedom of choice when making a purchase, meaning advertisements and more just become ways in which we learn about what we can buy rather than influencing our actions. Or do these manner of influence make our decision for us without us even noticing. For example, you see an advert on TV for your favorite tore and like the look of one of the products on special offer for one day only (the next day). With this knowledge the next day you choose to get up and head to the store to purchase the item you saw in the advert.

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The first way of looking at this is on the side of freedom of choice. Someone in full support of this would see that the TV advert helped to inform the individual and then they consciously made the decision to go out and buy it the next day regards to the offer still being available. However, looking at it in the eyes of someone who doesn't believe in freedom of choice', it could be seen that the advert influenced their behavior in various ways; such as firstly wanting the product, and secondly them going out to get it while still on the special offer advertised.

Not mentioned earlier, there is a third way of seeing the idea of freedom of choice with regards to consumer society and the various ways in which our freedom of choice' can be compromised. This is the idea that we both accept the influence, while then making the decision to follow through with the idea of purchasing. This essay has explored two concepts, both individually and together as a working unit. The first being the ' consumer society we live in, why today's society is this way compared to what it was before and how this affects the individual.

The second concept was the idea of freedom of choice' and what it is to us. When looking at them together it is hard to define whether that today's society involves doesn't include freedom of choice with regards to the large amounts of advertising used, or whether we do truly have the chance to make our own decisions. Therefore it seems easier to look at it as both these ideas working together, blending the influence of others and our own choice in whether to make that final purchase or not.