

## The Economic Dimension of Consumer Society

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### ABSTRACT

The most important player that led to the emergence of the notion of the consumer society was, undoubtedly, the capitalism. As for that the basic foundation of the sustainability of capitalist system, which aimed to make a profit and to renew constantly itself, was, the production. Moreover, the only way to be able to be sustained the production was, to pass through the consumption. Hence, the consumption-oriented activities occupied all the spaces of daily life and correspondingly, the advertising boards, encouraging to the consumption, were placed in everywhere from the logos on the clothes, to the billboards on the streets. The capitalist system, at the same time, with utilizing the sense of producing for consumption, constantly created new needs and so, it reproduced itself every once in awhile. After all, for the capitalism, there was no object or value that could not be able to be consumed. From this perspective, in this study, the consumer society were handled in terms of capitalism. Firstly, the definitions of consumption and consumption society were examined and then, the historical development of the consumption society phenomenon were explained and finally, the factors, stimulating the consumption society and the economic growth, were evaluated on the basis of capitalism.

**KEYWORDS:** Consumption, Consumption society, Economic growth.

### INTRODUCTION

There are some transition points, within the enormous diversity of which the humanity history and the society where he is included. These are; the transition from hunter and collector tribe to agricultural society, which symbolizes the transition of sedentism, the transition from agricultural society to industrial society where mass production, consumption and education dominated, and most importantly, the transition to the information society, which is also called as the post-industrial society. These developments in the field of production, which affected many people's lives in the world and radically transformed their daily experience, indirectly changed the needs and the consumption habits of the individual and nowadays, consumption, by becoming as a way of life, has turned societies into a consumer society.

When looked at the concept of consumption, in today's conditions, it has been assigned a number of meanings in addition to satisfying human needs and desires. The factors such as the proliferation of the mass production and the advancement of technology, have made people reach to products or services easier and faster. For this reason, the meaning of consumption has begun to be seen as an aim of a good life, which has been enlarged to invoke concepts such

as success, pleasure, entertainment and freedom. Moreover, with the increase in living standards, to be able to consume more, has turned into a sign of happiness and power and so, consumption has got out of the picture of just being an economic dimension anymore. Also, it has become an indicator, which shows consumers identity, social status and social class. The most important is; it has been a need category of itself for the consumer.

Undoubtedly that, capitalism, the free market and the mass media have been much effective in the development of the consumer society. Those actors, which provide people to seek the meaning of their life with the objects they consumed, recommend them to live their daily life momentarily and adopt the understanding of "live your life like tomorrow doesn't exist", have created the hyperconsumption and have made the consumption unavoidable today.

The fact that the consumer society has been spreading unstoppably all over the world, is the fastest and the most important change that the human kind, living without thinking of the future, has ever encountered. It is possible to say that, the tragic side of this important change is; the historical ascension of the consumer society has been much

effective in destructing the community and the environment, but it has been ineffective in providing a satisfying life for the people.

## 2. THE DEFINITIONS OF CONSUMPTION AND CONSUMER SOCIETY

### 2.1. What Is Consumption?

Consumption, which is a phenomenon based on as ancient as the human history, always comes out as an effective and decisive activity in the shaping of daily life and social life, from the past to the today's world. In parallel with economic and social developments, or the supply-demand balance in the economy, the importance of consumption in social life also varies. In this respect, despite the fact that the notion of consumption has a general description that can be accepted in every changing period and age, it has got different definitions, because of new values and norms changed in every period.

When looked at the dictionary meaning of the consumption word, it is faced with expressions of "being consumed or consumed" or "being opposed to the action of the production". It is possible to define consumption as acquisition, ownership, use or destruction of a product or a service to satisfy certain needs. The individual making this action, is called also the consumer (Yanıklar, 2006: 21). Consumption; it is a natural action that lasts from birth to death. While individuals are fulfilling this action, which is inevitable to live, they are of the opinion that they can achieve happiness and comfort. Mankind is in an effort to expand his activities related to consumption and to maximize the products, services which are concerned with consumption. It is apparent that he will give similar efforts also after this and it will be impossible to live without consumption for him (Odabaşı, 2013: 15). There are various and numerous needs of the person, who can not be self-sufficient in many physiological, biological, social and cultural aspects. All of the activities related to the satisfaction of these needs can be expressed as consumption (Torlak, 2000: 17).

The notion of consumption, according to Raymond Williams, means "destroying, spending, wasting and finishing" (Featherstone, 2013: 51). For Baudrillard (2015:143), consumption means that consumption of signs and symbols, not simple material objects. According to him, everyday life is now determined by the influence of objects, the display of household goods, the multiplicity of messages and goods rather than the other social interactions of people. Moreover, Baudrillard alleges that consumption is derived not primarily from nature (natural) but from culture area. For this reason, he interprets that consumption as a system of signs, which is organized by rules and codes rather than satisfying natural needs through goods and assets (Kellner, 1989:12-16).

Consumption is the satisfaction of needs and the reason of individual happiness. Jacques Lacan in his post-structuralist psychoanalysis thought that it had a similar relationship between the ideology of consumption and the romance ideology. According to him, just as the ideology of romance tells about the stories that are circled around a seeking, and the "love" in these stories, in the same way, the ideology of consumption is trying to tell a similar story. In romance ideology, love is handled as the most important emotion that solves all kinds of problems, like a magic wand. Love is the most important thing that completes humans' missing part and brings them a meaningful and precious existence. Also consumption ideology, on the one hand while it is trying to teach them the golden rule of life, "happiness is in consumption", on the other hand, it always tries to give the knowledge that something is missing in life and that can not be achieved to the happiness as long as this feeling is not satisfied. If it is not possible to live without "love", just as in the Romans ideology, it is never possible to be happy without consumption in the consumption ideology also (Storey, 2003:130-131).

