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A TOUR OF THE NEW MEANS OF CONSUMPTION

Consumption plays an ever-expanding role in the lives of individuals around the world. To some, consumption defines contemporary American society, as well as much of the rest of the developed world. We consume many obvious things—fast food, t-shirts, a day at Walt Disney World®—and many others that are not so obvious—a lecture, medical service, a day at the ballpark. We consume many goods and services that we must have in order to live and many more that we simply have come to want. Often we must go to particular settings to obtain these goods and services (although, as we will see, more and more of them are coming to us). This book is concerned with those settings: shopping malls, cybermalls, fast food restaurants, theme parks, and cruise ships, to name a few. We will be concerned with the issue of why we go to some places rather than others, and we will also deal with the ways in which these settings contribute to the high and increasing level of consumption that characterizes society today.

Unlike many treatments of the subject of consumption, this is *not* a book about the consumer[1] or the increasing profusion of goods and services.[2] Rather, it is about the almost dizzying proliferation of settings[3] that allow, encourage, and even compel us to consume so many of those goods and services. The settings of interest will be termed the *new means of consumption*. These are, in the main, settings that have come into existence or taken new forms since the end of World War II and that, building on but going beyond earlier settings, have dramatically transformed the nature of consumption. Because of important continuities, it is not always easy to clearly distinguish between new and older means of consumption,[4] but it is the more contemporary versions, singly and collectively, that will concern us.[5]

In order to get a better sense of the new means of consumption, let us first look at Walt Disney World and the larger Disney operation of which it is part.

DISNEY'S WORLD

Building on late 19th- and early 20th-century efforts, including world exhibitions (and fairs) and Coney Island in New York, Walt Disney and his company created a revolutionary new type of amusement park: the theme park. The first of the theme parks, Disneyland, opened in southern California in 1955.[6] It was followed by Disney World in Florida in 1971, Tokyo Disneyland in 1983,[7] and Euro Disney in 1992. The Disney theme parks (even the initially financially troubled Euro Disney) have, of course, been enormous successes, in great part because they built on and greatly expanded the bases of the success of the early amusement parks. This includes entertainment for the masses, great spectacles, use of technology for consumption rather than production, the commercialization of "fun," and the offer of a safety valve where people can expend their energies without threatening society. In addition, Disney systematically eliminated the "seedy" and risque elements that characterized and played a major role in the decline of many amusement parks in the first half of the twentieth century. Although visitors who arrived at earlier amusement parks felt a sense of looseness, even danger, tourists who arrive at Disney World know and take comfort in the fact that inside the gates lies a tightly regulated world.

Disney transformed the world of amusement parks by, among other things, cleaning them up, creating far more "moral" order than most of the early parks ever had, and making the amusement park acceptable as family entertainment.[8] Disney offered a self-contained, controlled environment free from the kinds of problems that had undermined earlier parks. It pioneered the order and constraint that is characteristic of virtually all contemporary theme parks.[9] Although the primary appeal of early amusement parks such as Coney Island was that they offered visitors "a respite from . . . formal, highly regulated social situations,"[10] the main attraction at Disney World is just such tight regulation.[11] To put it another way, although parks such as Coney Island provided "a moral holiday,"[12] Disney World created a new morality emphasizing conformity to external demands.

Disney World is highly predictable. For example, there are no midway scam artists to bilk the visitor. There are teams of workers who, among their other cleaning chores, follow the nightly parades cleaning up debris—including animal droppings—so that visitors are not unpleasantly surprised should they take an errant step. There is no sexual titillation of the kind that characterized many early amusement parks. The park is continually cleaned, repaired, and repainted; there is nothing "seedy" about Disney World. The steep admission charge, the high cost of eating, shopping, and so forth, as well as the costs involved in getting there have succeeded in keeping "undesirables" out. A Disney executive said, "Think of Disney World as a medium-sized city with a crime rate of zero."[13] As a result of this sanitation of the park experience, Disney parks have become a favorite destination for middle-class families and many other people as well.

The heart of Disney World is the Magic Kingdom (a telling name given, as you will see, our interest in this book in enchantment) and its seven "lands." The trek through Disney World begins and ends in Main Street, U.S.A, which leads to the six other themed "lands"—the newly remodeled Tomorrowland[14] with, among other things, a roller-coaster-like space adventure on "Space Mountain" (sponsored by FedEx), Fantasyland with the recent addition of the "Legend of the Lion King" (sponsored by Kodak), Adventureland with the long-running "Jungle Cruise," Frontierland anchored by such traditional favorites as "Country Bear Jamboree," Liberty Square with the "Haunted Mansion," and Mickey's Toontown Fair with Minnie's and Mickey's Country Houses.

Epcot Center has the General Motors exhibit encompassing the new Test Track thrill ride.[15] Reminiscent of world fairs, the World Showcase has pavilions featuring a number of exhibits from nations including China, France, and Morocco.

Another set of major attractions at Disney World is Disney-MGM Studios. The Hollywood Boulevard/Echo Lake Area features the "Star Tours," which involves a thrill ride inspired by Star Wars. On Dalmatian Avenue one will find the "Disney-MGM Studios Backlot Tour." New York Street/Backlot features "Jim Henson's Muppet*Vision 3D" movie (sponsored by Kodak). Sunset Boulevard has as one of its two attractions "Beauty and the Beast—Live on Stage." One of Animation Courtyard's two attractions is "Voyage of the Little Mermaid."

