Critiques and Defenses of Consumerist Culture

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Consumerist Culture and the Expansion of Unnecessary Consumption

The consumerist culture has existed for decades, though it is popular in the United States and other Western Nations. The perception of consumerism has become part of society's lifestyle, encouraging people to acquire goods they do not need. According to Firat, Kemal, and Arikan (179), consumerist culture is the belief that the well-being of people and happiness depend on the level of personal consumption.

The notion is built on believing that all consumers understand what they want. It creates the idea that consumers need fashion in the market, and it can be defined as consumer sovereignty (Firat, Kemal and Arikan 181). However, consumerist culture affects people's health and can damage a good future. It is useful to the economy since it encourages people to spend. On the same note, it can increase personal debt since it encourages overspending.

Research has established that consumerist culture negatively affects consumers and can lead to overspending, resulting in an accumulation of debt. Therefore, debt and overspending can slow personal growth (Singh 16). Most marketers believe that consumers do not know what they want, and consequently, they must be told or persuaded by an advertisement, which increases the spending rate of most people. As per one of the most successful entrepreneurs, Steve Jobs, "people usually do not know what they want until they are shown to them." With this argument, consumers are usually in a state of limbo, wanting to buy any goods being advertised. Therefore, it facilitates overspending by consumers; hence, people utilize their incomes to buy things they do not need instead of saving their incomes for personal growth and living within their means (Goodwin, Julie and Frank 25). Eventually, it creates an imbalance in the economy where people work to buy goods or properties they do not have any plans for, but simply because they were advertised in the media.

Advertising, Health, and the Social Costs of

Consumerism

Several studies have also shown that Americans are at the center of consumerism and advertisement, influencing the consumption of several products. According to Rumbo (132), consumerism culture can result in unhealthy eating habits which can cause obesity, hypertension, high blood pressure, diabetes, and other chronic diseases. This makes consumerism culture dangerous to consumers and should be avoided. However, defenders of consumers argue that it informs consumers so that they can make an informed decision regarding products in the market to avoid being exploited. For instance, research has indicated that some fast food can easily cause heart disease because of high fat content. It is evident that several fast foods which are usually being advertised on social media can easily cause diabetes and obesity, which are health conditions that can be fatal. Therefore, consumerist culture has never been good and can be disastrous and fatal if not addressed properly. It, thus, reduces the quality of human beings and increases the chances of getting some disease related to consuming a lot of fat or sugar.

Most importantly, consumerism culture can increase the crime rate in society. Research has indicated that consumerism creates an urge to possess devices like mobile phones, cars, and other electronics. Since an individual may not be able to afford such items, they may decide to steal due to pressure to have expensive gadgets. This makes consumerism culture a bad thing that should not be encouraged. However, defenders of consumerist culture argue that society is already rotten with or without consumerism culture and therefore, arguing that it increases crime can mean that consumerism has been there from the 1860s which is not possible. However, research has proved that consumerism can increase crime and therefore, any argument should be supported with studies that defenders of consumerism have failed to provide.

However, some people argue that consumerist culture drives a country's economy since it encourages people to spend more money. As stated by Rumbo (135), through spending, the country could easily get out of recession through a collection of taxes which are used to build a nation. Therefore, consumerist culture is essential for economic growth and should be encouraged. The proponent of consumerist culture regards the perception that it leads to overspending as a tactic people apply to avoid purchasing products and living below their means. Therefore, consumer culture is a noble concept that can be used to build a country's economy. For instance, if the purchasing power of a nation is low, the GDP will be stagnant, and the possibility of a country tumbling into recession is high. It is argued that advertising and marketing create an urge among consumers to purchase specific products, resulting in consumerist culture and, therefore, better economic growth.

Shopping, Social Connection, and Defences of

Consumer Culture

Consumer culture also encourages people to view purchasing products as a bonding experience, where people can take time off to discuss and get to know each other better. According to Smart (15), shopping with friends or relatives brings people together to understand one another and therefore, consumer culture plays an essential role in the social phenomenon, not just an economic part alone. For instance, when friends go out shopping, they listen to each other more often and consult, which can help in creating an inseparable link and understanding in society (Smart 30). It is argued that consumerist culture assists consumers in understanding the market and making the right choices about the kind of products to purchase. Furthermore, consumerist culture just informs the consumers of the available choices while the consumer decides whether to purchase a product. Therefore, consumerist culture is a good insight into goods or products that should be promoted in the market. Smart (32) further argues that consumerism indicates the link between marketing practice and the dangers of consumerism, which might be greater than believed to be just marketing academics.

Defenders of advertising also argue that advertising usually promotes vital information to the people regarding products in the market and therefore, it is an essential part of consumerism. Karam (24) states that advertisements help customers make the right decision when purchasing a product. It creates an informed society rather than destroying or misleading the consumers as portrayed by other actors. It is argued that without advertising and marketing, products would not move and consumers would not be able to know products or goods available in the market; therefore, it helps in avoiding being exploited by one company since a monopoly would not be able to exist in the market for a longer time. For instance, Coca-Cola spends USD twelve billion every financial year on marketing to create dominance, and because of a free society, Pepsi and the rest still get their share in the market. It is the essence of having marketing and advertising in society (Karam 20).

In conclusion, people have raised concerns about consumerism, and several believe that consumerism is linked to the rate of reduced well-being of consumers. Research has shown that consumerism influences consumers to be involved in unhealthy diets, such as the consumption of a lot of fast food, which can affect people’s lives, leading to several diseases. It is also argued that consumerism culture is bad for economic growth because it leads to overspending without thinking of saving some income for future growth. However, defenders of consumerist culture argue that it helps in strengthening the economy since it urges people to spend, hence putting a lot of money into circulation, which can result in increased economic growth. Nevertheless, it is essential to note that consumerism culture has existed in Western nations and has been part of their culture. Therefore, it is good to practice consumerism with many constraints since its long-term effect can have a more significant impact on society if not appropriately managed. It is, therefore, evident that consumerism culture has a bad effect on society and should be avoided at all costs.

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