According to Bocock (2014: 42-43), consumption should be seen as a phenomenon, which is placed in the production models of industrial capitalism. However, if it is desired to avoid an undeveloped, one-sided, economist approach to consumption analysis, the role of cultural values and symbols will also need to be emphasized. There is no way to ignore how much importance of the notion of capitalism for production and its associated consumption models, because the most important goal of capitalism as an economic and financial system is, to make a profit from the capital invested. Consumption, has been an integral element of modern capitalism so that it can continue as it is now. The simple and the obvious reason of this, is the fact that the goods produced can not be profitable unless they are sold for money. The capital, invested in the manufacturing industry must provide a proceeds from investment. This proceeds can only be achieved by selling goods and services with a certain profit. It is very clear that it does not make sense to continue producing of a commodity, unless it can be consumed and it can be made a profit from it. Therefore, the consumption economy also is as important as production.

It is not right to treat consumption as just an economic event. Consumption is a cultural phenomenon as much as being an economic one. Consumption, becomes a vital source of the culture of the period, of which consumption decisions are made. People, who grow up in a particular culture, see that this culture has changed throughout their lives: New words, new ideas and new styles. Culture evolves and people play a role in this change. Consumption, is where exactly the culture struggle is given and shaped (Douglas ve Isherwood, 1999:73). Therefore, consumption is now considered to be a cultural and social phenomenon and also to be an effect on identity, rather than being just an

economic phenomenon. Bocoock (1993: 10) says in this regard:

*“Consumption now affects the ways in which people build up, and maintain, a sense of who they are, of who they wish to be. It has become entwined with the processes surrounding the development of a sense of identity. As much it will remain an important social, psychological and cultural process, as well as an economic one.”*

## 2.2. What Is Consumer Society?

Consumption and consumerism defined as the ideology of today's world. The ideology is based on a wealthier life as a consequence of more production and more consumption. This praised prescription, espoused by supporters of free market economics, stands out as a valid ideology in today's world (Odabaşı, 2013: 18). The term of consumption society expresses that the societies organized around the "consumption" in the context of the consumption of goods and leisure time, rather than material production and service production. Even if the trends, emerging in the consumer society are controversial, it can be summarised as: increasing wealth, bourgeoisie, the emergence of a mass popular culture, the death of the social class, the emergence of the consumption sectors and the increasing of individualism (Marshall, 1999:768).

The consumer society is also, the society of learning to consume, of social training in consumption. That is to say, there is a new and specific mode of socialization related to the emergence of new productive forces and the monopoly, restructuring of a high-productivity economic system (Baudrillard, 1998:82).

In order that consumer society can exist and live, consumption should be presented by professional managers and consumed by consumers in market conditions, in price exchange relations. Consumption society is concerned with capitalist societies and can only be explained, conceptualized and examined when evaluated in this respect (Odabaşı, 2013:40). The mass consumer need, which can be predicted and directed before, underlies on the basis of the capitalist economic system. Marx states that as follows: "Capitalist society, by naturalizing needs, leads to the alienation of the things that man has created". According to him, while human beings have the objects in proportion of their needs "in the society of common producers", in this society, the needs, directed towards the other people are prioritized, rather than the needs for to material objects (İnsel, 1990: 25). To accumulate, to save or to invest, which are important for "puritan ethic", are meaningful and significant in nowadays, when "hedonic ethic" is dominant, because they guarantee that the future expansion of the consumer. Otherwise, these actions will be the disaster of the consumer society. Because consumer society is not a "savings wallet", it is a "credit cards' society". It is not a society of pending, or staying; on the contrary, it is a society that is living and seeking at now (Bauman, 1999: 50). In the "seeking society", the concept

of happiness is associated with consumption. When asked a question to the present day man, "What make you happy?", the answer is "to get everything that we desire". Consumption, providing them to do whatever they want and buy, provides a popular source of happiness to modern individual (Fromm, 1996: 90).

The consumer society needs its objects in order to be. More precisely, it needs to destroy them. The use of objects leads only to their dwindling disappearance. The value created is much more intense in violent loss. This is why destruction remains the fundamental alternative to production: consumption is merely an intermediate term between the two. There is a profound tendency within consumption for it to surpass itself, to transfigure itself in destruction. It is in destruction that it acquires its meaning. Most of the time in daily life today, it remains subordinate - as a managed consumptivity - to the order of productivity. This is why, most of the time, objects are present by their absence, and why their very abundance paradoxically signifies penury. Stock is the excessive expression of lack and a mark of anxiety. Only in destruction are objects there in excess and only then, in their disappearance, do they attest to wealth. At any rate, it is clear that destruction, either in its violent and symbolic form (the happening, potlatch, destructive acting out, both individual and collective) or in its form of systematic and institutional destructiveness, is fated to become one of the preponderant functions of post-industrial society (Baudrillard, 1998: 49).

Consumption society is often seen in the societies, where wealth, individualism and popular culture are enhanced, and social class boundaries are decreasing. For the creation of the consumer society, the policies, which make individual isolated, are applied. This is usually achieved through mass media (Bal, 2014:6 ). Baudrillard (1998: 34) noted the role of mass media in consumer society as follows:

*“What characterizes consumer society is the universal of the news item in mass communication. All political, historical and cultural information is received in the same...at once anodyne and miraculous. form of the news item. It is entirely actualized..i.e. dramatized in the spectacular mode..and entirely deactualized..i.e. distanced by the communication medium and reduced to signs..What mass communications give us is not reality, but the dizzying whirl of reality..the media do not involve us in the world but offer for our consumption signs as signs, albeit signs, accredited with the guarantee of the real.”*

The distinctive feature of the consumer society is, for people, the consumption has become in itself ultimately a target and a need, rather than for consuming to their basic needs. People spend their weekend excursions on hypermarkets instead of spending them on picnics or in parks. In these places, where thousands of various merchandise are available, they put them in their baskets, whether they need them or not. Especially working people

do not go shopping to meet their needs, on the contrary, they go shopping for getting rid of the stress of the week (Aslan, 1996: 14). In the consumer society, prosperity has become associated with consumption. The goal is, to launch the greatest amount of tangible or spiritual materials as much as possible and to provide to be consumed. Every day something new emerges, is consumed, yesterday wears out already for the next day and there can be found the newest things, offered to new likings along with new days. Almost; as they consume, they become happy and individual (Ilgaz, 2001: 329).

