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## **The Rise of American Consumerism in the Fifties**

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# Dedications

*I pleasurably dedicate my dissertation to my dearest parents and all  
my sisters and brothers.*

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# **Abstract**

After the Second World War; the period known as the post war economic boom, the United States had proven their power and gained back their lost confidence as everything was flourishing. More goods became available for more people in addition to economy development of suburbs. Therefore the United States of America have become finally a prosperous country for majority of people after a long period of discomfort and disasters. This research examines the culture of consumerism that underlined the rise of expenditure along with its potential psychological and environmental fallouts.

# Table of Content

	Pages
<b>Dedications.....</b>	<b>II</b>
<b>Acknowledgments.....</b>	<b>III</b>
<b>Abstract.....</b>	<b>IV</b>
<b>Table of Content .....</b>	<b>V</b>
<b>General Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Chapter One Conceptualizing Consumerism: Definitions and History.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>1. 1 Defining Consumerism.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>1. 2 Consumer society and Consumerism .. ..</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>1. 3 The History of Consumerism .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Chapter Two The Role of Television in Manufacturing Consumerism.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>2. 1 The Culture of Conformity.....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>2. 2 Television Programming.....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>2. 3 Television Advertising.....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>2. 3. 1 Definitions of Advertising.....</b>	<b>17</b>

2. 3. 2 The impact of Television Advertising.....	18
2. 4 Materialists Breeds Unhappiness .....	20
2. 4. 1 Materialism in Advertising.....	22
Conclusion.....	24
Chapter Three Predicting the Future of Consumerism.....	25
Introduction.....	26
3. 1 The Unsustainability of Overconsumption.....	26
3. 2 Solutions to the Unsustainability of Overconsumption.....	29
3. 2. 1 Green Consumerism.....	29
3. 2. 2 Minimalism.....	30
3. 2. 2. 1 Defining Minimalism .....	30
3. 2. 2. 2 Minimalism and Consumerism.....	31
3.2. 2. 3 Minimalism as a Lifestyle.....	32
3. 2. 2. 4 Minimalism and Sustainable living.....	32
3. 2. 2. 5 Proposed Minimalist lifestyle Regulations.....	34
1. Regulating Sustainable living.....	34
2. Tax Incentive.....	34
3. Education.....	35
Conclusion.....	36
General Conclusion.....	37
References.....	39

# **General Introduction**

There have always been social and political problems but the key to overcome them is usually challenging to find. One of such effective solutions may be consumerism as it fulfills the void caused, for instance, by terrible political events that Americans have been through. The obsession with shopping helps them to avert the attention from unpleasant situations.

Consumerism has been the subject of considerable discussion over the last four decades. It used to be a movement to improve the rights and powers of consumers in relation to the sellers of products and services. It is a protest movement of consumers against what they or their advocates see as unfair, discriminatory and arbitrary treatment. There is nothing new about the idea of consumerism. It is as old as business.

Moreover, Consumerism has undergone a number of changes in meaning. It is the idea that increasing the consumption of goods and services purchased in the market is always a desirable goal and that a person's wellbeing and happiness depend fundamentally on obtaining consumer goods and material possessions. In an economic sense, it is related to the predominantly Keynesian idea that consumer spending is the key driver of the economy and that encouraging consumers to spend is a major policy goal.

It has been argued that consumerism has become the modern day religion practiced by many people, fulfilling needs to connect, belong, and engage in rituals. From this point of view, consumerism is a positive phenomenon that fuels economic growth. Despite these various benefits, consumerism has a dark side that cannot simply be ignored. It had seen a possible threat in the way it was developing, especially after the fifties booming that was functioned as a safety anchor after the Second World War. Therefore, a growing number of academics, as well as the general population, have questioned the drawbacks of extreme buying and its consequences in the future.

This study attempts to answer the following questions to pin point the drawbacks of consumerism.

- 1-** Does consumerism has an effect on American's lives?
- 2-** How is television often associated with consumerism?
- 3-** How does overconsumption effect our environment?



The purpose of this study is to explore the reason behind the consumerism boom in American during the 1950s, and how television helped in the spread of this phenomenon. Furthermore, it investigates the impact of consumerism on Americans' lives, and how it negatively impacts environment.

This study is about the rise of American consumerism in the 1950s. It will explain the relationship between the American society and consumerism during the 50s era, as an attempt to analyze how consumerism has changed the American views towards their spending habits.

This Work has been organized into three chapters. In chapter one: We give a broad understanding to consumerism and how it might differ from the word consumption. This chapter also deals with the origins of the consumer society and consumerism, in which their origins are related to the historical evolution of society around the concept of production and the resulting form of society.

In chapter two: We will explain the factors that helped America to create a culture of conformity, exploring the onset of consumer society and television in their place of birth – 1950s America. It shows how television programming provided both implicit and explicit lessons on the joys of consumerism. Moreover, it has been argued that excessive consumption and the advertised materialistic values are impacting on people's personal well-being and social relationships.

The last chapter deals with the prediction of consumerism's future including a detailed discussion on the troubling environmental implication of overconsumption; providing possible solutions to mitigate these implications, and the necessity for an expanded understanding of the factors driving consumption practices.

**Chapter One**

**Conceptualizing Consumerism:**

**Definitions and History**

## **Introduction**

The last four decades have witnessed an over expanding interest in Consumerism and which is in a very critical condition. It has weak links with the Western world, but is in fact an international phenomenon. People purchasing goods and consuming materials in excess of their basic needs is as old as the first civilizations (e.g. Ancient Egypt, Babylon and Ancient Rome). The word Consumerism has to be fully understood in its historical retrospect with reference to the shift in the way society conceptualizes the world, highlighting the reasons behind the appearance of consumer society.

### **1.1 Defining Consumerism**

The term "consumerism" is claimed to be have originally emerged in the American magazine *The New Republic* in 1944. But, it did not relate to consumerism that we know today. It denoted a cooperative movement at the time, which is also an action that contains cooperative principles and is used in businesses. It looks difficult to identify the exact year when the term was first utilized as it is today understood - to express the idea of obtaining large quantities of products and services (Swagler, 1994). Consumerism is a complicated collection of economic, social, and cultural practices characterized by the independent production, monetary exchange, and commercialization systems that dominate American society. Consumption, in its most basic form, is the action of acquiring and consuming products in order to meet one's culturally determined wants. Robert Bocoock defined consumerism as "the active ideology that the meaning of life is to be found in buying things and pre-packaged experiences" (Bocoock, 1997, p.50). The most of people, on the other hand, buy and consume for psychological and material purposes that surpass reasonable and basic needs. Furthermore, Schwartz (1992) highlighted self-enhancement principles taken by society who want to acquire wealth, prestige, and goods in order to feel special. Power, the desire for wealth and resources, and achievement, the desire to be successfully and admirably prominent within one's society, were two of the self-enhancement values he identified. Consumerism appears to be used to meet extrinsic or materialistic aims in American society, owing to the influence of self-enhancement and materialistic aspirations. Such research is consistent with Slater's (1997) definition of the culture surrounding consumerism as a "continuous self-creation through the accessibility of things which are themselves presented as

new, modish, faddish and fashionable, always improved and improving” (p. 10). Throughout this way, current consumerism becomes voracious in nature, with insatiable desires and competition formed by ten comparisons with others creating social pressure to own instead of just enjoy the fruits of the Earth (Slater, 1997).

Additionally, there was a time when mass industries made products that helped people deal with existing armies, conformity to be led, and panoptical domination methods. People sought comfort and security in their belongings as a result of these factors. Surprisingly, these items were not meant to be consumed right away, but rather to be protected. However, the society might be classified as consumerist, because the primary social and economic purpose of such a society is to purchase and sell. Another definition of consumerism is economic, which states that consumerism is defined as economic policies that promote excessive consumption. Nonetheless, these two definitions are just two examples among many others. These could be linked or unrelated, and they can be misleading sometimes. It depends on the perspective we use when analyzing the meaning (Baudrillard, 1998).

