

Consumption and Production

Sustainable Development Goal 12

Issues for Discourse with Youth

Bahá'í Discourse - Consumption

Sustainable Development Goal 12

12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns

12 RESPONSIBLE
CONSUMPTION
AND PRODUCTION



Culture of Consumerism

...the dominant model of development depends on a society of vigorous consumers of material goods.... This preoccupation with the production and accumulation of material objects and comforts... has consolidated itself in the structures of power and information to the exclusion of competing voices and paradigms. The unfettered cultivation of needs and wants has led to a system fully dependent on excessive consumption for a privileged few, while reinforcing exclusion, poverty and inequality, for the majority.



balexert

beyond shopping

DISCOVER THE SHOPS

Culture of Consumerism

The narrowly materialistic worldview underpinning much of modern economic thinking has contributed to the degradation of human conduct, the disruption of families and communities, the corruption of public institutions, and the exploitation and marginalization of large segments of the population—women and girls in particular.

(based on Bahá'í International Community, *Rethinking Prosperity: Forging Alternatives to a Culture of Consumerism*, 2010)

Corporate Values

Corporations ignore their impacts on the global system with a narrowly defined material purpose (wealth, power) pursuing short-term profit.

This end justifies any means:

- arms and weapons
- addictive drugs/chemicals (caffeine, nicotine, narcotics, alcohol, etc.)
- addictive technologies
- violence and sex entertainment, gambling, etc.
- intensive advertising, consumer marketing

Lack of Corporate Responsibility

Tobacco, alcohol, ultra-processed foods (UPFs) and fossil fuels kill 2.7 million people a year in Europe. The World Health Organization (WHO) said powerful industries were driving ill-health and premature death by using “misleading” marketing and interfering in governments’ efforts to prevent killer diseases such as cancer, heart disease and diabetes.



PERFUME

PERFUME

CONFECTIONERY

ALCOHOL

TOBACCO

CHANEL

CHANEL

DIOR

DIOR

LANCÔME

GUCCI

HERBES

ROSE

KIEHL'S

WISKEY

WISKEY

WISKEY

WISKEY

ONLY AT THE AIRPORT

ONLY AT THE AIRPORT

2-1 free

14.90

14.90

30.00

Our special selection

Lack of Corporate Responsibility

This shows the huge damage major corporations and their products are inflicting on human health. Big industry uses overt and covert methods to boost their profits by delaying and derailing policies to improve population health.

“A small number of transnational corporations ... wield significant power over the political and legal contexts in which they operate, and obstruct public interest regulations which could impact their profit margins,” the WHO said.

Lack of Corporate Responsibility

Industry tactics exploit vulnerable people through targeted marketing strategies, mislead consumers, and make false claims about the benefits of their products or their environmental credentials. These major commercial industries undermine measures to reduce smoking, drinking and obesity, which are the biggest causes of avoidable ill-health.

(WHO Europe report, June 2024)

Profit Maximization

Too often, increases in productivity have been accompanied by delocalization or a transition to automation and thus, rising levels of unemployment. A single-minded focus on profit-maximization has also valued workforce reduction wherever possible. Under the present system, unemployment and underemployment are soaring and the majority of the world's population does not earn enough to meet their basic needs.

(based on Bahá'í International Community, *Rethinking Prosperity: Forging Alternatives to a Culture of Consumerism*, 2010)

Trusts (Monopolies)

In the economies of today, the business entities responsible for production of most goods and services tend to grow larger, buying up competitors, protecting their innovations as intellectual property, and aiming for monopoly positions where they control the market, set their own prices for maximum profit, and face no significant competition. In the time of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, these were called Trusts. He said:

No more trusts will remain in the future. The question of the trusts will be wiped away entirely.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Cooperation, in *Foundations of World Unity*)

Culture of Consumerism

- Materialism's gospel of human betterment produced today's consumer culture pursuing ephemeral goals
- Selfishness becomes a prized commercial resource; falsehood reinvents itself as public information; greed, lust, indolence, pride - even violence - acquire not merely broad acceptance but social and economic value

(based on Universal House of Justice, *One Common Faith*, 2005)

Culture of Consumerism

Today the world is assailed by an array of destructive forces. Materialism, rooted in the West, has now spread to every corner of the planet, breeding, in the name of a strong global economy and human welfare, a culture of consumerism. It skilfully and ingeniously promotes a habit of consumption that seeks to satisfy the basest and most selfish desires, while encouraging the expenditure of wealth so as to prolong and exacerbate social conflict. One result is a deepening confusion on the part of young people everywhere, a sense of hopelessness in the ranks of those who would drive progress, and the emergence of a myriad social maladies.