The latest addition to Disney World is Animal Kingdom, which opened in April 1998. It encompasses 500 acres, nearly five times the size of the Magic Kingdom. Many parts of the park are still under construction with a number of "lands" to be opened in the future. Already in existence is The Oasis, a lush jungle-like setting through which people enter Animal Kingdom and that includes a branch of the chain of Rainforest Cafe® theme restaurants. Safari Village includes the centerpiece of Animal Kingdom, the massive "Tree of Life." Several hundred hand-carved animals seem to grow out of the tree inside of which is a multimedia theater. Dinoland attempts to depict life as it existed millions of years ago and includes "Boneyard," a children's playground with equipment made out of what appear to be giant dinosaur bones. Africa includes a town, "Harambe," on the edge of a simulated savannah including natural landscapes and herds of animals indigenous to that continent; it also includes the "Kilimanjaro Safari" involving a trip through the countryside and a high-speed automobile chase across, among other things, a collapsing bridge over a "crocodile-infested" river.

Beyond the four theme parks, there are three water parks, a nighttime entertainment district, a shopping area, fourteen hotels, the town of Celebration, and the Disney Institute—all means of consumption in their own right.[16]

Disney has become a global presence not exclusively through its theme parks but also through its many other enterprises, such as its movies, television shows, and cable television network. Of greater relevance to the concerns of this book are the Disney stores that are found in innumerable shopping malls and on-line; Club Disney (entertainment centers for children); Radio Disney (a children's radio network); the new Disney Cruise Line; Disney's ownership of ABC, ESPN, the Anaheim Angels Major League Baseball team and the Anaheim Mighty Ducks National Hockey League team; the Disney Catalog; and even the Disney Credit Card. All of these are employed synergistically to sell one another in a tightly integrated system that ultimately sells the Disney name and yields huge profits. Disney theme parks are revolutionary in many senses, but perhaps above all they are part of a "selling machine" capable of marketing Disney to an unprecedented degree.

Disney's power is also reflected in the role it has played in the resuscitation of the area around Times Square and 42nd Street in New York City.[17] Prior to Disney's arrival, this area was all but dead as a commercial center, dominated by peep shows and street hustlers. In fact, *Rolling Stone* dubbed 42nd Street "the sleaziest block in America."[18] Many previous high-profile efforts to rebuild the area never got off the ground. But in 1993 Disney agreed to invest $8 million in the renovation of the New Amsterdam Theater to serve as a site for Broadway productions of Disney shows. In addition, a Disney Store was opened. Because of the luster of the Disney name, theme restaurants, a twenty-five-screen movie theater, a Virgin Mega-Store, Starbucks, and a hotel and entertainment complex soon followed. The result is that Times Square has been revived as a means of consumption and a business center and it may well serve to revivify other areas of New York City. For its part, Disney gained more stature and a theater as yet another means to sell itself and its products.

THE NEW MEANS OF CONSUMPTION

Disney World is of interest to us because it represents a model of a new *means of consumption,* or in other words the settings or structures[19] that enable us to consume all sorts of things. As a new means of consumption, Disney World has many continuities with older settings, as do many of the other new means of consumption. The predecessors to today's cruise lines were the great ocean liners of the past. Las Vegas casinos had precursors such as the great casino at Monte Carlo. Shopping malls can be traced back to the markets of ancient Greece and Rome. At the same time, these new means also exhibit a number of important and demonstrable differences.

The means of consumption are part of a broader set of phenomena related to goods and services: production, distribution, advertising,[20] marketing,[21] sales, individual taste,[22] style,[23] fashion.[24] Our concern is with the process leading up to, and perhaps including, an exchange of money (or equivalents such as checks, electronic debits to bank or credit card accounts, and so on) for goods or services between buyers and sellers.[25] This is often dealt with under the rubric of shopping,[26] but our interests are broader than that and include the consumer's relationship with not only shops and malls but also theme parks, casinos, and cruise lines, and other settings including athletic stadiums, universities, hospitals, and museums,[27] which surprisingly are coming to resemble the more obvious new means of consumption. In most cases an exchange occurs;[28] people do purchase and receive goods and services. This process may take place instantaneously or over a long period of time and may involve many steps—perception of a want, arousal of a desire by an advertisement, study of available literature (e.g., *Consumer Reports*), comparison of available options, and ultimately perhaps an actual purchase. Of course, the process need not stop there; it is not unusual for people to take things home, find them wanting, return them, and perhaps begin the process anew.

Many of the new settings have attracted a great deal of attention individually, but little has been said about them collectively. I undertake to analyze them not only because of their growing importance and inherent interest, but also because they have played a central role in greatly increasing, and dramatically altering the nature of, consumption. Americans, especially, consume very differently and we consume on a larger scale, at least in part because of the new means of consumption. Further, these settings are important beyond their role in the consumption process. Many of the settings considered here—for example, McDonald's,® Wal-Mart,® Disney—have become some of America's, and the world's, most powerful popular icons. My net is cast more widely than even Disney's reach to include discount malls, superstores, warehouse stores, Las Vegas casinos (which are increasingly Disneyesque), and so on.