Many people use the word consumerism and consumption to refer to the same thing, but there is a slight difference between them. Consumption is characterized as an action and a personal trait and it starts when a customer can afford buying and actually does so. Consumption is a natural act for the human kind which has its roots as ancient as living organisms. Furthermore, consumption is an inescapable part of life that all living organisms share for the purpose of survival. The only distinguishes us is that we both need money to buy essentials like food and shelter. Animals and plants, on the other hand, are entirely reliant on themselves and their innate survival abilities (Bauman, 2013).

There are a lot of definitions and technical words that might allow us to understand the term of consumer society — a society that purchases things it doesn't really need (Baudrillard, 1998). Consumerism and consumption can be found in a variety of works on a variety of topics, which contributes to the continued misunderstanding of the two terms. Aside from this misconception, the term "consumer movement" may also be misleading. As a result, it's important to remember that it's not the same as consumerism. Although the terms are sometimes used interchangeably, consumer movement refers to a situation in which organizations try to

avoid committing consumer fraud, and it is, in actuality, the protection of consumers' rights (Swagler, 1994).

## 1.2 Consumer Society and Consumerism

Societies are groups of people who share similar cultural elements or identical cultures. Worldwide consumer culture denotes a society with particular behavioral tendencies that crosses national borders. The members' tendency to respond inexorably to the forces driving the consumption engine reveals the closeness of the patterns. A consumer society, in its most basic form, is one in which for Baudrillard (1998) the whole society is organized around the consumption and goods are displayed through which a person gain prestige, identity, and standing. Same as the Veblen's notion of "conspicuous consumption" (1994), according to Baudrillard (1998) goods are not merely described by use-value and exchange value, as in Marx's theory of the commodity, but also in sign-value - the expression and mark of style, prestige, luxury, power, and so on - that increasingly became essential part of the commodity and consumption. It's same as words take meaning in a system of language; consumer society uses a system of signs to signify prestige and status. Within consumer society, objects are being used quickly and disposed wastefully. Recently this rapid use and disposal has been largely associated with the corruption of values and thus often carries a negative meaning. Baudrillard (1998) claimed that consumer society needs its items in order to exist, and in some ways, consumer society requires the ruin its objects. The connection to wealth is the contrast between abundance and absence. As a result, consumption took on a new meaning when it is destroyed. Baudrillard (1998) believes consumption is mostly a stepping stone between production and destruction. According some researchers, consumer society could only be understood in its social context: "The modern consumer is not an isolated individual making purchases in a vacuum. Rather, we are all participants in a contemporary phenomenon that has been variously called a consumerist culture and a consumer society. To say that some people have consumerist values or attitudes means that they always want to consume more, and that they find meaning and satisfaction in life, to a large extent, through the purchase of new consumer goods. Consumerism has emerged as part of a historical process that has created mass markets, industrialization, and cultural attitudes that ensure that rising incomes are used to purchase an ever-growing output." The

beginnings of the consumer society are clearly linked to the historical development of society all around idea of production and the resulting shape of society, as seen above (Baudrillard, 1998).

### **1.3 The History of Consumerism**

Before modern era consumerist behaviors was spread among the nobles who wanted to live an affluent life by pleasuring themselves with fancy luxuries, also among wealth businessmen who tried to imitate the nobles by building palaces. This may be true as nobles weren't really consumerist, but through military and special political services they got a higher nobility and quality of living. However, for the poorer classes consumerism was restricted due to poverty, and for farmer who had material resources as what was needed for living, any consumerism act frowned upon the wealthy classes who didn't accept the lower classes conveying any desire to pass social barriers or express individuality. In addition, Catholicism was dominant religion in Europe at that time and the religious puritan teaching encourages the observance to unworldly aspirations. They were worried about the material goals which can lead them from spiritual aims and obedience. So the moral system did not provide a good base for consumerism (Stearns, 2006).

It is recognized the rise of consumer society is strongly linked to the birth of modernity (Slater, 1997). Modernity is related to commercialization, or the growth of goods and services accepted as goods and traded inside the market, and is linked to worldwide commodity and the cultural institutions that help and promote exchange activities, such as advertisement on consumer credit availability. Historians also believe that the start of modernity was years before the industrial revolution in the mid 17<sup>th</sup> C in Europe with the expansion of consumption and material culture among the entire social classes (Fairchilds, 1993; Shammas, 1990). Meanwhile, it's not clear whether the expansion distribution in each class was the same or not during that time household goods, such as textiles, and personal ornamentation, such as buttons, were progressively bought from the marketplace within all classes. It's very likely that the growing availability of products, such as spices, and stimulants, such as tea, tobacco and cocoa contributed to the reshaping of consumer habits at this time (Thirsk, 1978).

Furthermore, due to worries the 16<sup>th</sup> c that the demand for imported commodities was depleting the economy, government measures encouraged business ventures for the local

manufacturing of previous imported items (Thirsk, 1978). Thirsk (1978) explained these entrepreneurs as "projects involving large-scale cottage-based production." mainly relied on consumer goods like pots, nails, linen, and tools. Thirsk believed that the lower classes only had enough money over margin to spend on some other items when communities began to manufacture goods that were not meant to address basic needs. Essentially, projects giving the workers cash, and items on which they would spend their cash (Thirsk, 1978), so the wealthy were no longer the only ones who could consume. This shift in production and consumption resulted in the birth of trade and business, which is credited with quickening the transformation of traditional rural culture into modern society (Slater, 1997).

The steady rise of trade in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries had a lot of effect on Western culture at the period. To begin with, the concept of consumption was reformulated. It was recognized for its relevance and importance in the trade of products, instead of for its wastefulness and loss of ethical, political, and economic values (Slater, 1997).the new understanding gave merchants and market owners a chance to discover new and different ways in order to attract the costumers, through shops windows, cheap items, or ads in the newspaper and famous magazines. Advertisements pay the way to fast recognition of brand's names, such as Wedgewood china, and the market-based exchange of trade means that consumers were free to acquire any product they wanted, limited only by the amount of money they had. This transformation view instable rise and lead to the appearance of hierarchical status in which wealth overtook religious and traditional determinants of what particular social classes were allowed to possess.

Besides this, trade brought a new era of social interaction, allowing for the free exchange of experiences, opinions, and conversations in public spaces. Males and females may break the chains from traditions and be at ease being opportunistic, active, and self-interested, and also resisting the aristocracy's subjective authority (Slater, 1997).

Regardless Of government resistance (because to its claimed social and moral risks) to consumption within the working and middle classes at this time, there was acceptance that it was a well-spring for economic expansion. In 1691, Sir Dudley North wrote:" 21 The main spur to trade, or rather to industry and ingenuity, is men's exorbitant appetites, which they will take pains to gratify, and thus be disposed to work, when nothing else will incline them to it; for if

men (sic) contented themselves with bare necessities, we should have a poor world". (North, 1971, p. 27) Individual needs for goods, as self-seeking and lusty they were thought to be, appearing to have been recognized for their collective potential in creating a successful and productive society. As a result, political leaders encouraged the export of goods and population expansion in strengthening the state.

