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## ***Consumer identity of modern man***

### **Abstract**

*This paper focuses on the analysis of contemporary society as a consumer society. Given the increasingly visible development of consumer culture and the expansion of consumerism, we consider it important to point to the influence on the formation of a consumer identity as the dominant identity of modern man. Bearing in mind the comprehensiveness and complexity of the concept of identity, we have found it important to point out the theoretical explanations of the concept of identity, its characteristics, its elements and dimensions, and in particular the views on a consumer identity by many authors who have dealt with this theme. This paper aims at the need for a better understanding of the contemporary consumer identity, and points to the consequences that the formation of a consumer identity leaves humanity.*

**Key words:** *identity, consumer identity, consumer society, consumer culture, consumerism.*

### **Introduction**

When we talk about identity, it is important to bear in mind that identity is a complex term and that the formation of a personal identity depends to a large extent on a socially dominant identity at a particular historical moment. Today, without doubt, we can say that consumer culture and the expansion of consumerism have caused the formation of an individual's identity as a consumer. Most commonly, a consumer society is a society whose values and

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norms are based exclusively on consumption, and the accumulation of material goods and use of services. The emergence of a new type of freedom - consumer freedom - characterised by the constant need to compete in the "volume of purchase" and the current satisfaction of consumer needs, has in some sense conditioned the collapse of traditional moral norms and values. Freedom in this regard implies freedom of choice, freedom of movement as well as "the freedom to cease to be what you already are and the freedom to become what you are not yet."<sup>2</sup> Consequently, in a wider social context, this phenomenon can be explained by the economic and/or political influences that, in effect, advocate an increase in consumerism, i.e. the formation of consumer culture, which ultimately means consumerism as a social practice.

In defining the concept of consumer identity, modern lifestyle and consumerism culture, we have come from the view that the consumer identity development is growing exponentially in contemporary society. For the understanding and analysis of this phenomenon, we have used theoretical works of some authors who have given a special contribution to this field, which has provided a better analysis and understanding of the contemporary consumer identity. In this paper the subject of research is identified through the question - *Is the consumer identity one of the most dominant identities of modern man?* Determining the underlying subject of the research is based on the following questions: Does a person today recognise him/herself in most cases as a consumer? Which factors influence the formation of consumer culture on a global scale, and in what ways does a "consumer as a human being" meet his/her needs. The basic objective is to provide a better understanding of the consumer identity and to determine the causes and consequences of a consumer identity formation in modern human beings as well as to determine the way that identity is manifested on an individual and social level.

The paper primarily relies on the theoretical concepts of Zygmunt Bauman, starting with the viewpoint that the greatest change within modern society occurred through the transition from the producer to the consumer society and for this reason there is a need for the formation of a new kind of identity and culture – the consumer identity and consumer culture. We also found it important to emphasise Ritzer's "McDonaldisation of Society", as a phenomenon that greatly represents the personification of a modern consumer society. Accordingly, relevant literature of authors who made a significant contribution to this area, was used with a special emphasis on Zygmunt Bauman, having in mind his enormous contribution to the understanding of the phenomenon of consumerism and the formation of a consumer identity

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<sup>2</sup> Bauman, Zygmunt, *Fluid Life*, Novi Sad: Mediteran, 2009, pp. 14

in modern society, as well as science works of theorists who were interesting and significant to the author of this paper, among others: George Ritzer, Helga Dittmar, Manuel Castells, Dragan Koković etc.

## Concept and forms of identity

In forming an identity, whether individual or collective, it is important to note that it is primarily built on the basis of the personal experience of an individual determined by the sociological framework. In that sense, we mean that an individual has been involved in certain social frameworks such as family, school, environment, etc. from primary socialisation and that these institutions directly affect the behaviour and channeling of individual activities. "An individual socialises and builds his/her identity in stages, for a long period ranging from birth to maturity. Constantly, the picture you build about yourself, your beliefs, and your own roles is an extremely important psychological structure that allows you to choose your activities and your social relationships."<sup>3</sup> An image of oneself represents a central role in the formation of an individual identity, or of his/her "ego". On the other hand, it is important to emphasise that any form of identification becomes meaningful only when it is noticed by "others". Given the complexity of this concept, it is important to understand that a personal identity is based on diversity while the collective, within a social group, is based on similarities. In this sense, we also recognise the developmental dimension of identity that usually encompasses all forms of identity.