Why should the readers of this book, most of them consumers, be concerned about the new means of consumption? In addition to the inherent interest of a major, often spectacular, social change in the realm of consumption, the new means of consumption are involved in a variety to developments that are designed to get more of us to spend time and money in consumption. Admittedly, most of us are eager to spend money in these settings. Others may feel that they are devoting too much time and money to consuming in these settings.[29] In either case, it makes sense to understand the ways in which those in charge of the new means of consumption are tempting us.

CATHEDRALS OF CONSUMPTION

The new means of consumption can be seen as "cathedrals of consumption"—that is, they have an enchanted, sometimes even sacred, religious character for many people.[30] In order to attract ever-larger numbers of consumers, such cathedrals of consumption need to offer, or at least appear to offer, increasingly magical, fantastic, and enchanted settings in which to consume. Sometimes this magic is produced quite intentionally, whereas in other cases it is a result of a series of largely unforeseen developments. A worker involved in the opening of McDonald's in Moscow spoke of it "as if it were the Cathedral in Chartres . . . a place to experience 'celestial joy.' "[31] A visit to Disney World has been depicted as "the middle-class hajj, the compulsory visit to the sunbaked city,"[32] and analogies have been drawn between a trip to Disney World and pilgrimages to religious sites such as Lourdes.[33] Book superstores such as Barnes and Noble® and Borders® have been called "cathedrals for the printed word."[34]

Shopping malls have been described as places where people go to practice their "consumer religion."[35] It has been contended that shopping malls are more than commercial and financial enterprises; they have much in common with the religious centers of traditional civilizations.[36] Like such religious centers, malls are seen as fulfilling peoples' need to connect with each other and with nature (trees, plants, flowers), as well as their need to participate in festivals. Malls provide the kind of centeredness traditionally provided by religious temples, and they are constructed to have similar balance, symmetry, and order. Their atriums usually offer connection to nature through water and vegetation.[37] People gain a sense of community as well as more specific community services. Play is almost universally part of religious practice, and malls provide a place for people to frolic. Similarly, malls offer a setting in which people can partake in ceremonial meals. Malls clearly qualify for the label of cathedrals of consumption.[38]

As is the case with religious cathedrals, the cathedrals of consumption are not only enchanted, they are also highly rationalized. As they attract more and more consumers, their enchantment must be reproduced over and over on demand. Furthermore, branches of the successful enchanted settings are opened across the nation and even the world with the result that essentially the same magic must be reproduced in a wide range of locations. To accomplish this, the magic has to be systematized so that it can be easily recreated from one time or place to another. However, it is difficult to reduce magic to corporate formulas that can be routinely employed at any time, in any place, and by anybody.[39] Yet, if these corporations are to continue to attract increasing numbers of consumers who will spend more and more money on goods and services, that is just what they must be able to do. Although such rational, machine-like structures can have their enchanting qualities (food appears almost instantaneously, goods exist in unbelievable profusion), they are, in the main, disenchanting; they often end up *not* being very magical. There is a tendency for people to become bored and to be put off by too much machine-like efficiency in the settings in which they consume. The challenge for today's cathedrals of consumption (as for religious cathedrals), is how to maintain enchantment in the face of increasing rationalization.

Although the new means of consumption will be described in terms of rationalization and enchantment (as well as disenchantment), it is important to recognize that they are not all equally rationalized or enchanting. Some are able to operate in a more machine-like manner than others. Similarly, some are able to take on a more enchanted quality than others. Disney World, a Las Vegas casino, or a huge cruise ship seem far more enchanted than the local McDonald's, Wal-Mart, or strip mall. In addition, specific settings may enchant some consumers and not others. For example, fast food restaurants and theme parks may enchant children far more than adults, although adults may be led by their children or grandchildren to participate—and to pay. Furthermore, enchantment tends to be something that declines over time as the novelty for consumers wears off. After nearly a half century of existence in the United States and proliferation into every nook and cranny of the nation, modern fast food restaurants offer very little enchantment to most adult American consumers. However, we should not forget that many adults found such restaurants quite enchanting when they first opened in the United States and they still do in other nations and cultures to which fast food outlets are relatively new arrivals. In sum, although we will describe the new means of consumption in terms of rationalization and enchantment, there is considerable variation among them, and over time, in their degree of rationalization and enchantment.

The terms *new means of consumption* and *cathedrals of consumption* will be used interchangeably in this book, both referring to the new settings in and through which we obtain goods and services. The idea of the new means of consumption emphasizes both that these settings are new and that they allow and encourage us to consume. The idea of cathedrals of consumption emphasizes that these settings are characterized by the enchantment needed to lure consumers, although disenchantment is an ever-present possibility as a result of the process of rationalization.

Two theories (a third will be added later) lie at the base of these conceptualizations of the new means of consumption. The first is the work of Karl Marx and his extension of his ideas on the means of production to the lesser-known, but central to us, conceptualization of the "means of consumption." The second is the theorizing of Max Weber who gave us the ideas—rationalization, enchantment, and disenchantment—that are fundamental to the conceptualization of the "cathedrals of consumption." I will offer a more detailed discussion of these and other theoretical ideas in Chapter 3, but before that I need to delineate more fully the major cathedrals of consumption.

OVERVIEW OF THE CATHEDRALS OF CONSUMPTION

We will review the cathedrals of consumption, beginning with fast food restaurants.