The desire to resemble the nobility, especially among the bourgeois, was another important factor in the emergence of consumerism in the 17th and 18th centuries. Through this era, the bourgeoisie was the social middle class, defined as those who owned wealth through business or finance. They were said to have a materialistic vision, were crafty, and were only interested in protecting and developing their wealth in order to retain their social superiority. According to historian, as the bourgeois grew wealthier, their desire to interact with the elites grew as well. In order to compete and gain fame among all the aristocracy, the bourgeois adopted devious marriage methods and became luxury buyers, as refined commodities were socially seen as a status symbol reserved only for the upper class. As a result, the aristocracy joined the bourgeoisie in their emulation game, each trying to beat the other's extravagant display of status and sophistication. The growing demand for luxuries increased production and commerce, encouraged capital growth, brought in the development of more efficient manufacturing processes, and helped to establish the capitalist system.

Furthermore, rising consumption of luxury items and non-essential objects engendered a hedonistic-aesthetic mentality away from traditional material goods, which eventually made its way down to the lower social classes as they reaped the economic advantages of a growing commercial economy, financial credit, new accessibility of adapted inferior refined commodities, and the development of rationalist production (Sombart, 1967). According to Sombart, such phenomena gave luxury a new meaning, separating it from its previous function as a status symbol. Luxury now gave comfort and pleasure to the under classes, as well as conveying culture and sociability within consumers.

Historians agree that the urge for the Industrial Revolution was fueled by a need for luxury, as well as a rising commercial economy, advertising manipulations, and social liberation. The rise of modern fashion in the 18th century was said to have fueled demand, as commercial compulsion and emulation can only be possible on the basis of fashion. This accurately depicts



the fast-paced nature of modern fashion, in which 'the new' was consumed and changed in a matter of years. This new phenomena stood in stark contrast to past customary changes in dress patterns, which took centuries to manifest. However, according to Campbell, the demand theory and its support of modern fashion fail to account for the existence of fashion in the beginning, as well as the quick shift it endured. He claims that such explanations for consumerism are insufficient in addressing the underlying changes in beliefs, values, and attitudes that he thinks are all at the heart of the consumer revolution. Indeed, he notices such profound shifts in numerous cultural transitions that happened in the 18th century. For example, the middle class had become increasingly obsessed in non-essential leisure tasks including such theatre, dancing, and horse racing, while women had become increasingly obsessed in fiction reading that coincided with the rising trend in romantic love as well as its new status as a sufficient reason for marriage. Since it was the middle class that carried puritan beliefs based on religious and moral thought that condemned indulgence, Campbell goes on to argue that the key question is where the facilitating values and beliefs that led to modern fashion, luxury, leisure, romantic love, and finally consumerism came from. He responds by asserting Romanticism's basic and influential forces within an increasing Enlightened age of time.

A worldwide viewpoint on consumer society has recently emerged. Ger and Belk (1996) look at how western society's spending practices – or "More Affluent Societies," as they named them – spread throughout the rest of the world - "to the Less Affluent Societies." Global mainstream media, tourism, immigration, and the export of popular goods all contribute to increased consumer expectations and demands, according to Belk (1996). He also discusses four unique yet linked methods of conceptualizing global consumer culture. The first is the expansion of multinational companies that manufacture and market consumer products. The proliferation of global capitalism is the second. Global consumerism, or a globalized consumption ethic, is the third perspective. Shopping and consumption desires infiltrate daily life such that the meaning of life is pursued, identity is formed, and relationships are shaped and maintained more and more in and by consumption. Individuals interpret happiness more and more exclusively in terms of their relative success in gaining access to high levels of consumption. The fourth perspective on global consumer culture is an extension of global consumerism to global consumption homogenization.

## **Conclusion**

Societies everywhere had built meaningful behaviors that served as alternatives to consumerism; they were not just impoverished, waiting around for the prosperity that would allow them to exercise some natural human propensity to consume. The very existence of cherished traditions would offer a further barrier to consumerism, which would often be criticized for its novelty (and for its foreignness), for its variance from established ways. Something of a revolution had to occur before consumerism emerged. But change was possible, and a revolution, all the more striking because such well-established patterns had operated successfully for so long, did take shape in many different specific settings. Several other conclusions emerge from a consideration of societies before full consumerism. First, consumerism was impeded by a combination of strong social divisions, widespread poverty, and alternative values. But second, signs of consumer interest abounded. Even the laws and religious rules that sought to limit consumer indulgence demonstrated that there were powerful impulses in play. Whether it is best to view some societies as consumerist, but simply lacking the full apparatus of modern consumerism or not really consumerist. Differences of this sort would have an impact later on, after the conditions for modern consumerism emerged. The precise patterns of modern consumerism would reflect earlier customs, even as new ingredients were added.

## **Chapter Two**

### **The Role of Television in Manufacturing Consumerism**

## **Introduction**

Alexis de Tocqueville claimed after visiting America in 1831 that the spirit and virtue of the American people are exemplified by the fact that they have a tendency to believe that their entire destiny is in their hands. The American people believe in the concept of equal opportunity and the possibility of achievement for everyone. This concept has been revived, modified, and rebuilt numerous times, and it is primarily accomplished through television. The 1950s are widely regarded as the formative decade of American television, when the medium shifted from its scientific roots to its current status as a ubiquitous consumer good, developed its own unique program forms and production practices, and learned about its regulatory constraints and commercial potential. The 1950s were the era of fast growth for the media, surpassing even that of radio broadcasting.

### **2.1 The Culture of Conformity**

With the Great Depression and World War II, young people shifted their attention to other things and start to recognize conformity, an obvious similarity in beliefs and attitudes among the vast majority of people, as a feature of their culture throughout the 1950s. People continued to view the fifties as a period of conformity in the years afterward, and because of what they have experienced in the past taught them to regard stability and material prosperity as life objectives. Furthermore, affluence was commonly accessible to Americans. The fast growth of the American economy created possible a quality of living that would have been impossible to imagine for the previous generations. This fairly high quality of living tended to depend on the purchase of consumer commodities, which were abundant as a result of mass production and consequently consumed by a huge section of the population. However, people thought that after the war, there would finally be peace, calm, and prosperity, so there was a big increase in the number of new born babies and the marriage rate increased significantly, with the approximately age for marriage falling to 20 in 1950s. “*Baby boom*” evolved as a term used to describe the skyrocketing numbers of new additions to families. Some 3.6 million births were recorded in 1950; by the end of the decade the figure had grown to 4.3 million; in addition, the birth rate itself surged to 3.51 births per woman by 1959, or up from 2.2 as measured in the late 1930s (Young, 2004).

As a result of the high birth rate, families were forced to move to suburbs, where living costs were cheaper, and a new way of life swiftly grown rapidly: mass-produced tract housing. These sprawling suburbs began in 1947 with the founding of Levittown on Long Island; when William Levitt used Henry Ford's mass manufacturing approach to housing for the first time. Because he couldn't put it through an assembly line, Levitt in effect brought the assembly line to the product. Originally, they were intended to be huge sub-urban communities where World War II soldiers and their families could live in affordable family homes, a house in Levittown costs around \$6,990, which is absurdly cheap when compared to the current average price predicted for February 2019 by Fedprimerate.com of \$379,600 (Halberstam, 1993). These archetypical homes gave newly families the opportunity to afford a piece of the American Dream (Bergman, 2018).

President Eisenhower's massive highway program boosted the appeal of the suburbs even more, as residents could still enjoy ease of transportation (Boyer, 2005). This enormous exodus from towns contributed to the creation of new communities made up largely of young, middle-class people who have been cut off from the conventional communal life found in cities. Suburbia gave an alternate sense of unity, providing individuals with a new feeling of belonging and identity (Bergman, 2018). A strong demand to 'keep up with the Joneses' through the acquisition of a 'standard Package of consumer goods' (Marling, 1994: 254) was soon realized, making possible in a society which not just had more disposable income than ever before but also had accessible to easy credit lines (Halberstam, 1993: 473, 505). Postwar Americans are no longer feeling the need to reject themselves immediate satisfaction, even if they were buying large-ticket things, sweeping away previous generations' reservations about indebtedness.