The concept of identity has its function and task performed in different circumstances, whether it is an analysis of an individual's personality, the formation of his attitudes and values, or even as identification with a particular group, smaller or larger, when it comes to forming collective identities. This process, most often, takes place through three stages in every person's life. Thus, we differentiate *the primary individuality*, which usually occurs during the first three years of childhood, *a categorical individuality* that is characteristic of the period to adolescence and the *personalising individuality* of adolescence.<sup>4</sup> Building an identity, especially a collective one, is largely based on some elementary materials from the past, such as a common history, social legacy, territorial affiliation, collective memory, and the like. Building a collective identity "determines the symbolic content of this identity and its

<sup>3</sup> Halpern Katrin; Žan-Klod Ruano-Borbalan, *Identity (s): Individual, Group, Society*, Belgrade: Clio, 2009, Pp. 6

<sup>4</sup> Same. Pp.7

meaning for those who identify with it or set apart from it. Since social identity building always takes place in a context marked by power relations, I suggest distinguishing between three forms and sources of identity building: legitimate identity, identity of resistance, and project identity.<sup>15</sup> *Legitimate identity* is characteristic for civil society, and through organisations and institutions and organised social actors reproduces an identity that "rationalises the sources of structural domination". If we applied this form of collective identity to today's consumer society, we would come to the conclusion that among the most dominant institutions of contemporary society are large manufacturing corporations, their advertising companies and the advertising industry in general, advocating mass consumption, and through various propaganda methods, they justify it. *Identity for resistance* enables the formation of communes or communities. It is structured, in the form of collective resistance, as a reaction to oppression by dominant institutions, ideologies, dominant values, etc. This aspect of identity in the consumer society can be seen in the poorer and marginalised layers, which due to a low living standard and the lack of material resources are being stigmatised by other members of the consumer society. This type of resistance can also occur in those members of society who, in propagating the value of consumerism and consumer culture, see the collapse of traditional moral values and norms such as modesty, solidarity, appreciation of others, and so forth. *Project identity* from individuals creates subjects. "By subject I mean the desire to be an individual, to create a personal history, to give meaning to the full wealth of individual life experience (...) the process of transforming individuals into subjects is a necessary combination of two ratifications: an individual in relation to communities and individuals in relation to market"<sup>16</sup>. This form of collective identity is particularly emphasised in the contemporary consumer society. The desire for individualism, personal development and self-actualisation today is best expressed in an individual's relationship to the market, but also to the community - the consumer community. In this sense, building an identity is understood as a representation or a blueprint of a different life that should cause the transformation of society.

Identity can best be defined as a process, but also as a state through which an individual determines their lifestyle and chooses social groups that he/she can identify with (what is conditioned by the social structures they belong to). The identity of individuals or a personal identity is formed in relation to other individuals and its emergence is conditioned by factors that are inher-

<sup>5</sup> Castells, Manuel, *Power of Identity*, Zagreb: Golden Marketing, 2002, pp. 17-18

