Faculty of Mass Media Communication
University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava

MARKETING IDENTITY
Explosion of Innovations

Jozef Matúš
Dana Petranová
(eds.)

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The international scientific conference held annually by the Faculty of Mass Media Communication, University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava has become a traditional event with support and attendance of mass media communication theorists and researchers as well as the media and marketing professionals.

The objective of the conference is to map the latest knowledge and trends in the field of marketing communication and to create space for the spread of the latest scientific knowledge and practical experience in the field of marketing, media and communication following the importance of innovations and support of the dialogue between professionals in academic institutions and practice.

The international conference Marketing Identity (before 2012 it was called New Trends in Marketing), which was held for the eleventh time at the castle of Smolenice, Slovakia, is organised by the Faculty of Mass Media Communication UCM in Trnava. The conference took place on 4th - 5th November 2014.

The theme of the conference was concisely expressed by its subtitle: Explosion of Innovations. The Faculty of Mass Media Communication has been working on several projects which address innovations in practice and in education. Therefore, one of the objectives of the conference was to present the results of research and to launch expert discussions.

The sessions of conference participants were realized within the following sections:
- Section 1: Marketing & Communication Innovations
- Section 2: Digital Innovations
- Section 3: Media Innovations
- Section 4: Green Innovations
- Section 5: Consumer Privacy Innovations
- Section 6: Governance and Adaptation to Innovative Modes of Higher Education
PREDATORY AND ALTERNATIVE HEDONISM – FROM SELF-DESTRUCTION TO VOLUNTARY MODESTY

Ondřej Roubal

Abstract

Hedonistic ethos is to intensify in the environment of consumer culture and in the atmosphere of unlimited consumerism, intentionally supported by market mechanisms. The value patterns of hedonistic life style are defined by experience motivations, excitement, sensual pleasures, delight, self-satisfaction, intensive need for emotional stimulations, present-time orientation or accelerated pace of life. It is considered identical with radical inclination towards individualization life practices, rapidly growing egoism and narcissistic tendencies confirming the meaning of one’s own existence. Hedonistic life style oriented towards consumer values, however, meets with frequent social, ecological and ethical criticism. There is room for discussion related to the alternative model of hedonism based on more responsible and well-considered approach towards consumption and voluntary modesty, which shall eventually enhance the sense of personal happiness and general satisfaction with life.

Key words:


Introduction

Different strategies contributing to the growth in demand and to creation of new markets gradually developed as part of the consumer culture. The ability to participate in consumer culture also becomes a significant indicator of personal success, prestige and appreciation. Personal efforts and aspiration thus lead to competitive acquisition of consumption goods used as the values of social comparison as well as the confirmation of one’s own social status and life situation. This naturally affects the strategies of life style, which are more present-time oriented, the unwillingness to economize and to postpone the consumption for the future. On the other hand, the consumers are socialized to be willing to accept and to adopt fashion trends, to search for new consumer targets

and to wander from one experience to another. The formation of new markets and the initiation of customer demand stress more the need for saturation of different individual desires, usually anchored in an emotional world of subjectively formulated objectives and authentic wishes. In this context, Schulze depicts the consumer culture as an ideal environment cultivating and strengthening the attitude of people to non-material values of experiences. According to Schulze, the focus of people on the experience becomes a significant determinant of search, formulation and implementation of a life project, as part of which the satisfaction of emotional needs, initiation of exciting feelings and induction of states of bliss play a key role. In order to meet these needs, it is more popular to apply hedonistic life approaches systematically supported and confirmed by interventions of globally functioning marketing activities. The emotional marketing of experiences is being developed, through media representing experiences as values that bear no delay and whose attractiveness, intensity and uniqueness can be preserved only through action, fast decision and determination not to postpone anything. Consumers turn into „experience collectors”, persistent adventurers wandering the marketing-marked paths of sensuality and aesthetic experience, aiming to hedonistically intensify present moments by shifting fleeting attention and only temporary interest in one experience to another. Prioritization of the experience as the central value leads to „everydayness improvement” and to radical withdrawal of meaningful rational conduct in favour of experience rationality. The nature of everydayness improvement lies in the ideal of „beautiful life” which is based on constant search for new experiences. „The motto of the day is: Make the most out of your life”.