The introduction of the first contemporary credit card, Diner's Club, in 1951 proved to be a sign of the times. In 1958, BankAmerica (now Visa) and American Express followed suit with the introduction of their own cards (Young, 2004). The goal of a suburban house with all the contemporary amenities became crucial to the American concept of success in the 1950s, thanks to popular media that glorified the buying frenzy. Appliances evolved into more than just tools; they were statements about a family's potential and ambitions. Moreover, modernity and technology were essential elements of the American identity following WWII, with purchasing three-quarters of all appliances created worldwide at the time. Foreign critics said that the US

had shifted its principles into materialism: 'Writing a handbook on household appliances is the best way to capture the spirit of the times'(Bergman, 2018).

TV was certainly the product of the 1950s that better reflected the peak of societal progress while also serving as the ideal weapon for manufacturers' psychological manipulations. Despite the fact that television was unfamiliar at the beginning of the decade, its availability and popularity expanded throughout the decade. Television sets, which were uncommon in American homes at the start of the decade, became popular by the end. By 1960, 90% of all houses had at least one television, with the average viewer watching for five hours each day (Bergman, 2018). Advertisements in magazines promoting the sales of television sets implied that TV was a way of bringing the family closer. Sets were frequently represented as a replacement for the traditional fireplace, depicted as a semi-circle encircled by happy family members. According to certain 1950s surveys, numerous Americans believed that television would strengthen family bonds and bring back memories (Spigel, 1992: 43–45).

## **2.2 Television programming**

The family melodramas had grown to be the most famous forms of TV programming by the mid-1950s. Day after day, families came in to see what the Cleavers, Andersons, Nelsons, and Stones were up to the popular shows the Donna Reed (1958–1966) , Father Knows Best (1954–1963), and Ozzie and Harriet (1952–1966), As well as Leave It to Beaver (1957–1963). Most of the shows had'sameness to their plots, sets, and also a strong focus on consumer items in the life of each character. These well-known television family' homes were virtually identical from one another. Always found on the suburb (Leibman, 1995). Most of the houses included a formal dining room, living room, kitchen, dinette, formal foyer, den, a couple bedrooms, and a garden with a picnic table. These homes also have books, pleasant furnishings, and the most up-to-date consumer equipment, as well as an automobile of the most recent make and model parked in the garage (Leibman, 1995: 230–231).

The leading families were not only suburban, but also (white) middle-class people with middle-class sensibilities. These families didn't have a maid; Mom prepared the food for the family and cleaning the house. Every household had a stable financial situation. Mom and the kids didn't have to work to help maintain the family, but a kid might occasionally do so (Boys would deliver newspapers, while girls would babysit) although the Puritan work ethic was

admired, the importance of home and its associated pleasures surpassed the importance of any job. Workaholic dads were pitiful, and the parent characters all of them arrived home in time to deal with their children's numerous misbehaviors properly and equitably. In contrast to the majority of real-life dads who commute between the suburbs and the town (see Halberstam, 1993), Extravagant wealth was considered inappropriate, since one cannot enjoy an item if one had much too much of it; poverty, on the other hand, was generally overlooked, as the poor were remained striving to satisfy their essential needs and so lacked the buying power to purchase devices, and most of these suburban lived in relative comfort (Leibman, 1995).

Due to the ease with which these TV families' material needs were satisfied, emphasis was placed on material desire and the necessity to acquire things discreetly. Aside from their growing influence, 'things' were the basis of one out of every eight plots, despite the fact that shopping for the purpose of buying was often frowned upon. To get the most out of what you buy, you need to be discerning about what you buy the girl must work at the shop to show her willingness to buy that dress, and the male should prove economy by saving money in order to purchase the boat. As a result, these TV shows transmitted the message that, while hard work is a reward in itself, tough works also allow the person to purchase (certain) consumer items, that are significant in terms of their reward function (Leibman, 1995). The suburbanite was a new breed of American who was targeted by the dramatic programs with their message of constant consumption.

## **2.3 Television Advertising**

### **2.3.1 Definitions of advertising**

According to Kotler & Armstrong (2010), the word "advertising" comes from the Latin word "advertere," that means to bring attention to anything. Advertisement has also a psychological impact on consumers and affects their purchased intentions, and the primary goals of marketers are to capture the consumer's attention in order to develop strong cognitive paths for brand ads. However, Flaherty et al (2004) stated that advertisements play a significant impact in people's lives, the majority of advertisers use new strategies and approaches provide viewers with additional information. In order to transmit the message they want to represent.

An advertisement is a combination of certain elements, including the content or message to be conveyed, the execution or style of conveying the specific message, and the frequency or repetition of the advertisement in front of the consumer. If all of these elements are properly managed, the ad could be said to be the most effective tool of communication. Advertising is the business of announcing the availability of something for sale or attempting to convince buyers to purchase a product or service. Advertisements utilize powerful methods to attract young people and children (such as appeals, promotional characters, celebrity endorsement, and giveaways) (Committee on Communications, 2006), and such methods do influence the popularity of the advertisement with children.

Thorson & Rodgers( 2012) claimed that, advertising is broadly defined as any form of paid strategic communication by an identified sponsor that aims to inform and/or persuade receivers about an advertising object (e.g., product, service, brand, organization, or idea), and it is traditionally conveyed through purchased time or space in mass media . In an economic context, advertising, like pricing or other types of marketing communication such as personal selling, is a subcategory and integrated component of all activities that promote a brand (marketing).

### **2.3.2 The impact of television advertising**

The role of advertising agencies has evolved with changes in media technology. When radio became broadly available in the 1930's, advertising agencies created a new way for their clients to sell products, with programs like the Lucky Strike radio show. With the growth of television during the late 1940's had a dramatic effect on the advertising industry, television has the most powerful influence since it attracts to both the eye and the ear, by shifting from frozen words and pictures of the printed pages, the voice and music of radio adverts to visual imagery of coupled by complicated soundtracks. Advertising agencies and sponsors did everything to affect the new audience. The house used to be an obstacle to marketing because only print advertisements and occasional door or door salesmen could penetrate its façade. With the advent of advertisement broadcasting in the 1930s and 1940s, the ideal of a home refuge first changed, but in the 1950s the persuasiveness of television quickly surpassed any other media (Young and Young, 2004).



Sponsors started a slowly road to television in the early 1950s. One main disadvantage is the cost of advertising. According to ( Young, 2004), sponsors spent between 10,000 and 20,000 US dollars on 1-minute advertising, which is 10 times that of radio advertising. Advertisers began to limit TV ads to 30 seconds to save money. The temptation and wealth potential of new media finally defeated prices. In 1951, TV advertising revenue was 41 million U.S. dollars, which is a lot of wealth for today's millions of dollars. Just two years later, this number has risen to 336 million U.S. dollars. There was an electronic shopping mall in the United States in the mid-1950s. By 1959, TV advertising could cover 90% of American households. This was the only export with this capacity (Chron, 2020).

In the first decade of post-war television, advertising companies tended to produce programs and commercials at the same time. This enables the easy mixing of advertising and entertainment, sensitivity to sponsors concerns, and direct promotion of advertising products that are part of the program itself. For example, Westinghouse, the sponsor of *The Adventures of Oz* and *Harriet*, wanted to set up a scene in the kitchen to showcase their brand of appliances. Producers' first job was to teach the family how to watch TV. The industry aimed its programs toward the housewife, who was thought to be the family's principal shopper. The persistent reiteration of past plots, along with an excess of repeating dialogue, proved to be one solution. *Search for Tomorrow* was always the second-most-watched midday TV show in 1954. TV advertisers aimed to instill the habit of watching TV by making chores enjoyable. If Mom learned she was missing out on prime time due to household chores, the sponsors were the first to offer a "corrective cycle of commodity purchases" - such as purchasing a dishwasher, for example – to allow her the luxury of enjoying her evening in front of the set with the family (Spigel, 1992).

