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## Consumption in the Developed Society and the Need to Change the Business Philosophy of Marketing

Konsumpcja w społeczeństwach krajów wysokorozwiniętych,  
a konieczność zmiany filozofii marketingowej

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**Abstract:** Consumption is a social activity, one of the objective prerequisites for better living conditions for people, and at the same time an important prerequisite for the functioning and development of a market economy. The study reveals that the efforts of many actors in the economy to make a profit are associated with the growth of consumption, with the development of a consumerist life strategy and a consumer culture. Consumption, on the one hand, allows individuals to liberate themselves, to express themselves, it is an expression of individualisation, but it is also a space for manipulation. In this context, attention has been drawn to certain forms of modern marketing which not only influence consumer demand or consumption, but also their lifestyles and identities. Alongside this, they promote consumerism, consumer culture and, in the long term, threaten sustainable development. In order to improve the quality of life of present and future generations the need to rethink some modern types of marketing and to change or reform the current marketing business philosophy is justified.

**Keywords:** consumption, economic growth, modern forms of marketing, sustainability, quality of life

**Streszczenie:** Konsumpcja jest działalnością społeczną, jednym z obiektywnych uwarunkowań wyższego standardu życia, a jednocześnie istotnym warunkiem funkcjonowania i rozwoju gospodarki rynkowej. Przeprowadzone badanie ujawnia, że dążenia wielu podmiotów gospodarczych do osiągnięcia zysku wiążą się ze wzrostem konsumpcji, rozwojem konsumpcyjnego podejścia do życia, a wręcz kultury opartej na konsumpcjonizmie. Konsumpcja z jednej strony pozwala jednostkom na wyzwolenie się z ograniczeń i zademonstrowanie swojej indywidualności, ale jednocześnie stanowi on przestrzeń podatną na manipulację. W tym kontekście zwrócono uwagę na pewne formy współczesnego marketingu, które wpływają nie tylko na popyt czy konsumpcję, ale także na styl życia konsumentów oraz kreowanie ich tożsamości. Taki marketing promuje kulturę konsumpcjonizmu, a w dłuższej perspektywie zagraża zrównoważonemu rozwojowi. Aby poprawić jakość życia obecnych i przyszłych pokoleń, wydaje się uzasadnione, by ponownie przemyśleć niektóre nowoczesne metody marketingowe i wprowadzić zmiany do obecnej filozofii marketingowej.

**Słowa kluczowe:** konsumpcja, wzrost gospodarczy, nowoczesne formy marketingu, zrównoważony rozwój, jakość życia

## Introduction

A developed society relies on an economy that tries to continuously increase economic growth and efficiently meet human needs. This is an important prerequisite for the members of this society to have a good quality of life. This should be supported by marketing, which is both a social and a management process. Along with the expansion of consumerism, contributing to the increase in socio-cultural burdens that are already threatening the life of people on Earth and the sustainable development of mankind.

Many entrepreneurs hope that marketing as a method of doing business will help them gain new markets for their goods and make the highest profit possible. The question remains to what extent they also take into account whether people's needs are being met. Other questions also arise. For example, whether it is responsible to put into practice forms of modern marketing that encourage people to consume more, while ignoring the fact that increasing consumption threatens the quality of life on Earth and the long-term sustainability of life.

In particular, some modern forms of marketing that encourage consumption in society are proving to be harmful. There is therefore a need to reflect on modern marketing and at the same time the current business philosophy of marketing.

The study pays attention to consumption in a developed society, which is also supported by the economy. It assumes that consumption is an important prerequisite for the functioning and development of the market economy that underpins this society and is also one of the objective prerequisites for a good quality of life.

We do not question the need to develop the economy, especially for the sake of human development. However, together with the mentioned authors, we question whether the current economy can increase and expand production and consumption in such a way as to benefit the people of today, to meet their real needs, and to improve

their quality of life, without compromising the satisfaction of the needs and the quality of life of future generations.

Based on the theoretical work of several authors, we show how consumption determines the lives of contemporary people in developed societies and what threats are associated with its increase.