(Universal House of Justice, *To Baha'is in the Cradle of the Faith*, 2 April 2010)



CAISSE



SPECTRA 2.0
ADJUST

Culture of Consumerism

The culture of consumerism has tended to reduce human beings to competitive, insatiable consumers of goods and to objects of manipulation by the market. Commonly held views have assumed the existence of an intractable conflict between what people really want (i.e. to consume more) and what humanity needs (i.e. equitable access to resources). How, then, can we resolve the paralyzing contradiction that, on the one hand, we desire a world of peace and prosperity, while, on the other, much of economic and psychological theory depicts human beings as slaves to self-interest?

(based on Bahá'í International Community, *Rethinking Prosperity: Forging Alternatives to a Culture of Consumerism*, 2010)

Culture of Consumerism

Against the backdrop of climate change, environmental degradation, and the crippling extremes of wealth and poverty, the transformation from a culture of unfettered consumerism to a culture of sustainability will require an earnest examination of our understanding of human nature and of the cultural frameworks driving institutions of government, business, education, and media around the world. Questions of what is natural and just will need to be critically re-examined. The issue of sustainable consumption and production will need to be considered in the broader context of an ailing social order—one characterized by competition, violence, conflict and insecurity—of which it is a part.

(based on Bahá'í International Community, *Rethinking Prosperity: Forging Alternatives to a Culture of Consumerism*, 2010)

Consumerism

Consumerism continues to act as opium to the human soul

(The Universal House of Justice, to the Bahá'ís of Iran, 2 March 2013)



ROYAL FESTIVAL

ASSIE

THE GIFT BOX



THE GREAT



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Our Special Selection

50% off

Spiritual principle: Detachment

Disencumber yourselves of all attachment to this world and the vanities thereof. Beware that ye approach them not, inasmuch as they prompt you to walk after your own lusts and covetous desires, and hinder you from entering the straight and glorious Path.

(Bahá'u'lláh, Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, CXXVIII)

Spiritual principle: Detachment

He is not to be numbered with the people of Bahá who followeth his mundane desires, or fixeth his heart on things of the earth. He is My true follower who, if he come to a valley of pure gold, will pass straight through it aloof as a cloud, and will neither turn back, nor pause.

Resisting Consumerism

The key to resolving these social ills rests in the hands of a youthful generation convinced of the nobility of human beings; eagerly seeking a deeper understanding of the true purpose of existence; able to distinguish between divine religion and mere superstition; clear in the view of science and religion as two independent yet complementary systems of knowledge that propel human progress; conscious of and drawn to the beauty and power of unity in diversity; secure in the knowledge that real glory is to be found in service to one's country and to the peoples of the world; and mindful that the acquisition of wealth is praiseworthy only insofar as it is attained through just means and expended for benevolent purposes, for the promotion of knowledge and toward the common good.

(Universal House of Justice, *To Baha'is in the Cradle of the Faith*, 2 April 2010)

Resisting Consumerism

Thus must our youth prepare themselves to shoulder the tremendous responsibilities that await them. And thus will they prove immune to the atmosphere of greed that surrounds them and press forward unwavering in the pursuit of their exalted goals.

(Universal House of Justice, To Baha'is in the Cradle of the Faith, 2 April 2010)

Transformation of Society

...the transformation required to shift towards sustainable consumption and production will entail no less than an organic change in the structure of society itself so as to reflect fully the interdependence of the entire social body —as well as the interconnectedness with the natural world that sustains it.

(Bahá'í International Community, Rethinking Prosperity: Forging Alternatives to a Culture of Consumerism, 2010)

Alternatives to Consumerism

The question of human nature has an important place in the discourse on sustainable consumption and production as it prompts us to reexamine, at the deepest levels, who we are and what our purpose is in life. The human experience is essentially spiritual in nature: it is rooted in the inner reality—or what some call the ‘soul’—that we all share in common.