Small-ticket consumer items like Proctor & Gamble and General Mills looked to be particularly well suited to television since it spurred impulse buying with items that had previously been 'pre-sold' through advertising. As a result, television advertisers turned away from manufacturers like Ford, RCA, and GM, who manufactured costly (and recession-sensitive) products. While advertisers and broadcasters worked to guarantee an addicted daytime audience, they also focused greater efforts on targeting audiences in prime time TV periods of 7:00–10:30 p.m. since there are more sets in use and more watchers per set than during the day. However,

there were numerous conflicts between broadcasters and advertisers over dominance of prime time programming during the 1950s. Advertisers, who paid for the production, were eager to have their programs broadcast at the most appropriate time; as a consequence, programming became almost chaotic, with no clear direction. Sponsor influence was significant when it came to both sales messages and show contents interview, despite network attempts to govern television transmission (TV Guide, 1956).

Products sold on television defined the 1950s. Commercials for detergents, kitchenware, television dinners, and large cola cars dominate the airwaves. Advertisers play the role of television through animation. The Ajax Cleanser leprechaun and the on-the-go spark plugs; also sausages appeared in commercials in the early 1950s. Animated characters like Speedy AlkaSeltzer, Gillette's Sharpie the Parrot, Mr. Clean, and Jolly Green Giant cheered up viewers in subsequent commercials. The advertising industry promotes celebrity endorsements; Loretta Young quietly promotes detergent, Lucille Ball and Desi Arnaz smoke sponsors cigarettes, Frank Sinatra sings Hair water. The popular TV cowboy launched breakfast cereals and other products for young people out of time. Budweiser's iconic Clydesdales first appeared in commercials in the 1950s and can now be seen in commercials, holidays and the Super Bowl (Chron, 2020).

## **2.4 Materialism Breeds Unhappiness**

Materialism is defined as an orientation that considers material goods and money to be important for personal happiness and social advancement (Bahar & Aysel, 2017), Belk an eminent scholar in the field of materialism defines materialism as: “the importance a consumer attaches to worldly possessions.” He continues: “At the highest levels of materialism, such possessions assume a central place in a person’s life and are believed to provide the greatest source of satisfaction and dissatisfaction in life”. Also Belk developed definitions and proposed that materialism was a personality trait reflecting traits of possessiveness, envy, and non-generosity. After that, other researchers discussed materialism in a different way than Belk. They describe this concept as a concept where individuals have material acquisition at the nub of their lives and view these material possessions as the source of their happiness. They believe that materialistic consumers judge personal success as a function of the quality of possessions owned. In the same line of the argument, Richins and Dawson scale in 1992 contains three

measures, namely success, centrality, and happiness. The three are generally combined, and the general materialism index is often used in various studies, including studies related to materialism and happiness. Few researchers have attempted to study the three components of materialism separately (Bahar & Aysel, 2017).

An exception is Ahuvia and Wong (1995), who show that among these three, having a belief that brings happiness is most closely related to dissatisfaction in life. The success of having a definition is also related to dissatisfaction with life, but only in certain areas, while the link between having centrality and (dis) satisfaction with life is quite weak and not significant. As a result of these studies, Richins & Dawson and Belk's scale dimensions have been used together 'success, centrality, happiness, and envy'.

Consumers who value materialism place the acquisition of products at the center of their lives, and success is essential for setting goals and objectives in life. For materialists, success is the primary source of satisfaction or dissatisfaction, happiness or unhappiness, rather than personal relationships, experiences, or contributions. A materialist also feels envious or dissatisfied when another person outperforms them in terms of happiness, success, prestige, or possessions. The term "centrality" refers to the consumer's tendency to place value on possessions at the center of their lives. Similarly, they buy products that aren't necessary or important to them (Bahar & Aysel, 2017).

Research shows that a powerful consumerist believes that what William Wordsworth said in 1807 "buying and spending" promotes unhappiness because it takes time to stay away from things that promote happiness, including family and friendships. "It is not absolutely necessary that the pursuit of material wealth interfere with your social life," said Dina. "But it may, if you do, generate a net negative return in terms of life satisfaction and happiness." Kaser added that people with strong materialistic values are likely to lead to a poorer sense of well-being. In Kasser's own book, "The High Price of Materialism", Kaser described his research and other people's research showing that when people organize their lives around external goals such as purchasing products, they report less interpersonal relationships, worse moods, and more psychological problems.

Kasser distinguishes between external goals and internal goals that tend to focus on property, image, status, and rewards and praise. These goals target results such as personal growth and community connections, and are inherently satisfying. Related to this, an unpublished study published by Dr. Marsha Richins, a social psychologist at the University of Missouri, found that materialists are unrealistic High expectations about what consumer goods can do for them in terms of interpersonal relationships, autonomy, and happiness. Neither money nor materialism can buy happiness. In fact, research shows that those who value wealth, status, and things are more frustrated, more anxious, and less sociable than those who do not value wealth, status, and things Donnelly suggested that the possible processes that cause unsuccessful pursuits of happiness and satisfaction through the possession of tangible objects are driven by the urge to escape from aversive self-awareness.

Shrum proposed that materialism focuses on the construction of identity through symbolic consumption, and because this process requires others to verify the results, it will lead to vulnerability and psychological instability (Górnik-Durose, 2020).

## **2.4.1 Materialism in Advertising**

Media critics have long argued that people's construction of social reality is a direct function of media exposure and information acceptance of both program content and advertising (Sirgy et al, 2012).

Television commercials in the postwar period paralleled American values and created the "New American Dream." Everyone had the opportunity to achieve the "Standard American Package" a family, a suburban home a care, and a lot of material possessions (Hannahchapman, 2016). In a 1956 Chevrolet advertisement, a husband and wife leave their home, the husband leading his wife to the car. The narrator says as they get into the car, "for shopping, for hauling a load full of kids to a picnic, you name it, the Bolleville fills the bill" (ChowderlyDude). This advertisement is a perfect example of the ads of that time; the family was usually the center of commercials, advocating the individualistic aspect of society in which the part is greater than the whole. The American Dream is depicted in Chevrolet's advertisement as the standard consumer package: a family, a suburban home, a car, and self-sufficiency. It encourages the desire for a comfortable life in which a stable job and family come first, with the ability to afford consumer

goods coming in second. This emphasizes the agreement on economic success for the individual as a focal point of society, where the importance is placed on what you have externally rather than what you are internally. These beliefs pave the way for television advertising (Hannahchapman, 2016).

The nuclear family is typically regarded as the primary unit in American society, and decisions are made based on personal preferences. Consumers and producers are both influenced by these well-known cultural values. Materialism can be found in all forms of communication and is still the main focus of advertising. Our societal obsession with material possessions, as well as the widespread belief that everyone has the ability to be promoted to a comfortable economic standing, is deeply rooted in society and is reflected and supported by the media, making the continuation of these ideals as a central component of the American Dream (Hannahchapman, 2016).

For instance, Shrum for example, showed empirically that TV viewing leads to materialism, with heavy viewers giving more attention to messages about societal affluence than light ones. Heavy viewers are attracted to what may be defined as more materialistic advertisement, with power influence of advertising connected to affluence, status, and prestige. Consumers also utilize information from television to create judgments about the prevalence of affluence, according to studies. Heavy viewers mistakenly feel that luxury goods and services are more common than they are. The majority of people are likely to be materially wealthy (affluent) in the eyes of the viewers. That is, they may exaggerate the average person's material well-being. Overestimation of the average person's material well-being may emerge as a result of exposure to TV ads that emphasizes status and prestige products. To put it another way, when luxury goods and services are promoted on television, (compared to necessity goods and services), the result is the cultivation of the assumption that most people are affluent and financially stable, and that the path to success in life is via getting more material products and the accumulation of personal wealth (Sirgy et al, 2012).

