

The influence of lifestyle on the consumer culture of the urban family

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Abstract:

The successive transformations that the world witnessed led to the emergence of the phenomenon of globalization and its strong impact on lifestyles. This in turn has affected urban families through the commodification of culture, so that culture became a commodity to be bought and sold. this is considered as a threat to identity with the dominance of a cultural pattern that is the Western pattern in general, and the superiority of consumer culture has led to standardizing the behavior and culture of individuals and families by subjecting them to globalized patterns of behavior.

Key words: lifestyle; the consumer culture; the urban family.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the era of economic liberalization and globalization, culture has transformed into a commodity that can be traded, and it is influenced by media and advertising. The world has witnessed rapid changes as markets expanded, and culture became a new mechanism in the hands of globalization leaders to influence individuals' characteristics, preferences, tastes, and thoughts.

The family used to play a fundamental role in supporting an individual's culture, drawing inspiration from simple life and Islamic civilization. However, due to the exposure to various media and the influence of other cultures, a cultural change has occurred, leading to new awareness and inclinations that align with the global developments.

Urban families are among the essential elements that have been influenced by cultural stereotyping. Temptation was directed towards marketing products, Western consumer patterns, and modern lifestyles. The culture of consumerism and its symbols became more important than the quality of the products. This change in cultural patterns is manifested in various aspects, including lifestyle, living standards, dealing with situations, exciting consumption, conspicuous consumption, and social differentiation. This raises the question: What is the impact of lifestyle on the consumer culture of urban families?

1. **Lifestyle:** Lifestyle refers to the distinctive way of life for specific groups within the context of modern consumer culture. It also expresses individuality, the desire for self-expression, and self-awareness in one's style (Belmamar, (no date)., p. 1)

Among the indicators that reflect one's taste are the choices of individuals regarding clothing, their way of speaking, how they spend



their leisure time and vacations, their preferences for food and beverages, and their choices of residence and transportation (El-Qurshi & Salim, (2013)., p. 10)

The increase in production, the diversity of markets, and the variety of goods have expanded the freedom of choice and diversified lifestyles. A group's behaviors and habits distinguish them from others, not only in terms of daily knowledge but also in their bodies, such as body size, physique, walking style, eating habits, self-respect, and tone of voice.

Pierre Bourdieu believes that taste classifies people, creating differences, barriers, and social strata. This makes it possible to map the world of tastes and lifestyles, distinguishing clearly between different levels within a single society at the same time. Knowledge of new products, their social and cultural value, and how they are used contributes to understanding culture. It is not just about what type of clothing we wear, but how we wear it. Therefore, the content of this theory lies in the idea that the satisfaction generated by products is related to their input, which is the social structure within the framework of a game based on satisfaction and maintaining it under conditions of inflation. In fact, the focus is on how individuals use products to create social bonds or distinctions (Belmamar, (no date)., p. 2)

Baudrillard approached the consumer society by analyzing the transformation from liberalism to consumption values controlled by large institutions, media, and a set of symbols and signs with their own logic that negates human reality. The individual becomes a participant in his society through the consumption of goods and products, belonging to a particular consumer group, which serves as a symbol of social status and level (Taibi, (2014), p. 179)

2. The concept of consumption

2.1. Linguistic Concept of Consumption:

The term "consumption" in language refers to the act of consuming something, and the person who carries out this action is a consumer. For example, people consume money when they spend it. They may consume more money than they earn, expending what they earn within a week when it should last them a month. Hence, this concept implies using up and emptying. It is also related to consuming words, which means to exhaust or deplete them. Consuming a debt implies repaying it in installments. In economics, it means using a commodity or service to directly achieve benefits without using it in the production of another commodity or service.

2.2 Definition of consumption:

In terminology, it refers to the use of products and benefiting from them to satisfy human needs. It is also considered a part of income (Boudarwaia, (2014, 2015), p. 23). Many researchers agree on the difficulty of defining and providing an accurate definition of the concept of consumption, as it is a shared field between the social sciences. In economics, it is defined as the direct use of goods and services to satisfy human needs.