<sup>6</sup> Touraine, Alain, *Critique de la modernité*, Paris: Fayad, 1992. According to: Manuel Castells, *Identity Path*, Zagreb: Golden Marketing, 2002, pp. 19-20

ited but also chosen. Bearing in mind that the consumer identity (which is also the central theme of this work) is one of the fluid identity forms, it is important to emphasise that the fluid identity and its forms can be labeled as a product of modern society. When we talk about this kind of identity, we have in mind, primarily, the consumer identity – identity of a media consumer, online/offline or digital identity, migrant identity, identity of the unemployed, identity of "Internet influencers" etc. The multiplication of fluid identities is characteristic for new times, fast lifestyles and an adaptation to contemporary social trends. What is interesting in this type of identity is that they are not territorially bound, but their emergence and development, thanks to a networked global society, seeks the whole world at great speed. The Fluid identity and its forms dominate significantly in relation to "solid" identities, those inherited or linked to a particular territory. In this sense, we can also link contemporary consumerism culture with the building of cultural identity. The process of cultural identification enables individuals to view cultural identity as a "symbolic and big body" approaching to shape and adapt their *ego*.<sup>7</sup> The cultural features of traditional societies, such as rituals, symbols, mythical stories, religious and political affiliation, are elements that enable an individual to integrate into a particular cultural community by linking their personal psychological functions with the values and morality of a given society. In modern fluid societies, this process of linkage and integration does not require a religious, political or similar affiliation, but a massive purchase and consumption of material goods and services. With each new purchase we become part of a global consumerism cultural community.

The development of fluid, modern identities raises the inevitable question - *What characterises a modern identity?* Charles Taylor points out the so-called dark side of modernity, where the modern human comes to a loss of meaning, the disappearance of goals and the loss of freedom, caused by the growth of individualism, the instrumentalisation of the mind, the dominance of modern technology and the crisis of citizenship and political participation.<sup>8</sup> Accordingly, this author suggests that the modern individual has fought for his freedom in terms of separating from repressive moral laws and frameworks of strong social hierarchies, but the appearance of the mentioned modern identity has resulted in the alienation of individualism and the loss of moral and value sources so that the individual remains left behind. There is often a question of whether the concept of an independent individual, sepa-

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<sup>7</sup> Halpern, Katrin; Žan-Klod Ruano-Borbalan, *Identity (s): Individual, Group, Society*, Belgrade: Clio, 2009, p. 12

<sup>8</sup> According to: Halpern, Katrin; Žan-Klod Ruano-Borbalan, *Identity (s): Individual, Group, Society*, Belgrade: Clio, 2009, p. 113

rated from others, is a contemporary illusion - considering that the formation and development of an individual identity is not possible without interaction with another(s). Observing contemporary global trends and social changes they carry, it is clear that features of identity such as power, expansion, and affiliation become more and more comprehensive while durability, closure, communion and resistance are increasingly weak. This process of change is particularly pronounced in contemporary fluid identities that are becoming more commonly accepted today.

### **Importance of consumption in modern society**

We can talk about consumer society as a society that is based on the consumption of material goods, merchandise and services, but also on the imposed needs in the sense of increasingly aggressive messages and ways of advertising companies. With the development of the consumer culture, the former working class evolves into a consumer one due to the loss of worker identity and the need to form a new, in this case, consumer identity. The emergence of a consumer identity is reflected in the change in the mode of production, i.e. mass production requires mass consumption, but also by enabling the lower social classes to have the satisfaction of an aspiration to a higher social standard, mostly through mass buying and accumulation of material goods.

Zygmunt Bauman introduces the distinction between two broad social categories: the *seduced* and *suppressed*. The seduced are fundamentally embedded in consumer culture, and their lives are largely devoted to the acquisition and representation of material goods, i.e. goods and services. On the other hand, the suppressed are those who lack the resources and are excluded from the market and whose lives, therefore, are intricately woven into state institutions. The most important motivation of the individual consumer is the search for self-identity, and the choice of consumers becomes a central place of freedom for the majority of citizens of advanced societies, since such a "consumer freedom" way is a channel for autonomous self-expression.