TV ads in the 1950s introduced a new home front in which materialism has become the norm, as it became a cultural language where everyone could communicate. It was strongly rooted in the principles of consensus, conformity, and consumption, all of which corresponded to

the national mood of the time. Advertising has been demonstrated to improve materialistic values because it is supposed to increase desire for something that would otherwise be unimportant. It enhances the ideology of a consumer culture in which happiness can be obtained through material possessions (Hannahchapman, 2016).

## **Conclusion**

The rise of suburbanism coupled with a higher disposable income provided fertile soil for manufacturers of consumer goods. And the proliferation of an incredibly popular medium, television, gave these producers a highly effective means to influence potential customers. Some manufacturers capitalised on television's success by designing popular tie-in products, the sponsors of 1950s programmes, gained an unprecedented stronghold over the broadcasting industry; they naturally used this influence to improve their own positions by aggressively stimulating a preoccupation for possessions among the general public, to the detriment of quality programming. Through both overt commercials as well as subliminal advertising in popular programmes, advertising agencies and sponsors managed to increase sales of their own products by capitalising on an image of how the typical American family should ideally appear. This made Americans to be more materialistic since People believe that buying more and more things will make them happy. The obvious failure of acquiring more possessions to fuel happiness is demonstrated by the fact that despite significant increases in prosperity, larger living quarters and a better overall quality of life, people is actually less happy and suffers more from depression; suffer higher levels of anxiety and depression.

## **Chapter Three**

# **Predicting the Future of Consumerism**

## **Introduction**

Numerous indicators suggest that as our global community continues to grow in numbers, we are also rapidly increasing the quantity of goods consumed per person, this lead to more resources are now needed for exploitation. Therefore, having no plan for well-being and environment can cause serious problems to the future societies. As a result of the fast-moving unbalanced economic growth, the world's systems may lose their ability to adjust with the people's well-being which also significantly affects the environment. In this era, having a systematic action plan can definitely help to focus on a common perspective.

### **3.1 The Unsustainability of overconsumption**

Sustainability can be defined as “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987). However, Americans have been encouraged to become "voracious, wasteful, and compulsive consumers” (Lopez, 2020) as consumerism has long been regarded the economic heart of American life, all this because of the extreme overconsumption of consumer products, regardless of the harmful consequences for society and the environment (Dauvergne, 2008; Princen et al, 2002; Stearns, 2006).

Over consumption and unbalanced consumer habits are not new concerns. In 1899, economist Thorstein Veblen wrote about the increase of conspicuous consumerism among the upper "leisure" class as a means of gaining power and influence. Following WWII, as consumerism extended to the middle classes and interest in the topic grew. Meadows warned of the limitations to expansion in the early 1970s, and Commoner, Ehrlich, and Holdren highlighted the significance of managing affluence (individual consumption levels), as well as population growth and technology pollution, as causes of harmful environmental impacts. Environmental economics researchers Daly, Brown, and Costanza emphasized the necessity for steady state rise and population and consumption to stabilize below the earth's carrying capacity in the 1980s and 1990s. Consumption is a problem that affects people on a large scale, from the individual to the macro political economy. Some regard an entrenched pathology of consumerism as a result of human nature at the individual level. They say that it is a human trait to want to consume more and more while avoiding any negative consequences. Competitive purchasing is a routine procedure that reflects a deep-seated



human desire to keep up with and be accepted by our desirable social group, according to this view. Otherwise, excessive consumption is viewed as a socially created way of life. Consumption, for example, can be a novelty-seeking act in which items are purchased to explore ambitions and desires of a "great life"—a dynamic and very susceptible term an "affluenza" in which lifestyle is shaped by a constant nervous desire for material acquisition. Yet, it has been stated that the excessive spending of Western countries is purely caused by a capitalism system that requires endless growth through continuous consumption. This system has fundamentally changed who we are, how we interact with others, and what we want to be.

According to Kasser (2002), capitalism and current consumer cultures produce a set of materialistic attitudes and concepts that encourage excessive spending .The concept that acquiring money and material wealth leads to a happy and successful life is a key tenet of the capitalist system. As Kasser (2011) states: “This consumer mindset or materialistic value orientation increases the probability that people engage in behaviors that support consumer capitalism, such as: spending their time shopping, learning about available goods and services, replacing functional but older goods with ‘the latest thing’, paying other people for services that were once taken care of within the household, and buying on credit” (p.865).

At the macro- scale, consumerism and over consumption are strongly rooted in the worldwide market economy where Trade and investment policies promote economic expansion and processes of commoditization convert more and more daily activities and human values into the commercial realm for purchase and exchange (Manno, 2002, 2012). Consumption governance is fully handled on a global scale. The focus has been on a complicated problem that has yet to be narrowed in terms of individual responsibility and technical efficiency. Both supporters and detractors of each strategy have been equally vociferous.

There is universal agreement that urgent action needs to be taken if we are to save the planet. The importance of practicing and embracing the philosophies of sustainability is becoming a greater priority for communities due to the impacts of climate change, declining water supply and species biodiversity, and our ecological footprint.

In criminology, excessive consumption has been connected to the production of ecological disorganization and viewed as a green crime against nature. There have always been natural

variations in the climate. But global temperatures are rising now because of human activities this led the world to be about 1.2C warmer than before people started using oil, gas and coal to power factories and transport, and to heat homes. The greenhouse gases released by burning these fossil fuels trap the Sun's energy, the amount of one greenhouse gas in the atmosphere - CO<sub>2</sub> - has risen about 50% since the 19th Century and 12% in the past two decades. Another source of greenhouse gases is deforestation, when trees are burned or chopped down, the carbon they normally store is released (Sustainability and climat change, 2021).

Climate change will transform the way we live, causing water shortages and making it harder to produce food, some regions could become dangerously hot and others uninhabitable because of rising sea levels. Extreme weather events - like heat waves, downpours and storms - will become more frequent and intense, threatening lives and livelihoods. People in poorer countries, which are least able to adapt, will suffer most, Polar ice and glaciers are melting fast - with low-lying coastal areas threatened with flooding by rising seas; as permafrost - frozen ground - melts in places like Siberia, methane - another greenhouse gas - will be released into the atmosphere, worsening climate change. The weather conditions needed for wildfires are becoming more likely. As their habitats change, some species will be able to move to new locations. But climate change is happening so rapidly many are likely to become extinct. Polar bears are at risk of disappearing as the ice they rely on melts away, Atlantic salmon could be devastated as the river waters in which they breed warm up; tropical coral reefs may disappear as oceans absorb CO<sub>2</sub> and become more acidic (Sustainability and climat change, 2021).

Scientists have set a temperature increase of 1.5C as the "safe" limit for global warming, and if temperatures go higher, damaging changes to the natural environment will probably transform humans' way of life. However, many scientists believe this will happen and predict rises of 3C or more by the end of the century; they have set a temperature increase of 1.5C as the "safe" limit for global warming. If temperatures go higher, damaging changes to the natural environment will probably transform humans' way of life (BBC, 2020).