### 2.3. The Features Of Consumer Society

There are also some characteristics of consumer society as well as the approaches belong to it, According to Ekin (2010), Çınar and Çubukçu (2009) and Baudrillard (1998), these are as follows:

- Consumer Society builds identities largely out of things,
- obey the ‘consume now’, do not postpone the desire,
- economic growth depends on the consumption,
- the key issues of enjoying life are consumption of goods and services,
- to consume is the surest perceived route to personal happiness, social status and national success,
- you are what you own and the more you own, the happier you will be,
- in a consumer society, people use spending and materialism as a way to build a new ego or become a new person by buying products which support their self-image,
- to keep the economic machine moving, people have to be dissatisfied with what they have; hence, who they are,
- in a consumer society, consumption must be organized so production can continue,
- the demand for consumer goods has to be sustained and accelerated or the consumer society cannot survive,
- widespread lack of moral discipline; glorification of greed and material accumulation,
- everybody is a walking advertisement,
- things have symbolic meanings,
- social space is reorganized around leisure and consumption as central social pursuits and as bases for social relationships,
- mainstream economics believes that marketplaces are abstract, stripped of culture (except the culture of consumption), of social relations and of any social-historical context,
- a tension exists because the isolated, personal, private moment of consumption (purchase, use and enjoy), work within the home and cultural endeavours are seen by those engaged in them as private when they are actually inherently tied to global economic and political processes,
- commercialization of leisure and mechanization of the home (free up time and energy to shop and provide more things to buy),

- consumer choices (taste and style) are seen to be indicators of who they are as a person and of their moves within the games of class, prestige, status, hierarchy, fashionability,
- consumer culture at worst as an entity that manipulates its citizens (mass deception) or at best as a resource for their creativity and needs,
- consumer society is the religion of the market (a system of beliefs) co-opts aspects of our humanity and spirituality
- in consumer society, people eventually begin to think that things are in disorder, priorities are mixed up, moral center is being lost - so they spend more to cover up the fear,
- loss of cultural diversity via cultural homogenization,
- a consumer society is based on round the clock in consumer society,
- all problems have a material or money solution.

It appears that altogether the very spirit of consumer society dictates that consumers are beings, living in a material world. Consumers are encouraged to use their purchasing power to exercise their freedom and choose from a variety of goods to make their life more meaningful. Consumers’ sovereignty is presupposed. This freedom is not attributed to their civil rights but comes from the ability to make personal choices in the market that let them identify themselves. At this point the sovereignty of the king or queen becomes irrelevant in comparison to that of the consumer in the market (Gay, 1996: 76).

### 3. THE EMERGENCE OF THE CONSUMER SOCIETY AND CAPITALISM

One of the most important variables, affecting consumption are; the changes that occurred in the production system. For this reason, every matter related to consumption, needs to be explained by production. In other words, the revolutionary changes, which occurred in consumption, are a result of the changes that happened in production (Orçan, 2014:20). As mentioned above, consumption society has a capitalist structure. Thus, the emergence of the consumer society can only be explained by the historical process, in which capitalism has changed consumption patterns.

#### 3.1. The First Evolution Of Consumer Society And Capitalism

Capitalism is an economic system, in which investment in and ownership of the means of production, distribution, and exchange of goods and wealth, are held primarily by individuals and corporations (Sturken and Cartwright, 2001:191). Capitalism, the dominant economic system of today's world, is not just a "mode of production", "market economy", "free market", "private property" or "commodity production". Moreover, it is a struggle and exchange system, in which economic and social relations are rationalized, commercial activities are organized, and class conflicts are not missing, while at the same time including different dimensions of economic life. Capitalism, which comes to the forefront with labor and capital and aims to grow

constantly and to expand on a world scale, has aimed at bringing a market-based society since it emerged. This order, which should be seen, as a form of socio-economic formation as well as a commodity production order, it is not just the structure of the present world, especially for the West, it should be seen as a global way of life that originated from the West, but has been spreading to the world by changing and transforming it (Duman, 2014: 39).

The birth of historical capitalism, took place at the end of various social developments over a long period of time. The process that capitalism began to profit-oriented production and turned into a market economy started in the 18th century in England. During that period, Britain, because of having rich resources and realizing the industrial revolution, controlled a significant portion of world trade, began small business-level production, exploited many countries, hence it laid the foundation for a new economic system (Down, 2000:29). Capitalism began to spread with factors such as; the disturbance of feudal order; urbanization, the development of foreign trade and the spread of money (Jessua, 2005: 13-18). In 1725, the starting of having been used steam-powered machines in England, increased to the number of workshops and factories which made in small scale production and various clothing products, especially fabric, started to be produced there. After a period of time, increasing pressure on the supply of manufacturing products caused to a new process called industrial capitalism (Duman, 2014: 41).

Before the Industrial Revolution – that is, before the late 18th century in England, or the middle of the 19th century in the rest of Western Europe and North America – the vast majority of each country's population lived in rural areas and worked in agriculture. Their clothing and household possessions were extremely limited by today's standards and were typically made by household members or by artisans from the same village. Fashions, technological change, and social pressure did not drive people constantly to make new purchases; rather, individual material goods were used, with repairs if needed, for decades. Major items such as winter coats were expected to last a lifetime and more and were often passed from one generation to the next. In this period, a small elite, of course, had long enjoyed higher consumption standards and habitually bought luxury goods and services. Elite consumption created employment for small numbers of artisans and merchants, often clustered around the courts and trading centers of each country. However, purchases by the elite were not large enough to transform a predominantly agrarian economy. Rather, elite consumption depended on the existence of agriculture, since upper-class incomes were directly or indirectly derived from rents, taxes, or other payments extracted from rural areas (Goodwin, Nelson, Ackerman and Weisskopf, 2008:5).

