

The system of consumer civilization

The most self-aware of are the middle-status intellectuals, among the advertising men, salesmen, and junior executives; and they describe the system as the Rat Race. So W. H. Whyte, Jr. J. K. Galbraith, however, describes it differently: "Among the many models of the good society, no one has urged the squirrel wheel." It is interesting to contrast the different species of imagined rodents between those who are running the race and the scholar it who is contemplating with wonder. (Paul Goodman =Growing Up Absurd= 1960: 60)

So, I was reading quotes from industrial design journals from the 1950s when planned obsolescence was really catching on. These designers are so open about it. They actually discuss how fast they can make stuff break and still leaves the consumer with enough faith in the product to go buy another one.[53] It was so intentional. But stuff can not break fast enough to keep this arrow [of consumption] afloat, so there's also "perceived obsolescence."

Now perceived obsolescence convinces us to throw away stuff that is still perfectly useful. How do they do that? Well, they change the way the stuff looks so if you bought your stuff a couple years ago, everyone can tell that you haven't contributed to this arrow recently and since the way we demonstrate our value is by contributing to this arrow, it can be embarrassing.

[53] For example, see "Planned obsolescence of desirability" and "How to outmode a \$4,000 vehicle in Two Years" and "America'sToughest Car - and Thirty Models Later" in Packard, The Waste Makers (1960) pp. 67 - 86. (Annie Leonard =Story of Stuff=

<http://storyofstuff.org/movies/story-of-stuff/>)



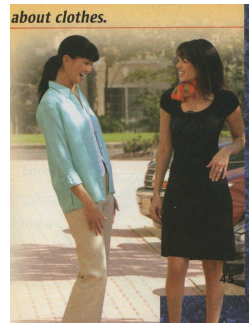
We each see more advertisements in one year than a people 50 years ago saw in a lifetime. And if you think about it, what is the point of an ad except to make us unhappy with what we have. So, 3,000 times a day, we're told that our hair is wrong, our skin is wrong, clothes are wrong...." (Annie Leonard)



Fashion is another prime example of this. Have you ever wondered why women's shoe heels go from fat one year to skinny the next to fat to skinny? It is not because there is some debate about which heel structure is the most healthy for women's feet. It's because wearing fat heels in a skinny heel year shows everyone that you haven't contributed to that arrow recently so you're not as valuable as that skinny heeled person next to you or, more likely, in some ad. It's to keep buying new shoes.

Advertisements, and media in general, plays a big role in this. Each of us in the U.S. is targeted with more than 3,000 advertisements a day.

Saslow =Top Notch= 2006: 45 Fashion, Created Wants Social Comparison, Perceived Obsolescence



Saslow = Top Notch= 2006: 46

Your breath is wrong.
Your smell is wrong.

Breathe Fresh is a gadget no Juliet or Romeo can go without. With this you will never be embarrassed again. You can test your breath instantly and know if you are as fresh as a mountain stream, or need some freshening up. You will never need to be afraid of eating garlic again!



Read and respond
What is each product for? Underline the sentences that tell you.

Is it skiing or for skiffing? ling, then you. Tap i if you are



A new concept in self-care to shape up your looks, set up your hair, tone up your appeal. The Big Beautiful Magnifier is a pocket-sized mirror that shows up every blemish and helps you get your face just right.

(Rod Ellis =Impact Intro= 1997: 56)

High consumer involvement is a significant cause of depressions, anxiety, low self-esteem and psychosomatic complaints. Psychologically healthy children will be worse off if they become more enmeshed in the culture of getting and spending. Children with emotional problems will be helped if the disengage from the worlds that corporations are constructing for them. The effects operate in both directions and are symmetric. "registering... a keen sense of social comparison..." People ... worry more about how much they have... and place more importance on financial success are more likely to be depressed and anxious.... Desiring less, rather than getting more, seems to be the key to contentment and well-being.... Materialism is related to [higher rates of depression and anxiety] psychological stress and difficulty adapting to life. People who value money and success are less likely to experience positive emotions, such as happiness and joy (Juliet B. Schor =Born To Buy= 2004: 167-174)

Advertising is Unhealthy

'The goal for the corporations is to maximise profit and market share. And they also have a goal for their target, namely the population. They have to be turned into completely mindless consumers of goods that they do not want. You have to develop what are called "Creative Wants". So you have to create wants. You have to impose on people what's called a Philosophy of Futility. You have to focus them on the insignificant things of life, like fashionable consumption. I'm tjust basically quoting business literature. And it makes perfect sense. The ideal is to have individuals who are totally disassociated from one another. Whose conception of themselves, the sense of value is just, "how many created wants can I satisfy?" We have huge industries, public relations industry, monstrous industry, advertising and so on, which are designed from infancy to mold people into this desired pattern.' (Noam Chomsky in the DVD =The Corporation= <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0379225>)

。。。消費文化に深く関った場合には、うつ、不安、自尊心(自己評価)の低下、心身症的愁訴の重大な原因になることが明らかになった。。。うつ傾向だったり、不安感にさいなまれたり、あるいは自己評価が低いなど情動面で問題のある子どもが、特に消費文化に取り込まれやすいということはなく、しかも企業が造りあげた消費世界から脱け出すことができれば、回復する見込みがあることが分った。。。この解釈は私の調査結果にも合致し、多くを得ようとするよりは願望のレベルを低くする方が、満足感と幸福感を充足させることができる。。。ノックス カレッジの親理学教授ディム カッサーは労作「高くつく物質至上主義」のなかで、物質主義的価値と幸福についてとひかっている。たとえば金銭的願望(高給の仕事につき、金銭的に成功し、欲いものを買う)と社会的目標(有名になり称賛される)と外見(流行に遅れず、注目される)についてのデータを収集して分析し、金銭的願望が強ければ、それだけ自己実現と生命力の面で薄弱だという結論を導きだしている。(シヨア「子供を狙え」 pp. 260-264)