Economic systems differ in defining the human needs which can be satisfied by consumption. The capitalist system views needs as the absolute desires of the individual. Meanwhile, the Islamic system sees it as a demand of the human being towards the available resources, while achieving it leads to the development of the necessary capacities.

The Quran frequently emphasizes the principles of moderation and temperance in spending (Mamdouh Abdul Rahim & Hala, (2011)., pp.



87-88). It is a behavior and culture that compels people to buy and attempt to possess things they do not need. It is a process which individuals engage in without awareness, influenced by external attraction factors that govern their behavior and consumption of things in an unnatural manner. (Mamdouh Abdul Rahim & Hala, (2011)., p. 88)

3. Consumption Patterns:

3.1 Regular Consumption Patterns: These patterns are associated with spending on basic human needs, taking a continuous and regular form. They encompass all aspects of continuous spending, such as spending on housing, furniture, food, clothing, services, education, healthcare, transportation, travel, leisure, durable goods, books, and entertainment (ZayedAhmed, (1991), p. 23)

3.2 Irregular Consumption Patterns: These patterns are related to spending on specific occasions, whether they pertain to a family member, such as birthdays, educational achievements, weddings, or engagements. These patterns serve to fulfill social needs. (Boudarwaia, (2014, 2015), p. 23)

4-The Concept of Culture:

4.1 - Edward Tylor: He was the first to provide a basic definition of culture, stating that it is the complex whole that includes knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by humans as members of the society- (Khalil, (no date), p. 12).

4.2 - According to **Malik Bennabi**, culture is of utmost importance in shaping the concept of culture, even though he acknowledges that culture does not encompass ideas alone but extends to encompass a lot more, such as lifestyle and social behavior. (Bekous, (2016), p. 2)

4.3 - Culture is, in general, the way or the method by which a society lives and provides for itself. It is derived from the society's conditions, needs, environment, and historical development. It represents a cumulative knowledge of a society over long periods. The individual's daily consumption behavior is greatly influenced by their culture. The individual's choice to buy specific goods and services is primarily guided by the basic values and standards they have acquired from their culture

5- The Concept of Consumer Culture: Consumer culture is defined as the sum of meanings, symbols, and behaviors accompanying the process of consumption, starting from the crystallization of the desire to consume, through the actual consumption, and ending with post-consumption . (Mustafa Awad, (no date), p. 12)

It is also defined as the cultural aspects accompanying the consumer activity, representing a set of meanings, symbols, and images accompanying the process of consumption (Mahr, (2019), p. 14)

It gives meaning to it and achieves its significance in daily life. Therefore, it signifies the interconnection of economic activities with cultural practices, which that can be identified through the circulation of capital or individual psychology.

Consumer culture represents the way people meet their needs, whether these needs are material, such as food, clothing, and beverages, or symbolic, like listening to music and songs. These needs can be real or artificial, and it encompasses the values and attitudes that motivate and direct individuals to choose specific consumption methods or accompany the consumption process or follow it afterward.

Consumer culture has both material and immaterial aspects. The material aspects revolve primarily around the material consumption



process. However, understanding these material aspects is incomplete without understanding the moral aspects connected to it. These moral aspects broaden the scope of consumer culture to encompass the meanings and images accompanying material consumption. These meanings, symbols, and images related to the consumption process manifest in three stages: before the consumption process, during actual consumption, and after consumption. The concept of consumer culture is connected to several other concepts:

A-Concept of Consumer Tendency: This concept refers to the transformation of meanings and symbols of consumption into an end in itself under the influence of the rapid spread of consumer culture, which is transformed through mass communication into a mass culture.

B-Concept of Lifestyle: It refers to specific and conscious patterns of preferences that distinguish the consumer style and give it a distinctive lifestyle character.

C-Concept of Consumption Symbols: It indicates the transformation of consumption into a language similar to everyday life language, with which people communicate with each other. Through this language, they establish symbolic credit that determines individuals' status and the scope of their interactions.

