

Garbage is a commodity

[Environment](#), [Pollution](#)



Garbage is a commodity Garbage is always considered useless and unworthy. It is a by-product arising out of various human activities that center around production and consumption of goods. The major sources of garbage are households and the commercial, industrial, agricultural, construction and institutional sectors. Garbage has been quoted to be lacking economic importance to the owners, and as such destined for landfills. However, the impression that garbage is worthless becomes untrue when garbage is treated as a resource rather than just something with no beneficial use. This comes from the idea of recycling, reusing, repairing and remanufacturing what's left after producing or consuming a good, and also by turning garbage into something useful. This paper explains how garbage can be turned around into something more useful, well enough to be called a commodity. The major processes that have successfully transformed garbage into products of economic value are recycling, reusing, repairing and refurbishing. These products range from fertilizers, animal feed, energy, and biogas. Recycling refers to the process of collecting and processing of materials that would otherwise be thrown away as trash and turning them into new products. Materials that are commonly recycled are steel, plastics, glass, aluminum and paper. Steel is used to manufacture most home and office appliances including cars, mobile phones, DVD players, doors and door locks, cutleries, roofs and fridges. Such items have different life spans, and are always replaced with new ones. The replaced items comprise part of garbage and hence they are taken to be worthless by the owners. They therefore find their way in the landfills. With recycling, they are smelted and steel is extracted which is then used in the manufacture of new products.

Plastic is another recyclable material. It is mostly used to carry items in form of paper bags and containers such as cooking oil containers or milk jars. Most of these items find their way in the dustbins and later in the landfills. Just like in steel, materials which are made of plastic can be recycled and converted into new materials of much usefulness and economic importance. For instance, plastic bottles which are thrown away are collected, cleaned, disinfected, broken down and melted into plastic cubes that are later transformed into new bottles. In this case, what was previously useless has been transformed into something more useful. Aluminum is always used in the manufacture cans that are used to store beer or soft drinks. These cans, after being used, make up part of garbage which can be recycled into new cans and sold back to beer companies. Paper is the other item that is rendered useless once it has served its original purpose. Sources of paper include newspapers, magazines, booklets, phonebooks, cardboards, greeting cards and manila folders. Such items can be recycled back into newspapers, magazines cardboards and also into toilet rolls, pencils and cups. Thus, their worth increases. Other recyclable materials are electronic products which are collectively called E-wastes. They include refrigerators, televisions, personal computers, mobile phones, printers and DVD players. These items are subject to obsolescence and also have limited life spans. For these reasons, they are often abandoned by the owners over a short period of time. Unless the owners take necessary steps to make good use of such garbage, they will remain useless. Recycling is one option where these items would be converted into more useful and up to date electronic products. Reusing is the use of a product in its original form, more than once without

manufacturing. By reusing items, you are simply making more of what you have instead of littering it away. The most commonly reused products are electronics, building materials, office and furniture items, medical equipment and household items. Garbage in form of such items can be made more useful through reusing. These items, instead of staying idle and therefore worthless, can be sold or donated to people who need them. For instance, household items which include clothing, furniture, dishes and appliances can be sold as second hand items to people who may not afford brand new products. Alternatively, they can be donated to a charity. Garbage is also made more useful by repairing garbage items. This means that garbage which appears to have lived its useful life is collected and fixed so that its functionality is maintained. For items that have broken down and therefore they may end up in the landfills, repairing is the best way to get them back to work. Electronic products are classic examples of items that are repairable. Personal computers, for instance, can be taken to a technician for repair. Also, furniture items which include desks, tables and chairs are repairable. Another way of making good use of garbage is remanufacturing or refurbishing. This involves collecting both used and new items and using them to create an item. In this case, garbage will constitute the old components. Garbage that make up laptops, toner cartridges, printers, cameras and engines are sometimes taken back to manufacturers where they are broken down and rebuilt using both old and new components. Composting refers to aerobic decomposition of biodegradable organic matter to produce compost. It can be broadly divided into home composting and industrial composting. The two types differ in their sources and the scales of

composting. Industrial composting is always done on a large scale and is used as an alternative to landfills. Garbage that contains materials rich in carbon and nitrogen are suitable for composting organisms. Garbage rich in carbon content would include things such as cereal straws, autumn leaves, wood chips, saw dust, paper and cardboard while garbage rich in nitrogen content include green plant material such as grass weeds and crop residues. Fruit, vegetable trimmings and manure of poultry and herbivorous animals are also characterized by high nitrogen content. Compost arising out of garbage has many benefits which include improving the structure and texture of soils thus enabling it to retain water, nutrients and air. Macro nutrients such as nitrogen, phosphorous and potassium and micro nutrients such as copper, iron and zinc are also added to the soil. Compost also has the benefit of attracting earthworms and other decomposers which help in breaking down organic material to release nutrients. According to research, soils that have been treated with compost have been proven to produce crops that are more resistant to pests. Diseases and insects are controlled. Also, compost based on leaves help to suppress nematodes and fungal diseases. Soil PH gets a boost with application of compost. Nutrients are always available at ranges between 5.5 and 7.5 for ornamental plants. The application of compost on soils maintains them at optimal levels therefore making nutrients available for plants. Garbage is used in biogas production. This is with particular reference to animal and human waste. By use of a biogas digester, methane is collected. This gas can be used to generate electricity energy. It can also be used generate heat for cooking food and warming water for home and industries. Hydrogen gas production is also

possible from garbage. In this case, solar energy is used to break down animal waste to come up with hydrogen gas. Hydrogen is siphoned and stored for other uses mainly as a source of energy. Incineration refers to a technology that involves burning of organic waste substances, converting them into bottom ash, fuel gases, particulate matter and heat that can be used to produce electricity. The incinerator ash is used in the building and construction industry to build blocks and roads. It's possible to grow mushrooms out of garbage. This involves spreading compost from correctly used latrines on reforested land. Such land is planted with pine trees which provide a nice environment for the growth of bolete mushrooms. This mushroom is expensively sold, thus generating high incomes to people involved in this practice. It can be concluded, without a doubt that garbage is in deed a commodity. It doesn't matter which form it takes; whether organic or inorganic. Garbage is transformable into something that is incredibly useful and with economic value. It all depends with how garbage is perceived. If perceived plainly as garbage as by its definition, then it becomes worthless and useless. However, if the perception about garbage is changed and treated as a resource rather than something useless, then that's when garbage becomes a commodity. This is only possible through deliberate human actions which include recycling, reusing, repairing, refurbishing and giving the garbage new uses. These actions also help to conserve the environment. References. Elizabeth Royte Garbage Land: On the Secret Trail of Trash Back Bay Books (August 29, 2006) William Rathje, Cullen Murphy Rubbish!: The archeology of Garbage University of Arizona Press; First Edition (March 1, 2001)