

READING

- What do you know about the cult of consumption? Name 2-3 examples demonstrating this phenomenon.
- Read the text.

The cult of consumption



Our civilization faces a lot of problems nowadays, from environmental degradation and climate change to social inequality and political instability. One particularly widespread issue that has arisen in recent times is the consumer culture, or consumerism, which has given rise to various problems of its own. The consumer cult is closely linked to the sciences of marketing, advertising, economics, even psychology seeking to understand and manipulate human behavior in order to promote consumption of goods and services.

The consumer cult is characterized by a strong desire for material possessions, a tendency to prioritize consumption over other values, and a belief that happiness and self-worth can be derived from acquiring and displaying possessions.

Overconsumption

The desire of constant consumption can lead to anxiety, and dissatisfaction with one's life. It can also result in overconsumption

of resources, such as food, water, and energy, which strains global systems and contributes to resource depletion.

Health problems

The consumption of unhealthy foods, tobacco products, and alcohol are linked to a range of health issues, including obesity, heart disease, cancer, and addiction. Also, the pressure to keep up with trends and fashion and maintain an image of success can lead to feelings of stress, anxiety, and low self-esteem.

Social inequality

The consumer cult often reinforces existing social hierarchies, as those with higher incomes or greater access to resources are better able to participate in consumption. This can lead to social exclusion and feelings of frustration among those who cannot afford the latest trends or luxury items.

Labour exploitation

In poor countries, the production of consumer goods may rely on exploitative labor practices, such as child labour, forced labour, and low wages. Many workers in the global supply chain are paid poverty wages and work in unsafe conditions.

Discuss in pairs:

- What is the cult of consumerism? How do you personally understand this term?
- Have you encountered it in your daily life? How did it manifest itself?
- Do you consider it as a big problem? If yes, what negative impact can the cult of consumption have? If not, what positive aspects do you see in this phenomenon?

Key words:

- consumption – потребление
- to promote smth – содействовать, поддерживать
- to derive from smth - происходить
- frustration – разочарование, расстройство
- to rely on smth – зависеть от/ полагаться на
- supply chain – цепь поставок
- environmental degradation – деградация окружающей среды
- social inequality – социальное неравенство
- material possessions – материальные ценности

Read the information about some concepts of the consumption cult.

- **Overconsumption** is a term used to describe the consumption of excessive amounts of resources, goods, or services. In the context of consumer behavior, overconsumption can also refer to the excessive consumption of food, clothing, electronics, and other material possessions, often driven by advertising, social pressure, and cultural norms.

- **Resource depletion** refers to the consumption of natural resources, such as minerals, fossil fuels, forests, water, and air, at a rate faster than they can be restored or replaced. This can lead to a decline in the availability of these resources, which are essential for human life and economic activities.

- **Social hierarchies** refer to the systematic organization of individuals or groups within a society based on status, power, prestige, wealth, or other attributes. In any society, there are typically dominant groups at the top of the hierarchy who hold the most power and influence, and marginalized groups at the bottom who are often excluded, discriminated against, or oppressed.

- **Social exclusion** is a complex phenomenon that occurs when individuals or groups of people are systematically pushed out of social life. It can be seen in various forms, such as discrimination, marginalization, poverty, lack of access to basic services, and limited opportunities for participation and progression. As a result, those experiencing social exclusion may find themselves trapped in dangerous living conditions, leading to increased crime and mental health issues

- **Labour exploitation** occurs when an employer takes unfair advantage of an employee's work, often by paying them less, with unsafe working conditions, or requiring them to work excessively long hours without compensation. Labour exploitation can be difficult to identify, as it often occurs beneath the surface of seemingly normal workplaces.

Now, choose one of the concepts and give a 2-3-minute talk about the chosen concept pointing out nature of problem and its role within the consumption cult. You can use a plan below:

1. State the problem. Begin by defining the concept. Discuss how it evolved over time.
2. Talk about an impact of the concept in the modern world.
3. Analyze how social media and technology influenced the developing of the concept.
4. Investigate the role of government in dealing with the problem.
5. Tell about the issues with the concept in your home region.
6. Finally, try to come up with a strategy focusing on solving or decreasing negative influence of the concept on our life.