D-Consumption of Images: Here, the consumption of a specific product is associated with a particular mental image attached to the product through presentation style or repeated advertising. These concepts are closely intertwined in the realm of consumer culture .(ZayedAhmed, (1991), pp. 27-28)

Some theorists of consumer culture, such as Henry Louis Vivre and Jean Baudrillard, have emphasized the effectiveness of

advertising. They consider it a powerful force that exercises a form of control over people's minds, by going beyond being just a marketing tool to become a social control mechanism. Jean Baudrillard believes that advertisers have given products and commodities an extra dimension. Thus, these products themselves evoke desire. In capitalism, from the perspective of consumer culture, it is not just an economic system, it is a form of culture where everything is harnessed to promote consumption, and the energies and tastes become submissive. (Khalil, (no date), p. 83)

6. Characteristics of consumer culture

Ahmed Hijazi defines the characteristics of consumer culture as the creation of forces that possess the means of influence, promotion, and persuasion.

It is based on creating and highlighting aspects of pleasure in purchasing (Hegazy, (no date), p. 117)

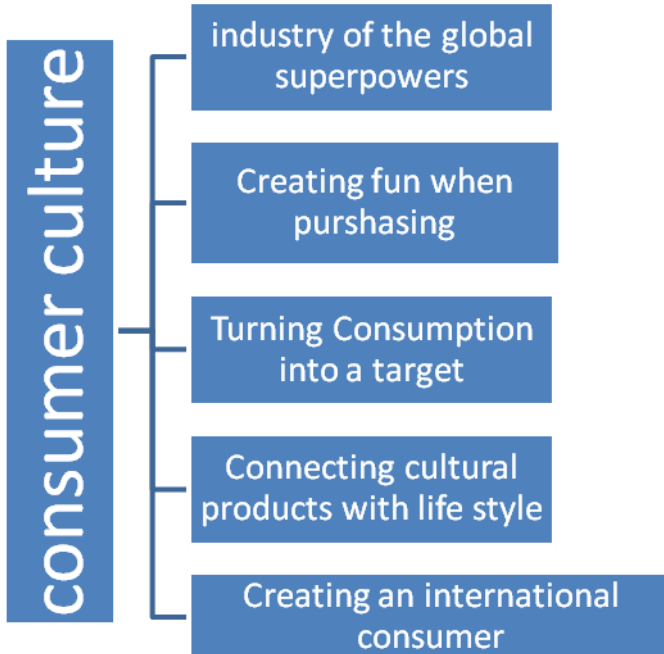
. Thus, consumption has turned into an end in itself, expressing a symbol of an individual's status, leading to an increase in consumer aspirations associated with conspicuous consumption. (Ben Makki, (2014, 2015), p. 47)

Consumer culture uses meanings and symbols by linking cultural products with everyday lifestyles through communication channels. This guides the pattern of culture towards post-modernity by reproducing and reinforcing the logic of consumption (Al Qadi, (2004), p. 25).

It reveals consumer tendencies as an essential part and message for manufacturing the good life in modern urban civilization. Social life areas have been liberated from market demand and adapted at a global level as consumer needs (Stephen, (2002), p. 09). However, the



increasing prevalence and the extreme importance of high-quality and cheap brand names are additional indicators of the growth of the luxury lifestyle. (Roger, (2011), p. 57)



**Characteristics of consumer Culture– TheSource is Thetow
researchers**

7-Advertisingand Promotion in Lifestyle contexts:

The technological and media advancements have turned individuals into a part of the consumer culture by distinguishing between the human mirror and the screen human. The human mirror reflects on the other through communication and mutual interaction, while the screen human is the display of fashion and consumer culture. Baudrillard suggests that in the 20th century, people have become screens themselves, becoming models and performers of predetermined roles within the consumer society.

