

Consumption and customers in the automobile industry



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- Yu Dai

“ I don’t need it but I want it, why shouldn’t I have it?” In the documentary *No Impact Man*, the heroine Michelle questioned her husband Colin who had proposed the environmental protection project. The question, simple while indeed stated with logical precision, involves significant issues. From the economic perspective, this situation is described as hovering between personal motivations and consumer values when making economic decisions. Personal motivations have been considered a driving force of consumption, whereas consumer values express motivational concerns according to the theory of basic human values (Schwartz, S. H., & Bilsky, W.). In the end of the movie, Michelle cycled through Manhattan with her baby girl. She once could not understand why some people did not drive in New York City, but then she became one of them. It is customary to consider that “ finding balance regard to values” implies compromise, in which personal desires are usually first sacrificed, as it did in the case of Michelle who gave up her car. Nevertheless, I argue that values can be useful in expediting technological progress and giving us guidance for consuming smarter rather than simply sacrificing motivations.

The formation of consumer values cannot be divorced from the consumption behavior itself. The idea of consumption has a long history, even before the emergence of money, back to the barter system period. Consumerism in the contemporary sense, which was considered as the early immature consumer value, originated in late nineteenth century when the accomplishment of the Second Industrial Revolution further encouraged the economic development. People’s spending habits changed greatly during the past several centuries.

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Most economic developments in the last century have been achieved at the cost of environment, and after entering the new century, many attempts were made to change the situation. Automobile industry as one of the most representative examples shows the possibility that moral standard, as part of the consumer value, can stimulate the market to develop new technology through its influence on consumer demand and behaviors.

Modern cars were invented based on the working steam-powered vehicle during the Industrial Revolution, and have become prevalent since the mass production of affordable cars by Ford Motor Company in early 1900s. The popularization of cars had made life more convenient, but meanwhile, plenty of problems arose owing to a lack of environmental consciousness in the early period. Along with the improvement of the consumer values, vehicle pollution has been a global concern with the coming of the twenty-first century. Although the inhabitants of the earth were fully aware of the importance of the environmental protection, it was still unrealistic to force them to give up owning cars in order to minimize the gas emissions and the use of petroleum resources. Therefore, there was an urgent demand for new types of cars which can be more ecofriendly.

In the first decade of the new century, the design and manufacture of electric vehicles by Elon Musk is a milestone in the automobile history. Tesla Motors, the company with its incredible fully electric luxury sedan hit the wealthy who pursued fresh excitement and were willing to take responsibility for protecting the environment. The attractions of this fancy motorcar lie not only in its amazing acceleration or safety performance, but also in the use of clean energy to effectively avoid the emission of carbon monoxide and <https://assignbuster.com/consumption-and-customers-in-the-automobile-industry/>

nitrogen oxides. As Tesla Roadster was introduced as a better substitute of traditional cars to the market and consumers were naturally willing to replace the old one for the reduction of gas emission and the better protection of the environment, other companies saw the great opportunity as well and launched their new products one after another. Such positive consumer-driven cycle made energy-efficient and environmental-friendly automobiles a new trend of this century. Different from what had happen to other markets, consumers didn't simply cease their consumption in automobile to ease their concerns. Instead, they stimulate the market to update the products supplied by showing great demand for new types of cars out of concern for the environment, behind which is great influence from the consumer values. It finally offers them more choices, and thus they do not need to give up their motivations.

The high price of Tesla Roadster may not be affordable to everyone, but other participants also showed their great efforts to make consumption both eco-friendly and satisfying. For those who already have cars, it seems impractical to buy a new one but reasonable to replace with another kind of fuel. Consumers highly demanded some improvements made in petroleum industry in order to reduce their guilty of polluting the environment. In this situation, the appearance of hybrid gasoline is well-founded. This new fuel reduces the pollution by adding ethanol into gasoline, which remains water after the combustion. With government support and the increasing demand, the production and use of ethanol fuel boomed in the past few years. And for those who want to buy new cars with budget constraint, the promotion of highly-efficiency and clean-fuel vehicles drop the price dramatically, and

provide them with many choices as well. Consumer values often succeed in giving us suggestions about what we really need and demand for right things, in which bring such innovations that allow us to avoid struggling between conscience and desire.

Besides automobile industry, there are many other businesses in which consumer values successfully make progress of technology to drive industrial development. In pharmaceutical industry, it has been a long history to use rare animals in medicine. The controversy of whether bear bile should be used as medicine has never stopped. Bear bile has been used as ingredients for its high medicinal value for thousands of years. However, the methods of bile extraction were very cruel which caused untold suffering to bears. Consumers expected the development of new drug which has the same effect but without hurting animals. Under this circumstance, after half-century study and experiment in medical circle, an artificially synthetic analogue of bear bile eventually were sold on the market and used widespread. It was another success that values guidance played its role rightly to promote the upgrade and update of commodities to conform customers' demand. And there are numerous successful examples in every all walks of life.

During the formation of consumer value in the past few centuries, a question has been frequently asked was in what way and how it guides our consumption behaviors. I would like to point out that consumer value as an invisible ideology often makes indirectly effect on buying habits. It exerts an imperceptible influence on consumer demand, and eventually promotes the

market to supply better products with advanced technologies which allowed consumers easily to make right decisions.