A significant feature of the consumer society is also the appearance of *lifestyle* which, through the symbols and codes "enrolled" into the cultural characteristics of society, creates a form of life that enables "expressive coherence to the social practices accompanying the rise of consumer culture" and creates conditions for participation of an individual as a consumer "in the modern project of selfhood". The formation of a certain lifestyle in the consumer performs two significant functions: "a vehicle of self-identity by

providing resources for definition of self, and a determinant of social and cultural identity by providing outward indications of where one fits in the social and cultural scheme of things". In other respects, lifestyle performs significant communicative functions, enabling consumers to express their cultural needs and tastes.<sup>9</sup> In this context, it is necessary to deal with the marginal cultural phenomenon - *snobbery*. This phenomenon appears as a striving for the formation of a desired individual's identity, so we can easily associate it with a contemporary consumer identity. Snobbery is not only related to art and culture, in the narrow sense, but also to leisure, fashion, entertainment, tourism etc. In this way it becomes a certain lifestyle because many leisure activities are pervaded with snobbery. Snob style is reflected in the aspiration to reach through certain patterns of behaviour, valuation and appreciation, the world of higher circles (...) The snob society converts orientation towards achievement into orientation towards belonging.<sup>10</sup> The sense of belonging is a key factor for the growth of consumerism and the creation of a consumer society in almost every part of the world. Constantly increasing the volume of consumption makes it possible for those lower social layers to feel accepted by members of higher social circles. However, one of the basic characteristics of consumerism is a false sense of belonging because the things that are purchased in a very short time are replaced by newer, better models so that the original feeling of satisfaction soon becomes pale if the individual is not able to keep up with consumer society trends. Such socially-understood values lead to the stigmatisation and marginalisation of those members of the society who, due to bad economic opportunities, are not able to participate in the apparent increase of consumption and therefore, today, we are witnessing the emergence of large social differences.

A consumer society is not only the total sum of all consumers but it represents a certain totality. It is a society that values its members, most often, by the capacity of spending and their relation to the same. "When we say consumer society, it means more, much more than a mere verbalisation of the trivial observation that members of that society, finding a source of satisfaction in spending, spend most of their time and effort trying to increase those satisfactions. It also means that the perception and treatment of practically all elements of the social environment and the activities that this environment initiates and shapes shows the tendency to be managed by the consumer syn-

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<sup>9</sup> According to: Dunn, Robert G., *Identifying Consumption: Subjects and Objects in the Consumer Society*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2008, p. 121. Retrieved at: [www.questia.com](http://www.questia.com)

<sup>10</sup> Koković, Dragan, *Pukotine kulture*, Novi Sad: Prometej, 2005, pp. 347-348. (Translation of the author)



drome as a cognitive and gradable predisposition."<sup>11</sup> An interesting explanation of the consumer syndrome is observed in the parallel between the consumer and producer society. The consumer system evaluates and raises the transience and degrades durability, which means that the value of the novelty is above the value of durability. "Among the objects of human desires this has become the subject of appropriation, which is quickly followed by disposal in the waste, instead of the permanent possession of things and enjoyment of them. *With the consumer syndrome, everything is turning around speed, intemperance and waste.*"<sup>12</sup> The important difference in the appearance of the consumer society, compared to the previous ones, is that its pursuit for perfection, in fact, means a lot of things. A consumer society is a society of surfeits and abundance, a society whose members need objects of consumption in order to provide a current satisfaction with needs that arise as a result of the influence of consumer consciousness. The ability to satisfy consumer needs is what the consumer society makes attractive and viable.

Consumers' awareness today is increasingly evolving thanks to the formation of cyber/ online or Internet identity. What characterises this kind of identity is a certain personality that we choose for ourselves by creating our own cyber identity that is particularly present on social networks. Thanks to personal information we share with others, as well with other individuals, but also with Internet providers, according to our interests and online searches, advertising companies offer products and services that may be of interest to a particular target group, or potential consumers. Thanks to the high flow of information we share online, Internet providers are selling the same to potential producers who have a huge amount of data and, consequently, the market is getting bigger. In this way, a new kind of economy - the data economy - was formed.