In the related context, we will try to specify the main features and manifestations of hedonistic life style which is described as predatory. This description is used to identify a specific model of hedonism developed in conditions of consumer culture, the coordinates of which present hedonistic life attitudes similar to the models of brisk and predatory rapaciousness and predatory style of thinking. At the same time, we will try to show how predatory characteristics of hedonism manifest themselves and to indicate its ambivalent displays. In the end, we will try to point out possible factors of self-destructive potential of predatory hedonism through liberal criticism and to offer an alternative model of hedonistic lifestyle, from which the consumers should discover more authentic and stable feelings of life joy and happiness. The alternative model of hedonism is to represent a generally more considerate and economical lifestyle which takes into account ecological, social and ethical values, simultaneously respecting the needs of consumers as well. Alternative hedonism is not thus perceived as an attempt to promote ascetic lifestyle but as an attractive, less economically and time-consuming lifestyle where non-material as well as material values play the key role, however these values are achieved through a more considerate type of consumption. One of possible factors of alternative hedonism respecting the more considerate and rational approach towards the consumption may even be the ability and willingness to postpone joys and pleasures for the future. Such induced situation may bring more life pleasure and joy than approaches preferring immediate gratification.

1 Life as „experience project” and hedonistic cult of the moment

In a society, where marketing industry as a significant media body substantially supports and promotes pleasurable experience instead of the most valuable attributes of life, hedonism gains ground as an essential attribute of commercialized lifestyle. Schulze’s concept of life as the „experience project” is thus fulfilled in a hedonistic view of life accompanied by extraordinary desire to live life to the fullest, to constantly search for new emotional stimuli and pleasures, to maximize private welfare and to reveal the secrets of all new pleasurable experiences. It is based on fleeting appetite of different experiences that need to be changed as fast as possible, without hesitation, unnecessary delays and postponement. The choice for entertainment is less stable and more impulsive; it bears no delay since the objects of experiences themselves quickly change in the explosion of practically unlimited offer of new opportunities. Moreover, experiences are difficult to be „consumed” in parts, whereas a certain part cannot be saved for „a rainy day”. Consumers are „trained” by marketing to worship the „cult of immediate satisfaction” with one rule „now or never”. Under certain circumstances, consumers turn into predators that respond immediately
and quickly chase after the prey promising unique emotional excitement and authentic experiences.

Orientation to experiences becomes the central motive of life, dominant value and aim in life that is no object of choice but necessity. The society intensively focusing on values identified with the emotionality of pleasurable experiences, initiation of delights and spiritual bliss will more likely support life cycle strategies corresponding to hedonistic mentality preferring instant gains and conduct models that are connected with term instant gratification in economic theory. Experiences become mainly the object of momentaneous consumption, present moment, object of acute action and are only with difficulties and reluctance postponed until a later time. Predators act immediately since any hesitation or postponement may jeopardize not only the goal achievement but also shorten the time given for fast and fleeting change of other experiences generated by wide choice of opportunities of emotional marketing. The orientation of life style to the instant gratification is distinctly and quite intensively supported by the interventions of marketing actions that stress the trend of immediate and easy availability. Marketing themes usually initiate active and fast action, they refer to life „without limits“, suggest life in a world of unlimited possibilities and endless adventures. It is quite difficult to imagine a commercial marketing message advising the consumer to be contained, careful, to postpone decisions and to be modest and restrained.

Bauman pays attention to the specific significance of phenomenon instant gratification which is no longer the aim of social actors only but it also concerns completely impersonal and trans-personal institutionalized structures. The promotion and enforcement of the cult of immediate consumption are quite evident in the whole complex of marketing industry, the main task of which is to monitor the increase in economic

6 Life philosophy of independence, non-determination and „inner orientation“ logically leads to the application of such life strategies that can support and develop this attitude to life. Predatory hedonism focusing on the values of pleasurable experience requires mobility, flexibility and variability; it refuses to accept stability and obligations, i.e. anything that could tie and restrict life movement focusing on the fleeting and shifting world of experiences. It is a life „without ties“, unpredictable, unsettled, wild and impulsive.


This whole process, however, is likely to show ambivalent nature. On the one hand, consumers chasing after various adventurous experiences are rewarded with certain delights and excitement; they may come across new impulses and sources of pleasure and the unwelcome fossilization of everydayness is actually prevented by their own consumer greed for experiences. They will not allow the initial attractiveness of pleasurable feelings to simply turn into commonplace and boring comfort. They search for new challenges, discover new things, refuse routine and like players they start to play new games with a view to having a good time with the game and its outcome. They enjoy the game as well as the results they achieve during the game.