With the invention of the steam-powered machines and Industrial Revolution in the first quarter of the 18th century,

and improvements in the steel industry in the early of 19th century, there was experienced major developments in railway and seaway transportation (Rosennberg ve Birdzell, 1992: 187). Simultaneously, as more production took place, more market were needed and this caused to a revolution in transportation. An important factor in the development of transportation in this period was that the iron used in the construction of ship, locomotive, wheel and railwas produced at less expensive. For this reason, in parallel with the developments in the iron and steel industry in the 19th century Europe, with the opening of new routes extending to the railways and inner areas, there was experienced to developments that would revolutionize in transportation and communication technology. Thus, the newly produced goods and equipments were able to find a chance to reach more quickly to new consumers, living even in the rural areas as well (Orçan, 2014:21).

In parallel with production, transportation and communication; through the birth of communication and media in the 17th century and the advent of modern advertising in the 19th century, modern consumption got new possibilities. Individuals, began to receive the news of a newly published book or cosmetic product with an object other than human communication. Most importantly, the manufacturer found to a different means of communication with the consumer. While fashion magazines, catalogs and journals were directing individuals to the consumption on the one hand, advertising on the other hand increased the power and importance of the press. In this way, the connections and relations between modern publishing and consumption were established. In this period, printed publications seemed to assume the mission of consuming in a sense (Orçan, 2014:21).

Another factor in the development and expansion of modern consumer habits was; the migrations to urban areas from rural areas. In the 19th century, mechanization in agriculture came about, depending on the industrial revolution. This development in agriculture, greatly reduced the population of agricultural workers and forced people to live in cities. Bocock (2014:25-27), asserts that modern consumption patterns were, to some extent, the result of living in metropolises that was formed in these cities and their suburbs.

### **3.2. The Forms Of Capitalist Production In The Mid-Twentieth Century**

#### **3.2.1. The mass production process, Fordism**

Another process, stimulating to the development of capitalism and the formation of consumer society was, the mass production systems. Towards the end of the 19th century, Henry Ford's serial automobile production system, for normal families, revolutionized the development of western capitalism. With this initiative, called "fordism" by A. Gramsci, not only was achieved to mass production but also to standardizing the products (Bocock, 2014:29-31).

Some authors consider that this development was one of the most fundamental factors in being spread of Western consumption (Fine and Leopold, 1993:65).

Fordism referred to the organization of production but also to a regime of accumulation or macroeconomic pattern of growth. Fordist mass production made possible mass consumption, generating a new norm of middle-class consumption based on relatively high wages and the production of relatively inexpensive, standardized products. The Fordist regime of accumulation included a variety of institutions to support mass markets and mass consumption, including public insurance and public assistance and a system of collective bargaining, which generalized the class compromise of relatively high and growing wages in return for labor peace throughout the core of the economy (Vidal, 2011:275).

As a capitalist system, Fordism, based on Taylor's “Principles of Scientific Management” theory. In this model, for the effective production, the labor process had to be broken into pieces temporally and spatially and then brought together and integrated. Thus, productivity would be ensured by specializing in a narrow field of production (Duman, 2014: 52). Henry Ford synthesized a new social life style with the Taylorist mode of production. The Taylorist mode of production was based on an eight-hour workday and a five-dollars fee principle and a two-days weekend holiday for workers. This means that the remaining free time of workers, who work 8 hours in the factory, should be reserved for the purchase of manufactured products. In order that the market to expand and to grow constantly, workers need to get "enough" wages, have plenty of spare time and spend the money that they earn on the market for consumption (Harvey, 1997:148). For this reason, in the 1920s, the working hours of workers in the United States were shortened and their wages were increased. These two strategies had been used as a way of transforming employees into consumers. In that way, consumption was no longer just an action specific to the elites as in pre-industrial period. On the contrary, consumption was anymore an action, practiced by the lower class of society also.

Besides the ordinary workers, new consumer groups also emerged during “Fordist” mass production and mass consumption period. These groups began to make a choice on what they buy. Through communication and media, brand images were placed in everything from unidentified soap powders to cars, drinks, cigarettes, clothing articles and kitchen utensils. The privileged target group was, young women and men, who were still living with their parents and working in highly paid jobs (Bocock, 2014:31).

To sum up, the fordist mode of production, as a socio-political phenomenon, revealed the condition that individuals were to be regarded as, in the context of the orientation from the mass production to the mass consumption, being assets that had to work to be able to produce and had to consume

to be able to live at the same time. In this system, people were considered as assets that were not important whom they were, were paid as much as work they did, and were valued as much as they spent to consume. Advertising, in the form of creating the mass consumption and production cycle, undertook its mass sales mission and markets, consisting of core families, whose consumption styles were similar to each other brought about marketing practice, oriented at the products were produced with the mass production. Briefly, it can be said that the consideration, consisting of this period was; "more leisure time, more consumption" (Cross, 1993: 40-41).

By the end of the 1970s, due to the burden, given to infrastructure investments and public expenditures by welfare state understanding, public finance was broken down and capitalism was dragged into a crisis. The crisis, by decreasing the capital's profit limits and employment, created massive unemployment and caused to the classic Fordist model to go bankrupt (Taymaz, 1993: 11). Also, the important matters in the form of Fordist production such as; the comprehension of massive production, the economic growth and profitability and the ignorance of the consumers in marketing, caused to the negativities, especially, in social environment (environmental pollution, deterioration of natural balance etc.). So, Fordism, due to lost its influence with the changes in the economic field, gave rise to the emergence of Post-Fordist mode of production as a new model of production (Yeygel, 2006:203-204).

### 3.2.2. The late capitalism; Post-Fordism

Fordism was associated with the mass production of standardized goods for consumption by “the masses”. Post-Fordism, by way of contrast, was associated with small-scale units of production producing non-standardised goods tailored to the tastes of particular groups of consumers: niche markets, market segments, targeted markets and so forth. The shift to post-Fordism, it was widely acknowledged, had come about as a consequence of technological innovations, particularly the micro-chip, in the productive process and in communications. Marketing professionals told that detailed market research could be readily incorporated into differential product design, suggesting that production was driven by consumer-derived information (Lodziak, 2002: 20).

