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During the past fifteen years we have seen an exponentially grown interest in consumption and consumerism not only in social sciences, but also in arts and humanities and popular discourse alike. In this process the focus of the topic has dispersed, and contemporary theories of consumer culture and consumer society appear more or less fragmented. In the 1990's, consumer practices were most often seen as matters of style, identity and culture. Recently, however, a growing number of writings have started to analyse consumption as economically rooted, politically divisive, socially cohesive or mundane and routine matter. Tim Edwards's critical textbook is an example of the latter kind. It focuses on consumption as a series of contradictions and inequalities on several levels.

The structure of the book owes somewhat to Gabriel and Lang's "The Unmanageable Consumer" (1995), particularly in the definitions of consumers by the various discourses surrounding consumption. While Gabriel and Lang's categorisation of a modern consumer results to a rather fragmented outcome however, Edwards limits the definitions more coherently into five dimensions. The consumer can be a *king*, a utilitarian decision-maker, a *victim* seduced by marketing and advertising, a *criminal*, either a kleptomaniac shoplifter or a professional thief, a critical *anti-consumer*, and a pleasure-seeker or *voyeur*. What Edwards points out is the increasing sense of contradiction that exists across all of these definitions of consumption. Can consumers be anti-consumers *and* victims, or both bargain-hunters *and* pleasure-seekers? Do affluence and money automatically make consumption pleasurable? Can a shopping experience be both rapturous and torturous?

These contradictions are discussed in seven chapters that are ordered (loosely) chronologically in relation to the study of the past, present and future of consumer society. First Edwards analyses various classical and contemporary theories of consumption. The different perspectives are evaluated sharply and critically, although almost too briefly, resulting in an unnecessarily compact body of text. However, several real-life examples and associations to modern consumer society help to keep the text accessible to undergraduate students. Various examples also illustrate the third chapter, which evaluates a consumer's interpretations of marketing and advertising. Edwards strongly criticises the trend towards equating marketing and advertising with the consumer's personality and lifestyle, as well as the relentless individualising of consumers, which is (still) popular in both sociology and marketing studies. The main conclusion of the chapter is very simple: the most important determinants for consumption and thereby the most relevant market segmentation strategies seem to be the traditional ones: social status, income, and access to consumption.

Differences between consumers in terms of social divisions, resources and access are evaluated in the following three chapters. The fourth chapter concerns questions of social policy and social divisions surrounding the differing positions of consumer groups in contemporary Western society. The chapter also discusses issues such as consumer activism, consumer protection and consumer crime. These are welcome topics, since the connection between the welfare state and consumption is overlooked in most writings of consumer society. However, Edwards only analyses the situation in the UK, and the Anglo-Saxon welfare state model. A comparison to other economies and welfare state regimes would have completed the picture of social divisions in Western consumer societies.

Chapter Six associates the different experiences of shopping with the inequalities and contradictions of consumer society, and does it very well. This chapter discusses the potential of consumption to empower and oppress various consumer groups. Here the main determinants for inclusion or exclusion are gender, sexuality and ethnicity. However, although these issues are important and interesting, with them alone the discussion remains one-sided. Analyses of other social indicators, such as age, life course or employment situation should have been included. Edwards mentions these only very briefly.

In the seventh chapter Edwards critically analyses the relationship between consumption and fashion, and sees fashion almost solely as a disempowering mode of production, which creates unparalleled rate of consumption and social division. Here, too, the analysis of social divisions overemphasises gender, sexuality and ethnicity. Another weakness in this chapter is the lack of basic theories of social and cultural dynamics of fashion, such as those of Simmel. The last chapter explores the relationship between postmodernism and consumer society. Edwards avoids straight criticism of postmodern theory, but still acknowledges the limits of postmodernism when trying to explain the politics and practices of consumer society: "...although postmodern society is of consequence consumer society, consumer society is not necessarily postmodern society." (p. 166).

Despite some weaknesses, "Contradictions of Consumption" is a well-written book, and a welcome down-to-earth alternative to several cultural and philosophical writings of consumption available. Although the writer's criticism towards consumer society is

slightly overdrawn in places, he also manages to crystallise something very germane: a consumer society is made of people consuming, and people want to consume, when they are hungry – for anything.

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The Consumer Society. Theory, Culture & Society. Theory, Culture & Society caters for the resurgence of interest in culture within contemporary social science and the humanities. Building on the heritage of classical social theory, the book series examines ways in which this tradition has been reshaped by a new generation of theorists. It will also publish theoretically informed analyses of everyday life, popular culture, and new intellectual movements. An Introduction to the Politics of Desire Philip Goodchild. Pierre Bourdieu and Cultural Theory. Critical Investigations Bridget Fowler. Consumption (Economics) Consumer behavior. Click here to see similar releases: V dni miatezhe i smut krovavykh : kazachestvo vo vremena Smuty v Moskovskom gosudarstve na rubezhe XVI-XVII vekov V.F. Mamonov. by V.F. Mamonov. ISBN: 5857162793 Author: Mamonov, V. F. (Vladimir Fedorovich) Publication & Distribution: Cheli?insk . [pdf, txt, ebook] Download book Contradictions of consumption : concepts, practices, and politics in consumer society / Tim Edwards online for free. By indiscriminately consuming as a society, this encourages the expansion of exploitation of foreign working classes. Bauman proposes post-industrial societies are governed by "aesthetics of consumption" rather than "ethics of production" (Cohen & Kennedy, 2007). Organisations such as Apple, Nike and similarly Primark are guilty of this system, the former two retailing premium priced products produced at the lowest cost possible cost, by attaching symbolic meaning to the products. Palgrave, Hampshire| Edwards, T (2000) Contradictions of Consumption: Concepts, practices and politics in consumer society. 2 pages, 706 words. Write an Essay That Outlines the View That a Consumer Society Is a Divided Society.