The study is based on qualitative research, mainly on theoretical analysis (content, critical) of scientific studies and other texts from several fields of social sciences, especially some works of leading representatives from the field of sociology, economics and marketing. On the basis of these, the consumption is presented primarily as a social activity that significantly affects the quality of life of contemporary human beings. In developed societies it is an expression of individualisation, but at the same time it is also pointed out that consumption in these societies is also a space for manipulation. In this context, attention is focused on some forms of modern marketing that are currently contributing significantly to increasing consumption, shaping consumer lifestyles, influencing the formation of human identity, etc. Consumption and thus consumerism is promoted in developed societies, especially with the help of modern types of marketing. We point out the unsustainability of some forms of marketing as they seek to promote consumption without taking into account the real needs of people, natural resources and the environment.

In order to ensure a good quality of life for present and future generations, we propose to reconsider modern types of marketing. Some of those types, especially aggressive marketing, are based on emotional manipulation, encourage impulse buying and can lead people to excessive buying of goods they do not need, thereby increasing consumption. We describe these marketing techniques as irresponsible with regard to current and future consumers. Critical reflection on the promotion of consumption by some forms of modern marketing results in an argument for the need to change or



reform the business philosophy of marketing. This is because we assume that if marketing continues to be guided by economic logic, consumers will lose their sovereignty, although some will not be aware of this, and at the same time, there will be unnecessary production of goods and services, which will ultimately threaten sustainability.

### **1. Economy Focused on Economic Growth, Promoting Consumption and Consumerism**

There is no doubt about the promotion of consumerism and a consumerist life strategy in today's developed society.<sup>1</sup> This is largely due to the current economy, which J. Šmajs describes as predatory. As he states, the idea of economic growth is thus incompatible with nature, which we consider to be the superior host system of culture (Šmajs 2014). The predatory economy is associated with the irrational management of natural resources, with the burden on the environment, and represents a serious obstacle to moving towards a more sustainable future (Singh et al. 2024).

Several authors of philosophical, sociological, cultural and economic studies (e.g. Meadows et al. 1972; Juvin and Lipovetsky 2012; and others) point out that the economy in the long term is not able to provide people with the conditions for a quality life, or even their survival. Among other things, this is because its development presupposes the growth of consumption, which is not only due to limited natural resources, but also to the planet's limited ability to cope with waste.

H. Librová (2003) even explicitly states that the wastage inherent in consumerism is a necessary condition for the growth of the economy. In this context, the issue

of sustainability<sup>2</sup> is increasingly becoming one that concerns us all.

We consider the main problem to be the fact that many actors, especially those in the economy, do not perceive or overlook the fact that, along with increasing production and the sale of products, the number of consumers is growing, sometimes at the cost of harming people and other values on which the continuation of life on Earth depends.

But the development of a society that relies on a market economy needs consumers. The economy thus needs to promote consumption and consumerism<sup>3</sup>, which becomes an important task, although a tacit one, especially for marketing. Through marketing, which is generally understood as a business method, the needs of the target market are to be met for profit. Modern marketing is not only intended to help satisfy needs but also to stimulate people's needs. Satisfying them is in many cases more important for the functioning and development of the economy than for the consumers themselves. Consumption of both material and non-material goods is increasing, although not equally among the members of society.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> According to the Brundtland Report (Our Common Future), sustainable development or sustainability is understood as meeting the needs of present people without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (WCED 1987, 16).

<sup>3</sup> Some distinguish between consumption and consuming. From a sociological point of view, consumption in the broadest sense of the word is the process or result of satisfying needs in which material and immaterial goods are utilized, depleted, "consumed." Consumption is a mean to achieve something, but if it becomes the goal of life, it is referred to as consumption (Sociologická Encyklopedie 2020).

<sup>4</sup> In the 1980s of the 20th century consumption gradually began to replace production and became the main differentiating mechanism in society. U. Beck pointed out that instead of "class worlds," "unequal consumption styles" are emerging (Beck 2011, 125).

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<sup>1</sup> Countries are considered developed if they meet certain socio-economic criteria (a sufficiently developed economy, skills criteria, GDP/GNI per capita, the level of industrialisation of the country, etc.). Developed countries also share other common characteristics (Boyle and Velasquez 2024).

## 2. Consumption in a Developed Society - a Space for Individualisation and Manipulation Through Some Types of Modern Marketing

Consumption, which is the process of appropriating and using products and values to satisfy needs, is increasingly penetrating the value patterns of a society that is described as consumerist. In such a society, every aspect of social life is linked in some way to consumption.