### **Forming Identity of Contemporary Consumers**

To understand the complexity of forming a particular identity, it is important to point to the classification of identity, namely: those imposed (e.g. national identity in some cases) and those that have been chosen (e.g. consumer identity). "We are aware that affiliation and identity are not carved in stone, that they are not secured by lifelong guarantees, that they are highly subject to negotiation and can be revoked; and that our own decisions, the steps we take, the way we do it - and the determination to persevere in all of this - are

<sup>11</sup> Bauman, Zygmunt, *Fluid Life*, Novi Sad: Mediteran, 2009, pp. 102. (Translation of the author)

<sup>12</sup> Bauman, Zygmunt, *Fluid Life*, Novi Sad: Mediteran, 2009, pp. 103. (Translation of the author)



crucial factors both for one and the other."<sup>13</sup> What constitutes perhaps the greatest paradox in differentiating these identities is the fact that the driving force that once influenced the formation of national identity today, in a certain way, affects the formation of a global one. "Globalisation means that the state no longer has the strength or the desire to maintain its marriage with the nation as strong as a rock and unmistakable."<sup>14</sup>

In keeping with the lifestyle of the consumer society, the modern human does not experience his/her individualism as a negative phenomenon. Separation from the rest of society and alienation in the economic and social sense, today, allows an individual-consumer a certain type of exposition that differentiates him/her from the rest of society. This phenomenon is particularly present in young people and leads to the creation of greater social differences, but also to the celebration of the world where a product of massive consumption has the highest value

The identity of a modern consumer is largely conditioned by the McDonaldisation of society, if we have in mind that this process of McDonaldisation signifies the paradigm of a much wider process that encompasses humanity as a whole. "McDonaldisation does not only affect catering, but also education, health, travel, leisure, nutrition habits, politics, family and almost every aspect of society."<sup>15</sup> In this aspect, we can say that the uniformity of the consumer's identity of society greatly conditions the formation of individualism in the sense of predictability that is "emphasised in discipline, systematic and routine which as a result means the equivalence of phenomena and things, regardless of place and time".<sup>16</sup> When forming a consumer identity, it is important to bear in mind that during the last few decades, behaviours, aspirations and consumer desires have changed dramatically. Mutually linked economic-structural, socio-cultural and psychological transformations have created a different climate in which individuals experience and live their lives, mostly as consumers. Purchasing and mass consumption do not play a central role only with adults and adolescents, but this role is already present in the early stage of life (in childhood), so the growing concern about the growth in a comprehensive consumer culture is quite justified.<sup>17</sup> Clearly, the consumer identity is formed at a very young age in a way that symbolic images related to

<sup>13</sup> Sorić, Matko, "Zygmunt Bauman - Identitet: Razgovori s Benedettom Vecchijem", Zadar: *Sociological Review-Zagreb*, No. 41, 2011, pp. 363. (Translation of the author)

<sup>14</sup> Same, p. 364. (Translation of the author)

<sup>15</sup> Ritzer, George, *McDonald's Society*, Zagreb: Naklada Jesenski i Turk, 1999, Pp. 15 (Translation of the author)

<sup>16</sup> Same. Pp. 142 (Translation of the author)

<sup>17</sup> According to: Dittmar, Helga, *Consumer Culture, Identity and Well-Being*, New York: Psychology Press, 2008, Pp. 10.

certain products and what they present, are propagated to children by defining and determining their individual and collective identities on a daily basis.