Thanks to technological innovations, post-fordism made it possible to produce micro-scale, without requiring the establishment of large factories, and employed fewer laborers by using computers, especially robotics, in the production process. Firms tried to get more products at lower cost in a short time, to give importance to quality, brand, fashion and image and to bring produced products to the fore with their "image", "innovation" and "symbolic" values (Gorz, 2001: 44). Because Post-Fordism, primarily focused on the production of high-quality and sleek products, rather than mass production, it gave importance to

the manufacture of personalized products and led to the establishment of small-scale production facilities instead of factories. In addition, it asked for specialization and high skill in their own fields from workers, by tending to new technologies, flexible production and profitable products. Post-Fordism, therefore, as a production system, which based on flexible production, low cost, cheap labor, became prevalent more and more day by day.

In the period of Post-Fordism (late capitalism), corporations were multinational, goods moved globally, and consumers purchased goods that had been manufactured across the world. This means that the physical and social distances between the production and the distribution and consumption of most goods have grown even larger. For instance, much of the clothing that was sold in North America and Europe was manufactured by underpaid workers in Taiwan, Indonesia and India. Computers were constructed from parts made in Taiwan, Mexico and Silicon Valley, all very different and distant places. Late capitalism was also based more on the exchange of new forms of commodities such as; services and information rather than material goods. In this contemporary context, commerce was increasingly global and advertising was also produced for global markets (Sturken and Cartwright, 2001:197)

The most important aspect of post-fordist production was that the product was sold not only by its usage (utilization) field but also by its images and meanings. In this period, consumption stood out more than production, furthermore, it was given importance to leisure time and was emphasized to consume rather than to work. Needless to say, post-Fordism was portrayed as consumer-friendly. Frank Mort confirmed this when he stated that:

*“Advertisers and marketers are not simply the slaves of capital. They are the intermediaries who construct a dialogue between the market on the one hand and consumer culture on the other. But, importantly for the ideology of consumerism, ‘Product design and innovation, pricing and promotion, are shaped by the noises coming from the street’”* (Lodziac, 1995:12-19).

In other words, production is consumer-led. This means that the significance of post-Fordism (an economic phenomenon) for shaping consumer society without fear of being accused of economic reductionism. The economics of post-Fordism, after all, are consumer-determined! And, because this is assumed to be so, consumer products today are viewed as more likely to provide pleasure and meaning than was the case in the era of standardised production. Furthermore, consumption, it is assumed, has now become an arena of empowerment, an arena in which individuals are encouraged to express freely their desires. Fordism could never accommodate this – it was far too inflexible. While it was relevant to be critical of mass production, and the devious attempts of advertisers to foist their products on to ordinary people, consumer-led post-Fordism has removed the need to

approach consumption critically. Marketing now bows to consumer sovereignty (Lodziac, 2002:20-21).

In short, while passing through Fordism to Post-Fordism, it happened a tendency that wastoward from production and working culture to consumer culture, from product culture to image and brand culture and from functional consumption to symbolic consumption (Odabaşı, 2013:44). All of these developments, mentioned above, have led to cities becoming increasingly crowded places on the world scale, to live geographical mobility between countries and to spread the capitalist culture with an international quality (Macfarlane, 1993:263). Thus, it can be said that in today's world there has been no place left where capitalism can not enter.

#### **4. THE FACTORS THAT STIMUALED THE CONSUMER SOCIETY AND THE ECONOMIC GROWTH**

In the consumer society based on the capitalist system, the continuity of the production depends on the increase of the consumption. Thanks to, marketing strategies, which influence individuals' consumption decisions by encouraging them to consumption, the financial instruments that allow consumers to spend their future earnings today and also the production techniques, are created to the masses, who are directed towards to consumption. It should not be ignored by the fact that consumption and consumption society's frenzy is a product of supply-side economic policies. According to Latauche, who studies on the social effects of economic growth models, on the basis of the consumer society and the current economic growth; there are four important dynamics that can be summarized as; rendering products unusable, communication and media tools, borrowing system through credit and credit cards, and attractive consumption places (Dannoritzer, 2010).

##### **4.1. The rendering products unusable**

The main objective of supporting consumption with production forms is the rendering products unusable. It is possible to explain the concept of the rendering products unusable, as the whole of the production efforts that lead to the resale of products by being shortened their usage time deliberately. Today, technological developments and production methods are compatible with the rendering products unusable model. Almost all of the new products - especially the technological ones - are designed to leave their old places to new models, without it breaks down or wears down. Moreover, this change brings out as a necessity, rather than a choice offered to the individual. Because today, the extensions of newer versions of many technology products are not designed to be compatible with older products. Consumers are often deprived of the willpower of choosing the new released product because of it is better and more beautiful (Kadioğlu, 2014:63).

In terms of businesses, it is not rational for technology to work for longer-lasting and not self-renewing products.

What the rational is, the provision of productions that will ensure the continuity of the purchasing action, make purchasing attracted to consumers or force them to buy. Hence, the investments in the development of production technologies have aimed at generating new models with new extensions rather than extending the usage life of the products. It may be said that many of the products which are being used today, have a longer life than their last version (Kadioğlu, 2014:63).

Vance Packard, who is an American social critic and author, (1960: 55), in his book ‘The Waste Makers’, handled the concept of the rendering products unusable with two perspectives; as Rendering products functionally unusable and Rendering products perceptively unusable.

#### **4.1.1. Rendering products functionally unusable**

In this situation; the usage lifetime of a product is determined deliberately during its production phase. Rendering products functionally unusable efforts can be handled under four headings such as; to limit the usage life of products, to reduce the quality of the materials, to create incompatibilities between new versions and old versions, and to plan high repair costs (Packard, 1960:36).