On the other hand, however, the methods of hedonists – predators constantly searching for new and more exciting preys represented by experiences, obviously did not induce more stable and permanent feelings of pleasure and satisfaction. The problem is that every particular decision and every choice from the wide offer of opportunities must evoke doubt as to whether other choices and decisions might not induce more irresistible experiences after all. The bigger the choice of different experiences is, the more intensive feelings of insecurity are induced.
by the next decision. In order to eliminate the unpleasant feelings of insecurity and fear that each specific decision made within the choice of possible experiences may have deprived the consumers of other more attractive and tempting items offering irresistible feelings of pleasure, the collectors of experiences try to switch as fast as possible a large amount of different pleasurable experiences. They run back and forth between experiences, trying to absorb as much as possible within the shortest possible time to have enough time to „taste” other temptations. This naturally leads to the inflation of experiences where the effort to accumulate most of the experiences within the shortest periods of time also results in superficiality. Besides the feelings of insecurity, feelings of disappointment set in as well. The obsession with constant change and variation of experience objects, fast sequence of changing experiences cannot erase fancies and visions of other more attractive and still untested temptations that keep escaping and need to be pursued till complete exhaustion; moreover, the principle of constant innovations and the stream of exciting novelities turn into commonplace routine – becoming the cycle of everydayness.

In this context, we can introduce the concept of „self-deceiving hedonism” by C. Campbell, based on the out-of-control desire to have everything new and on intensive imaginative dreaming and fantasies about changes that are the main aim in life in this perspective. The hedonist is constantly unsatisfied, especially with the way he lives, but he dreams up another life he could live. Campbell compares contemporary hedonism to Romanticism, where dreams and fantasies were important personal quality reflecting the efforts of people to live non-alienated and authentic life. However, the difference lies in the fact that hedonistic dreaming comes true through desires to acquire consumer goods as the more important aspect is the desire of wanting to have the goods than to own them. Hedonist dreaming is permanent and unstoppable, desires and fantasies are endless, for to resign and to be satisfied with the things the hedonist already has would mean to adapt oneself to the world and to resign the project of „non-alienated life”. A more important aspect of this project is to want than to have. Once the dreaming hedonist achieves the object of his desire, this specific item becomes unimportant for him. He quickly redirects his desires and attention to some other goods representing something new. Possession of things thus does not induce more peace or satisfaction with the customers, but it leads to constant dissatisfaction, furthermore initiating obsessive struggle and search for new seemingly indispensable products.

Hunters of pleasurable experiences spin the axes of entertainment hustle and bustle faster and faster, they frantically jump from one experience to another only to find out that more frequent devouring of experiences makes the appetite for excitement even stronger. The hunger for experiences remains, only the appetite is more promiscuous. The question remains how to diminish many a disappointment and disillusion where the experiences should bring joy and pleasure, how to diminish anxiety and insecurity where the practically unlimited choice of experiences should induce feelings of authenticity and unlimited personal freedom.

2 From predatory hedonism to its alternative model

The hedonistic model described as predatory is the object of frequent social criticism. British philosopher K. Soper presents a rather untraditional criticism revealing self-destructing potential hidden in practising the unbound hedonism containing many often unrecognised self-destructing elements that need to be reflected and eliminated for our own good. Soper’s criticism questions consumerism-based hedonism not only in terms of problematic ethical, environmental and social effects, but mainly in terms of the negative impact on the actors themselves. In the end, the predatory model of hedonism is to soften sensual pleasures and to divert attention


from more spiritual forms of good life. Hedonistically-oriented life style is to restrict human abilities to experience spontaneous moments of joy and to lead to total sensual numbness.14 On the other hand, fast-
food life style eliminates what becomes the object of growing interest, such as more free time, more personal contacts and a slower-paced life.15 According to Soper, modern forms of consumerism represented by predatory hedonism principally follow the ideas of growth economy as a system operating effectively provided that people are willing to spend their money. However, the problem is that if consumers should increase the number of their purchases, they would have to intensify their work-load, i.e. to spend more time at work thus limiting their free time for themselves and the family. This forces people to purchase larger amount of goods and services, which compensates the lack of free time they are deprived of while trying to earn financial means necessary to support and to implement the consumer life style.16 This consumption dynamics is to restrict more available and financially far less demanding forms of satisfaction which are ruthlessly replaced with more expensive compensations in the form of consumer goods and services. For instance, travel and vacation industry generates products promising to get back at least some of the time spend on work duties. The similar concept can be seen in the popular web of city fitness centres resembling artificial impersonal industrial halls where people intensively focus on their bodies in concentrated training sessions. This may also involve a compensation for the lack of free time that could be invested in slower less stressful and quieter movement in nature.

