IMAGES AND OBJECTS – Active Methodology Toolkit 7
Education for responsible and sustainable lifestyles

# Why Buy?

## The symbolic value of consumption

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*Toolkit 7 in the Images and Objects – Active Methodology Toolkit series*

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> *"Consumption clearly contributes to human development when it enlarges the capabilities and enriches the lives of people without adversely affecting the well-being of others. It clearly contributes when it is as fair to future generations as it is to the present ones. And it clearly contributes when it encourages lively, creative individuals and communities. But the links are often broken, and when they are, consumption patterns and trends are inimical to human development… **Consumption patterns today must be changed to advance human development tomorrow.**"*
>
> (United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 1998)

# INTRODUCTION

People all over the world yearn for more things and increased opportunities. At the same time, our ecological footprint becomes heavier, lifestyle-related illnesses spread, financial problems increase and the consequences of climate change bring unexpected challenges. How can we deal with the needs, desires and ambitions of a steadily growing global population and still manage to preserve natural resources and promote human well-being for all?

One important approach to this dilemma is to help young people understand why we consume; what makes us buy and where the line stops between necessary, sufficient consumption and excessive, extravagant consumption.

Much of what we consume is for purposes other than what is immediately obvious. We seldom reflect on the symbolic value of the products and services we purchase. By considering the "hidden" drivers behind our individual consumption patterns, we can more easily distinguish what we need and want from that which advertisers, peers and manufacturers convince us that we want. By rethinking definitions of needs and desires we can also contribute to clarifying what is meant by "sustainable consumption".

This toolkit provides suggestions for learning activities that not only shed light on why we buy, but also stimulate consideration of alternatives that can lead to more sustainable consumption.

Source: Colourbox.com

Source: Colourbox.com

**The Partnership for Education and Research about Responsible Living**

The Partnership for Education and Research about Responsible Living (PERL) is a network of educators and researchers developing methods and materials to encourage people to contribute to constructive change through the way they choose to live. PERL partners research social innovation and responsibility; give visibility to creative communities that collaboratively invent new ways of living; promote education for sustainable development, in particular education for sustainable consumption; develop teaching methods/materials; provide reference/guidance; develop values-based indicators; and produce policy recommendations for education for sustainable lifestyles. PERL consists of partners from 140 institutions in 50 countries.

PERL is part of the UNESCO Chair for Education about Sustainable Lifestyles and its UNITWIN project, both of which are co-ordinated by The Center for Collaborative Learning for Sustainable Development at Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences (previously Hedmark University of Applied Sciences).

# IMAGES AND OBJECTS ACTIVE LEARNING METHODOLOGY

PERL has developed a series of images and objects toolkits that promote student-centred activities and active teaching and learning methodologies which encourage students to question the way they think, the values they hold and the decisions they make in the context of responsible and sustainable living.

The PERL toolkits all use images and/or objects to help teach responsible and sustainable ways of living in an active, interactive, practical and holistic way.
Mel Silberman (1996) coined the Active Learning Credo which illustrates the importance of active learning and the benefits to students who are actively engaged in the learning process:

"What I *hear*, I forget.
What I hear and *see*, I remember a little.
What I hear, see, and *ask questions about* or *discuss* with someone else, I begin to understand.
What I hear, see, discuss, and *do*, I acquire knowledge and skill.
What I *teach* to another, I master".

## What methodology is used in this toolkit?

This toolkit suggests activities constructed around a set of thinking tools based on the CoRT tools created by Edward De Bono (2009). CoRT stands for Cognitive Research Trust.

Source: @Dr_EdwarddeBono

Thinking skills are associated with 21st century skills and are part of the set of skills students need to succeed in learning, work and life. Thinking skills can help us to think more clearly, understand and evaluate the links between ideas, appraise arguments, develop judgement, problem solve and more.

According to De Bono (2006), one of the leading authorities on the direct teaching of thinking as a skill, "Thinking is a skill that can be improved by training, by practice and through learning how to do it better".

The CoRT thinking tools help to emphasize thinking as something that is deliberate rather than reactive. They are quick and easy to use and help students to see and examine topics more broadly and look at ideas from more than one viewpoint. Rather than making an instant judgement about an issue or a problem, the tools help students to explore a range of different possibilities and viewpoints and weigh up all the factors that might be involved before making a decision. In this toolokit activities are built around using three of the DeBono tools to help to explore the theme of consumption in a way that is wide-ranging, thought provoking and creative. Each of the three tools has an acronym:

PMI : **P**lus, **M**inus, **I**nteresting

OPV : **O**ther **P**eople's **V**iews

CAF : **C**onsider **A**ll **F**actors

## What is the structure of this toolkit?

This is the seventh toolkit in the series of active learning toolkits for responsible living developed by PERL. The toolkit focuses on historical reflection, self-analysis, and comparison of examples as key learning strategies, to help to explore themes related to responsible living and sustainable development. The toolkit encourages communication between students and elders in their families or communities as a means of gaining insight into changes in consumption patterns that have taken place over the years.

The toolkit also includes information about the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) (2015-2030). This information is intended to support the student-centered activities in the toolkit by providing a broader global context for responsible and sustainable living.

Each topic in this toolkit is supported by a number of suggested activities. Each activity includes a brief explanation, and where relevant, a reference to an image that can be used as part of the activity. Images can be found at the back of the toolkit in the image bank.

The activities can be initiated in both formal and non-formal settings e.g. (a) in the classroom, (b) at home, and (c) in the local community. The toolkit also contains suggestions for photographs that the students themselves can take linked to the different topics described in the toolkit. In relation to the activities about alternatives to traditional modes of consumption, students should be encouraged to suggest and document additional alternatives.