**To limit the usage lifetime of products:** Here, when it is planned, a product breaks down or wears out at a given time, usually not too distant (Packard, 1960:37). For instance, in 1881 Thomas Edison's first bulb had a 1500 hours usage lifetime. In the productions occurred in 1924, the bulbs' usage lifetime was increased up to 2400 hours. However, with the concern that long-lived use would reduce sales, bulb manufacturers agreed to limit their production with a 1000-hours usage lifetime. Also, in a similar way today, the lifetime of some computer printers is limited by a chip, placed inside them. The product, after receiving a certain number of copies, written also in the its package, the chip enters the circuit and the printer becomes dysfunctional (Dannoritzer, 2010).

**To reduce the quality of the materials:** With this method, by being used poor quality material in the production phase, is caused to the product to be lost its functions in a short time. With this method, while enterprises provide cost advantages on the one hand, on the other hand, they also provide consumption advantage, by being consumed their products to consumers again (Kadioğlu, 2014:65). As an example for this case, it can be shown that in today, products, made from plastic become deformed in a short time.

**To create incompatibilities between new versions and old versions:** In this situation, the products' new produced models are performed incompatibly with the old models' extensions products. Today, most of the technology companies produce both tools and softwares. Tools and softwares are complementary goods. In order to use new software or software extensions, it is often necessary to

change the tool as well. This situation is a deliberate sales strategy. Nowadays, this model of rendering products unusable is seen quite frequently in the game consoles. For instance, every new game console, released by the PlayStation brand, does not run games that the previous console run. In addition, the revised versions of the games are produced in accordance with the latest model consoles and do not work with the older consoles also. Thus, the consumer is forced to buy a new game console to use the newly released game (Kadioğlu, 2014:65).

**To plan high repair costs:** Thanks to this method, in today's world, rather than repairing the products purchased, renovating has become a more widely used option. The reason of this; the product reparation cost is enough high to buy a new product when the product loses its functional properties and the spare parts and service investments of new products are not existed. In addition to this, due to the price advantage and ease of payment, the downsizing of the repair sector also makes buying of the new products attracted. For example, when the toners of many brands printers become dysfunctional, to be fixed them is as expensive as to get a new printer. Therefore, consumers may tempt to buy a new printer instead of buying a new toner (Kadioğlu, 2014:66).

#### **4.1.2. Rendering products perceptively unusable**

In this situation, a product that is still sound in terms of quality or performance becomes "worn out" in individuals' minds because a styling or other change makes it seem less desirable (Packard, 1960:38). The purpose of rendering products perceptively unusable efforts is; to ensure the continuity of consumption. In order that companies, investing in new model development continuously can sell their products' new models, they should be able to make their old models' customers become re-consumer. Moreover, new models are sometimes launched to the market by being made changes, just in their images rather than any functional improvements. Although a phone, not broken down or worn out, the desire of buying a new one, which is launched to the market, because of it has more beautiful and different appearance, can be an example of this situation. The important point here is, to provide the consumers feel themselves uncomfortable about using the old models of the product while the new models are existing and so, to direct the consumers to consumption again. (Kadioğlu, 2014: 69).

### **4.2. Communication and Media Tools**

The new communication technologies that are emerging in today, are coming into people's lives more and more, and changing their values, attitudes and habits with each passing day. In this period of restructuring capitalist production, communication and the media play a very important role. Today, almost every moment of human life is filled with media tools. It has become possible to see advertisement panels in every area such as; on the billboards, at home, in the gardens, at school, at work, on the



streets, on the walls of buildings, on buses, trams, taxis. Berger (1990: 129), refers to this case in this way: “In the cities in which we live, all of us see hundreds of publicity images every day of our lives. No other kind of image confronts us so frequently. In no other form of society in history has there been such a concentration of images, such a density of visual messages.”

It can be said that communication and media tools are a central component of consumer societies and capitalism. Advertisement is an instrument, placing a product on the market, maintaining its position, and providing it to be sold in this location. (Oskey, 2001: 67). Communication and media tools constitute the biggest profit share of media businesses. Media businesses, which need revenues of advertisement to sustain their existence, increase their media impressions to be able to increase their profit share obtained from here (Bal, 2014:5). In a similar way, advertising companies also think that the more they show advertisement to individuals, the more products will be bought. This is true in a context, because the more the human mind sees an object, the more they are familiar to the displayed object. The same reason, also prevails in advertisements. In this way; the advertised product is jogged a consumer's memory and is placed in there. Even if the consumer has not decided to buy the product yet, that product, from now on, will exist on a corner of his/her mind. In short, the frequency of impressions of advertisements has become actually a part of the mutual benefit policy for both advertising companies and media businesses (Bal, 2014:7).

According to Postman (2004: 145), the aim of advertisements is; not to reflect the quality and value of the product being advertised, but to make it feel that the consumer is qualified and valuable. Because the content of the advertisements focuses on the quality of the consumer, it tries to push consumer to make more consumption every time and to make him/her a loyal member of the consumer society. In this sense, the most important behavior expected from an ideal consumer is, to buy the each product advertised without waiting and without questioning. Thus, individuals, by becoming the slave of the consumption, yield to the objects' images and their symbolic values (Duman, 2014:102). Indeed, advertisements are the most important messages that encourages, enhances and sustains to consumption. These messages usually carry normative and ideological contents. Although consumers are often unaware of this fact, they behave to the content of the message appropriately. Advertisements; therefore, turn into a communication tool that reflects to carry meanings of symbols, images rather than the true characteristics of the objects. In this sense, actually, each advertisement functions both as a sided text with hidden messages and as a mirror of what people imagine (Aydoğan, 2005: 48-54). For example, while individuals are buying a car, firstly they purchase the impression and the image created by the warm family

atmosphere shown in the car's advertising, rather than the ease of which the car provides as a means of transportation. The image brings the object to be consumed almost magical, by awakening the subconscious of the individual, and activates the feeling of having to the object in the individual and thus, the individual is deceived. In this case, the individual succumbs to the image of the object that he/she bought. He/She will find out this situation, only after he/she has bought the product and has started using it but the damage has done already (Duman, 2014:160).