Franchises and Fast Food Restaurants

A large proportion of fast food restaurants are franchises. Franchising is a system in which "one large firm . . . grants or sells the right to distribute its products or use its trade name and processes to a number of smaller firms . . . franchise holders, although legally independent, must conform to detailed standards of operation designed and enforced by the parent company."[40] Franchising began in the mid-1800s,[41] and today, one out of twelve businesses in the United States is a franchise.[42] On business days a new franchise opens once every eight minutes; more than 8 million people work in the franchise industry.[43] A&W® was the first food service franchise, beginning operations in 1924; Dairy Queen® opened in 1944 and by 1948 had a nationwide chain of 2,500 outlets. Bob's Big Boy® started in the late 1930s and Burger King® (then InstaBurger) and Kentucky Fried Chicken® began in 1955. McDonald's was a successful hamburger stand in San Bernardino California owned by Mac and Dick McDonald before it was discovered by Ray Kroc; the first of the McDonald's chain opened in 1955. By the end 1996, McDonald's had 21,022 restaurants, with projections of 30,000 McDonald's outlets by the year 2000 or shortly thereafter. In addition to its expansion within the United States, McDonald's has become much more of an international presence in recent years. The other big player in the fast food business is Tricon Global restaurants. Spun off by PepsiCo in late 1997, Tricon owns three of the largest franchises—Pizza Hut®, Taco Bell®, and Kentucky Fried Chicken. Overall, Tricon has approximately 30,000 restaurant units and operates the largest fast food system in the world.[44] There are, of course, other important players in the industry, including Hardee's®, Wendy's®, and Domino's Pizza®.

Chain Stores

Related to the franchise is the chain store. The main difference is that chain stores have a single owner whereas many individual franchises are owned by independent entrepreneurs. The first true chain store was the supermarket chain A&P® (The Great Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company), which by 1880 encompassed ninety-five stores. Others were J.C. Penney® (begun in 1902) in the dry goods area and among the variety stores the five and dime store opened by Frank Woolworth in 1879 in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Although many of these early chains have declined or disappeared, the chain store is still an important presence in American retailing. Examples include chains of supermarkets (Giant,® Kroger,® Safeway®), drug stores (Rite Aid®, Walgreens®, and CVS®, for example), department stores (J.C. Penney, Macy's®), as well as elite shops such as Valentino®, Ralph Lauren®, Calvin Klein®, and Dolce and Gabbana®.[45]

Catalogs

The roots of the modern catalog reach back to 1872 and its pioneer, Aaron Montgomery Ward. The catalogs of Ward's®, Sears®, and other mail order firms constituted significant ways of consuming from the late-1800s well into the 1900s. Catalogs have boomed in recent years.[46] Currently almost 14 billion catalogs are distributed annually by about 10,000 companies. The catalog industry now has approximately 377,000 employees. Each week the average U.S. home receives 1.7 catalogs. In 1996, almost 60 percent of the American population, about 113 million people, ordered goods from catalogs. Almost $48 billion was spent on catalog sales in 1990, and that has been growing by almost 7 percent a year since then.[47] Among today's leading catalogs are those from L. L. Bean®, Land's End®, and Victoria's Secret®.

Shopping Malls

The first planned outdoor shopping center in the United States, Market Square, was built in the Chicago suburb of Lake Forest in

1916.[48] It was followed in 1924 by another, Country Club Plaza, on the then-outskirts of Kansas City. The Highland Park Shopping Village in Dallas, built in 1931, represented the first time that storefronts were turned away from the public streets inward to a central area. There was a hiatus in the building of malls until the post-World War II suburban boom gave it new impetus. The first “dumbbell” mall, Northgate in Seattle, was built in 1947. It included “two department stores anchoring the ends of an open-air pedestrian mall, set in the middle of acres of parking.”[49] More important, the first modern, fully enclosed shopping mall was Southdale Center in Edina, Minnesota, which opened in 1956. Enclosing the mall gave it a vertical dimension and served to make it more spectacular. Enclosed malls were also cheaper to build and created a synergy that increased business for all occupants. Shopping malls have since been built on the Southdale model, and they are considered one of the new means of consumption.

However, the formulaic pattern of shopping malls and the competition from newer means of consumption have caused the conventional mall considerable difficulty. Shopping time per trip to the mall is down to about 70 minutes compared to more than 90 minutes in the early 1980s. Some are warning that about 30 percent of existing regional malls either will be forced to close or will be converted to other purposes. Said the chair of one of the largest mall developers, Mills Corporation, “There is too much sameness in retailing. If you dropped a person into most malls, they would not know what part of the country they were in.”[50] The result is a shift toward entertainment in shopping malls[51] as well as the development of different kinds of malls.