### Which competences does this learning process promote?

The activities in this toolkit contribute to the development of the following competences:

- Ability to define what one considers to be a good quality of life and the ability to identify the values upon which this is based.
- Awareness of a commodity's intangible and symbolic characteristics.
- Ability to understand how individual lifestyle choices influence social, economic and environmental development.
- Basic knowledge of the market system and the role of business.
- Ability to understand and compare the practicalities of both the supply and demand sides of production and consumption.
- Ability to recognize, decode and reflect critically on messages from the media and the market.
- Realization of the complexity and often controversial nature of sustainable consumption issues.
- Ability to acquire, assess and use information on the consequences of consumption especially on the environment.
- Consciousness of civil society's power to initiate alternative ways of thinking and acting.
- Ability not only to envision alternative futures but also to recognize reasonable paths of action leading to these.

Source: Colourbox.com

*"The test of human progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much; it is whether we provide enough for those who have too little."*

*(Roosevelt, 1937)*

**WHY BUY:**

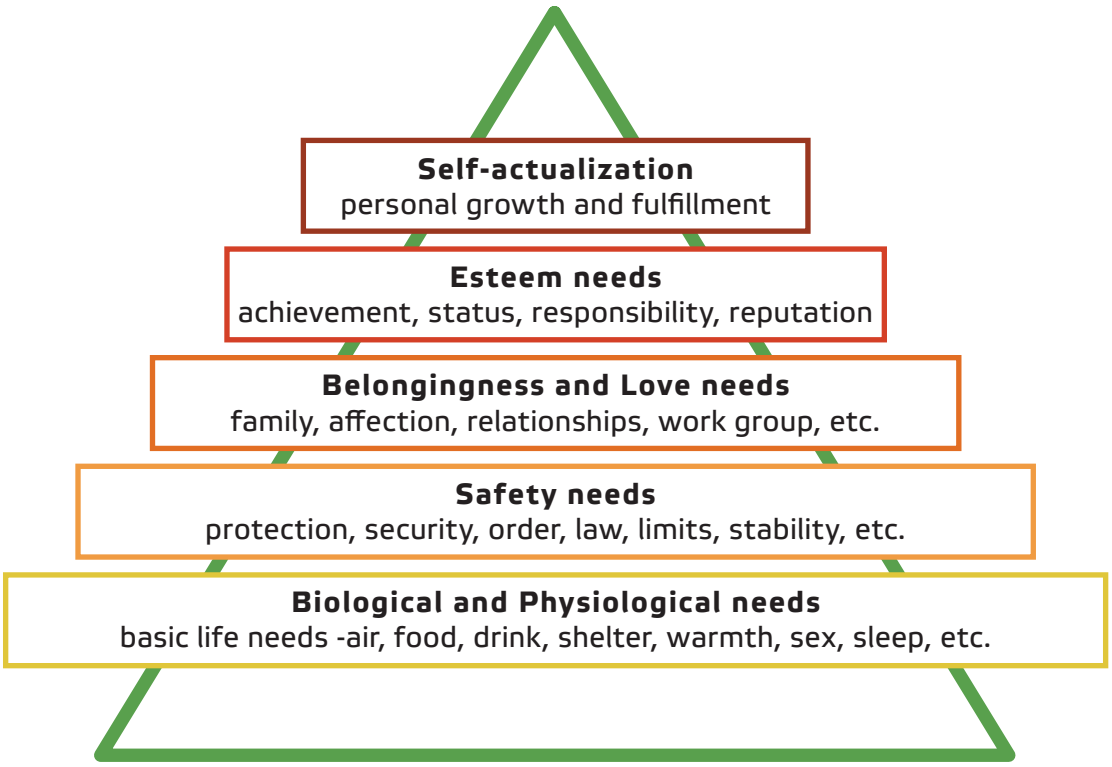
# Survival

Human beings need clean air, clean water, warm temperatures, food, clothing and shelter. Not everyone is able to meet these basic physical human needs. For some, it is a question of living where there are limited natural resources. For others, it is a question of living in areas where humans have polluted or destroyed natural resources. And, for some, it is a question of not having access to the monetary resources required to make it possible to fulfill their basic needs. Whichever the case, people have engaged throughout history in exchanging, purchasing or taking services and goods to ensure their physical survival.

Today we live in a global society where fulfilling our basic needs for survival is often dependent on conditions faraway from where we live. A global market and powerful advertising determine, to a large extent, what is available and where. The internet has made it easy for producers and service providers to be anywhere while reaching out to people in their homes.

People also have, in addition to purely physical needs, emotional and spiritual needs which are essential to survival. People's need for love, acknowledgement, care and understanding has been expressed through myths, legends, stories, sculptures, pictures and songs ever since earliest documented human history.

Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of basic needs, as shown below, is one of several descriptions of human needs. Even though the model has been criticized, it provides a useful starting point for reflecting on consumption patterns.



# Consumption to stay alive

*Learning objectives:*

- Recognizing requirements for existence
- Identifying personal priorities
- Reflecting on sufficiency and moderation.

*Resources needed:*

- Image #1 and/or other relevant images
- Time for personal reflection and group discussion.

**Back to basics**

Sufficiency is often described as "having enough but not too much" or "functioning within limits". But definitions of what is considered sufficient and moderate or excessive and luxurious change from time to time. Some understand sufficiency as being a question of "doing without" or sacrificing. Others feel that sufficiency implies functioning within certain limits.

- What limits does image #1 suggest?
- If you only had the means of doing one thing aside from your daily work, what would that be?
- What do you consider when you decide what is of most importance to you?