## **3.2 Solutions to unsustainable Overconsumption**

### **3.2.1 Green consumerism**

According to Akenji (2014) green consumerism is “the production, promotion, and preferential consumption of goods and services on the basis of their pro environmental claims” (p. 13). This definition brings out three interrelated concepts, depending on whether green consumerism is viewed from the perspective of the manufacturers, the marketers (and retailers), or the consumers. From the manufacturers’ perspective, green consumerism would imply green production, i.e., adopting production processes that use less natural resources, consume less energy, and emit less pollutants, as well as green product development, e.g., Toyota Prius, a petrol-electricity hybrid car (Akenji, 2014).

From the standpoint of traders (or retailers), green consumerism means green marketing, such as eco-labelling products and services. Green consumerism, from the standpoint of the consumer, would imply purchasing and consuming green products as well as engaging in environmentally responsible consumption activities such as recycling (Akenji, 2014). Extant literature on green consumerism research viewed from the consumers’ perspective are generally directed to addressing a number of questions relating to how green consumerism could be achieved at different levels of society and, perhaps, even globally; whether the burden of increasing green consumption should be borne by individual consumers, as a moral obligation; and what factors affect individuals’ choice of green practices in their routine interaction with the environment. The solutions to such issues have also been investigated in a variety of ways. For example, to learn more about how green consumerism can be achieved, Hirschl demonstrated how product life could be extended and product use intensified through a shift in use regimes in household washing and winter sports. In contrast, Boström and Klintman explained how eco-labels could be made more trustworthy in order to increase consumer participation in environmental labeling as a means of increasing green consumerism. To shed light on the obstacles that consumers may face in embracing green consumerism, Moisander (2007) established a motivation conceptual model to illustrate the limits of framing and focusing on environmental policy initiatives based on the individual motivation and morally responsible choice. We used the tenets of Theory of Planned

Behavior (TPB) (Ajzen 1991) to investigate the origins of green consumption behavior, enhanced by the principles of Social Exchange Theory (SET) (Hall 2003).

Ajzen (1991) suggested three antecedents for behavioral intention: attitude toward the behavior; subjective norms or perceived social pressure from social reference groups, such as family and friends; and behavioral control, which denotes perceived ease, or difficulty, in performing the behavior. The joint effects of these antecedents lead to behavioral intention. In developing the measurement items for attitudes, subjective norms, behavioral control and intention, we focused on green purchase (i.e., buying green products), which we view as the root of green consumption. We believe that consumers with intention to purchase green products would have a pro-environmental posture, which would be consistently displayed in both their pre- and post-consumption behavior. In green marketing situations where a consumer perceives two products equal on all aspects, except external environmental benefits, the preference and ultimate consumer choice may be determined by the size of those benefits. Andreoni also noted that when, or after, engaging in environmentally responsible behavior actions, consumers experience a personal reward, which Andreoni calls the “warm glow of giving”. Consumers experience the intrinsic warm glow, derived from moral satisfaction of contribution to the common good of the environment (Hartmann and Apaolaza-Ibañez, 2012), suggesting that people’s action is contingent upon the presence of incentives.

### **3.2.2 Minimalism**

#### **3.2.2.1 Defining Minimalism**

Minimalism is a way of living that rejects traditional consumption values in favor of simplicity (Meissner, 2019). The minimalist method is characterized by two concepts, according to Leo Babauta: find the important and remove the rest (Lopez, 2020). Minimalism promotes the decrease of human consumptions and bustle, in contrast to the consumerism cultures that several Americans are a part of (Meissne, 2019).

Minimalism is the polar antithesis of consumerism and consumerism-related behaviors(Lopez, 2020). Others defined it as an “anti-consumer-oriented social practice”. Some have gone away to call minimalism an “ostentatious (seeking to attract attention by gaudiness) ritual

of consumerist self-sacrifice.” (Chayka, 2016). In a more positive light however, minimalism can also be considered as “an increasingly popular critical reflection on the ills of consumerism and an effort to forge new ways of resisting and living amidst capitalism in the United States” (Rodriguez, 2018).

It's hard to give a comprehensive definition of minimalism because of its philosophical foundations (Lopez, 2020). As a result, when adopting this lifestyle, each person can establish his or her own set of principles and amount of change. For some, minimalism is shifting to a tiny house, while for others, constant process of decluttering. But, one of the primary challenges with the minimalist lifestyle is that it does not presently reflect a collective challenge to consumption and waste. Instead, the minimalist style in the United States is a personal answer that lacks coherence. “Radical potential to collectively challenge the capitalist system that often traps consumers in a primarily materialistic landscape” (Lopez, 2020) Whereas minimalism nowadays encourages internal focalization (Meissner, 2019), state legislation mandating or incentivizing it could easily have a great collective effect on people and the environment.

### **3.2.2.2 Minimalism and Consumerism**

Women now have three times the amount of clothes in their closets as they had in the 1930s. (2016, Weinswig) Individuals frequently link consumerism with personal satisfaction or social prestige; it wouldn't be a concern if consumerism were not one of the primary sources of environmental problems (Lopez, 2020). While some individuals may be aware of the link between consumerism and the environment and they lament that the environment is suffering, they may not associate this gradual environmental damage with their own choices. Nevertheless, there is no denying that the accumulation as a consequence of high levels of consumerism has a negative impact on the environment and natural resources (Meissner, 2019) Higher levels of consumption equate to larger inputs of energy, materials, and waste by products which leads to more damage to the environment. This is where minimalism or the minimalist lifestyle springs into action. Minimalism seeks to cut down on everyday consumption in a world of “too much.” (Meissner, 2019) Encouraging individuals to be mindful of their purchases, minimalism serves as the negation of compulsive and mindless purchasing. High volumes of consumerism lead to high values of created waste by human beings (Lopez, 2020).

For this reason, many minimalists often practice “zero waste,” which is a step further from reducing their consumption. While literal zero waste is likely impossible, the Zero Waste Strategy means reducing one’s waste as much as possible and redesigning the resource’s life cycle so no product goes to waste. (Lopez, 2020) The link between consumerism and waste is simple: the fewer resources owned equates to fewer resources processed and less waste generated. With this line of thinking in mind, more radical minimalists strive to fit their year’s (or more) waste in a single sixteen (16) ounce mason jar. This serves as a reminder and ensures that they’re aware of what cannot be recycled and what contains the most plastic or damaging items to the environment (Lopez, 2020).

### **3.2.2.3 Minimalism as a Lifestyle**

In the past, minimalism gained popularity as an art movement, later evolving into other disciplines such as music and architecture(Lopez, 2020). Gradually over the years, minimalism has gained popularity in countries that are high on consumerism such as the U.S., Japan, and other European countries. (Uggla, 2019)It is now common to see the hashtag “minimalist” or “minimalism” on social media sites such as Instagram or Twitter and see a plethora of aesthetically pleasing photographs. Such photographs are usually characterized by neutral color palettes, plants, and natural textures such as cotton or jute.( Chayka, 2016)Minimalist bloggers and vloggers are also more popular than before.( the Minimalists, 2020) Books such as “The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up” (2014) by Marie Kondo and “Goodbye, Things” (2017) by Fumio Sasaki(Meissner,2019) have brought the minimalist lifestyle to the mainstream. (Weinswig, 2016) And while minimalism can be reduced to only aesthetics in art or literature, many see it as a way to address environmental issues. (Uggla, 2019)

### **3.2.2.4 Minimalism and Sustainable Living**

Minimalism is usually reflected in forms of sustainable living. A practical avenue for individuals to create a progressive sustainable path is to be aware of how to reduce energy use. Some ways to create a more sustainable household are to install energy-efficient light bulbs, carpool, and utilize energy-efficient appliances (Lopez, 2020) .An additional way to have a more sustainable minimalist way of life is to reduce home size or invest in a tiny home. The tiny home movement began to pick up in the U.S. after the 2008 global economic recession. Varying from

person to person, tiny homes are usually between 100 and 400 square feet (Lopez, 2020). This is a drastic difference to the median American single-family home of 2,426 square feet, as reported by the U.S. Census Bureau in 2017. (Warren, 2018)