Of tremendous importance itself as a cathedral of consumption, the shopping mall has been of perhaps even greater importance in providing the groundwork for a variety of related developments. There is, for example, the development of increasingly large malls culminating in so-called mega-malls such as the West Edmonton Mall (opened in 1981) in Alberta, Canada, and the Mall of America in Minneapolis, Minnesota (opened in 1992). The largest mall built in the past five years is the 1.7 million-square foot Ontario Mills outside of Los Angeles with 200 stores and a 30-screen movie house.[52]

There is also the profusion of various kinds of specialty malls, especially the discount outlet malls that are so popular in resorts or as tourist destinations. The first outlets appeared in the 1920s attached to the mills of New England fabric companies. Later, the outlets took hold in association with the sewing factories in the Southeast. The first outlet centers are traceable to the opening of the Reading (Pennsylvania) Outlet Center in 1970. Larger outlet malls began to appear in the 1980s. The largest is Sawgrass Mills in Florida, which encompasses 1.9 million square feet, attracted 25 million customers in 1997, and is the state's second most popular tourist attraction (trailing only Disney World).[53] The outlet mall in tiny Manchester, Vermont (population 3,600) is the fifth largest contributor of sales tax revenue to the state: Its contribution grew from $1.1 million in 1993 to $6.5 million in 1996.[54] Today, there at least 350 outlet centers in the United States; it is now a $12 billion a year business.[55] Outlet malls have become a cultural phenomenon, destinations in their own right. People even take vacations or trips in order to go to outlet malls. For example, on a typical fall weekend with the changing foliage at its peak, one is likely to find long lines at Manchester's factory stores, but the nearby Appalachian Trail is apt to be nearly empty.[56]

Also of interest is the recent spread of shopping malls into other settings such as Las Vegas casinos, cruise ships, airports, train stations, and college campuses (especially in student unions). In fact, malls are so ubiquitous (and Americans spend so much time and money shopping) that one scholar describes the United States as "the world's biggest shopping mall."[57]

Electronic Shopping Centers

Worthy of special treatment is the advent of the "dematerialized" new means of consumption, the electronic shopping centers that are likely to undergo enormous expansion in the years to come. One variant is the television home shopping networks such as HSN® (Home Shopping Network) or QVC® (Quality, Value, Convenience).

Round-the-clock television retailing has grown enormously in the years since it was first broadcast on HSN in 1985; QVC followed a year later.[58]

Another variant is the infomercial, which is estimated to have done almost $2 billion in business in 1995.[59] These are ordinarily half-hour "shows" (typically broadcast late at night or on weekends) that are really extended advertisements for a particular product. They are included as a means of consumption because they usually offer telephone numbers that allow viewers to purchase the product by telephone and credit card.[60]

Cybermalls and other forms of on-line shopping are still in their infancy. The Internet was founded in 1988, based on earlier technologies such as Arpanet (founded in 1969 by the Pentagon for messages between defense labs and universities) and NSFNET.[61] Although fewer than 10 million households had on-line computer access in 1995, by 2000 that number is expected to grow to more than 43 million.[62] In 1996 alone, the proportion of Internet users who shopped on-line doubled from 12.5 percent to 25 percent.[63] Wal-Mart opened its on-line Internet center in 1996 with 2,500 items; in 1997 it announced an expansion to 80,000 items, or about the same number as in its regular stores.[64] At the moment, the big attractions are sites that offer stocks, computer equipment, "boy toys" (e.g., Sharper Image®), CDs, cassettes and videos, books, and other products such as flowers.[65] However, big growth may still be some years away. One estimate is that although retail business on the Internet (only a small part of which is through the cybermalls) will grow from $530 million in 1996 to $7.2 billion in 2000, it will continue to represent a steady 4 percent share of Internet business—the big growth areas will be business-to-business commerce and finance.[66] So far, cyber sales have been hampered by slow technologies and problems with ensuring the security of credit card numbers. However, in the longer term, it is likely that cybermalls and related forms of cyber-commerce will outstrip the shopping mall.

The case of Amazon.com® is an interesting one. In 1994, the company's founder, Jeff Bezos, then on Wall Street, noticed that the new World Wide Web was growing at 2,300 percent a year. He decided he wanted to do business on the Web and thought through a list of products that could be sold. He decided on books because of the large variety, the fact that no single merchandiser controlled the market, and because computers could help customers find what they wanted. He quit his job and headed for Seattle because it was a high-tech town and it provided him access to an important book distribution center. Thus a new means for consuming books was founded. By the middle of 1998, Jeff Bezos's shares in that company were worth approximately $2 billion.[67]

Also worth noting is the dramatic and controversial growth of gambling through on-line casinos such as World Sports Exchange and Casino Royale.[68] Already estimated to be a $200 million a year business, it is expected to grow to $1 billion annually by the year 2000. Like all of the cyber sites discussed, it is a threat to the more conventional means of consumption, in this case the casino (to be discussed shortly). The reason is clear from the following statement by a person who plays almost every day for two or three hours: "It's great. I don't have to leave the house . . . It's very private. There are no distractions, no dirty looks from the casino people if you win."[69] Much the same thing could be said by consumers of another important on-line business: pornography.

Discounters

Discount merchandising began to boom in the 1950s. Although such stores had predecessors (e.g., Korvette's®, K-Mart®), discount department stores have recently undergone enormous expansion.[70] Of great note is the Wal-Mart chain. For the fiscal year ending January 1, 1997, Wal-Mart's total sales were almost $105 billion; a 12 percent increase over the previous year. It and its major competitor, Target®, were both founded in 1962. As of May 1997 there were 2,302 Wal-Mart stores. In addition, Wal-Mart spawned Sam's Club—a chain of warehouse stores—that began operations in 1983 and now has 438 outlets. (Warehouse clubs are very basic retail operations with merchandise displayed in huge, bare settings, and they offer opportunities to buy in bulk. They advertise little and offer few services. Although the membership requirements are very loose, a membership charge of $25 to $35 is usually required.[71])

Another warehouse club, Costco Wholesale® was created out of a merger of Price Club (founded in 1976 by Sol Price) and Costco (created in 1983). As of March 1997, the company operated 272 warehouse stores (each between 70,000- and 160,000-square feet) in twenty-three states and five other nations. It had 25 million cardholders and employed almost 53,000 people (more than 40,000 in the United States). In fiscal year 1996, its revenues exceeded $19 billion. Like Sam's Club, Price Club/Costco is characterized by simple, warehouse-like settings. A limited range of low-priced and discount goods, including food, are sold. Price Club/Costco offers discounted goods, especially in large sizes and in packages of multiple items, so that consumers often end up purchasing more of a given commodity than they intended to purchase. Demonstrations and samples are abundant. Goods are laid out in such a way that customers often end up buying many things on a whim that they may not need or ever finish.

