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# Success, Social Power, and the Forgotten Vote of Consumers

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## Abstract

Success is often treated as a personal achievement and wealth as a sign of a better life. This paper argues that such views misunderstand both success and wealth. First, success is not a transformation of human life itself, but an expansion of social power. Second, wealth does not alter the fundamental structure of human existence, but reorganizes control over resources and people. Third, the social power of successful individuals is not inherent; it is collectively granted by society, especially by consumers, through everyday actions. Finally, this paper argues that if this collective “granting” is understood as a form of voting, it can be consciously redirected to build a more equal and humane society. Recognizing consumer behavior as a political and ethical act is essential for reclaiming public power and reshaping social outcomes..

**Keywords:** *Success; Social Power; Wealth; Consumer Choice; Collective Authority; Economic Ethics; Social Equality*

**JEL Classifications:** *D11, D63, P16, B41*

## 1. Success and Social Power

In modern society, success is often described as personal excellence. Successful individuals are admired not only for what they do, but for who they are believed to be. Success is treated as evidence of superior ability, vision, or even character.

However, when examined closely, success is better understood as a change in social power, not a change in human nature. A successful person gains the ability to influence others, shape decisions, and control resources on a larger scale. Their words are taken more seriously, their actions have wider consequences, and their mistakes are more easily forgiven.

In other words, success expands what a person is allowed to do within society. It grants permission. It does not transform the person into a different kind of being.

Wealth is often assumed to improve life at a fundamental level. People believe that more money leads to deeper happiness, greater meaning, or a more complete existence.

Yet wealth does not change the basic structure of human life. Regardless of income, people continue to experience uncertainty, desire, fear, boredom, connection, and loss. Aging, illness, and death remain unavoidable. Emotional vulnerability remains intact.

Wealth can reduce certain pressures and provide comfort, but it does not create a new category of life experience. It modifies external conditions, not the inner reality of being human. At the level of life itself, successful and ordinary people remain essentially equal.

## 3. Why Successful Individuals Gain Social Power

If success does not represent a higher form of life, why do successful individuals hold so much power?

## 2. Wealth and the Nature of Human Life

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The answer lies in collective authorization.

Entrepreneurs, corporations, and public figures do not generate power on their own. Their power exists because millions of people support them through everyday actions: buying products, using services, sharing content, and offering trust. These actions accumulate into influence.

Success, therefore, is not purely self-created. It is socially produced. A business grows only because people continue to choose it. A platform dominates only because users remain active on it. Power emerges from repeated collective participation.

#### 4. Who Grants Social Power to the Successful?

Social power is granted by society as a whole, but consumers play a central role.

Every purchase is a small act of support. Every subscription, click, or habit reinforces certain actors while excluding others. Individually, these actions appear insignificant. Collectively, they determine which individuals and organizations gain the ability to shape the world.

The problem is not that consumers lack power, but that they do not recognize it. Consumer behavior is framed as private choice rather than public consequence. As a result, people continue to grant power without realizing they are doing so.

Success narratives hide this process by focusing on individual talent and effort while ignoring the massive role of public participation.

#### 5. Consumption as an Invisible Vote

If consumers collectively grant power, then consumption can be understood as a form of voting.

Unlike political voting, this vote is continuous, decentralized, and unacknowledged. There is no ballot, no clear moment of

decision, and no sense of responsibility. Yet its effects are often stronger than those of formal elections.

Through consumption, society constantly decides:

- which businesses grow,
- which practices are rewarded,
- which values dominate the market.

Seen this way, consumer behavior is not neutral. It is an ethical and political act, whether recognized or not.

#### 6. Building a More Equal and Humane Society

If consumption is a form of voting, then social outcomes can change when this voting becomes conscious.

A more equal and humane society does not require rejecting markets or wealth. It requires redirecting collective support toward actors that respect human dignity, fairness, and long-term well-being.

When people understand that their everyday choices grant power, they gain the ability to withdraw support from harmful systems and reinforce better ones. Equality emerges not from eliminating success, but from making power accountable to the public that grants it.

#### 7. Conclusion

Success should not be confused with a higher form of life. It is a redistribution of social power, not a transformation of human existence. Wealth changes control, not essence.

The social power of successful individuals is granted by the many, not created by the few. Consumers, through countless ordinary actions, continuously vote for the structure of society.

Recognizing this hidden vote is the first step toward reclaiming public power. When people become aware that their choices

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shape who holds authority, success loses its mythic status and becomes what it truly is: a social permission that can be granted, redirected, or withdrawn.

A more just society begins not with new heroes, but with a clearer understanding of where power really comes from.