In today's developed societies, consumption of material and immaterial goods is on the increase, and a consumer culture or consumerism is developing, which influences people's way of life, quality of life, value orientations, and the system and structure of their needs. Consumerism, is associated with excessive consumption and wastage (Librová 2003), with human efforts aimed at the consumption of material and non-material goods (Chorvát 2015), with the idea that the purpose of human life is to consume, to allow for a constant escalation of consumption, which will solve all the problems of both personal living and social coexistence (Glossary of Sustainability terms (Hanusin et al. 2000)).

There is a doubt that consumption can solve both individual human problems and societal problems. And anyway, we have no guarantees to what extent, if at all, it improves the quality of life<sup>5</sup> that is at least the quality of life in terms of perceived standard of living, the degree of satisfaction with one's life, the perception of well-being in a particular community and other qualitative criteria. However, we are inclined to the view that in developed societies the quality of life is under the dominance of such consumption (Laluha and Dinuš

2018). Consumption in these societies more or less influences the lifestyle<sup>6</sup> of some inhabitants (individual developed societies differ). It is based on excessive consumption of material products, and for this reason it is referred to as "consumerism." Consumption has become for them a way of life, and for some people it even constitutes the meaning of human life (Bauman 2008; Mravcová 2012). Modern marketing has a great deal to do with this. Also, thanks to it, a "culture of over-consumption" has developed and for the so-called hyper-consumers consumption has become more important than need. On a planet of consumers, we consume more and more services, and we consume them everywhere (Juvin and Lipovetsky 2012). Increasingly, we are turning into consumers, and some of us are even choosing to prolong our lives or improve them in some way.<sup>7</sup>

Consumption is thus certainly not only important for the functioning and development of the economy but is more or less important for the individual members of societies. It enables them to satisfy a variety of needs, to express ethical, aesthetic, political and other preferences, and to relate to their surroundings.

It has been argued that "consumption is important for the process of individuation" (Smart 2010, 33). According to the followers of the individualization model, we understand it in the sense of greater autonomy, in the sense of expanding the individual's room for manoeuvre. Individuals have the freedom to choose their lifestyles, which they "largely make up as a jigsaw puzzle of the choices offered by contemporary consumer society. From these options, depending on their characteristics, they choose, and

<sup>5</sup> The concept of quality of life is a synthesising concept defined by the most general indicators. Currently, there are several conceptions of quality of life, because quality of life is the result of the interaction of social, health, economic and environmental conditions that relate to human and social development with a non-linear but synergistic effect (Smolková 2023).

<sup>6</sup> Lifestyle also expresses the values and interests of an individual, group or society. Lifestyles are shaped by the roles they occupy in society. In interactions, in the material and physical environment, in behaviour, etc. (Sociologická Encyklopedie 2020).

<sup>7</sup> Nowadays, not only physical, but also cognitive, social, etc., "human enhancement" is being considered. Transhumanists are trying to overcome "human" limits (Plašienková et al. 2022; Višňovský 2015).

thus shape their lifestyles as a way of their own life self-fulfilment” (Sopóci et al. 2019, 61). They define their lifestyles for themselves by choosing from the products and services on the market.

In a developed society we find unequal consumption styles. Individuals differ from each other, for example, in their choice of clothing, food, beverages, leisure activities, and consumer goods, which erases the boundaries of previously bounded status groups. Consumption also plays a significant role in the formation of human identity<sup>8</sup> and, as already mentioned, has a significant impact on the quality of life of individual subjects. The consumer society is the context in which collective and individual identity<sup>9</sup> is formed. Particularly in rich countries, we are currently witnessing a shift from an identity based mainly on a person’s position in the socioeconomic (class) structure, to an identity that is based mainly on lifestyle and consumption behaviour (Chorvát 2015). As already mentioned, consumption in developed societies becomes an important differentiating mechanism.

In contrast to the proponents of the individualisation model, who share the view that personal identity is formed freely, just like lifestyle, i.e. by free choice, the second group of thinkers believes that contemporary people do not decide their lifestyle freely and consciously (Juvin and Lipovetsky 2012; Chorvát 2015). The view has even emerged that “there is a real danger that the economy and consumption will create (or are already creating) a virtual quality of life<sup>10</sup>, which they

impose as a desirable model of consumption on the consumer – the manipulated citizen” (Laluha and Dinuš 2018, 13). Other representatives, among them prominent sociologists, also point out that the lifestyle or way of life of the members of a society is largely determined by the market (Bauman 2000; Giddens 1991). According to A. Giddens, this is particularly the case for members of the lower class or members of the underclass, for whom the possibilities to consume are severely limited.

