Stanley Carhee

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Professor Gautreau

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Sorry, what was that? I don’t speak broke. This is all anyone would hear, if you did not own air pods. Air pods became a way of flexing one’s wealth and flexing will always be a trend in modern day society.

Apple is one of the most well-known companies throughout the world, and their products are always successful. Anything that has an Apple logo attached to it is a cultural signifier in our digital age and now Apple products are now considered fashion and arguably modern art. Air pods had a slow start when they were first introduced, as they were seen as “dorky” and “dumb-looking", however as time passed by with the disappearance of headphone jacks in iPhones, the air pods seemed to be the better choice for earphones and while at it, gave the owners of air pods a distinct look that only a few had at the time.

Air pods have become the most recent example of hedonistic consumerism, which is the spending of money on things that one cannot fully afford and is mostly seen in the middle class. Media promotes hedonistic consumerism according to the article, *Framing Class, Vicarious Living, and Conspicuous Consumption,* written by Diana Kendall. Kendall explains in her article about the representation of class in the media and how it effects on how people live. And one of her more interesting points is the idea of hedonistic consumerism. The trend of showing off wealth isn’t done by the upper class, but by the middle class.

The poor only buy things they can afford and only things they need. The rich buy what they know they’re worth and are financially able to live the luxurious lifestyle. However, the middle class are the ones buying things they can’t afford and are continuously climbing into debt deeper and deeper with each swipe of their credit card. “Many reports show that middle- and working-class US consumers are incurring massive consumer debts as they purchase larger houses, more expensive vehicles, and many other items beyond their means” (Kendall 25). The middle class were the ones who set the trend that having air pods were a way of showing wealth and spread it through the media. Media tries to get the lower and middle class to always strive to become like the rich and be able to live how they live. Whenever you think of people flexing what you buy, it isn’t the rich doing it, because they are around people who can afford the same things they have. It’s the higher end of the middle class flexing to the lower and mid-section of the middle class, showing off their “wealth” and saying they are able to live like the rich.

Because of this, there was a notion that one had to own air pods in order to fit in with their peers. Celebrities were seen on social media owning them and since the middle-class love to chase the rich, they created the new standard of owning air pods. However, air pods, priced at $159, isn’t that expensive as other items, such as designer cars. Yet, they were an indication of wealth among the middle and lower class, why?

The idea that made owning air pods a flex was “disposable wealth”. Air pods are small and could easily be misplaced and there is a sense of risk in owning them. But if owning them comes with a risk, then it must mean you’re rich if you could afford to buy them and afford to lose them. Also, knowing that they are rechargeable products means they will eventually be longer usable and when buying air pods, that is a known fact. Usually, when buying something that is considered to only be owned by the wealthy, people try to make sure to preserve it and keep it “fresh” for as long as they can, which is what makes the product still seem luxurious after purchase. For example, if you had a Gucci belt, you would make sure that nothing will ever happen to them. And that goes for air pods, but there is also an excitement of thought of possibly losing them. And thinking of that in an amusement way just validates the idea of disposable wealth.

However, there has been a recent decline on the hype of air pods and are slowly decreasing in social value while still sold at the same price as when they first came out. Everywhere you look, you can find at least one person with air pods on, no matter where you are. Although there have been other companies with wireless earphones, they were never too important, in a social sense, until the air pods became popular this past year or so. And the other brands had the wireless earphones for a higher price than the air pods and weren’t seen as the cultural norm. So then other companies, such as Samsung, tried coming out with their own, but were not able to compete with the popularity of Apple among the younger consumers. There have been knock offs that were created in order to imitate the looks of an air pod that were sold at a way more affordable, inexpensive price with the same functions and looks of any other air pod.

Just like painting and other forms of art, once there are replicas being made, the original tends to lose the value it once had. And that’s the same path air pods took. Now all we have to do is wait for the next product that sets trends and is the new source of hedonistic consumerism and leads to the depiction of having wealth.