The progressing model of consumption culture prosperity is more and more based on collective willingness and readiness to spend money and reluctance to save, to live in the mode of voluntary modesty and to postpone pleasures and joys for the future. At the same time it assumes that people will work harder and more intensively and sacrifice more time for financial income subsequently invested in products compensating and replacing those properties and values which people give up in favour of time-consuming work.

In this context, Soper presented the model of alternative hedonism as a variation of sustainable life style that is environmentally friendly as well as considerate of physical and mental health, taking into account the needs of privacy and family life.17 This alternative hedonism model is based on the assumption that the predatory consumption hedonism fails to evoke feelings of happiness and satisfaction, but rather personal disappointment, inner tension, emotional emptiness and permanent insecurity. It points out necessary restrictions of the consumer life style that does not bring more but fewer sensual pleasures and joys. The concept of alternative hedonism is not puritan and does not follow the ideas of renunciation and asceticism. To the contrary - it offers more attractive strategies to achieve peace, welfare and sensual pleasures. The source of these pleasures and joys should not be searched for in the objective knowledge of „real“ or „true“ needs, i.e. in the visions of what values the consumers should try to achieve or what properties they should desire. It is necessary to focus on our own skills of self-reflection, experience and self-critical discovery of negative impacts of consumerism on our own life as well as on the surrounding world for which an alternative hedonist should be able to assume responsibility. We abandon here the idea of „unrecognised“ and commercially generated „artificial“ needs manipulating the desires of consumers. The stress is put on authenticity, self-control and the potential of free will of consumers who are able to continuously reflect and independently evaluate their own life situation determined by the consumer culture and consumerism. Self-reflective skills of consumers should identify negative aspects of consumption-based hedonist methods offering satisfaction instead of ecstasy and preferring resignation to transcendence.18 This should also show the consumers a way to „more spiritual“ interests and overall more profound and intensive experiences.19 With the reference to Adorn, we live in a society where „everybody lives on a plane“, but they obey the commandment „thou shall not fly“.20 It shows

16 ibidem, p. 372.
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that the main sources of personal happiness include values that exist beyond "shopping zones" and cannot be simply bought as a product or service. They mainly represent family values, friendly social relationships, a meaningful job and free time.24 Alternative hedonism focuses on acquiring abstract qualities, such as time, attention, space, peace, nature and safety that are to represent new forms of luxury and comfortable life.22 The possibility to enjoy our free time and to be allowed to decide about our time is one of the most desirable values. Enough free time is to represent one of the most luxurious factors and a significant determinant of a happy life. It relates to the concept that alternative hedonism rejects constitutive parameters and qualities of predatory hedonism, e.g. the before-mentioned "cult of immediate satisfaction", which has to obey the rhythm of quick time. Alternative hedonism as specific life strategy of high-quality, fulfilled and happy life disapproves stressful haste, urgency, rapid and quick changes of different life moments, desire for quick results and temporary emotional excitement and rather focuses on a slower-paced life that offers free moments allowing to enjoy peaceful joys of ordinary life situations.23 While the feature of predatory hedonism is the afore-mentioned "cult of immediate satisfaction", the constitutive feature of alternative hedonism might be the "cult of deferred pleasure".

3 Better later than now?

In the context of developed ethos of predatory hedonism and the related "cult of immediate satisfaction", we often and in vain search for more distinct and frequent displays of how many economists describe as "anticipated gain", sociologists or anthropologists as "deferred pleasure". Generally speaking, the anticipated gain results from a situation where you look forward to possible future pleasurable experience.24 It refers to a situation where immediate consumption of a product gives way to deferred consumption. Some products may evoke such powerful feelings of "looking-forward-to" that the preference of deferred consumption to immediate consumption appears to be subjectively more beneficial from psychological perspective.25 Subjective feelings of joy, pleasure and bliss need not result from hasty and immediate consumption but also from deferred pleasure. Deferred pleasure belongs to the category of human activities that can be practised only in slow time. To postpone something means to wait, not to rush and to wait for the right moment that shall bring the expected gain. Lottery ticket agents may not profit from the fact that betters would spend a lot of money on tickets because they would naively believe to win the main prize, where the statistical chance of such a win equals almost zero. These companies might economically profit only because the betters buy a chance to win, though this chance is extremely small. And the visions of such lottery winnings may evoke most intensive feelings of pleasure and the looking-forward-to process related to the possible winnings becomes the only reward in most cases. Certain disappointments experienced in these lotteries need not result from the fact that the ticket was not the winning ticket but from the fact that the better can no longer enjoy the time and situation filling him with pleasurable feelings of possible win.