We are inclined to the opinion that not only lifestyle and way of life, but also the identity of the contemporary person in the developed society is largely determined by the market, more specifically by marketing, and in this context, we also wonder about the fact that its formation and even manipulation takes place. It is no coincidence that identity together with image are among the basic concepts of marketing, and both concepts can be associated with, for example, a product, a person, a brand and, at the highest level, a company (Žažová 2012, 65). In order to increase both sales and profits, modern marketing methods are applied in the market and thanks to them, the goods and services offered become a promise of satisfying needs and ensuring a better quality of life.

Marketing, which is a social and managerial process as well as a business method, can more or less determine people’s decision-making. An important role of marketing is to “seduce” or encourage today’s people to consume, including through the creation of pseudo-needs<sup>11</sup>, thus influencing not only consumer demand or consumption, but also their identity. Librová (2003) even referred to the consumer as a slave to never ending pseudo-needs. The creation of both

8 On the role of consumerism and lifestyle in identity formation (Giddens 1991; Bauman 2004).

9 For example, freegans are a collective identity, with their individuality expressed by the fact that some of them are vegetarians, others are vegans, and so on (Lojďová 2014).

10 Marketing has an impact on creating virtual quality of life. Just as virtual reality is a generalized term for any type of experience that essentially places the user “in” another world or dimension, a computer-simulated environment, virtual quality of life is presented by using a computer. For example, with virtual reality, you can immerse users in the world created by

your brand. There is even an elaborated Virtual Reality Marketing Strategy. (Novak 2012; Duncan 2024).

11 Pseudo-needs, or false needs (oppositum – true needs) are artificially created needs imposed on consumers by the market... Already T. Adorno and M. Horkheimer pointed out that capitalism creates a culture based on false needs (Marcuse 1987).

pseudo-needs and consumer lifestyles can thus be seen as either an intentional or unintentional goal of some types of modern marketing. Although this is not universally true. It cannot be denied that modern marketing, in the contemporary world has a significant role to play in meeting business objectives, but also in meeting the needs of many consumers and the needs of society. Its effectiveness is multiplied by using mass media to drive sales and reach the widest possible audience. In particular, virtual marketing uses digital technologies and telecommunications to promote products or services and enables a quick connection with a global audience. With the help of websites, businesses can reach out to individuals all over the world (Sela 2024).

Despite the fact that some declare that modern marketing is able to utilize all the capabilities of businesses to provide the best for the customer, and thus foster growth, that marketing is most successful when it is built around the customer, and customer experience, rather than internal structures (Armstrong et al. 2020; Scollans 2020), there is no doubt that modern marketing encourages many potential consumers to consume unreasonably and to increase their consumption. It is even sometimes the case that some forms of modern marketing restrict consumers' freedom of choice, play a part in shaping consumer lifestyles, influence the formation of their identity and their overall quality of life. This confirms the fear of the danger that the economy and consumption will create, or are already creating, a virtual quality of life.

We also see a problem in the fact that many customers or consumers are virtually unaware that their choices and decisions are determined by the interests of retailers and producers. They are only seemingly making their own choices. Modern marketing, which is developing alongside modern technology, is supporting not only demand, sales, but, above all, consumption. Today, its effectiveness is multiplied by mass media (communication through print, broadcast media

and the internet, smartphones, tablets and other devices). It seeks to reach the widest possible audience, attract new consumers and drive sales.

### **3. Irresponsible Marketing - a Barrier to Consumers' Quality of Life as Well as an Obstacle to Sustainability**

We consider as irresponsible the marketing which, in the interest of higher consumption and especially in the interest of the highest possible profit, significantly contributes to the creation of a consumerist lifestyle of a large part of the population, while at the same time contributing to the damage of the environment and nature, which in the long run worsens the conditions of people for a quality life.

