

# Commodity fetishism

[Economics](#), [Macroeconomics](#)



Karl Marx introduces the concept of commodity fetishism which is our society's obsession with the consumption of goods and services. It is in Marx's opinion that this is used to mask the exploitation of the working class as they become obsessed with consuming. We use capitalism as a system of exchange value, for example we exchange our labor in order to afford food to survive instead of producing our own food. The prices we see when we walk into a store represent the human labor required to produce the product and the approximate use value one would achieve using it.

The use value is simply the amount of utility we gain from consuming or using a good or service. Now, I travel very often on business trips with my father's investment company; recently we went on a trip to Boston with Mackenzie Investments. We stayed in a world class hotel and were treated to box seats at a NFL game, this was paid for; Marx would refer to Mackenzie's business functions as having an exchange value.

The company will subsidize our travel costs as well as provide goods and services to satisfy our wants in order to build a relationship and in turn receive our business. The use value we receive from the consumption of these commodities will also impact how we view Mackenzie. Perhaps a person in attendance at the football game detests the sport while another adores it; each person will value the experience differently as it provides different utility to each person.

Our relationship between ourselves and Mackenzie is not based on an intrinsic level but rather on the giving of commodities, we will only briefly talk to the fund managers of the company so it's hard to build a relationship on anything but what they provide us with. This relationship has the ability to

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be built on the giving of goods and services due to the capitalist society's commodity fetishism. We will observe the working class where more and more people are working in factories and large corporations to produce more commodities for people to buy or services to use.

While the lower class is trapped in a cyclical labor to consume cycle (in other words living pay check to pay check like 47% of the Canadian economy (globeandmail)) the rich are reaping the benefits. The workers must consume because this is what society tells them to do, they must labor in order to consume so the workers labor, be it mental or physical they are becoming a commodity themselves because they are for hire. They sell themselves and their labor to their boss who sells what they produce and in turn makes the profit.

This relates directly to the alienation earlier discussed by Marx. The workers become alienated from the product they are producing for they will not use it, they become alienated from self because they are not in control of their actions, often they will also be alienated from people in their be it in their own office or at their station in a factory. The drive behind our society seems corrupt and vague; we observe the prices of goods and services but do not account for the hardships of the workers producing them.

We often see ads about children overseas in sweatshops being exploited but what about our own people who slave away 9-5 at a job they hate producing goods they do not consume for the sheer benefit of the monetary gains of their boss Question: Now that we have uncovered the true nature of capitalism how can we change it? Is there any way to help abolish the fetishism which takes advantage of the working class and benefits the rich?

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