Due to the great reduction of the physical housing area, there is almost an automatic reduction in the amount of gas and water needed to run the home (Lopez, 2020). Consequently, this equates to a smaller carbon footprint (White, 2018) and less overall possessions, which are a part of the minimalist lifestyle goals. Calculating how much space individuals need to sustain their current behavior, a recent study reported that the energy consumption by tiny house dwellers was decreased by 45%. After downsizing to a tiny home, individuals inadvertently practiced the minimalist lifestyle: they adopted more environmentally conscious eating habits, traveled less by car, recycled more, and bought less consumer goods. The prices of tiny homes vary on whether individuals build or buy the home. In 2017, the average price for a tiny home (from twenty-five tiny home building companies in thirteen different states) was \$59,884. (Lopez, 2020) This is a radical difference to the median price of an average American home: almost \$200,000. However, while tiny homes can range from less than \$10,000, they can also increase to \$150,000 if they are luxurious. (Martin, 2017)

Even at this extreme, tiny homes prove to be more affordable than the median American home. Furthermore, tiny homes provide mobility (Lopez, 2020) and an opportunity to reduce one's environmental impact. 366 million acres of ecologically viable land may be conserved . 366 million acres of ecologically viable land may be conserved if 10% of Americans switched to small homes. Small homes are a practical response to the loss of green spaces, increasing air pollution and energy consumption, and ecosystem fragmentation created by the average American home's size growth. Furthermore, downsizing has a positive impact on every major aspect of a person's life (food, transportation, and consumption of products and services). Overall, small homes promote pro-environmental behavior and enable decrease ecological footprints as a type of minimalism. (Saxton 2019)

### **3.2.2.5 Proposed Minimalist Lifestyle Regulations**

#### **1-Regulating Sustainable Living**

The language of such regulation will explain that due to the danger that the environment is in, each household and business is required to participate in a more sustainable way of living. The proposed state regulations mandating citizens to live sustainably would focus on the family size and house size ratio. Ideally, individuals would live in a smaller space that was comfortable for their family size. If not, regulations could still enforce sustainable living in a variety of ways. For example, a home of one would only be required to have one of the sustainable living options mentioned previously while a family of five would be required to follow at least three. One way to ensure that each home is implementing a sustainable practice is to add a feature that is common in tiny homes; this could be multi-purpose furniture that promotes space-saving or the incorporation of solar panels in the home. For apartment complexes, regulations or ordinances would require community gardens full of fruits and vegetables that not only promote health but sustainability. Due to distinct geographical areas and a variety of resources, regulations would vary by state. For example, for states with a majority of sunny days, the regulation would mandate the use of solar panels. For states with open valleys, regulations would require gardens. As a final alternative, the regulations would allow the individual to decide what practice of sustainable living he or she will implement, whether it be switching to energy-saving appliances or moving into a tiny home (Lopez, 2020).

#### **2-Tax Incentive**

It is a probability that the proposed regulations would be faced with opposition from the public. In California, smart meters were installed to collect information about individuals' electricity usage to encourage voluntary conservation of energy; this caused opposition, with individuals claiming that it constitutes as a "breach of privacy". ( Barringer, 2011) Due to the nature of the minimalist lifestyle regulations, it is likely that they will face similar opposition. However, resistance to regulations, specially regulations that encourage a minimalist agenda and help the environment, might arise not because of fear of government intrusion but simply because the public does not give environmental issues the appropriate importance(Lopez, 2020). Accordingly, tax incentives can be another method employed to encourage the minimalist lifestyle. Using taxes as a



way to shift consumption patterns for environmental reasons is not common. (Salzaman, 1997) However, that does not mean that the movement towards minimalism ends there. If the proposed regulations were not implemented state-wide, tax incentives would serve as a great motivator to encourage the minimalist lifestyle. Allowing individuals to have the freedom to exercise this option would encourage willing participation. Similar to how monetary incentives are given when people turn in bottle deposits, tax incentives would be put in place to encourage taxpayers to engage in the minimalist lifestyle (Lopez, 2020).

In addition, individuals would receive benefits or other monetary incentives to encourage participation in environmentally friendly companies. Companies such as Getaway allow individuals to experience living in a tiny home (cabin) for an average price of \$100 per night. To inspire interested individuals who are uncertain about making the transition into the minimalist lifestyle, the government would be in communication with app developers to sponsor or waive fees for said individuals. Similarly, the government would encourage individuals to participate in companies such as Cladwell, a company that helps with clutter by creating thoughtful wardrobes for individuals so that they shop intentionally and love and wear every item that is in their closet. (CLADWELL, 2020) Upon receipt, levels of engagement with apps like these would be measured and then a tax breaks given accordingly. The more minimalist the lifestyle becomes, the greater the tax break. This would allow for individuals to change and grow in their minimalist lifestyle as their tax break increased with them over time.

### **3-Education**

Another way that the minimalist lifestyle could be encouraged is through the use of education. If the aforementioned regulations were found to be too intrusive or too conservative, minimalist lifestyle classes could be implemented in high schools. This would be a separate class where children learn about tiny homes, reducing their carbon footprint, and learning to reduce their consumption and waste. This class could explain the benefits and disadvantages of the minimalist lifestyle and present this as an alternative for their futures. If such regulation mandating schools to teach young children about the minimalist lifestyle did not occur, perhaps the topic could be implemented into another class such as Home Education or Science. Here, students could engage in practical application by learning how to shop “green,” preserve energy, and be conscious of their consumerist decisions (Meissner, 2019).

## **Conclusion**

Using environment and natural resources properly is important for the future of the world. It is not only governments, managements, and businesses that have to be environmentally conscious. Important steps can be taken with the support of consumers, who are the most important driving force of markets. Therefore, all kinds of information are needed to contribute to sustainable consumption. However, we can raise the awareness of the potential effects of consumerism on the environment at global and local levels, and on the people today and in the future with several ways such as; green consumerism which advocate for the efficient use of energy, which ultimately helps in saving money, reducing utility bills, lowering emissions of greenhouse gas, and enabling economies to meet the growing energy demands. Also Minimalism that provides an opportunity for the individual to practice generosity on a larger scale than ever before. Minimalism allows us to redirect our finite resources away from our wants and begin to use them in practical ways to meet other people's needs.

## **General Conclusion**

To conclude, the researcher provides answers to the research questions that our work is based on. It has shown that consumerism is a vast concept; it is a boon as well as a curse to society and environment. After World War II the growth of suburbs was one of the great population movements in American history, created a vast new market and provided an important boost to several of the most important sectors of the economy. There was rapid growth in the number of people able to afford what the government defined as a “middle-class” standard of living. Consumerism at that time tried its best to provide customers with their desired products and services, using one of the most powerful inventions: the television who gave producers a highly effective means to influence potential customer, and advertising was the way to make it. However, many researches proved that consumerism wasn’t a good way to overcome Americans problems. It would appear that excessive consumption was the reason behind the psychological diseases resulting from materialism. This later argued to be generally considered a negative value, trait or behavior, being associated with greed, shallowness and lack of spiritual values; it depletes happiness and threatens satisfaction with our relationships.

In addition, the findings arising from analysis appear to indicate that Overconsumption may lead to a serious problem for the future generation, such as reduction in the planet’s carrying capacity and climate change. Excessive unsustainable consumption will exceed the long-term carrying capacity of its environment (ecological overshoot) and subsequent resource depletion, environmental degradation and reduced ecosystem health. The issue of sustainability was suggested to overcome the problems stemming from the consumption of natural resources, concepts like green consumerism and minimalism were highly recommended.

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