An irresponsible type of marketing is "aggressive marketing," which relies on *aggressive marketing* practices or aggressive business practices to "push" customers to buy immediately. Instead of offering enough information about the product or service and leaving the decision up to the customer. While it may be effective in generating short-term sales and increasing revenue, it may also contravene both legal and ethical standards, and so may be damaging to customers, competitors, as well as the reputation of the business, etc. It may take the form of, for example, telemarketing, junk emails, pop-ups, intrusive videos, but also cold calling, false advertising, negative marketing, guerrilla marketing, etc. (Hashem 2023). Such and similar practices mislead and harm consumers. Apart from that, we also encounter more serious cases where they have a negative impact on their health (UNICEF 2023). As stated, "Aggressive is so much to be attracted to at any price, and, most importantly, to keep the attention of consumers, with the intention of dag and interested in buying" (Stošić Mihajlović and Trajković 2019, 9).

The aim of aggressive marketing is not to satisfy the real needs and desires of people in societies, but to manipulate them. We are inclined to support the view that

aggressive marketing can be a source of an ethical dilemma, and companies should be careful not to violate ethical or legal standards in their marketing activities. For example, not to make false or misleading claims, not to use deceptive advertising, not to engage in unfair competition practices, etc. (Hashem 2023).

Aggressive marketing relies on intrusive marketing tactics and some customers under its influence increase consumption and adopt a consumerist lifestyle. Of course, depending on what their personality characteristics are, for example, how aware they are of the influence of marketing on their decision-making, how well they can cope with aggressive advertising, false free offers, etc.

One of the reasons why we consider some marketing practices to be irresponsible is that they are based on emotional manipulation (inducing feelings of fear, guilt or pity, arousing desires), which should lead consumers to make decisions based on emotions, even at the expense of rational thinking. Consumers are also easily influenced to purchase goods they do not need. For example, aggressive marketing encourages so-called *impulse buying*, *compulsive buying*<sup>12</sup>, but it can also lead to addiction (*shopoholism*, or *obsessive shopping* or *oniomania*), which manifests itself in the fact that a person has a strong urge to buy, constantly, even if they do not need the things they are buying at all (Szkanderová 2017). It is based on the fact that consumers are increasingly immune to traditional marketing activities and register them in a state of so-called *perceptual blindness*.

Such marketing relies on the use of bold tactics – such as unsolicited emails, spam, misleading advertising and misleading sales tactics, etc. Similarly, manipulative

types of marketing include *buzzmarketing*, *ambush marketing*, but also *neuromarketing*, *aroma marketing* and *hidden advertising*. Although some of them try to achieve the greatest possible positive impact on customers. For example, aroma marketing in the sense of attracting new customers and retaining old customers by using a pleasant aroma (Berčík et al. 2020), with the main objective being to sell and ensure prosperity, although such marketing may not directly harm customers. It can contribute to a better quality of life for consumers, although some questions arise. For example, whether aroma marketing or other types of modern marketing do not create pseudo-consumption in customers and then motivate them to satisfy it.

Marketing is even used to promote green consumerism, which is considered a sustainable business concept (Srinivas 2015). It shall promote environmentally responsible consumer choices and thus actively contribute to the demand for sustainable and environmentally friendly goods and services. And also, for some producers, retailers and consumers, green consumerism represents a way to engage in pro-environmental, sustainable business. In this sense, in fact, green consumerism offers new profit opportunities. Green consumerism masks its market-driven origins under a thick layer of morality-packaging: “if you buy this product, you can help to save the world” (Sandilands 1993, 45).

Green production implies “green purchasing” or “green shopping,” but it raises the question of whether the products that consumers purchase through these purchases also fulfil the qualities that are claimed by the marketing tools. More specifically, whether they are truly environmentally friendly products whose production is energy-efficient and has a minimal negative impact on the environment.

We are inclined to the view that: ‘Even eco-consumption is consumption’ (Michalíková 2019). Marketing that promotes green purchases or eco-purchases, promotes

<sup>12</sup> Impulse buying is defined as a sudden urge to make an unplanned purchase, and compulsive (compulsive) buying is planned shopping to temporarily relieve an unpleasant tension. For some individuals, shopping may be a way to escape negative feelings (anxiety, boredom depression, anger, self-critical thoughts, etc.) (Tancsáková 2024).



eco-consumption, while sometimes consumers are manipulated. When some products are marketed as “sustainable,” while sustainable development is not really supported by companies<sup>13</sup>.