(Bahá'í International Community, [Rethinking Prosperity: Forging Alternatives to a Culture of Consumerism](#), 2010)

Alternatives to Consumerism

The faculties needed to construct a more just and sustainable social order—moderation, justice, love, reason, sacrifice and service to the common good—have too often been dismissed as naïve ideals. Yet, it is these, and related, qualities that must be harnessed to overcome the traits of ego, greed, apathy and violence, which are often rewarded by the market and political forces driving current patterns of unsustainable consumption and production.

(Bahá'í International Community, [Rethinking Prosperity: Forging Alternatives to a Culture of Consumerism](#), 2010)

Alternatives to Consumerism

It is not enough to conceive of sustainable consumption and production in terms of creating opportunities for those living in poverty to meet their basic needs. Each individual has a contribution to make to the construction of a more just and peaceful social order, and to play his or her rightful role as productive member of society. Sustainable consumption and production could then be characterized as processes that provide for the material, social and spiritual needs of humanity across generations and enable all peoples to contribute to the ongoing advancement of society.

(based on Bahá'í International Community, [Rethinking Prosperity: Forging Alternatives to a Culture of Consumerism](#), 2010)

Alternatives to Consumerism

Progress at the technical and policy levels now needs to be accompanied by public dialogue—among rural and urban dwellers; among the materially poor and the affluent; among men, women and young persons alike—on the ethical foundations of the necessary systemic change. A sustainable social order is distinguished, among other things, by an ethic of reciprocity and balance at all levels of human organization. Within such an order, the concept of justice is embodied in the recognition that the interests of the individual and of the wider community are inextricably linked.

(based on Bahá'í International Community, [Rethinking Prosperity: Forging Alternatives to a Culture of Consumerism](#), 2010)

Alternatives to Consumerism

...the shift towards a more just, peaceful and sustainable society will require attention to a harmonious dynamic between the material and non-material (or moral) dimensions of consumption and production. The latter, in particular, will be essential for laying the foundation for just and peaceful human relations; these include the generation of knowledge, the cultivation of trust and trustworthiness, eradication of racism and violence, promotion of art, beauty, science, and the capacity for collaboration and the peaceful resolution of conflicts.

(based on Bahá'í International Community, *Rethinking Prosperity: Forging Alternatives to a Culture of Consumerism*, 2010)

Alternatives to Consumerism

Sustainable production should involve systems that enable all human beings to contribute to the productive process. In such a system, all are producers, and all have the opportunity to earn (or receive, if unable to earn) enough to meet their needs. More than simply the means of generating wealth and meeting basic needs, work provides a role in the community and developing one's talents, refining one's character, rendering service and contributing to the advancement of society.

(based on Bahá'í International Community, *Rethinking Prosperity: Forging Alternatives to a Culture of Consumerism*, 2010)

Alternatives to Consumerism

The transformation of complex social realities will require the development of institutional capacity (regional centres of research and training) within local populations to create and apply knowledge in ways that address the specific needs of that population. The result will be to break the present unbalanced flow of knowledge in the world and dissociate development from ill-conceived processes of modernization. “Modern” technologies will be characterized by an orientation towards addressing locally defined needs and by priorities that take into account both the material and moral prosperity of society as a whole.

(based on Bahá'í International Community, [Rethinking Prosperity: Forging Alternatives to a Culture of Consumerism](#), 2010)

Meeting ongoing challenges

The powers released by Bahá'u'lláh match the needs of the times. We may therefore be utterly confident that the new throb of energy now vibrating throughout the Cause will empower it to meet the oncoming challenges of assisting, as maturity and resources allow, the development of the social and economic life of peoples, of collaborating with the forces leading towards the establishment of order in the world, of influencing the exploitation and constructive uses of modern technology, and in all these ways enhancing the prestige and progress of the Faith and uplifting the conditions of the generality of mankind.

(Universal House of Justice, Letter to the Bahá'ís of the World, Ridván 140 B.E)

Pathway to Sustainability

...the pathway to sustainability will be one of empowerment, collaboration and continual processes of questioning, learning and action in all regions of the world. It will be shaped by the experiences of women, men, children, the rich, the poor, the governors and the governed as each one is enabled to play their rightful role in the construction of a new society. As the sweeping tides of consumerism, unfettered consumption, extreme poverty and marginalization recede, they will reveal the human capacities for justice, reciprocity and happiness.

(based on Bahá'í International Community, *Rethinking Prosperity: Forging Alternatives to a Culture of Consumerism*, 2010)