

Perspective on Consumption Regarding Mark Sagoff's Consumption Piece

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Consumption is arguably one of the hardest issues to control in the broad scope of climate change, but when taking a closer look– it's actually easier to solve than we think. Nowadays, we live in a society where the media takes a huge influence on our day-to-day actions, including our consumption habits. Regardless of whether or not we already have a product that works for us, there is so much advertising embedded into billboards, social media platforms, and even in the food we eat in order to convince us that we don't have enough. Sagoff's writing touches on two different types of consumption that we all experience today without even realizing: that being the "consumer society" (Sagoff 473), and the 'planet resource consumer' (Sagoff 473). The reading points out that these two concepts are often paired together and seen as the same– which isn't completely wrong, but both ideas need to be understood separately before being able to solve the overarching problem of the general term often disguised as "overconsumption."

When referring to a consumer society, this can be portrayed as the food we buy that goes to waste– or the clothing we buy that only lasts one season before a newer, trendier, product comes out and everyone runs to buy it. We want to get more so that we are never left without. The underlying reality is that there will always be more that we want, and humans will never be able to attain "enough." Our visions of what it means to have enough or be enough are entirely skewed due to the malleability of our opinions and actions when it comes to fitting in with the rest of society. Most of us don't think twice before buying a cute shirt from a company for \$5 because we want to be like everyone else, but we must also take into account that a 10 year old sewed the seams for \$0.75 an hour in a sweatshop where they probably can't even afford to buy the shirt that they're spending hours to create. This not only harms the people creating the shirt, but also the planet in the process of creating it– and this goes for pretty much all of the products that we buy. The energy being used from facilities to manufacture the products that we consume on a daily basis are at an all time high, especially with the rise of sites like Amazon, Temu, or Shein. These sites are equipped to keep up with current trends to sell to the consumer, just for the shirt or item to end up in a landfill within a year or two.

The planet resource consumer is just as bad as the consumer society, which is why it is important to address both, considering you rarely have one without the other playing into it. The reading touches on this point best when it says “indeed, nothing may seem more obvious than that the more consumer goods we buy, use, and discard, the more we overwhelm the capacity of the earth to provide materials and absorb wastes” (Sagoff 473). It goes on to talk about living in a way that is not rooted in overconsumption and depletion of the planet, or else we may actually end up being the ones who run out of our natural resources; which is of much more value in the long run compared to the short life cycle of trends we experience now. It is not a sustainable way to live in the long run since we are too focused on instant gratification and pleasure.

In regards to solutions for the presented issue of overconsumption in our society, I don't feel like there is only one way to go about it. This can be considered a problem in itself because some may argue that we need to agree on one solution, so that everyone can be focused on the same plan. Others will say that it's better for different groups of people coming to the problem from different standpoints. For me personally, I think that the best way to speak about overconsumption is through your wallet. Not many people actually take the time to see what kind of company they're giving their money too, but instead we're concerned about how the Shein shirt fits us or how the Tyson brand chicken nuggets taste. Society is so brainwashed in regards to how we think we should feel about certain issues, and I genuinely believe that things won't get fixed anytime soon because of what we are worried about. Aristotle talks about this concept the best when he teaches about “the virtue of moderation: he thought we should possess and consume only as much as necessary to get on with the worthwhile business of life, namely, political action” (Sagoff 474). I agree with this because it goes back to my point about people being brainwashed into thinking they don't have enough and that they need more every time a new product comes out. If people could take a step back and detach themselves from the media, I overall think that we would have less of an issue.