

Consumerism

[Linguistics](#), [English](#)



Consumerism Consumerism is basically man's need to increase his possessions whether they are needed or not. It is fundamentally greed personified in our own lives. There is no reason for it; yet it is contagious in all of us. Mahatma Gandhi once said, "The earth provides enough to satisfy every man's need, but not every man's greed." From this quote, we can understand the need for enough provisions for every man to make ends meet. If someone goes out and buys some fruit for their kids, it cannot be considered consumerism. A simple definition of consumerism would be the accumulation of wealth or possessions simply for the sake of it. Part of the problem is the "image" that we are expected to portray. Most people subscribe to the theory, "if everyone else is buying it, then I want that too." If one of your friends went out and bought a new Ferrari, even though he already owned four cars, then you would inevitably feel envy towards him. Society would demand that you went and did exactly the same thing because you cannot look "out of place."

Broken down, consumerism basically is correlated with social standing. If you are of a certain social class, then specific lifestyle choices are expected of you. Take for instance our neighborhood friend who is making not much more than the minimum wage. She is a teenager so there are always expectations that she is cool enough for her peers. Peer pressure plays an enormous part in consumer spending. Our teenage neighbor makes only \$8 per hour, which is barely enough to survive; yet she is spending hundreds of dollars on Gucci shoes and Prada bags. We must ask ourselves why she feels the need to be extravagant when she can't afford it. The reason for this is twofold: (1) she has to uphold an acceptable image to her peers and (2) she

is constantly being bombarded with advertising telling her that her life would be incomplete without a certain product. Advertisers generally use famous people to help promote their products because the regular consumer looks up to them as a role model. Our neighborhood friend is no different from the rest of us—she feels pressured to live a lifestyle that is perceived bring happiness in our lives.

The problem with consumerism is that it increases the gap between the rich and the poor. According to the World Bank, the richest 10% of people on earth account for over half the total consumption. On the other hand, the poorest 10% only contribute less than 1% towards the global total.

Consumerism is contributing to the breakdown of societies as people groups demand to have their “ share” of the wealth. There is a problem with a consumerist society such as America—most of what is spent on consumerism is usually borrowed. This results in the need to eventually pay it back. However, as has been seen this last week with the debt ceiling debate, consumerism cannot go on forever. If it is allowed to go on without intervention, then it will result in the destruction of what we currently perceive society to be.