A number of travel agencies offers the so-called "last minute travels". It is a situation depicting life motives in quick time conditions, involving quick decision, fast and short preparation and hasty urgent implementation. Customers, who often use this bargain, do not usually have enough time for proper preparations, but they also lack time that could be used as the looking-forward-to-holiday phase. It is the enjoyment prior to the holiday and pleasurable dreaming about what the holiday might bring that might be the best thing about the whole holiday. This might be the reason why many travel agencies have offered the so-called "first minute travel", the contrary to the "last minute travel" in recent years.

23 It could be expected that given the widespread "cult of immediate pleasure", we shall slowly lose our ability and willingness to wait in the conditions of consumer culture. This issue was tackled by L. Potter who carried out empirical inquiry in waiting rooms and analysed attitudes of people in connection with these situations where they have to put up with time delays. Potter found out that most respondents perceived waiting as a most pleasant situation and the waiting room stood for the zone of quietness. The results stress the significance of relaxation and the ability to enjoy uninterrupted free time. "English patience" Observer Magazine, 21.10, 2010.
25 There are empirical studies demonstrating that the vision of "looking-forward-to" feelings is such a strong motive of a man's conduct that many cases prefer the deferred consumption to earlier consumption. E.g. people would love to wait for a kiss 3 days or for a dinner in a French restaurant a week. LOEWENSTEIN, G. F., D. PRELEC: Preferences for Sequences of Outcomes. In Psychological Review, 1993, Vol. 100, No. 1, p. 95.
The customer thus purchases the holiday as well as enough time to look forward to the holiday.

The fact that many luxurious trademarks introduce waiting lists pursues at least two goals. First, it enhances the prestige guaranteed for the buyers by the identity symbols that have to be waited for. The customer experiences a situation that is intentionally and calculatedly forced out by the complex of marketing communication in the culture of instant gratification in the interest of economic subjects. Ironically, the customer is deprived of the possibility to acquire something immediately – which is otherwise a standard usually provided to the general public of less wealthy consumers. It is the situation of waiting and postponing the access to the goods that demonstrates certain characteristics that this situation requires a certain sacrifice from the customer. These sacrifices in the modern consumption-based society might be the most tormenting. However, if the customer makes “this sacrifice” in order to obtain something, the product on the waiting list gains in value for him and most likely for the others as well. Second, the introduction of the waiting list also makes sense because the customers may look forward to the product they are going to purchase. It does not take into account the gain from the value he intends to get. The same pleasure and joy might be brough by looking forward to a luxurious watch that cannot be purchased unless you are on a long waiting list with other buyers...as if they were waiting for a cheaper holiday.

Conclusion

Preference of deferred gains means return, though only temporary, to the conditions of slow time, i.e. a situation we might be less familiar with and are not well aware of in this time of modern communication technologies and information influx. The strategy of deferred pleasure does not support the arrival of quick time; this strategy of acquiring psychological gain is driven away by commercial marketing communication, systematically maintaining and enhancing the consumer appetite and greed for knowing new sources of entertainment and pleasure. Enforcing the principles of deferred pleasure is not in the interest of impersonal institutionalized structures forming consumers’ spirit and commercializing everydayness, but it might be in the interest of social actors themselves in order to

slow down the axes of entertainment hustle and bustle and the pace of hasty running back and forth from one experience to another with the expectation that more experiences and more frequent emotional adventures might also bring more pleasure and joy. Metaphorically speaking, fast driving trains as well as quickly passing landscape relief offer numerous varied pictures and perceptions; they attract more and more travellers. The customers wish to travel faster, they hate waiting on the platforms and refuse to lose their time with tiring travelling on one single line so that they could restlessly jump from one train to another and try as many train connections as possible. Travelling should offer entertainment; it is about the ride, not some commonplace and flat transportation from point A to point B. Travelling gets faster which is not only the wish of passengers, but also the pragmatic interest of transportation companies. Nobody cares about the brakes, only about the gas pedal. It is necessary to add that stepping on the gas pedal results in faster drive; however, it certainly does not fulfil the expectations of passengers concerning this ride speed. Sometimes, the consumers show bad mood, sullenness, disappointment and inextinguishable thirst for travelling, which might be just the side-effects of a furious ride that lost its aim and probably became much too fast. Who would ask then for a slow ride with a view of a few scenery if these fast trains can offer much more? Who is willing to restrict the scope of travelling if it offers so much? Would it not be more convenient to try more often what it is like to buy the ticket and to look forward to the future ride?

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References:
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Contact data:
Ondřej Roubal, Ph.D.
University of Finance and Administration
Faculty of Social Studies
Estonská 500
101 00 Prague 10
CZECH REPUBLIC
oroubal@centrum.cz