**What makes us human**

Lao Tse, Confucius, Buddha, Moses, Christ and Mohammed all turned attention to the essential importance of people's intangible, spiritual needs and to the relationships between the individual and community. Today's global community also focuses on the fulfilment of non-material as well as material needs. Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) emphasize the role of justice, fairness, tolerance, respect, dignity, empathy, caring, commitment and solidarity.

- Does image #2 bring to mind any needs?
- Can you find other images that indicate diverse ways of expressing justice, tolerance and social responsibility?

*Learning objectives:*

- Recognizing intangible factors for survival
- Understanding the role of values in our lives
- Acknowledging the non-material aspects of the Sustainable Development Goals.

*Resources needed:*

- Image #2 and/or other relevant images
- Information about the SDGs
- Time for personal reflection and group discussion.

*Learning objectives:*

- Acknowledging positive and negative aspects of restricted consumption
- Acquiring insight into survival in other parts of the world

*Resources needed:*

- Image #3 and/or other relevant images
- Access to data sources
- Time for personal reflection and group discussion

**A long life**

According to the 2014 World Health Organization statistics, if you are born in Niger or Chad you will have one of the shortest lifespans compared to people in other countries. If you are born in Japan or Iceland, you will live the longest.

- Consider image #3. Discuss the positive/plus factors about this idea: "Everyone should be allowed to live where they can have a long life."
- Next discuss the negative things and potential problems about the idea.
- Finally, think about what would be interesting to know, or to figure out, or to try out in relation to the idea.

# WHY BUY: Identity, belonging

*Goods are used to create an intelligible world and to establish and maintain social relationships.*

*(Douglas & Isherwood, 1996)*

Source: Lewis Akenji

Clifford Geertz (1973) and Peter Corrigan (1997) describe consumption in simple societies as a way of creating a sense of social belonging (whether it be through the acquiring of the skin of a lion, the feather of an eagle or a hunting knife) that signifies who one is or what one has accomplished. Material goods are considered tools or channels through which human abilities and spiritual values are expressed. Marcel Mauss (1925) labelled this manner of consumption "social glue".

Some researchers, such as Max Weber (1920/2002), conclude that a person's identity is based on the consumer behaviour patterns that they share with their community or culture, even if they live in a complex society.
An individual's basic principles and values are communicated by his/her consumption patterns. Consumption also indicates which social groups one aspires to be a part of.

Researchers such as Max Weber (1920/2002) and Thorstein Veblen (1899) recognized that consumption was also a way of acquiring a higher social status or a new social image. Consumption is a way of creating an identity by sharing a lifestyle based on similar consumption habits. Prior to 1900, consumption habits were generally seen as proof of success. Dybvig (1995) wrote about the drive to "be like the Jones's". Famous and respected people's patterns of consumption had a contagious effect on individual's opinions of the qualities of their own lives.

There are many who feel that they can show "who they are" and "where they belong" by what they own and by what they buy. Some feel that personality and character are most clearly expressed through the choices one makes in relation to the material world. The level of satisfaction reached is often measured by how many possessions or economic possibilities one has. In fact, today many people see the acquisition of material goods as the main motivation or purpose of their lives.

In order to acquire an identity, it is essential that one has information. Young people seek to know what is "in" at a given time. The modern media-dominated information society provides adolescents with data which functions as building blocks of identity. Common frames of references have evolved thanks to television, films, and the music industry.

# Consumption to show who we are

### Me—a global citizen?

There are those who maintain that young people of today have multiple identities. Others contend that young people actually lack a basic identity and construct their identity as circumstances allow.

- Look at image #4. What do you think about the following statement: "People should nurture a global identity as well as an individual one"
- What might be the positive/plus factors about this idea?
- Are there negative or problematic aspects to the idea?
- What would be interesting to know about, or figure out, or try out in relation to this idea?

*Learning objectives:*

- Acknowledging positive and negative aspects of globalization
- Acquiring insight into what constitutes identity and individuality.

*Resources needed:*

- Image #4 and/or other relevant images
- Time for personal reflection and group discussion.

*Learning objectives:*

- Recognizing how consumption and identity formation are related
- Identifying consumption patterns that different types of people have
- Reflecting on one's own consumption patterns.

*Resources needed:*

- Image #5 and/or other relevant images
- Time for personal reflection and group discussion.

### Different ways of living

Consider the lifestyles of the three individuals in image #5 (a nun, an astronaut and an athlete).

- What kind of lifestyles do they have? How do they compare?
- What kind of consumption do you think characterizes their everyday lives?
- What characterizes your life?
- Students can also be divided into smaller groups. Each group finds or takes a picture of a person that explicitly shows his/her profession or interests. At first each group attempts to make a brief story about the depicted individual. After each group has shared their individual's story with the rest of the class, all students discuss the topic of how the consumption of these three individuals signifies/characterizes their identity and how they differ.

### If I were King

The Egyptians, Mesopotamians, Chinese, Indians and Romans had systems of economy that stretched beyond basic sustainability and mutuality.

Look at image #6. Society was split in two; there were rich and there were poor, and there were very few in between. To the upper classes, it was an accepted fact that they had a "birthright", maybe even a "god given" right to consume the resources of society in order to cover their luxury needs.

- Can you find images of people who still live this way?

*Learning objectives:*

- Reflecting on diverse social systems and consumption patterns
- Recognizing social hierarchies in historical and contemporary times.