The fact is that eco-consumption is now becoming the new face of many companies, some of which are just changing their sales tactics. In doing so, they rely only on general environmental claims, and the information on sustainable products is not sufficiently substantiated.

It can be agreed with Lipovetsky that ecology has now become a factor of production, and an ecological culture (nature conservation, balanced management of ecosystems, confusion of industrial development with environmental protection, etc.), which is based on so-called “ecological hedonism,” has become widespread. Although it has succeeded in “moderating” the processes of production and consumption and redirecting supply and demand towards bio-industry and bio-products, towards soft and clean technologies, it has not succeeded in moderating the rise of individualism and consumerism. New technologies and thus green products appear on the market, green deals are made, and eco-marketing develops, but under the label of respect for the environment, economic competition, the transformation of the ecosphere into the anthroposphere, the “will to will” dyed green, continues.

Many consumers are really fooled, they buy green products and do not realise that they are becoming eco-consumers. They may even feel that they are behaving responsibly because of their “eco-buying.” In many cases they are encouraged to do so by advertising. In this way, marketing experts are actually promoting a consumerist way of life while actually hiding behind ecology.

Consumerism is also promoted, for example, by greenwashing, which the United

Nations presents as “the deceptive tactics behind environmental claim” (United Nations n.d.), a manipulative marketing practice that manifests itself in a number of ways. For example, consumers, investors and the public are misled through deceptive marketing and false claims about the environmental benefits of products and services. Such marketing, for example, relies on claims that a company is committed to reducing pollutant emissions to zero, when in fact it is not based on any such plan at all; and, furthermore. For example, on information about the sustainability of a product which, although made from recycled materials, is produced in a high-emission factory, which pollutes the air and nearby watercourses, or information on activities which relate to widely discussed environmental issues in the public domain, while on the other hand information on activities which contribute to environmental degradation is withheld (Jakubczak and Gotowska 2020). A number of fines have been imposed in this context.<sup>14</sup>

In the context of critical perspectives on some of the types of marketing mentioned, but also more generally on the business philosophy of contemporary marketing, which appears to be a serious obstacle to sustainability, some specific questions arise. One of them is whether this and similar types of marketing promote sustainable consumption<sup>15</sup>.

Similar questions encourage those involved in marketing in business to be responsible. Not only to meet the objectives of the business entity, but especially to meet the real needs of customers and consumers

13 Sustainable development of a company relies on ways and practices that conserve and regenerate the Earth's resources for future generations (WCED 1987).

14 One of the most serious fines for greenwashing was imposed on Volkswagen. The car company has been hit with fines and court fees after lying about its vehicle emissions to regulators and consumers. Fines have also been imposed on several other car companies (Davison 2024).

15 Responsible production and consumption is one of the Sustainable Development Goals and an integral part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (United Nations 2015).

without harming other business entities, but also the environment and nature. The common denominator of the above issues is, thus, responsibility and sustainability (Hanuláková and Pročková 2001). Unfortunately, the responsibility defined in this way is still secondary for many business entities and in order to achieve prosperity in the form of profit, but also to improve their position on the market, they continue to create and put into practice new forms of marketing.

Considering profit is the main motive for the whole business, including marketing, the opinion of H. Jonas is interesting. According to him, “the elimination of the profit motive leads to the elimination of at least one pressure that leads to waste, namely the pressure to artificially create outlets for goods that no one wanted or even knew about in the first place” (Jonas 1997, 216). According to this author, the pursuit of profit is associated with a series of needs that are actually enforced by economic growth. Irresponsible marketing puts some people in situations that force them to succumb to what is forced upon them. Consumer decision-making is unconscious and irrational rather than conscious and rational. Fromm (2014), a psychoanalyst and representative of Freudianism, even compared the consumer to an incontinent infant who constantly demands his bottle of milk. This too, in a certain way, confirms that a desirable consumption pattern is imposed on the consumer through marketing.

The above narratives of modern marketing are also examples of irresponsible marketing, which contributes significantly to the growth of consumerism, which, in the long term, harms humanity and is an obstacle to sustainable living. Such marketing does not promote sustainable consumption. One of the hopes to mitigate or stop the trend of increasing consumption and growing consumerism is to rethink the current modern types of marketing and even – to change

or reform<sup>16</sup> the current marketing business philosophy.