The media highlights what is common and shared among individuals while avoiding or erasing what makes an individual unique and different, treating the individual as part of the audience to weaken their resistance, making them believe that there is an influential public, even though they are the real actors (Haneini, (no date), p. 359)

Exposure of families to imported programs and media content broadcast by television channels has had a significant impact on the construction of society. Families are the vehicle for social awareness, national heritage, and civilization, transferring traditions and customs from one generation to the next to preserve the society's identity and elevate its practices and traditions. They are a social system that influences and is influenced by other social systems (Mabrouka, (2018), p. 27)

Additionally, one theory of consumption asserts that the style of consuming goods is linked to advertising and promotional images manufactured for various consumer tastes and preferences. These impressions are influenced by the image and appearance preferred for the consumption of the product. This demonstrates that there is a logic to consumption where goods are used to establish social relationships. Thortschein Veblen argues that social factors determine consumption patterns, with the wealthy spending in line with their social class and



distinctions. This is where conspicuous consumption comes into play, which expresses an individual's belonging to the affluent class in capitalist society.

Furthermore, Thortschein Veblen identified the concept of conspicuous waste, which means that people from lower social classes imitate the upper classes, by purchasing expensive items as a form of emulation and to gain prestige. Veblen divided the utility of a commodity into two categories Primary and secondary utilities

Primary utility refers to the efficiency of a commodity in providing a service that the consumer needs. It relates to how well a product fulfills its intended purpose.

Secondary utility, on the other hand, pertains to the product's ability to highlight the consumer's purchasing power, signifying an increase in their social status. In other words, it reflects the capacity of a product to showcase an individual's ability to buy, indicating a higher social standing.

Veblen argued that wealth was a symbol of higher social status during the pre-industrial period, whereas in modern industrial society, conspicuous consumption became the distinctive symbol. Advertising messages, particularly through television broadcasts saturated with desires and emotional appeals, are designed to promote products, stimulate purchasing, and create the desire to buy (Belmamar, (no date)., pp. 2-3-4)

Lifestyle in consumer culture is connected with infusing aesthetic values into everyday life by encouraging the dynamics of the modern market, creating fashions, lifestyle choices, and new experiences. Celebrities, movie stars, and others present their lifestyles as life projects through showcasing various clothing,

appearances, and experiences. In the modern era, individuals constantly seek the new, the fashionable, and the creative. They are aware that they live only one life and must strive to enjoy it (Belmamar, (no date)., p. 7)

8. Consumer culture and the phenomenon of globalization:

Giant capitalist corporations have sought to bring about social and cultural changes and create desires that chase their products by providing massive financial resources. This aims to make people worldwide share the same tastes and consumption habits, transcending geographical boundaries, ethnicities, and traditions. They achieve this by opening up markets in third-world countries and exporting their products. This process involves reshaping the identities of individuals and families, compelling them to conform to a consumer society, regardless of the economic and financial capacities of middle and lower-income households. In this context, individuals, especially in third-world countries, are viewed as primarily consumers rather than producers, and this has a significant impact on national economies, social stratification, and the psychological well-being of individuals and communities (Taibi, (2014), p. 173)

9. Mechanisms of promoting consumer culture and lifestyle:

9.1 Restaurants

Food is a significant part of cultural heritage that reflects the amalgamation of food with culture, symbols, customs, traditions, cooking methods, and shopping styles. It highlights the identity of families and the extent of their cohesion. In recent times, particularly in major cities, we have witnessed the presence of many restaurants with an American influence, such as McDonald's, KFC, Pizza Hut, and Burger King.