*Resources needed:*

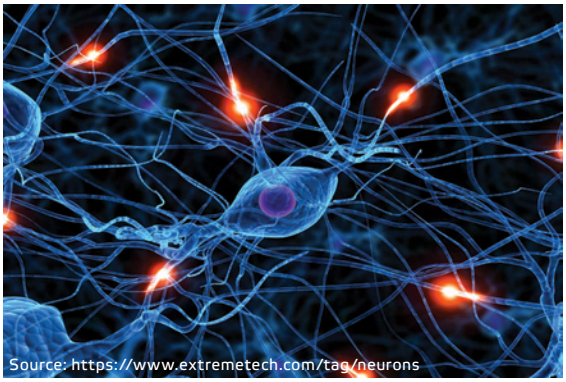
- Image #6 and/or other relevant images
- Access to data
- Time for personal reflection.

**WHY BUY:**

# Habit

*"People find themselves 'locked in' to unsustainable consumption patterns. Consumer 'lock-in' occurs in part through the architecture of incentive structures, institutional barriers, inequalities in access, and restricted choice. But it also flows from habits, routines, social norms and expectations and dominant cultural values"*

*(Jackson, 2005)*




People develop habits from the time they are born. Many of the habits we establish are related to, and are often copies of, ways that our family has behaved. Many of our habits exist because the communities we grew up in acted in similar ways or had expectations that we should act in a particular manner.

Numerous researchers have investigated the role of habits. Emile Durkheim (1892), Pierre Bourdieu (1990), John Bargh and Peter Gollwitzer (1994), Aarts and Verplanken (1999) and others, have questioned to what extent people can actually make rational choices. The physical, emotional and psychological aspects of habits are stronger than many have given them credit for being. Once a habit is embedded in our brain it is very difficult to modify the neural patterns.

Often our consumption patterns are as they are because "we are used to doing things that way" and it requires effort and sometimes discomfort to change. This fact has become increasingly more evident amongst people who "want" to have more responsible consumption patterns but have difficulty actually acting on this intention.

Many modern consumption habits lead to serious consequences. Over-indebtedness is a growing problem in many countries. Lifestyle-related illnesses such as overweight and obesity related health problems, such as diabetes, have reached epidemic levels in some regions of the world. The list is long and the transition from "habits" to "addictions" is one experienced by increasingly more individuals.

While habits may be difficult to change, they can be changed. And, as the introductory quote in this toolkit states, our consumption habits MUST change if there is to be sustainable, human development.

# Consumption because we have always done it

*Learning objectives:*

- Recognizing personal consumption habits
- Reflecting on the processes of change involved in modifying one's own consumption patterns
- Identifying factors about the life cycle of a product.

*Resources needed:*

- Image #7 and/or other relevant images
- Access to data
- Time for personal reflection and group discussion.

**Jeans, jeans and more jeans**

Do you own a pair of jeans? If the answer is "yes", can you remember what you were thinking when you bought them? Was any of the information below in your mind at the time?

Look at image #7 and ask yourself:

- How many other pairs of jeans do I have?
- How much have I spent on jeans recently?
- Can I repair or reuse any of my old jeans?

If you pay 50€ for a pair of jeans, the textile worker will, in the worst case scenario, be left with 0.50€ if the jeans are produced in Asia. The world average is 6€. The store you bought them in will be left with 27€.

Growing cotton demands large agricultural areas in countries in the south where people are starving.

Around 20,000 deaths and 1 million poisonings are linked each year to the chemical sprays applied in the cotton industry. If everyone bought one less pair of jeans each year, a country of approximately 5 million people would have saved nature and people in the south approximately 420 tons of environmentally destructive chemicals.

- Can you find other relevant information about jeans?

**Commercial free zones?**

There are many places in the world that look like image #8. Other places are crowded with shopping centers.

- Consider the suggestion that there should be more "commercial-free zones" in every city.
- What would be the benefits of such a regulation?
- What might be the negative aspects?
- What would be interesting to discover, try out or know about this suggestion?

*Learning objectives:*

- Recognition of the influence commercial activities have on our daily lives
- Awareness of the space that commercial activities take in our surroundings.

*Resources needed:*

- Image #8 and/or other relevant images
- Time for personal and group reflection.

*Learning objectives:*

- Reflecting on diverse saving and spending habits
- Identifying well-known quotes that encourage specific consumption habits.

*Resources needed:*

- Image #9 and/or other relevant images
- Access to information about other cultures and expressions
- Time for personal reflection.

**"A penny in time saves nine"**

Habits concerning saving and spending vary greatly around the world and throughout the ages. But most cultures have traditional sayings or verses that encourage wise use of available resources.

- What sayings or verses come to mind when you look at Image #9?
- Do you know of any sayings or verses from other countries that emphasize ideas about the value of saving?

# WHY BUY: Curiosity, novelty

It is characteristic of human beings to learn, discover, and try to expand their abilities, knowledge and experiences. Most babies and children express delight at surprises and new things. They investigate unknown territories. They widen their horizons. People do not cease searching for new explanations and adventures as they grow older. Explorers, inventors, and researchers have existed throughout history. The search for innovative things and approaches have always been motivating factors to individual activity of all kinds.

Yet it was not until the early 1900's that consumption started to include "novelties" and entertainment as key factors (Scitovsky & Baumann 1988/92). This emphasis was closely connected to the fact that global mass production patterns emerged and resulted in dramatic changes in the lifestyles of masses of people around the world. A wide variety of products began to fill the shelves on shops. Products began being transported around the globe. And today digital communication and e-commerce brings large amounts of previously unfamiliar objects and information into our lives at the click of a finger.