Also worth mentioning are supercenters that combine a grocery store, a drug store, and a mass merchandiser in one enormous setting. For example, a 200,000-square foot Wal-Mart supercenter is twice as large as a normal Wal-Mart and six or seven times the size of a typical supermarket.[72] Wal-Mart operates 354 supercenters; its first supercenter opened in 1988. Other important operators of supercenters are Fred Meyer in the West, Meijer in the Midwest, Target, and Kmart.

Superstores

Not to be confused with the supercenter is the superstore, which is arguably traceable to a 1957 ancestor of the current Toys 'R Us®.[73] The distinguishing characteristic of a superstore is that it carries an extraordinary number and range of goods within a specific retail category.[74] Toys 'R Us has all the toys one can imagine (and it controls

20 percent of the U.S. toy market); Circuit City® and Best Buy® offer a wide range of electronic gear; books are the specialty at Barnes & Noble and Borders; office supplies are abundant at Staples®, Office Depot®, and Office Max®, and the specialties of many of the rest—Sports Authority®, Baby Superstore®, Petsmart®, and so on—are obvious from the names. Superstores have evolved in a number of incredible directions: Garden Ridge® with its 4,000 varieties of candles; American Health Superstore® with 8,000 products including, among other things, twenty types of canes[75]; and Just for Feet and Sneaker Stadium® with their 4,000 varieties of recreational shoes, "In short, every kind of gear a foot sweats in."[76]

Superstores are sometimes called "category killers" because their enormous variety and low price tends to drive an earlier means of consumption, the small specialty shop, out of business.[77] And these superstores are growing rapidly. An incredible 80 percent of all new retail space in 1994 was occupied by superstores. They now account for one-third of retail revenue in the United States, up from virtually nothing little more than a decade ago. Although this enormous growth is likely to be punctuated by a number of notable failures, we can safely anticipate the continued expansion of superstores.

The new means of consumption discussed to this point are the kinds of settings that most of us frequent on a regular basis. There is a whole other set of new means of consumption that are more unusual. They relate more to tourism, or extraordinary vacations, than to day-to-day activities; they involve attempts to escape the mundane.[78] In fact, they are part of a general trend toward viewing tourism as a type of consumption.[79]

Cruise Ships

Cruise ships have a long history. The great ocean liners of the late 1800s and early 1900s are certainly important predecessors. However, the modern cruise ship can be traced to the maiden voyage of the cruise ship *Sunward* in Florida on December 19, 1966.[80] A major boon to the cruise business occurred in 1977, when the television series "Love Boat" made its debut. The show took place on ships of the Princess Line® and made that line famous. It also served to popularize the cruise. The Carnival® line began operations in 1972 and soon thereafter came to emphasize the "Fun Ship."

In recent years, both cruise ships and the idea of a cruise have been revolutionized. In the early years of the industry, people took cruises in order to get from one location to another; the cruise was seen as a novel way of getting to interesting locales. Now the ships themselves, as well as the entertaining experience of the cruise, are the main reasons for taking a cruise. There are significantly more cruise ships, and cruises are far more frequent. Although the cruise lines carried only about one-half million passengers in 1970, by 1995 that number had increased ten-fold to 5 million passengers.[81] Through most of the 1980s and 1990s, the number of cruise passengers grew at a rate of 7.6 percent per year.[82] There are many more cruise destinations now and a much wider variety of types of cruises (gay, family, nature, and so on). Cruises have become far more affordable (cruise lines are now even offering financing).

The cruise ship itself has been transformed. Ships of the 1970s tended to be small, uncomfortable in inclement weather, with tiny cabins, no television, and limited menus. Although there is a wide variety of cruise ships, the most popular have become much larger and more spectacular. They also have come to encompass a number of other means of consumption such as casinos, night clubs, health spas, shopping malls, bars, and so on. Each of these plays a role in making the modern cruise ship a highly effective means for getting people to spend large sums of money and consume an array of services and goods.

Casinos

Like amusement parks and cruise ships, casinos (often coupled with hotels) have a lengthy history. The modern casino can be traced to the founding of the Flamingo Hotel® by gangster Bugsy Siegel in Las Vegas in 1946.[83] There had been casinos in Las Vegas prior to this time, but the Flamingo was the first of what was to be the ever-accelerating development of spectacular casino–hotels. In its early years, Las Vegas relied on income from gambling, and other potential money makers (hotel rooms, food, shows, and so on) either were loss leaders or marginal producers of income. In more recent years, Las Vegas has reinvented itself and become more oriented to family entertainment. Although gambling is still an important source of revenue, the other facets of the business of casino–hotels are also designed to make lots of money. The modern casino–hotel is a highly effective means of promoting gambling, the Las Vegas experience, and the activities and paraphernalia that go with them.

