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## **Consumer Culture At Large: Cacophony, Lipophobia, Lipophilia and the Quest For Identity**

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**Consumer Culture at Large:  
Cacophony, Lipophobia, Lipophilia and the Quest for Identity**

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**Abstract**

One major consequence of modern societies developing into consumer societies seems to be an increase in the average weight of the population. This increase, in the Western World as well as in other societies, has reached a point where many voices are raised against the “fat epidemic”. These voices, together with the general beauty image underlining (sometimes extreme) slenderness, has produced a situation where it is fairly safe to say that modern societies are lipophobic: they express a deep anxiety of fat and fatness (Fischler, 1990). Public health campaigns again and again underline the very negative consequences, both in terms of health and in terms of the resulting economic strain on public health services, from the increase in the average weight of the population of developed societies. On the other hand, the public discourses about health and well-being also evoke the importance of being satisfied with your body shape. “Sexy at any size” calls are (though less common than dieting instructions) numerous, especially in the feminine press, and in several countries media specifically oriented towards what is most often called “big beautiful women” (or a variation thereof) are flourishing. The general question is how consumers’ in that particular segment experience and negotiate such messages of appraisal confronted, as they are, with the general condemnation from other commercial but also a lot of public agents? This study looks at the general issue of relating to and belonging to, what might be characterized as an “unwanted majority” of consumer culture, the so-called overweight segment. The method used is partly a “nethnography” of web boards oriented towards discussing the stigmatisations and other problems connected to belonging to this segment, as well as the countering of discourses of the general lipophobia by underlining the presence of a counterideology of lipophilia – as expressed in the “big is beautiful” movement. This question is further investigated through a series of depth interviews and group interviews with Danish women on weight issues and consumption choices in the domains of food, clothing and leisure activities. Through an analysis of media and consumer discourses, the tensions between lipophobia, lipophilia in modern consumer society are discussed, followed by a discussion of the quest for a particular identity position in the middle of this tension of this particular, and very important market segment.

Fischler, Claude (1990), *L’omnivore*, Paris: Odile Jacob.