Adolescents are tempted by choices their parents could hardly have dreamt of. Food, clothing, entertainment and technology from around the globe are accessible, close at hand and available at affordable prices. The lower cost of production which has contributed to affordable prices has come about due to the work of farmers, peasants, fishermen and tradesmen who have turned into modern proletariats. The lower cost of "new" things has contributed to their accessibility.

Novelty also plays a role in how consumption helps individuals attempt to achieve "authenticity" or "uniqueness" by using commodities in particularly personal ways. Individuals construct, to a far greater extent than previously, their own environments and demonstrate their own uniqueness without the support of their original cultural patterns and symbols. They seek and use new and different ones. Tourism and studying abroad are two common channels through which curiosity and novelty affect our consumption patterns.

# Consumption because it's new and nice

### Not my problem—or is it?

Many claim that excessive consumption is driven by the urge to experience and have new things. Image #10 shows one consequence of our "use, toss and buy new" mentality.

- What do you know about the disposal of electronic devices?
- Where are the majority of landfills with electronic devices located?
- How do landfills like the one in the picture impact the water and soil where they are?
- How do they affect the people living nearby?
- What other factors are important to consider when disposing of objects?

*Learning objectives:*

- Identifying the consequences of our consumption patterns
- Realization of the complexity and often controversial nature of sustainable development.

*Resources needed:*

- Image #10 and/or other relevant images
- Time for personal reflection and group discussion.

*Learning objectives:*

- Develop the ability to acquire, assess and use relevant information about the consequences of our consumption
- Awareness of side effects of our choices.

*Resources needed:*

- Image #11 and/or other relevant images
- Time for personal and group reflection.

### Looking pretty?

New discoveries often come at a cost. Outer space is littered with pieces of old spaceships, satellites, etc. Marine life in many oceans is being destroyed by the garbage deposited in the sea. The "precautionary principle" which required thorough testing and careful, monitored application is being applied less and less than in the past.

- What does image #11 bring to mind about the importance of the "look before you leap" approach to cosmetic surgery?
- Consider positive and negative aspects of cosmetic surgery.
- Are there any facts about cosmetic surgery you would be interested in finding out more about?

### Novelty taxes

Many governments have placed taxes on new commodities. New cars, in particular, often come with considerable taxes. Other countries have insignificant or no taxes at all on new items.

- What do you think are the reasons that some people feel "novelty" or "luxury" taxes are useful?
- Why do you think others disagree?
- What would you say to a consumer tax on all mobile phones, data games, cars, furniture, films and appliances that are not more than a year old.
- Would your consumption patterns change if new items were more expensive?
- What do you think of so-called "green taxes" on items and services which are deemed "unsustainable"?
- Consider image #12 and your own buying habits.

*Learning objectives:*

- Knowledge of various ways of regulating over-consumption
- Awareness of how one spends one's money
- Basic knowledge of the impact of legislation on consumption.

*Resources needed:*

- Image #12 and/or other relevant images
- Time for personal reflection.

# WHY BUY: Pleasure, beauty

Pleasure describes the broad class of mental states that humans and other animals experience as positive, enjoyable, or worth seeking. It includes specific mental states such as happiness, enjoyment, ecstasy, and euphoria. “Many pleasurable experiences are associated with satisfying basic biological drives, such as eating, exercise, hygiene, and sex. The appreciation of cultural artifacts and activities such as art, music, dancing, and literature is often pleasurable” (Schultz, 2015)

Source: Victoria Thoresen

Beauty is a characteristic of an animal, idea, object, person or place that provides a perceptual experience of pleasure or satisfaction. The experience of "beauty" often involves an interpretation of something as being in balance and harmony with nature, which may lead to feelings of attraction and emotional well-being and positive life quality. Standards of beauty have changed over time, based on changing cultural values.

Beauty touches something in our soul. And while beauty can be experienced in a glorious sunset or the soft glow of a baby's skin, beauty can also be the result of human endeavor. In almost all known civilizations beautiful objects have been highly valued for themselves as art and for their functional value as exchange for other desired items (a wife, a farm, a job, etc.)

Wonder is when a person opens up to something not previously thought of or experienced. One forgets oneself, and experiences spontaneously and immediately. The moment of wonder cannot be planned in advance neither can we always be sure of which elements are necessary in order to understand that there may exist more than we know right then and there. Wonder is often experienced when a person encounters beauty or has a happy or extremely pleasurable moment.

The search for new ways of measuring human development has resulted in growing interest in the concepts of well-being, happiness and mindfulness. At the launch of the first Global Happiness Index Report at the U.N. in NYC, it was emphasized that happiness, as it is understood in some parts of the world, is not the same as momentary pleasure. Happiness is a state of contentment attained often after great effort, struggle and sometimes pain. It is also seen as a human quality that cannot be purchased with money. However, products and services are repeatedly marketed as “easy paths to bliss”, or quick takes on delight.

# Consumption because it's amazing!

### Vacation hot-spots

In Goa, India, the local inhabitants have had to move in order to make room for new expensive tourist hotels and golf courses. Local fishermen are no longer allowed on to the beaches where they worked, and this has had an impact on the local economy. In addition to this, areas that were previously used for growing rice and cashews and for grazing are now turned into golf courses.

- What positive factors can you think of that are related to the development of tourist sites?
- What negative factors can you think of?
- What more would you like to know or do in relation to the question of "sustainable tourism"? Consider image #13

*Learning objectives:*

- Knowledge of the consequences of consumption
- Awareness of the role multinational companies play in tourism
- Recognition of the need for more sustainable tourism.

*Resources needed:*

- Image #13 and/or other relevant images
- Time for personal and group reflection.

