

INTRODUCTION

Throughout our lives, we journey through the process of self-discovery. This journey involves many facets, not only the ones we are aware of but also most of the things we are about to discover.

One of the facets of discovering oneself is our material possessions. In the symbolic communication model, possessions are seen to be a symbolic expression of one's identity.

There is an observation that one's possessions are considered a part of oneself. They are symbols and extensions of the personal and social aspects of one's identity or personhood (Belk, 1988).

In this lesson, you will discover the part of yourself as reflected by your material possessions, your material self. It is also called economic self as it encompasses your economic aspect. Before we start, take a quick look around your room, bag, and closet. What are the things you possess? Do these possessions reflect your personality?

Reflecting on the questions above will help you learn more about yourself. Further, finishing this lesson will also help you gain the following:

INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Identify the different forces and institutions that influence the development of the material/economic self;
2. Examine yourself through your possessions;
3. Criticize your consumer behavior by naming recent material purchases and stating the underlying motives of acquisition; and
4. Examine your material possessions by doing a decluttering plan.

MODULE 2.2 LESSON on Material/Economic Self

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Introduction

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Lesson Proper

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Now that you are here let us move on with the motivational activity below.



MOTIVATION

MY TOP 5 I CAN NOT LIVE WITHOUT

Instructions:

1. Explore your possessions and discover the importance of the objects around you. Imagine you could only have five objects to keep with you from now on.
2. Look around your home or your room. What are the objects that you own?
3. Get your bag, and search for things that are important to you.
4. What will they be if you are given a chance to choose the five objects you cannot live without? List down things that you cannot live without and briefly write a short explanation of why you chose these objects.
5. Write your answers below:

OBJECTS	IMPORTANCE
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	

How do you feel about listing only five objects?

How did you choose those five objects?

Likely, it took you much time to make the decision and do the selection. In reality, we have more than five important things that we cannot live without. So why only five, right? This activity allows you to reflect on the value of things, especially those you own. It will help you understand your material self better. So, *what is this material self?*



Is it for real that a person would feel good about herself if he/she has an expensive set of clothes.

Further, perhaps you've heard, "*We are what we eat.*" The material self further suggests, "*We are what we have.*" According to William James, the material self is "*...the sum total of all he calls his, not only his body psychic powers but his clothes and his house, his wife, and children.*" However, some cannot entirely

The next question would be, “*Do your possessions define you?*” It is what you are going to explore in this lesson.

Possessions do not just have value. They are not only economic commodities. They are also vehicles and instruments for another order's realities, such as influence, power, sympathy, social status, and emotions. Since the beginning of the age, it has been a reality that possessions are symbols of ourselves and our identity (Gentry et al., 1995). Possessions may deliver or exhibit (1) control and expertise (actual or impression), (2) comfort and emotional stability, (3) a concrete record of achievements, (4) past and future goals, and (5)

a souvenir of relationships. Similarly, material possession could be interpreted as symbolic self-completion. Often, goods and possessions are used to complete or compensate for what is lacking in a person. For example, even if you are not so smart or qualified, so long as you are wearing an expensive watch, a high-class pair of shoes, and you have the latest model of a cellular phone, then you are good.



Our Possession, Our Identity

You can make yourself known through your possessions. Other people can understand you through your possessions.

People are likely to purchase products that can relate to their personalities. Material possessions signify some aspects of one's sense of self and identity. For example, most millennials have laptops and cell phones. They are familiar with different technological innovations because of their inclination to be immersed in the digital, which is why they are known as digital natives. They use these gadgets to communicate, study, and maintain a particular social status to a certain extent. Parents buy necessities for their families because it symbolizes their need to provide "security." The clothes people wear manifest their style and comfort.

Possessions tell a lot about their owners. Things are bought because of personal associations. Thus, one's sense of self and identity influences how an individual purchases their wants and makes economic decisions that address their personal and social needs.

Review your possessions and fill out the matrix below.

My favorite possessions	What do they tell about me?	Why am I keeping them?
(1)		
(2)		
(3)		
(4)		

While you are given limited space to list your favorite possessions, you may actually have

more to write. The activity above will let you reflect on the role of your possessions. As you will learn later, these possessions are not only functional on their own. They have other values beyond their intended uses.