The consumer society evaluates and assesses its members according to their ability and willingness to play that social role. Differences between today's and previous societies (industrial-producer society) are not so pronounced and dramatic, as opposed to the role of members of these societies. The main difference in the mentioned roles is the determination of priorities, i.e. the change of almost every aspect of society, culture and individual life. "The differences are so deep and multiple that they fully justify the story of our society as a separate and different kind of society", that is, consumer society.<sup>18</sup> The differences we can see in the modern (consumer) and previous (industrial) society, influenced by the formation of consumer consciousness and consumerism culture, are changing the basic structure of society. We can see the equalisation of middle and lower class levels by introducing a whole new society - the consumer society. In modern society, consumption occurs in the form of amortisation of class differences. In developed countries, individuals are able to overcome social differences through purchasing and spending and retain a sense of satisfaction as long as they are able to shop. With the development of modern technology and the influence on individuals' awareness through various advertising methods, consumers have developed a certain consumer spirit that sees their highest values in continuous consumption. In this sense the values, needs and overall lifestyle of modern society members are significantly different from those of previous societies. On the other hand, in the consumer society, we do not distinguish layers and classes as obviously as in previous societies, but certain differences are still noticeable. This is especially characteristic for poorer, underdeveloped countries such as Bosnia and Herzegovina. Although manufacturers adapt products to market opportunities, in which case we have products of a lower standard, the question arises as to whether purchasing and consuming such products and services really provides a sense of equality among all members of society.

When forming a contemporary consumer identity, it is important to emphasise that it is formed only when others notice it, which is the essence of all forms and types of identity. Material things systematically affect how we perceive the identity of other people, meaning that material goods not only play a role in our overview of others, but also individuals use them to personally present and create the feeling that they are the people they would like to be. On the other hand, the possession of material goods fulfills a series of psy-

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<sup>18</sup> Bauman, Zygmunt, "The Self in a Consumption Society", *The Hedgehog Review*, 1999, Pp. 36; Source: <http://www.iasc-culture.org/THR/archives/Identity/1.1FBauman.pdf>, Retrieved: 01/02/2018.

chological functions such as: the feeling of being in control, independence, enjoyment or emotional comfort. However, the relationship between material goods and identity is of exceptional psychological significance, emphasising that the motto "I shop therefore I am", is in many ways present in the contemporary consumer culture.<sup>19</sup> The behaviour and activities of each individual are also conditioned by the "design and structure of its products". Thus, we come to the conclusion that the role of an individual is to enable products to perform their functions, and not vice versa i.e. that the products enable individuals to achieve their goals.<sup>20</sup>

The fact that material goods surround us daily and that they are an integral part of our life is not a new phenomenon. Of course, if we talk about material goods that have a specific purpose and meaning, they make life easier. However, with the emergence of a consumer society and the need to create a desired identity, material goods and services become part of almost every conversation, and by media placement in various ways, it becomes an irreplaceable aspect of life we are often unaware of. The ideal consumer should not accept anything too easily, nothing should oblige him/her to a long-term dedication, no need should be considered fully satisfied, and no wishes or aspirations should be considered as being the ultimate. His condition and life vow should be "until further notice" for any liability and loyalty, or any obligation. This kind of attitude towards life is "the built-in temporality of all engagements".<sup>21</sup> On the other hand, one failure of the consumer society is the fact that every consumption is time-consuming, and that is a major concern for producers and sellers of consumer goods. Consumer satisfaction must be instant in a double sense - consumables should immediately provide pleasure "without the need for learning skills" (for the use of a given product) and "without long-lasting foundations", but satisfaction should end at the time when consumption expires and that time should be minimised. The need to reduce the duration of a given product/service is best achieved if consumers do not pay attention to it for too long and if they do not focus their desires on some object on the long term. Also, the desired effect of mass consumption is gained if consumers are "impatient, tense and restrictive; and above all, if they are easily excited and prepared to lose interest quickly".<sup>22</sup> In our modern

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<sup>19</sup> Dittmar, Helga, *Consumer Culture, Identity and Well-Being*, New York: Psychology Press, 2008, Pp. 27 (Translation of the author)

<sup>20</sup> Hamouda, Manel; Gharbi, Abderrazak, "The Postmodern Consumer: An Identity Constructor?", *International Journal of Marketing Studies* Vol. 5, No. 2. April 2013.

<sup>21</sup> Bauman, Zygmunt. "The Self in a Consumption Society", *The Hedgehog Review*, 1999. p. 37; Source: <http://www.iasc-culture.org/THR/archives/Identity/1.1FBauman.pdf> Retrieved: 02/02/2018.