*Learning objectives:*

- Recognizing the links between pleasure, consumption, loans and indebtedness
- Knowledge of what taking out a loan entails.

*Resources needed:*

- Image #14 and/or other relevant images
- Time for personal reflection and group discussion.

### Feeling good

Does limitless consumption lead to limitless pleasure? Research indicates that once individuals have reached a certain economic level that ensures that they can cover their needs, increased wealth and consumption does not necessarily guarantee greater happiness.

- Should there be limits on how we use money?
- Many people fall into debt due to excessive loans.
- What restrictions are there to taking out loans?
- What facts should you know concerning loans, interest and repayment policies?
- Consider image #14. What other thoughts come to mind?

### Is beauty in the eye of the beholder?

- Ask another student what they think is beautiful.
- Next try to find someone between the age of 50 and 80+ and ask them to describe something beautiful. Ask them if they have any possessions which they consider beautiful and why they think they are beautiful.
- Consider what makes you happy, contented, satisfied, amazed, joyful? Why?
- Look at image #15. Can you photograph something you regard as being beautiful?

*Learning objectives:*

- Respect for diverse opinions
- Esthetic appreciation
- Awareness of the relationship between consumption and the search for beauty.

*Resources needed:*

- Image #15 and/or other relevant images
- Access to relevant data
- Time for personal reflection.

# WHY BUY: Advertising

Source: Colourbox.com

Things are in the saddle, riding humanity.
(Emerson, 1904)

Commercial advertising consists of different ways of influencing large numbers of people with the ultimate aim of achieving the increased sale of commodities and services. Advertising is also the backbone and a controlling force of the media. It provides the funding necessary to run online sites, films, newspapers, radio, television and magazines.

Some of the basic principles in advertising are to:

- get the attention (of the consumer)
- create interest (in the product)
- promote desire (to have the product)
- encourage action (obtaining/purchasing the product)

To maintain profits and continue selling, companies often nurture insecurity and create discontent in order to keep customers buying. Modern society is paradoxically characterized by continually increasing diversity while at the same time exhibiting more conformity and stereotypes than ever before. Commercial markets exploit this uncertainty to convince future customers that their product reflects the values, attitudes and lifestyles the customers are looking for.

*"From 1950 to 1990, total global advertising expenditure increased nearly seven times. It grew one third faster than the world economy and three times faster than world population. ... "*

(OECD, 2001)

*"Predictions indicate a 4.4% increase in global advertising expenditure in 2017 taking it to 547 billion USD."*

(Statista, 2016)

Advertisements use many means for achieving their goal. Some ads look as if they are providing information, while consciously deleting facts, or making exaggerations and dubious statements. In advertising that uses pictures, this may mean selective photographing or technical alterations. Advertisements often use: hints such as sexual innuendos; repeating the name of the product as often as possible; or giving the product a local twist. They imply things about the product, without ever saying them explicitly.

Advertisers also seek attention by shocking. One trend has been to break taboos and go beyond normative cultural limits. Another trend has been through "product placement" or "soft sponsoring" where advertisers pay to have their product used visibly in a TV show or movie or be used by a famous person. A further trend is to provide funding to sports teams, charities, etc. so that the brand's logo is obvious.

# Consumption because we were convinced to do so

*Learning objectives:*

- Awareness of advertising techniques
- Ability to identify and deconstruct advertisements.

*Resources needed:*

- Image #16 and/or other relevant images
- Time for personal and group reflection.

**Sweeter kisses**

Is a toothbrush just something to clean your teeth with? According to commercials, the "XX toothbrush" is what you need to get 'sweeter kisses' and a more attractive smile.

- Will the girl in image #16 get more boyfriends or have greater popularity and success if she uses that specific "XX toothbrush"?
- What is positive about the toothbrush ad?
- What negative aspects are there?
- What might be interesting to know more about or do in relation to ads of this sort?

**Water off a duck's back**

A well-known Danish song starts out by asking "What did you learn in school today, dear little boy of mine?" A modern version of the song goes "What did you buy in the shops today, dear little boy of mine?" In order to consider the effect of advertising, the lyrics can once again be modified like this: "What did you decide not to buy today, dear little boy of mine – and why?"

Look at image #17 and discuss the following questions: If I decide not to buy today...

- Will other people be affected by my choice, and who might that be?
- How will they be affected?
- What will those who will be affected think?

*Learning objectives:*

- Reflecting on people's ability to not be manipulated by advertising
- Awareness of the consequences of mass consumption and reduced consumption.

*Resources needed:*

- Image #17 and/or other relevant images
- Access to relevant data
- Time for personal reflection.

*Learning objectives:*

- Recognizing persuasion techniques
- Reflecting on one's own ability to withstand persuasion and advertising
- Identifying how one uses various persuasion techniques oneself.

*Resources needed:*

- Image #18 and/or other relevant images
- Time for personal reflection and group discussion.

**Persuasion**

Image #18 shows one way that people use to try to persuade others to do what they want.

- What other methods does advertising use? Why?
- Test several persuasion techniques by inviting students to work in pairs. One student sits on a chair, the other stands up. The standing partner has two minutes to convince the other, through verbal means only, as to why she/he should give up the chair. If successful, or after two minutes, students change roles. This exercise can give rise to a range of persuasion techniques such as flattery, bribery, trickery and verbal abuse; it may also result in an entrenchment of original positions.

# WHY BUY: Peer pressure

People must constantly make decisions in relation to the modern consumer society, choosing between a vast variety of possibilities. To choose clothes, music, films, and activities which are acceptable to peers in order to be included, is not always easy. Peer pressure has an enormous influence on people. The risk involved in making the "wrong choice" has proven, at times, to be devastating. Anxiety and irresponsibility grow. Lifestyle illnesses are more common and serious.

