Features of a Consumer Society

- build identities largely out of things
- the key issues of enjoying life are consumption of good and services
- to consume is the surest perceived route to personal happiness, social status ans national success
- activities that previously belonged in the domestic sector are being integrated into the market sector - this is necessary because households have been transformed from workers to consumers
- in a consumer society, consumption must be organized so production can continue
- features of this society are: widespread lack of moral discipline; glorification of greed and material accumulation; increase breakdown in family and community; rise of lawlessness and disorder; the ascendancy of racism and bigotry and priority of national interests over the welfare of humanity
- to keep the economic machine moving, people have to be dissatisfied with what they HAVE; hence, who they ARE
- everybody is a walking advertisement
- *things* have meaning
- the demand for consumer goods has to be sustained and accelerated or the consumer society cannot survive
- 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
- the consumer is placed at the center of the good society as an individual who freely and autonomously chooses, pursue choices through rational means and creates a dynamic society through market exercised power over economic institutions (consumer is king/queen - sovereign)
- there is a debate about the relationships between the private sphere (the home) and the public sphere (government and business). A new dimension to this is the civil society sphere.
- a relationship exists between the individual and the collective (moral and ethical ramifications)
- the relationship between *economy, society* (a group of people united in a relationship and having some interest, activity, or purpose in common) *and culture* (something immaterial, as a style, values or philosophy, that is passed from one generation to another) *is strained*
- there is a tension between the explosion of productive forces and the objective consumer culture AND the inability of members of the culture to assimilate it, leading to alienation and isolation
- modern progress will produce human unhappiness if it produces only material wealth

- another tension exists because the isolated, personal, private moment of consumption (purchase, use and enjoy), work within the home and cultural endeavors are seen by those engaged in them as PRIVATE when they are actually inherently tied to global economic and political processes
- central to the evolution of a consumer culture is the commercialization of leisure and mechanization of the home (free up time and energy to shop and provide more things to buy (commodification - turning social activities and emotions into economic activities - measure lives by money)
- peoples 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
- is the consumer culture an entity that manipulates its citizens (mass deception) or a resource for their creativity and needs?
- consumerism is a way of living which locates the meaning of one s life in acquisition, ownership and consumption (used to mean a contagious disease - galloping consumption)
- the religion of the market (a system of beliefs) coopts aspects of our humanity and spirituality
- advertising, packaging and marketing are used to produce consumers of products whose need it illusory because the machine has made us feel inferior, inadequate and needy
- fulfillment through materialism is not sustainable or even attainable
- excessive consumerism leads to pollution, hazardous wastes, exhausted resources, irreversible environmental damage, spiritual withdrawal and an increased gap and growing tension between the haves and have nots
- unchallenged, materialism will co-opt our physical lives, our community and our spirit because it gives us a misleading sense of being in control and secure (short term)
- products are made psychologically obsolete long before they physically wear out
- consumerism is manifested in the chronic purchasing of new goods and services with little attention to their true need, durability, country of origin, working conditions or environmental impact
- in a consumer society, people eventually begin to think that things are out of whack, priorities are mixed up, moral center is being lost - so they spend more to cover up the fear
- the system is dedicated to the proliferation of superficial (what appears to be but is not) variety
- loss of biodiversity is paralled by loss of cultural diversity via cultural homogenization which is covering everything with a blanket of sameness shrouding the uniqueness
- technology has left us isolated with no sense of belonging (it has cocooned us the extent that we are blinded to our destructive ways)
- you are what you own and the more you own, the happier you will be
- a consumer society is based on round the clock living and we were not biologically designed for this
- the trappings of affluence can turn into traps
- leisure and shopping are becoming increasingly fused
- in a consumer society, all problems have a material or money solution

- 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
- in a consumer society, people can be said to be under the influence of the religion of consumerism; ironically, consumerism offers no refuge for our lives
- if a consumer society sees consumers as sovereign, then these people who waste, squander and destroy are sitting on the throne!
- some say that, in a consumer society, consumption has replaced work as people s central life interest (ironically we have to work in order to spend)
- modern consumer culture has been admonished because
  a. large sections of the world population are excluded
  b. material prosperity fails to being happiness
  c. the sacrifices entailed by producers are unacceptable
  d. materialism compromises spiritual values
  e. mass culture is vulgar
  f. environmental impact is horrific