<sup>22</sup> Same.

society, driven by an ever-faster way of life, spending often allows us to feel pleasure and happiness at least for a short time, and shopping often occurs as a remedy against stress and the way to overcome the monotony of everyday life. In that way, buying can be an exciting, careless and interesting way of solving problems caused by stress or boredom or simply a way of personal enjoyment in the form of awards for a well-done job or a way to deal with hardships at work. On the other hand, it is important to note that impulsive shopping can often indicate that such behaviour is the result of psychosocial disorders such as depression, anxiety, anger and the like.

By asking "What Is a Consumer?" we get some interesting answers. A consumer is a person who consumes and consuming means to use things to "eat them, carry them, play with them and otherwise causing them to satisfy one's needs or desires."<sup>23</sup> In developed countries of the postmodern world, money in most cases mediates between the desire of the consumer and its satisfaction, and in that case, being a consumer usually means adapting to most things that are predominant for consumption. However, it is important to emphasise that consuming also means destroying. This phenomenon can be explained in the following way: "In the course of consumption, the consumed things cease to exist, literally or spiritually. Either they are 'used up' physically to the point of complete annihilation, such as when things are eaten or worn out, or they are stripped of their allure, no longer arouse and attract desire, and forfeit their capacity to satisfy one's needs and wishes."<sup>24</sup> From another side, in a sense, we can talk about freedom of choice for consumers - any uncertainty they may have when purchasing and choosing products can be alleviated by professional advice, primarily by the advertising industry. The freedom of the consumer is, therefore, the most successful form of freedom for most people. It is "more real" than the freedom associated with the entrepreneurial age of capitalism where competition was destructive. This leads us to the conclusion that consumer freedom produces self-satisfaction, social integration and the reproduction of the system - that is: "The consumer market is therefore a place where freedom and certainty are offered and obtained together: freedom comes free of pain, while certainty can be enjoyed without detracting from the conviction of subjective autonomy. This is no mean achievement of the consumer market; no other institution has gone this far towards the resolution of the most malignant of the antinomies of freedom."<sup>25</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Bauman, Zygmunt. *Work, Consumerism and the New Poor*, England: Open University Press, 2005, pp. 23. Downloaded from: [www.questia.com](http://www.questia.com)

<sup>24</sup> Same.

<sup>25</sup> According to: Russell, Keat; Whiteley, Nigel et al., *The Authority of the Consumer*. New York: Routledge, 2004, p. 63. Retrieved from: [www.questia.com](http://www.questia.com)

The relationship between the needs of a consumer society and their satisfaction is based on promises and hopes for satisfying these needs. The needs will always be greater and never fully satisfied, but not unrealistic and impossible to prevent the desire for goods that is, in a certain way, promised. More precisely, the hope and promise of satisfaction is more attractive than merely meeting a certain need, which unambiguously represents, perhaps, one of the greatest paradoxes of postmodern society.

Given that consumers in the modern global society have all the advantages of modern technology and information resources, they should use it for a more reasonable approach in determining their needs and to take into account that producers adapt to them and their wishes. The central role in the global consumer culture is the role of the individual-consumer. This is particularly characteristic of the information provided by consumers by creating their Internet identities because, for producers, the prospect of predicting and possessing this information is one of the key business factors in the contemporary world.

