

Consumerism and its discontents essay sample



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As the consumption level and living quality keep increasing, most of us no longer need to worry about not having enough to eat and wear, so we start to consume in growing numbers. Therefore, a lot of us became so-called consumerists. After reading the book written by Annie Leonard, I got a clearer idea on the consumerist worldview, and I thought about how am I fitting in this consumer society as well.

First of all, we need to distinguish well the terms “ consumption” and “ consumerism” , because these are two completely different ideas.

Consumption is the only way to meet our basic needs. Everyone does it, or else we cannot have the daily necessities, and the economy won't run. There is nothing wrong with the consumption. What we are trying to discuss here is the consumerism. It is the worldview of all the consumerists. They tend to fulfill their emotional and social needs through consuming all kinds of stuff, and define people by what they own (Leonard, 145). “ I am what I have” is a simpler way to say it. Consumerism is about excessive consumption(Leonard, 145). The omnipresent commercials are, without doubt, a huge factor that encourage us to consume more. The commercial companies are using all kinds of methods to show us their products, with only one intention: convince us to buy it. One of their most effective tricks is to make us believe that we will be happier or be more satisfied if we just buy this product. But is this true? No. In the end, it only proves that the human's desires are insatiable. We always want more than we have: a better car, a bigger house, more clothes, a new cell phone. We are looking on their brand and price tag rather than their simplicity, functions and durability.

Do we really need them? Absolutely not, we can totally live without all these, but still we are buying ceaselessly. Most of the items we buy will end up in the dustbin or in a corner that we will never throw a glance at. However, we need to work more, and lose the time with our family and friends to earn back the money we have spent. Are we happier? I doubt it. Moreover, as we know, the industrial wastes are the main killer of our environment. By producing these merchandises, we are polluting the water, cutting down the forest and contaminating the land (Leonard 2010). But are consumerists selfish people? I wouldn't say so, because we are living in such a society where most of the people will judge you by your clothes, your car, your house, your cell phone etc. It's hard not to follow the trend. Not many people will have the courage to wear only a few outfits a year, to buy a cell phone of an unknown brand, or to use second-hand books in the school, if they have the condition to not do so. Besides, the consumerism is not totally a bad thing, since it keeps the economy running. If everyone only buy their absolute necessities, most of the factories will shut down, most of the people will be unemployed, and the companies will not have the fund to develop new technologies neither.

Although I have said a lot of negative aspects about the consumerism, to be frank, I consider myself to be a part of it. I am a consumerist, not because I think it is right, but because I don't want to be different from the rest. As I said before, it's hard not to follow the trend. When our friends are all using iPhones, and that your parents propose to buy you one, are you likely to refuse? I admit that I already have plenty of junks at my home and I am still buying them in, because for me and my family, we think that your material

possession reflects your family condition. I believe that if their family condition is fair, most of the parents wouldn't want their child to wear the same old clothes everyday or to buy second-hand stuff or even to use a cell phone for more than five years.

I think there is nothing wrong to purchase new items which can bring you pleasure, as long as you find an appropriate way to weed out your old stuff. Donation is always a good way to do it. If you can help the people in poverty by replacing your old items with new ones, why not? Besides, I think that the money you have earned is meant to be spent. What else can you do with it anyways? As for me, I like to shopping and buy some new clothes from time to time, and I think it is a pleasure to wear a pretty new outfit. In order to weed out the old clothes, we will do a spring cleaning every year and donate them to the helping centers. However, I do agree that your family and friends can bring a lot more happiness than the materials do, but they don't necessarily conflict with each other. As for my family, my parents still have a lot of time to spend with me after work. In the meantime, they are providing me everything I need, and I am very happy with my current lifestyle.

Therefore, despite all the negative aspects of the consumerism, I think we cannot get rid of it. Consuming is one of the most important part in our lives, and is part and parcel of the economy. However, we do need to think about how to reduce all kinds of wastes and to save our planet. But like I said, if you can give your old stuff to others and replace it with a new one, then why don't you do it and enjoy your life while you still can!

Work Cited

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Leonard, Annie. *The Story of stuff*. New York: Free Press, 2010.