The Self and the Consumer Culture



Consumer culture focuses on spending customers' money on material goods to achieve a capitalist economic lifestyle. In modern and postmodern society, it is characterized as creating and cultivating the self and social meaning of marketing, purchasing, and displaying commodified goods. Consumer culture gives us the tools to express who we are. Still, while doing so, it simultaneously reinforces an economic system in which the individual's ability to be free or choose is, ironically, constrained. Hence, in consumer culture, people no longer consume goods and services merely for functional satisfaction. Consumption has become increasingly meaning-based. Brands are often used as symbolic resources for identity building and maintenance. Consumers use brands and products to express their identities.

Consumer behavior has affected Filipino self-identity. The buying behavior of the Filipino people has become highly dependent on vanity and materialism today. It means that more people would be more likely to buy products as long as these have higher esthetic value and are better than what others are using. Also, decisions concerning purchasing certain items and services depend on many factors. One of these factors is financial constraint. It may explain why most Filipino consumers buy things on sale and with discounts.



Similarly, the availability of goods and services and family and friends influence Filipinos' purchasing behaviors. Often, family members, friends, and colleagues are the usual influencers for Filipino consumers. They usually listen to people's advice in choosing a brand that will suit their needs and desires.

Possession as Part of the Self

There are many cases where individuals value themselves based on what they possess and the value of their possessions. Their possessions become an important component of self because they define who they are. Their existence is based on what they have and what they do. Their possession becomes their

Materialism:

Buying things we don't need
with money we don't have
to impress people that don't matter.

second skin, which covers their entire being.

Materialism and Self-valuing

Materialism refers to the importance a person attaches to worldly possessions. There are three dimensions of orienting values for the materialistic person: **(1) Acquisition centrality**, where the materialist tends to place possessions and the process of acquiring possessions at the center of their lives. They tend to buy things even if it's not necessary. They also tend to acquire things not because of necessity but instead because of the difficult process of acquiring them. Self is valued through the number and difficulty of acquiring one's possession.

(1) Acquisition is a pursuit of happiness, where the materialist tends to view their possessions and acquisitions as a means of providing the materialist with some level of personal well-being or satisfaction with their lives. A shopaholic [a compulsive buyer] is a classic example of this. Self is valued by acquiring things that make them happy. And lastly, **(2) Possession defined success**. Materialists tend to base their own and other's success on the number and quality of possessions. Self is valued when living with all the things that validate their esteem.

Needs vs. Wants

Some people may confuse needs with wants, but there is a clear distinction. Needs are those important for survival. Food, clothing, and shelter are basic needs, so people purchase them out of necessity. Wants, however, are synonymous with luxuries. People buy them for reasons that do not warrant necessity. Cell phones and other gadgets for communication can be perceived as necessary, but purchasing units on the high-end line can project a particular social status or taste. People sometimes purchase items to build how they want to be perceived by others. Clothes may be necessary, but people can choose brands and styles to project their identity for other people to see. Whether people have needs or wants, material possessions say something about the personality and social values of those who own them. Possessions are extended versions of oneself.



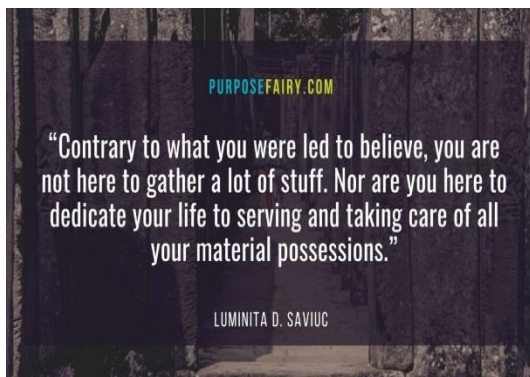
Likewise, in acquiring material goods, people generally consider utility and significance. **Utility** is where one is concerned with how things serve a practical purpose. **Significance** when one is concerned with the (a) meaning assigned to the object, (b) how objects become powerful symbols or icons of habit and ritual that can be entirely separate from their primary function, and (c) how objects become powerful symbols or icons of habit and ritual which can be entirely separate from their primary function. In contrast to utility, significance has more to do with expression and meaning.