#### **4. The Need to Change or Reform the Current Marketing Business Philosophy**

It would certainly be wrong to take a comprehensive view of the development of new forms of marketing and to question their contribution to both the development of the market and to a better quality of life for people-consumers. At the very least, this is because they enable consumers to obtain information about new products and services, to purchase them, and thus to improve their living conditions.

In a developed society where consumption has become an important criterion of social stratification, a determinant of lifestyle and overall quality of life, there is a need to rethink not only some types of modern marketing, but also the modern marketing business philosophy on which contemporary marketing is based.<sup>17</sup> This need is currently reflected by some others (Grundey 2010; Giannasi and Casarin 2022). Changing marketing challenges for the 21st century are related to the new global environment and increasing global competition, but also, for example, to changing customer values and orientations, to environmental degradation, to economic stagnation, and so on (Grundey 2010).

From our point of view, a change in the marketing business philosophy is necessary because contemporary marketing is guided by economic logic, erasing all temporal and spatial constraints on consumption and is incompatible with the idea of sustainable life on Earth. In order to ensure a good quality of life for individual members

<sup>16</sup> Reformation – renewal, transformation, correction. In this case, it is the renewal, reformation or correction of a marketing business philosophy.

<sup>17</sup> Marketing professionals think of Marketing Management Philosophies and usually understand it in a narrower sense, as a marketing management philosophy. It influences the way they approach their customers (Kotler et al. 1999).

of society, as well as for the “healthy” functioning of market economy, consumers must be given back their sovereignty, which many of them are losing or giving up of which they may not even be fully aware.

The main problem is that the current marketing philosophy is increasingly moving away from the core role that marketing has played since its inception. The truth is that the role of today’s modern marketing is not only to inform, encourage and activate the consumer to buy a product, but also to entertain him. And yet, no marketing should move away from its fundamental task, which corresponds to one of the basic objectives of the economy – to satisfy the needs of individual subjects in society. At all times, it must be based on the central idea that individuals have needs and wants that can be satisfied through the purchase of goods and services. This is another reason for changing the current marketing business philosophy, which does not respect that: “The consumer is the captain” (Mises 2018, 248). Although the management of all economic affairs in a market economy is the task of entrepreneurs, they are obliged to obey the commands of the captain, that is, the consumer. The entrepreneur is at the helm, but if he does not follow the commands of the public, he will suffer losses, he will go bankrupt (Ibid). This applies to all entrepreneurs, thus also to sellers and experts in marketing. L. von Mises, praised for his fine interpretation of the principles of economics, in his book, *Human Conduct*, considers them as “chocolate kings” who have no power over consumers, their customers. Such kings do not rule but serve. “When consumers prefer to spend their money elsewhere, they lose their kingdom” (Mises 2018, 251).

Finally, even P. Kotler, who calls himself the father of modern marketing, in his book *Marketing Management*, which was published in 1967 and has become the “bible” of marketers around the world, stressed the broader meaning of marketing right from the start. It extends to the whole of human society, where it has the task

of improving people’s lives. Kotler called marketing an art but made it clear that *it is not an art to find a clever way to get rid of what someone has created. It is the art of creating real value for the customer, helping them to have a better time* (Kotler Marketing Group 2023).

Marketing management has been described as the science of selecting target markets and of acquiring, retaining, and growing customers through creativity, communication, and delivering the best value to customers (Kotler and Keller 2015). However, contemporary marketing in practice is increasingly moving away from these ideas or putting them on the back seat.

Similar to Kotler, P. Drucker has defined marketing in terms of the end result, that is, from the customer’s point of view, which views the whole business. “It is customer who determines what a business is. For he it is customer, and he alone, who thought being willing to pay for a good or for a service converts economic resources into goods” (Drucker 2007, 31-32). Similar to Mises, Drucker sees the consumer as the captain. However, both are primarily concerned not with the good of consumers as such, but with the good of entrepreneurs, because if they do not realise that their main task is to satisfy the needs of consumers and make them happy, they will not be successful in the market. What Drucker was referring to were consumers’ real needs, not the needs created by irresponsible marketing. He saw the role of marketing as improving the quality of life in the area of consumption, considering consumerism and its proliferation to be the result of poor management and calling for social responsibility in this regard. He was convinced that marketing could make the consumerist way of life as we know it obsolete (Ibid). However, as it turns out, and as has been pointed out above, it is marketing, and more specifically some forms of modern marketing, that are involved in shaping consumerist lifestyles and promoting consumerism in general.