Anorexia and bulimia, for example, can be frantic efforts to "fit into the accepted (market-borne) picture" of a typical teen. Chronic lack of sleep, a widespread lifestyle condition affecting adolescents in many parts of the world, concerns doctors because of the consequences for the individuals' health, welfare and ability to function in society. Diabetes and overweight brought on by the unbalanced intake of sugar and lack of physical exercise are considered by the World Health Organization to be one of the major problems of today's adolescents.

Some youth who choose to go their own way have experienced the stigma of individuality or the condition of loneliness to be so heavy that they cannot face the challenge. Worldwide, one million people commit suicide yearly and many are young people. As many as 450 million people worldwide suffer from mental health or behavioural illnesses. There is a documented increase in life-style related suicides amongst adolescents in Europe. Drug addiction has increased. Drug trafficking globally constitutes an estimated 85 billion € every year (greater than the GNP of three quarters of the 207 economies in the world.)

The burdens accompanying commercial identities are not only related to mental and physical health. Indebtedness is a recurring problem for many adolescents, particularly indebtedness brought on by excessive consumption.

A major objective of education for sustainable lifestyles is to help people recognize peer pressure and to develop the self-confidence to withstand it. Without the self-awareness and courage to be independent, individuals are not able to contribute to constructive change leading to more sustainable, responsible living.

# Consumption because everyone else does

### Be sexy!!

Rubber bracelets were, for a period of time, very popular in the USA and Europe among children and youth. The bracelets were sold at a moderate price in large fashion stores and kiosks. They had different colours – each colour related to a level of personal behavior and sexual contact. The bracelets were most popular among young people in their early teens, but were also sold to children as young as 5-6 years old. Teachers and parents were informed by the children that the most usually accepted color-code was an implicit way of indicating one's willingness to have various degrees of intimacy including sex.

- Do you know what the different colored bracelets in image #19 are supposed to mean?
- How did many schools deal with this exhibition of extreme peer pressure?

*Learning objectives:*

- Identifying expressions of peer pressure
- Awareness of ways of dealing with commercialized peer pressure
- Consideration of how to withstand peer pressure.

*Resources needed:*

- Image #19 and/or other relevant images
- Time for personal reflection and group discussion.

*Learning objectives:*

- Awareness that shopping can become a form of addiction
- Recognition of the consequences of submitting to peer pressure.

*Resources needed:*

- Image #20 and/or other relevant images
- Access to relevant data
- Time for personal reflection.

### Buying your way "in"

John is obsessed with buying popular, fashionable objects that he sees in the media and commercials. He is convinced that by doing this, he will gain access to the "in-group" that he wishes to belong to. But this has not happened. No matter how much he buys, he does not gain admittance to the group. After a while, the problem becomes such that he cannot help buying everything he sees in commercials.

- How do different people handle this kind of situation? Consider image #20.

### Bullying not allowed

Image #21 shows a young person who is distressed by being bullied.

- What positive factors can you find in the following suggested legislation? "Anyone caught bullying another student by publishing on social media photos or texts that compromise that student shall be immediately expelled from school and not allowed to return."
- What negative factors can you see?
- What else would you like to know or do in relation to this suggested law?

*Learning objectives:*

- Recognition of the influence commercial activities have on our daily lives
- Awareness of the space commercial activities take in our surroundings.

*Resources needed:*

- Image #21 and/or other relevant images
- Time for personal and group reflection.

# ALTERNATIVES TO BUYING

In this toolkit the main factors that cause people to buy have been presented. However, there are other ways to fulfill our needs and desires, some of which may lead to more sustainable, responsible consumption. The list below is a brief summary of some of the more common alternatives to buying which have become popular in recent years. Examining each alternative is not the intention of this toolkit but might well be the focus of follow-up learning activities.

1. **Survival**
   — sharing economy, circular economy, self-sufficiency

2. **Identity**
   — community dialog and social activities such as community service

3. **Habit**
   — collective goals, accessible, sustainable products and services

4. **Curiosity, novelty**
   — open sources, sharing, digital media

5. **Pleasure, beauty**
   — real rather than "virtual" experiences, increased contact with nature

6. **Advertising**
   — Corporate social responsibility, ethical marketing, positive "nudging"

7. **Peer pressure**
   — building self-confidence; respecting diversity

**The future you might want**

Consider alternative behaviours that you are familiar with related to each of the themes/ topics listed above.

- What positive effects can you identify?
- What negative factors can you imagine there might be?
- What do you think needs to happen in order for such behaviours to become common in your family, community, country and elsewhere?
- What would you like to know more about or to do about such behaviour changes?

*Learning objectives:*

– Ability to recognize alternative futures
– Recognizing reasonable paths of action leading to alternative futures.

*Resources needed:*

– Relevant images
– Time for personal reflection and group discussion.

# THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Source: United Nations

Image #1 Source: United Nations

Image #2 Source: United Nations

# WHY

## RESPONSIBLE AND SUSTAINABLE LIVING

# BUY?


# WHY

## RESPONSIBLE AND SUSTAINABLE LIVING

# BUY?

Image #3 Source: Colourbox.com

Image #4 Source: Lewis Akenji

# WHY

## RESPONSIBLE AND SUSTAINABLE LIVING

# BUY?


# WHY

## RESPONSIBLE AND SUSTAINABLE LIVING

# BUY?

Image #5 Source: Wikipedia- Túrelio + Colourbox.com

Image #6 Source: Colourbox.com

# WHY BUY?

RESPONSIBLE AND SUSTAINABLE LIVING

WHY BUY?