However, meanings are often culturally determined. For some, even the smallest utilitarian objects are capable of embodying values.

Roland Barthes studied the concept of semiology, or the study of signs, to further understand the term significance. He was one of the first philosophers to analyze the relationships between people and objects. According to Barthes, it is through objects that people assert their identities. Objects are not just things but reflect the wider lives of communities and individuals. The things people possess are also in sync with what their community values. This idea suggests that objects, aside from contributing to how an individual identifies themselves, also signify people's relationships with others based on what they possess.

So getting this far, you have already learned how possessions become a part of yourself and how they influence your whole self and personality. Further, you will discover that with all the material things you have, you need to re-evaluate their worth and utilities. Decluttering will help you do it.

Refocusing your Material Self by Decluttering



The goal of this lesson is for you to understand yourself by evaluating everything you possess. You may have bought these things, or they might have been given to you. Either way, these things say something about you. The attached meaning in each item might be why keeping it though it is no longer essential for your day-to-day living. Letting go of the things you have kept for quite some time is not easy. That is understandable. However, holding and hoarding these things also gives feedback about you.

Likewise, keeping many things will somehow clutter your understanding of yourself. Hence, letting go of “non-essential” and “not-so-essential” valuables can help you refocus your understanding of yourself.

Now that you have been informed about the relationship between the things you possess yourself and your identity try to revisit everything you possess. As you look around, you may ask yourself if all these material things you see define who you are. You may try to remember what prompted you to acquire these things (wants vs. needs). Who and what influenced you to acquire these things? Can you identify the essential, non-essential, and not-so-essential among these things you possess?

Decluttering helps you develop good decision-making skills and gives you more space to breathe. Now, start contemplating the material possessions that you have. Set a decluttering

plan to condition yourself (emotionally and psychologically) to let go of these things. After you declutter your items, try to revisit those things left on your possessions and evaluate who you are. Through this, you will understand your SELF more.

Here are some tips for decluttering your possessions:

- 1) Identify which things you have not used for a while.
- 2) Separate things according to essential and not-so-essential.
- 3) Consider the attached meaning in the item and ask yourself, "Can I let it go?"
- 4) What are the things that you no longer use for a long time but cannot dispose of
What is holding you from disposing of it?

SAMPLE 7 STEPS TO DECLUTTER



You may now be ready to do decluttering. But first, you have to check on your learned points and do the application activity below.



APPLICATION

MY LAST PURCHASES

Instruction: Contemplate the recent purchases that you have made.

1. Remember the last five (5) things that you recently bought.
2. Identify each, whether it is a need or a want.
3. Complete the table with your answers.

RECENT PURCHASE	REASON WHY YOU BOUGHT IT	Write "N" for NEEDS & "W" for WANTS	WHY DO YOU THINK IT IS A NEED OR A WANT?
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			



BULLET IT!

Summarize your learnings into three points. Give three statements summarizing everything you have learned from this module.

- ❖ _____
- ❖ _____
- ❖ _____



DECLUTTERING PLAN

Instruction:

- (1) Write down the specific steps that you are going to do in letting go of the materials you are currently possessing.
- (2) List your basis for disposing and keeping your material possessions.

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

(3) Based on your plan, fill out the table below of the thing/s that you will be disposing of.

1.	6.
2.	7.
3.	8.
4.	9.
5.	10.



GUESS WHAT

The next topic will be about the self formed due to our human nature as political beings. This self is called SELF.

RUBRICS for Decluttering Plan

CRITERIA	Needs Improvement 76 – 85 pts	Sufficient 86 – 94 pts	Excellent 95 – 100 pts
Content Comprehensiveness 20%	There are, at most, two learned concepts presented and utilized.		More than two learned concepts are presented and utilized.
Presentation of Bases 30%	The bases presented are unclear, insufficient, and meaningless.		The bases presented are clear, sufficient, and meaningful.
Organization of Steps 50%	The presentation of steps to be undertaken is not logical and practical.	The presentation of steps to be undertaken is logical but impractical and unattainable.	The presentation of steps to be undertaken is clear, logical, practical, and attainable.

REFERENCES

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