Modern Las Vegas hotels make money by offering as many as 5,000 or 6,000 rooms at operating margins around 25 percent. The city as a whole has more than 100,000 hotel rooms. The casinos are enormous and spectacular, offering an increasingly large number of ways to gamble. And these casinos are huge money makers for the house with operating margins on table games (blackjack, for example) of roughly 25 percent and of more than 50 percent on slot machines, the true cornerstones of the modern casino.[84] The Mirage Hotel–Casino® alone has operating profits of $200 million per year. Whatever last small bills and coins a departing visitor might not yet have spent are apt to be taken by the slot machines at Las Vegas's McCarran Airport or in state line casinos for those who are leaving by automobile.

Las Vegas casinos have also, in one way or another, been transported to much of the rest of the United States. The most notable examples are the casinos in Atlantic City, on Native American reservations, and in many other settings (including, in Canada, the West Edmonton mega-mall). Tunica County, Mississippi, "long known as one of America's most wretched backwaters," has almost overnight become a gambling mecca with nine casinos and 50,000 visitors a day as of this writing.[85] In just five years, it went from the poorest to the richest county in Mississippi. Other examples of the spread of the casino influence include the previously discussed on-line casinos as well as race tracks that have poker rooms or slot machines.

Entertainment Aimed at Adults

The Las Vegas casino model has had other kinds of influences. For example, there is a chain of adult-oriented entertainment centers known as Dave and Buster's® (the first one opened in 1982; there were nine at the end of 1996), which look like miniature casinos; the chain is seen as a possible harbinger of "the Las Vegasification of America."[86] In fact, one of the co-owners said, "By virtue of its scale and the adult concept . . . yes, we're like Las Vegas."[87] They are large (in one case, 50,000 square feet), have bars, restaurants, pool tables, and a large number of modern games (video games and virtual reality games such as virtual skiing and car racing) and traditional arcade games (skee ball, for example). One can win tickets redeemable for prizes. There is even a small casino, although gambling for money is not permitted. Servers deliver food and drink to the play areas from the restaurant and two bars.

Reflective of the Vegas influence, Dave and Buster's is itself also representative of the growing number of new means of consuming adult-oriented entertainment. Another is Q-Zar,® which involves a fifteen-minute game of laser tag played by two teams with up to twenty players on each team.[88] Many shopping malls are moving toward offering more entertainment like that found at Dave and Buster's. Other new entertainment-oriented chains include Gameworks® (the first opened in Seattle in 1997) and Viacom Entertainment Stores®.

Eatertainment

Another contemporaneous example of the trend toward emphasizing entertainment are chains of themed restaurants (often called "eatertainment"), which have grown dramatically in recent years (although some have run into trouble lately). Theme restaurants "typically combine lackluster food, designs that resemble theater sets and entertainment ranging from costumed waiters to museums of memorabilia."[89] The pioneer in this realm, Hard Rock Cafe®, was founded in London in 1971. Although a British creation, it took as its mission the introduction of "good, wholesome American food" to the English.

By 1995 there were more than forty Hard Rock Cafes in many of the world's major cities. It is interesting to note that it is not the food but products with the Hard Rock Cafe logo that are generally coveted by visitors and tourists. According to one observer, "Most people who wear the t-shirts never even sit down to have a meal there; they simply walk into the apparel stores to look at and purchase Hard Rock buttons, caps and sweatshirts. What in the world compels these people to buy memorabilia from a restaurant in which they have never eaten?"[90] In fact, with the wide array of merchandise (including $300 leather jackets) now available sporting the Hard Rock Cafe logo,[91] the wearing of anything with that logo gives the wearer almost instant international recognition. As Thorstein Veblen argued long ago, "Esteem is awarded only on evidence," and for many today esteem is derived from the Hard Rock logo on a t-shirt.[92]

A similar chain is Planet Hollywood®, which openly admits that it "operates movie-themed restaurants in the Hard Rock Cafe 'eatertainment' vein."[93] Instead of rock memorabilia, Planet Hollywood offers movie memorabilia. It does not try to conceal the fact that its hamburgers are "high-priced." And it proudly states that the sale of t-shirts and other souvenirs accounts for 40 percent of all of its sales.

Among other such chains that have recently opened, or will soon open, are The Apple Cafe® (a cyber cafe from Apple Computer), Bubba Gump Shrimp Co.® (based on the movie *Forrest Gump*), Club Kokomo® (inspired by the Beach Boys's song), Marvel Mania® (comic-book theme), Motown Cafe® (inspired by the music and stars of Motown records), and so on.[94]

OTHER MEANS OF CONSUMPTION

The cathedrals of consumption are important not only in themselves but also for their influence on other parts of society. A surprising number of settings are emulating the new means of consumption in one way or another.