At least in the light of these and other ideas of the above-mentioned thinkers, who were at the birth of marketing, it is necessary to reconsider some of the modern forms of marketing that we have mentioned above. Indeed, the original statements of these and some other thinkers are by no means obsolete. On the contrary. We believe that it is appropriate to consider reforming the original aim of marketing – to satisfy the customer, which should be the fundamental value and goal of all marketing. This objective is being pursued, but in a greatly distorted form. The customer cannot be a value simply because he or she is a source of profit as a buyer or consumer.

Along with this, it should be pointed out that the business philosophy of marketing in developed societies should not neglect the broader meaning of marketing, which extends to the whole – to human society. The role of marketing is to promote sustainable consumption that will improve the quality of life of customers or consumers, while not jeopardising the satisfaction of the needs of future generations and at the same time contributing to economic development as well as social and sustainable development.

This is its permanent role, valid in the past, today and in the future. The main role of marketing is therefore to be complemented or extended to include the shaping of sustainable lifestyles and the overall improvement of the quality of life of present and future people.

Political guidelines and specific policy decisions in individual countries and communities can make a significant contribution to supporting the proposed philosophical shift and to ensuring that current marketing in developed societies does not move away from its original role of restoring sovereignty to consumers and contributing to the functioning of a healthy and sustainable economy. They can ensure not only that some marketing businesses are sanctioned for misrepresentation or manipulation, but also that they can make a contribution

overall – to restoring or correcting the marketing business philosophy.

## Conclusion

One of the important conditions for the development of the economy is the growth of consumption, which also has an impact on the quality of life of the population.

In developed societies, the growth of consumption is associated with economic growth, but unfortunately also with the restriction of consumer sovereignty, with the deterioration of ecosystems, nature and the environment. In this paper, we have drawn attention to the fact that in developed societies consumption is a space for individualization, but also for manipulation, through some types of modern marketing.

Aggressive marketing, but also some other types of modern marketing, even if it does not seem so at first sight, have a hand in the spread of consumerism, which determines people's lifestyles and their quality of life, and in the other problems and threats that are associated with consumerism. They are becoming not only an obstacle to consumers' quality of life, but also an obstacle to sustainability.

Criticism of some forms of modern marketing, particularly aggressive marketing, green marketing and others, whose effectiveness is currently multiplied by mass media, is justified for several reasons. One of the main reasons is that, in the interests of maximising profits, they encourage an increase in consumption and thus in people's consumer lifestyles, with the result that, over time, not only consumers' needs, but also their lifestyles and their identities, are gradually ceasing to be determined by consumers themselves and are increasingly determined by the market. The second serious reason relates to the threat to the environment and the resources needed for the life of future generations, which threatens sustainable development.

Modern marketing undoubtedly helps businesses to market their goods and services, which brings them profits, and



marketing experts are profitable, too. However, this does not automatically mean that customers or consumers can automatically count on profits in the form of quality goods and services. Modern types of marketing are determined by the interests of producers and sellers and promote consumerism and a consumer culture that is incompatible with the idea of sustainable living. This is irresponsible marketing, which is both an obstacle to consumers' quality of life and an obstacle to sustainability.

For the interest of the quality of life of present and future humans and, more generally, for the interest of sustainable life on Earth, there is a need not only to rethink some of the forms of modern marketing that have been put forward, but also to rethink some of the forms of modern marketing that are more or less diverted from the original aim of marketing. We have pointed out that the restoration of the original role of marketing, which is to satisfy the needs of customers, and ultimately the reformation of the whole of the current marketing business philosophy, represent hope for consumers that their freedom in the marketplace will not be restricted and that they will be able to satisfy their real needs and lead a good life by means of products that they freely choose themselves. The adoption of some policy measures in states and communities can make a significant contribution to this.

Certainly, enabling people to lead a good life does not depend on marketing alone. Returning to the original values that underpinned marketing when this area of business first started to develop will enable business to be customer-oriented and will contribute to enabling them to lead a better quality of life. At the same time, it will also help business to contribute to economic, social and sustainable development.

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