RESPONSIBLE AND SUSTAINABLE LIVING

Image #7 Source: Colourbox.com

Image #8 Source: Daniel Fisher

# WHY

## RESPONSIBLE AND SUSTAINABLE LIVING

# BUY?


# WHY

## RESPONSIBLE AND SUSTAINABLE LIVING

# BUY?

Image #9 Source: Colourbox.com

Image #10 Source: Colourbox.com

# WHY

## RESPONSIBLE AND SUSTAINABLE LIVING

# BUY?


# WHY

## RESPONSIBLE AND SUSTAINABLE LIVING

# BUY?

Image #11 Source: Colourbox.com

Image #12 Source: Colourbox.com

# WHY

## RESPONSIBLE AND SUSTAINABLE LIVING

# BUY?


# WHY

## RESPONSIBLE AND SUSTAINABLE LIVING

# BUY?

Image #13 Source: Colourbox.com

Image #14 Source: Colourbox.com

# WHY

RESPONSIBLE AND SUSTAINABLE LIVING

# BUY?


# WHY

RESPONSIBLE AND SUSTAINABLE LIVING

# BUY?

Image #15 Source: Colourbox.com

Image #16 Source: Colourbox.com

# WHY

## RESPONSIBLE AND SUSTAINABLE LIVING

# BUY?


# WHY

## RESPONSIBLE AND SUSTAINABLE LIVING

# BUY?

Image #17 Source: Colourbox.com

Image #18 Source: Colourbox.com

# WHY

## RESPONSIBLE AND SUSTAINABLE LIVING

# BUY?


# WHY

## RESPONSIBLE AND SUSTAINABLE LIVING

# BUY?

Image #19 Source: Colourbox.com

Image #20 Source: Colourbox.com

# WHY

## RESPONSIBLE AND SUSTAINABLE LIVING

# BUY?


# WHY

## RESPONSIBLE AND SUSTAINABLE LIVING

# BUY?

Image #21 Source: Colourbox.com

# WHY

## RESPONSIBLE AND SUSTAINABLE LIVING

# BUY?

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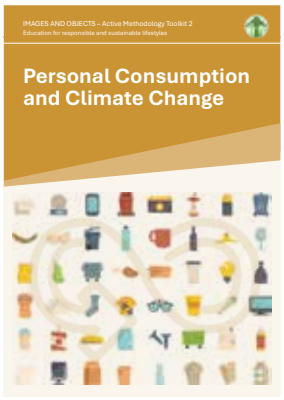


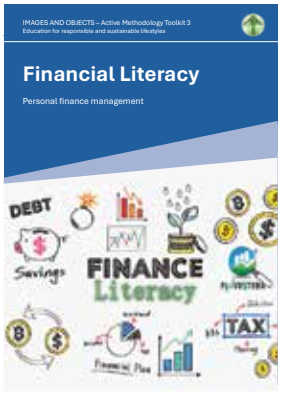

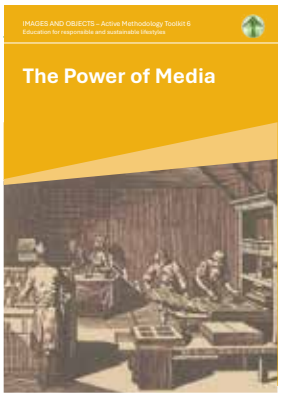

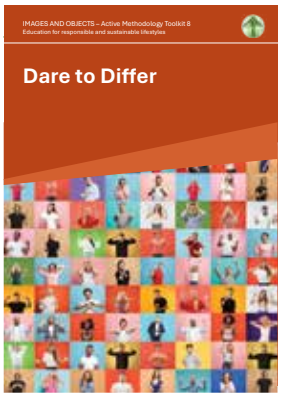


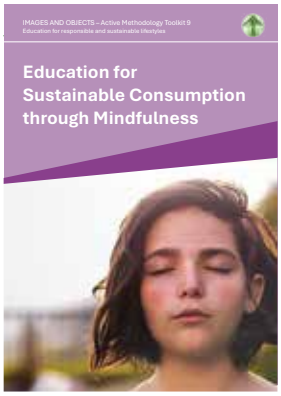

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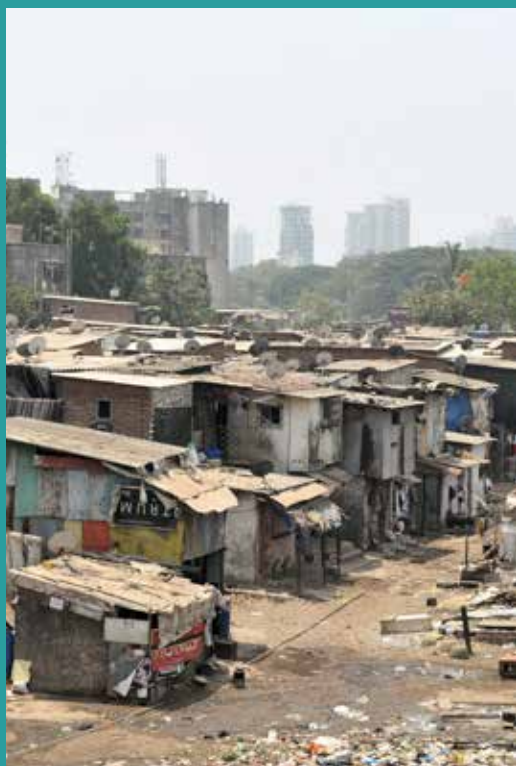
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