## **Conclusion**

The development of consumer awareness and consumer culture is becoming more and more present in contemporary society. Without buying and accumulating material goods and using services, the contemporary individual-consumer begins to lose their sense of being and remains an unidentified entity, that is, without today's dominated identity in almost every part of the world - the consumer's identity. Consumerism is a culture of spectacle, where consumption is fun and its impact on consumer consciousness is achieved thanks to mass media.<sup>26</sup> Consequently, advertising companies through the media are "selling" a certain style and way of life consumers are seeking, and because of those aspirations, consumers enter a debt servitude in an attempt to align themselves with a high social class – the rich and famous. Marking the consumer life as a "fluid life", by fundamental analysis of the consumer identity as their product, we conclude that it is precisely the consumer identity that is dominant in the modern human's life. Consumption is fun and its impact on consumer consciousness is achieved thanks to mass media.<sup>27</sup> The dominance of the consumer identity and the growing presence of the fluid life

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<sup>26</sup> According to: Vukadinović, Maja, *Stars of supermarket culture: media glory in consumer society*, Belgrade: Clio, 2013.

<sup>27</sup> According to: Vukadinović, Maja, *Stars of supermarket culture: media glory in consumer society*, Belgrade: Clio, 2013.

is the cause of an increase in individualism, which on the other hand, affects modern man's growing sense of alienation. This trend has spread rapidly, and today it covers almost all developed societies. In this sense, the hypothesis that the development of consumer identity is most dominant in a large number of individuals in modern society has undoubtedly been confirmed. The constant search for modern man's individuality follows him throughout life and leaves little time for anything else. "The logic of consumerism is tailored to the needs of people who are trying to build, preserve, and refresh their individuality, and especially to face the aforementioned aporia of individuality."<sup>28</sup> Individuality in the consumer society is a privilege for those groups of individuals who have the choice of choosing identities in relation to those whose identity is predetermined, and that individuality is provided by the consumer identity. Fluid, that is, consumer life, functions in that it the role of the object of consumption is assigned to each of its fragments. A contemporary man to avoid the feeling of discomfort, due to the use of a product that, by the parameters of the fluid life, is outdated and unattractive with great speed and ease buys a new one. Consequently, each of these objects loses its value, usability and, most importantly, its attraction.

The emotional participation of individuals in the consumer society is a comprehensive component of every aspect of the life of an individual. "Liquid moderns are men and women who possess and are possessed by consumer culture (...) and they live their lives through the objects they buy and consume."<sup>29</sup> In that sense, we can also speak of a conditional sense of freedom, because by buying and rejecting things, an individual forms the identity he or she strives for. However, as a consequence of this, there is a general insecurity because without spending we cease to exist, and in the pursuit of individualism, an individual, unconsciously, again becomes a part of an ineffective mass (buyers mass). Forming a consumer's identity of a contemporary man occurs when he starts buying, using, and rejecting products and services of mass consumption. Building a consumer identity in many ways also affects interpersonal relationships, which means that the duration of marriage, friendship and all things traditional societies recognise as being of the highest value, within the fluid life as well as with consumer products, has an expiration date.

We consider it important, in the end, to point to the consequences the development of a consumer society, but also the consumer identity leaves on our society. As a country that was, not so long ago, affected by war actions, as well as the sudden transition from socialism to capitalism, Bosnia and Herze-

<sup>28</sup> Bauman, Zygmunt, *Fluid Life*, Novi Sad: Mediteran, 2009. Pp. 34.

<sup>29</sup> Blackshaw, Tony, *Zygmunt Bauman*, London: Routledge, 2005. Pp. 113. Retrieved from: [www.questia.com](http://www.questia.com)

govina is among the poorest European and world countries. That fact clearly shows that the purchasing power of our society is very low. However, according to world trends that welcome the formation of consumer identity, Bosnia and Herzegovina is not that far behind. The adoption of a consumer culture leads to enormous social differences, which ultimately results in a large number of citizens leaving these areas in search of a "better life" and the ability to work beyond the borders of their country to find the necessary self-confidence so they can form their desired identities.

The formation of a consumer identity greatly affects the disappearance of other forms of identity and their characteristics, such as the identity of an ethnic community, the national and religious identity, as well as traditional cultural identities. A consumer culture becomes dominant as a culture that does not know the physical boundaries or other characteristics of traditional societies. With the development of consumer awareness, a global society is created, which for the highest value recognises the mass production and consumption of material goods.

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