These restaurants signify the introduction of new lifestyles and ways of life into our communities and the emergence of a new food culture imposed by globalization on the world as a whole and third-



world societies. This has affected households and brought about profound changes in taste, posing a threat to cultural heritage. Families now frequent these restaurants, encouraging individualism, which, in turn, affects family relationships (Belmamar, (no date)., p. 7)

9.2 Chopping Centers

Shopping centers are a model for commercial markets that appeared primarily in the United States, often referred to as "malls." These places define the lifestyle of post-modernity, where families shop, spend their leisure time, and socialize with friends. The expansive space of malls, multiple floors, and the availability of many products and services not found elsewhere have contributed to their popularity. Their design is based on creating amazement and attractiveness, symbolizing urbanization and keeping up with the demands of the times. As a result, many urban families have adopted mall shopping as a distinctive lifestyle, where strolling through these places has become more important than the actual act of purchasing. Thus, urban family shopping and frequenting these shopping centers have become psychological obsessions and excessive consumption tendencies that affect family identity (Belmamar, (no date)., p. 8)

9.3 Amusement parks

Entertainment has become a global industry that relies on capturing minds beyond the element of imagination in leisure activities. It is enhanced through lifestyles, behavioral patterns, and tastes promoted by various multinational companies. According to Erik Barnau (Bekous, (2016), p. 2), it is not just entertainment, but also advertising for the current state of affairs. Globalization seeks to create a unified culture that brings the world together, which some see as conflicting with the identities, cultural specificities, religious beliefs, and values of different societies.

The culture of the information age, thanks to information technology, is expected to foster fruitful dialogue between cultures and embodies happiness and peace among people, regardless of their races and cultures . (Belmamar, (no date)., p. 8)

10. Culture consumption risks on the modern family

10.1 Family

Consumer culture and Western lifestyles have significant effects and risks on urban families, including the dissemination of the culture of countries that export goods and products. This leads to cultural dependence, causing them to lose their identity. Additionally, these imported goods may lack health and safety standards. Parents may struggle to teach their children to be frugal in their consumption, leading to financial problems and excessive consumption tendencies. This can result in family budget deficits and marital issues (Mamdouh Abdul Rahim & Hala, (2011)., p. 166) .

10.2 Economic Risks

Increased consumption can lead to the breakdown of the fundamental elements of growth, especially savings and investment, which affect a country's economy. Prioritizing consumption as a primary goal in individuals' and families' lives can affect income and the resources available to future generations. This can create consumerism and an unhealthy environment for locally produced goods, promoting dependency on imported products and following the latest trends.

10.3 Social Risks

Modern media and technology have created an idealized image of the wealthy worldwide. In reality, one in five people in the world suffers from deprivation of basic needs such as food, clothing, shelter,



and sanitation. Numerous studies confirm the impact of materialistic consumer culture and consumption behavior on the psychological health and happiness of families. An increase in consumption and spending does not necessarily lead to more happiness and well-being for families. The accumulation of wealth and possessions can lead to unhappiness, anxiety, and depression. The prevalence of divorce and the failure of marital relationships is also seen across the globe.

10.4 Environmental Risks:

Increased consumption leads to higher production to meet consumer demands, which in turn puts pressure on resources and generates a significant amount of waste that threatens the environment worldwide (Fawzia, (No date), pp. 74-75)

11. Conclusion

The era of information technology has given rise to new patterns of lifestyles and consumption. Advertising has played a crucial role in shaping these patterns, stimulating consumption, and disseminating consumer culture, deepening it in societies, particularly in third-world countries. These consumer societies have produced ongoing and continuous consumption that has influenced their identities. Lifestyles and consumption patterns have also impacted families by reshaping their tastes and way of life through the media, advertising stations, and mechanisms for spreading consumer culture. This has led to the imitation of Western lifestyles and the emergence of extravagant behavior and appearance in food, clothing, and entertainment, putting pressure on family finances and our culture and identity.

Recommendation

- Raise awareness about the need for prudent consumption, saving, and adherence to consumption values that align with our cultural

values and customs. Discourage extravagance and superficial consumption.

- Emphasize the role of families and schools in fostering responsible consumption among the younger generation.
- Activate the role of consumer protection associations in educating individuals about their consumer rights and advocating for them.
- Encourage the purchase of local products to support domestic production.
- Raise awareness among merchants and producers about their responsibilities towards consumers.
- It is essential to address the risks associated with consumer culture and promote more responsible and sustainable consumption practices.

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