

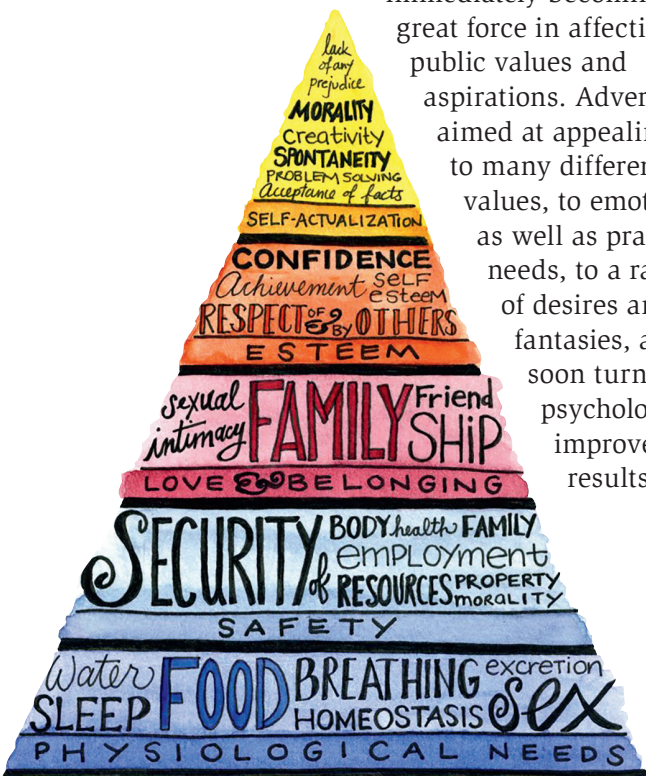
Consumerism and the consumer society

■ The birth of consumerism

Before the late 18th century, the huge majority of population lived in rural areas and worked in agriculture, and individual goods were re-used and repaired for decades. The Industrial Revolution transformed production and consumption: mass production led to mass consumption; department stores appeared in the big cities of the world; new packaging technologies were developed and allowed for a wider distribution of products. Consumerism emerged as part of this historical process and created cultural attitudes that guaranteed that growing **incomes** were used to purchase an ever-growing **output**.

■ The birth of advertising

Industrial progress made it possible to create nationally and internationally known brand names in the marketing of goods for the first time. Thus, advertising emerged as an important component of the marketing and distribution of products, immediately becoming a great force in affecting public values and aspirations. Advertising aimed at appealing to many different values, to emotional as well as practical needs, to a range of desires and fantasies, and soon turned to psychology to improve its results.



■ Consumer motivation and behaviour

Motivational research was the branch of psychology which was soon investigated.

A well-known theory formulated by Abraham Maslow **argued** that human needs are arranged in a pyramidal hierarchy that puts primary needs at the base level and secondary ones at higher levels. If the basic needs are satisfied, the higher levels can emerge; conversely, if lower order needs are not satisfied, higher order needs are no longer pursued.


According to Maslow, there are five levels in this hierarchy:

1. **physiological needs**, such as hunger and thirst;
2. **safety needs**, such as security and protection;
3. **social needs**, such as sense of belonging and love;
4. **esteem needs**, such as **self-esteem**, recognition and status;
5. **self-actualisation needs**, such as self-development and self-realisation.

This theory has since been used by marketers: by examining and adapting to the needs of consumers, advertising will encourage people to buy, thus guaranteeing it its success.

to argue: *argomentare*
income: *reddito*
output: *produzione*

to seek: *cercare*
self-esteem: *autostima*

1  **Answer the questions.**

1. What happened because of the Industrial Revolution?
2. What is consumerism the result of?
3. What was the first role of advertising?
4. What did advertising resort to to improve its results?
5. What is Abraham Maslow's theory based on?
6. What levels are there, according to Maslow's theory?
7. What happens if lower needs cannot be satisfied?
8. Why is this theory used in advertising?

2  **Write these needs under the appropriate level of the Maslow pyramid.**

cry to be fed • seek protection • care and contact • be part of a group • be respected and approved • occupy a social role • physical survival • gain recognition from others for our actions • express our potential • creativity • spontaneity • give and receive love • friendship and sexual intimacy • suppression of worries and anxieties • having a satisfying self-image • better understand ourselves and the world around us • be an element of the community

Physiological	Safety	Social	Esteem	Self-actualisation