Athletic Facilities

A variety of modern athletic facilities such as golf clubs, tennis clubs, ski resorts, and fitness centers can all be seen as new means for consuming athletic activities. The new professional athletic stadiums can be described in a similar fashion, witness in baseball the Baltimore Orioles's Oriole Park at Camden Yards, the Cleveland Indians's Jacobs Field, and the Atlanta Braves's Turner Field. Although these new stadiums often resemble earlier versions, and even seek to copy them in many ways, they also have a number of innovations. For example, they all feature spectacular computerized scoreboards; they have all become more adept at extracting money from those who use their services (e.g., high-priced suites of box seats at baseball and football games; food courts that resemble those found in shopping malls; elaborate souvenir shops). As a stock prospectus for the Cleveland Indians Baseball Company put it: "Fans at Jacobs Field are offered a customer-focused experience in an attractive, comfortable environment featuring a variety of amenities, concessions and merchandise options."[95] Although these athletic facilities have a long history, the more modern forms are far more oriented to, and effective at, serving as means for the consumption of athletic services (and goods).

Luxury Gated Communities

Like the new athletic stadiums, luxury gated communities often seek to resemble, and even copy, traditional communities. Unlike the majority of these early communities, these new communities have opted to wall themselves off from the outside and to privatize their streets.[96] Consumed in these spectacular settings are expensive homes and a rich and luxurious lifestyle including golf courses, tennis clubs, fitness facilities, and so on. Almost *de rigueur* in these communities are expensive home furnishings, landscaping, and automobiles. (In the exclusive and expensive gated communities of Boca Raton, Florida, the high-priced Lexus® is known as the "Boca Chevy.")

Educational Settings

Administrators are coming to recognize that their educational campuses need to grow more like the other new means of consumption to thrive. The high school has been described as resembling a shopping mall.[97] The university, too, can be seen as a means of educational consumption. These days most campuses are dated, stodgy, and ineffective compared to shopping malls, cruise ships, casinos, and fast food restaurants. To compete, universities are trying to satisfy their students by offering, for example, "theme housing"—dorms devoted to students with shared special interests.[98] As universities learn more and more from the new means of consumption, it will be increasingly possible and accurate to refer to them as "McUniversities."[99] A related and important trend, still in its infancy, is the growth of the virtual university, especially the Western Governors University being put together at the initiative of the governors of thirteen states in the western United States.[100] It will be increasingly difficult to dis- tinguish such dematerialized universities from cybermalls.

Medicine and Hospitals

A similar point can be made about medicine and hospitals.[101] We already have "McDoctors" (drive-in, quick service medical facilities) and there are many indications that we are moving in the direction of "McHospitals." Examples of the latter trend include expensive suites that look more like hotel than hospital accommodations, more and more "in-and-out" procedures, and so on. HealthSouth®, a chain of mainly outpatient rehabilitation and surgery centers, is seeking to copy McDonald's and offer low-cost, efficient and accessible health care throughout the United States. Its chair says, "I felt we could brand health care in 50 states, and no matter what city you were in, you could have consistent treatment."[102] HealthSouth uses sports stars to increase its visibility, puts its logo on jogging suits and gym bags, and is in the process of creating a catalog of HealthSouth products. It also is having discussions about co-branding athletic shoes and nutritional drinks. Another company official says, "We hope to be right up there with the Cokes and Nikes."[103]

Museums and Charities

Even museums are coming to look more like shopping malls.[104] (Blurring the distinction are largely mall-based commercial chains such as the Museum Shop® and the Nature Company®.) The Metropolitan Museum of Art houses what amounts to a small department store and has more than a dozen satellite stores in malls selling books and museum-made products. The Louvre not only has its shops but also an underground shopping mall with high-end boutiques such as Chanel and Yves Saint-Laurent.[105] The National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., has been described in the following terms:

> The huge skylighted atrium is surrounded by promenades connected by bridges and escalators; individual galleries open off this space, placed exactly where shops would be in the mall. Potted plants, lavish use of marble and brass, and, in the neon-lit basement concourse, fountains, shops, and fast-food counters make the resemblance even more striking.[106]

The former chair of Neiman Marcus® said, "I was in the Metropolitan [Museum of Art] recently, and I was flabbergasted when I saw the size of their store. They are selling everything from rugs to jewelry."[107] He might have been less flabbergasted had he known that the roots of the modern museum are, in part, in the World's Fairs and Expositions.

In addition, to raise money, charities are now using catalogs and 800-numbers to allow recipients to order, among other things, a rabbit and two chicks for a Rwandan family, prenatal care for women in Bangladesh, and a small business loan for a Haitian woman.[108]

Mega-Churches

We can bring this discussion full-circle by pointing out that although the cathedrals of consumption have a quasi-religious character, religion has begun to emulate those cathedrals. Here is one description of the result:

> Megachurches are huge steel and glass structures with acres of parking . . . at their fanciest [they] feature aerobics classes, bowling alleys, counseling centers, and multimedia bible classes where the presentation rivals that of MTV. On Sunday morning, big screens project Scripture verses and the lyrics to pop-style religious songs so that everyone in the congregation can see and follow along.[109]

Said one expert, "They're the biggest movement going in the Protestant Church."[110] Another commented, "They are what I call the Wal-Mart-ization of American Religion."[111] Similarly, the pastor of a large Baptist church has sought to make his services "fun" and to that end urged his staff to study Disney World.[112]

CONCLUSION

This chapter has been devoted to introducing the twin concepts of new means of consumption and cathedrals of consumption. I have also introduced the reader to the major types and examples of such means. Chapter 2 offers insight into the wider context and implications of the cathedrals of consumption, as well as their impact on the way Americans and, increasingly, much of the world consumes.