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# Poststructuralist Lifestyle Analysis: Conceptualizing the Social Patterning of Consumption in Postmodernity

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## Abstract

In the sociology of consumption, a core research issue is the symbolic expression, reproduction, and potential transformation of social collectivities through consumption. The two theoretical perspectives that have long dominated both consumer research and sociological investigations of this class of research questions—what I term personality/values lifestyle analysis and object signification research—have become less useful in the postmodern era. In this study, I develop an alternative poststructuralist approach for analyzing lifestyles. I describe five core principles of poststructuralist lifestyle analysis that distinguish this approach from the two predominant paradigms. Drawing from a series of unstructured interviews, I argue that each of these five features allows for more nuanced description of lifestyles than the two predominant approaches. Poststructuralist lifestyle analysis can be used to unravel the social patterning of consumption according to important social categories such as social class, gender, race/ethnicity, nationality, and generation in advanced capitalist countries in which postmodern cultural conditions make tracing these patterns difficult with conventional approaches.

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