The reaching of advertisements to their goals, depends on using the right images and discourses. The images and discourses used, can be shown an alteration in terms of product type, areas of interest, popular culture, gender and age groups. For example, cartoon characters or famous child stars, who play in children's films are featured in the advertisements for children's product. These characters, become quality of reference that product. Also, this has become a sector for film manufacturers. Film manufacturers are getting huge revenues, by marketing their new created cartoon characters to brands (Bal, 2014:9). For instance, Sponge Bob, which is beloved by children, is mostly used in burgers and fast food advertisements because of its role as a grill player in the cartoon. Burger King, from time to time, also distributes Sponge Bob toys with children's menus (Çakır, 2013:151). Like this, many cartoon characters, by being used in advertisements, influence children and turn them in to a member of the consumer society.

The success of every advertisement is hidden in the advertisement's understanding of the society and the needs of that society and the dreams that the society wants to achieve. This is the reason why image and a social identity are promised to the target group in all advertisements. In addition to this, a sense of trust and a message of socialization is engraved in their subconscious. In this way; to consumers, it makes them feel that their dreams may come true and they may come one step closer to their dreams by the meta that they consumed. Furthermore, the consumers are convinced that they may get unlimited power, liberty and social glamour, while they are consuming (Hatıplı, 2016:108). Berger (1990:131) refers to this situation like this:

*“Advertisement proposes to each of us that we transform ourselves, or our lives, by buying something more. This more, it proposes, will make us in some way richer - even though we will be poorer by having spent our money. Advertisement persuades individual of such a transformation by showing us people who have apparently been transformed and are, as a result, enviable. The state of being envied is what constitutes glamour. And publicity is the process of manufacturing glamour.”*

Today, this is, especially common in advertisements for women. For example, famous figures are featured in the advertisements for cosmetic products produced for women

and it is stated that they maintain their appearance by using these products. In this direction, it makes the audiences feel that they can also get the chance to become famous, providing these products are used. But, if a famous person is not placed in the advertisement, absolutely, beautiful and often colored eyed women are placed in. Through this, it is tried to be explained that the other women also, might be as beautiful as the woman in the advertisement, provided that they used these products (Oskay, 2001: 47).

In addition to this, the other function of advertisements is also, to ensure that people desire the things, which is more and newer than what they have and, whatever their financial potential is to encourage them to want more (Uzoğlu, Bayçu and Uluyağcı, 2005:81). Because, the purpose of advertisement is to make the spectator marginally dissatisfied with his present way of life. Not with the way of life of society, but with his own within it. It suggests that if he buys what it is offering, his life will become better. It offers him an improved alternative to what he is. All publicity works upon anxiety. The sum of everything is money, to get money is to overcome anxiety. Alternatively the anxiety on which publicity plays is the fear that having nothing you will be nothing. Money is life. Not in the sense that without money you starve. Not in the sense that capital gives one class power over the entire lives of another class. But in the sense that money is the token of, and the key to, every human capacity. The power to spend money is the power to live. According to the legends of publicity, those who lack the power to spend money become literally faceless. Those who have the power become lowable (Berger, 1990:141-142).

#### 4.3. Credit And Credit Cards

One of the reasons for stimulating the consumer society and economic growth, is the credit cards. Credit cards are a kind of payment instruments that allow people to buy goods and services without carrying cash and provide them to pay for their goods, services that they bought after a certain period of time, or make an installment plan in terms of the interest coverage and thereby, offer them to the possibility of using credit and withdrawing cash (Yılmaz, 2000:4). In today's consumer societies, credit card usage is increasing day by day. Credit cards have become to be used by almost every segment of society, from students to retirees, from poor to rich, and people of all kinds and ages (Evans, 2004: 61).

Among the reasons why consumers prefer credit card can be explained such as; avoiding to carry cash, shopping easily, using interest-free loans for a certain period of time, cheque guarantee limit, withdrawing cash in overseas countries and obtaining from extended credit facilities (Çeker, 1997:1). At the same time, the credit card, as an alternative to cash and checks, is a payment tool, which is easy to carry and secure. Moreover, it can be said that credit cards are not only able to meet their cash needs but also provide respect for their holder. The credit card holder is not a person who is having in a difficult position paying for not having money at

hand, on the contrary, he/she is regarded as a person, who is accredited to him/herself, has credit worthiness and respected (Kaya, 2009: 118-123). In this regard, it may be said that the credit card is the most important tool of; reinforcing the individuals' sense of belonging to a certain class, reflecting their consumption practices, habits, incomes, statuses and therefore their positions (Duman, 2014: 98).

In the capitalist system, credit and credit cards are shown as if it were a natural right that every consumer should use. Those, who do not have a card or do not use a card, are treated like criminals. What is interesting here is that; even though the consumers do not have any income, they continue using credit card, by regarding that it is a right granted to them. Consumers often blind to it. Because credit or credit cards are strategic tools, providing people to spend without earning it. By means of these tools, banks intend to increase both the consumption and their profits (Duman, 2014: 99). Thanks to the credit cards, consumers, by doing installments, are pursuing a satisfaction that will never come to an end (Duman, 2014: 99). Because installment payment options, give consumers the opportunity to spend more than their purchasing power, by mortgaging their future incomes. Therefore, consumers, through the installments, have the opportunity to purchase many products that they can not buy them in cash. As long as consumers are clearing their credit debts, their credibilities are also discharging and so, it enables for the consumers to make new expenditures (Kadioğlu, 2014: 48). Basically, the capitalist system is also based on this sense. The sole purpose of the capitalist system is; to direct individuals to the consumption and the expenditure, not to the accumulation and the savings (Duman, 2014:99).

#### 4.4. Attractive consumption places

Another reason that stimulates the economic growth and the consumer society is the presence of the attractive consumption places. Centers, where shopping is performed in today's consumer societies, are taking an important place. With regard to consumers, these centers are virtually indispensable places. Everything, from restaurants to jewellers, cinemas, hairdressers, clothing stores, toy stores, bookshops, shoemakers, are gathered under a roof in these centers (Duman, 2014:91).

Attractive consumption places are giant places, which offer all kinds of goods and services to people. Endless array of products that can be offered and purchased there. Individuals, encountering different goods in these places, find themselves in an abundance of the limitless options. In this circumstances, the individual, whose purchasing practice becomes blunt and so, is having difficulty in deciding what to buy or not, can not even notice his/her real and artificial needs. What also, fundamental for the capitalist system is; to create the abundance of consumers who choose as a way of life, eating well, going after different tastes,

acquiring practical or entertaining tools and spending every moment of their lives by consuming (Kozanoğlu, 1999:23).

Attractive consumption places, on the purpose of, attracting perpetually more consumers to themselves, pulling the consumers out of the bother of the outside world and allowing consumers to stay there longer, have been turned into colored, luminous and eye-catching places (Ritzer, 2011:51). In shopping malls, especially, showcases are arranged in an eye-catching and an attractive way. Showcases are like giant screens that can not take consumers' eyes off them. In there, people's interests, requests, curiosity and desires, and most importantly, feelings of possession are caressed, provoked and stimulated. People, who succumb to their desires, are repeatedly strolling in these places for an all day long, with the intention of buying something constantly and having have more. Therefore, people lose their self control in the magical environment of the store and they become unconscious about what, how much and why they should take it. As they are fascinated by the colorful environment of the store, they will try to buy and to have more. Unfortunately, at the end of the day, they usually return their home, with a fool's paradise of having bought of many things that never passed through their minds while they were entering the store (Duman, 2014:94).

According to Ritzer (2000: 14-26), consumption places has been structured, not only to allow the consumption, but also to orient or even to force people to the consumption. For this to happen, nothing has been leaved up to chance. On the contrary, for consumers, to value their leisure time here and to satisfy their needs from here, everything is organized in a rational way, by being taken into account blow-by-blow. Purchasing action is not left to chance, through being exploited, especially, psychological and physiological impulses of consumers. For instance, the loudness and the tempo of the music in these spaces are influencing on the emotional bond that they create with the store, by relaxing or saddening the customers. According to a research result in this area, the slow music rhythms lead to make customers move more slowly than the fast ones. Compared to the fast ones, customers are spending more 38% times in the store by the slow music and, therefore, it raises the consumption too. The same can be said for the smell, which dominates the environment. The smells that are emitted the environment in the shopping centers, cause to stimulate people's hunger impulses and to stay them in the center longer. While the combination of fragrance and music is inviting customers to a bed of roses, the usage value of the goods remains in the shadow of the images in this magical environment (Arık, 2006: 119-120). Moreover, at that moment no one can think of the usage (intrinsic) value of the goods.

Consumption places are also considered as entertainment and show venues (Duman, 2014:144). Because, shopping today is one of the most popular ways of enjoyment and

relaxation in most modern cities. Entertainment is the unique notion for people, who work throughout the day in the work process that the capitalism is dominated and are looking for something to relax and to rest. Moreover; entertainment, created by the capitalism and filling up the leisure time of the employees actually serves again the working process. The entertainment, now adopted as a fulfilling of leisure time, is nothing more than a trap that actually prepares the individual for the next day (Adorno, 2007:68). The most important point in this order is, to pull the consumers' strings. For this reason, cinema halls, cafeterias, children's amusement parks, beauty and sports halls, clowns, magicians, important and special guests, festivals, mini concerts... all together, has structured the consumption and the shopping, which are hidden inside the entertainment. The interior design in the shopping centers together with the entertainment and show mentioned, is designed for the sands of time without by questioned. Somehow, an ordinary clock, showing the darkness of the air and the time elapsing, has been forgotten in a place where everything is considered (Arık, 2006:104).

Ritzer (2000: 27) refers to consumption places as "cathedrals of consumption". According to him, the centers in question, carry a feeling of collectivism of the kind provided by traditional temples. In these places, individuals visit to these places, with acting the same intention and the purpose, and at the same time, performing to similar rituals. Consumers, in this sense, have almost believed to consumption. Moving from Ritzer, the opinion that shopping centers (shopping malls) are places of worship for consumption societies, and shopping is a form of worship in these places, is, by going too far, another face of the truth virtually.

## CONCLUSION

The dynamism of economic regulations in the history of mankind, is the function of the demand. Demand-side productions have emerged as needs appears and have been put into practice to be met the needs completely. The developments, emerged after the Industrial Revolution, especially the standardization and the facilitation of production, have brought the end of demand-side production. This situation is the starting point of supply-side production and it is the place where the needs have begun to turn into the desires. Essentially, this point can also be considered as the point of formation of the consumer society in the corporate sense.

As the needs have turned into the desires and in the economy, the concept of the need has given it's place to the concept of the demand, a new era of consumption has begun under the supply-side policies. At this point, by having been given subliminal messages to people, with the help of Freudian theories, it was provided that they become just a consuming asset rather than an economic one.

Today, the aim of the people is, to consume rather than to satisfying their needs. Peoples' identities have established on the consumerism and consuming more. Even if every consumed material, which is advertised is not taken, it is being worked to have it. The motive here is not a need but an instant satisfaction. In other words, it is a temporary solution to the satisfaction of the desires. After consumption had taken place, the instant satisfaction was disappeared and making a new consumption to provide a new satisfaction have been; the aim of people to get money at this period (Hatıpler, 2016:95). The desperate side of this situation, is that the mankind, who has been the subject of life since the day it began to live on earth, have become the object of life. The man, who has become the object of life, is seeking for his happiness in the consumption, not in the main affairs of life. The man, falling into this dilemma, becomes happy at the consumption moment, but as the time is passing and the happiness is disappeared, he wants to re-consume with the thought to be happy again. There has been no way through the this dilemma. The end that awaits man, who can not find the way out from this dilemma, will be mostly suicides or unreasonable behaviours.

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