

Does Society Need Marketing?

Does marketing promote consumption for its own sake? Certainly, there are some people who gain status from their possessions. But is this the fault of marketing or just a general trend of the changing environment?

To assist you, listed below are some comments from a recent focus group on this particular issue.

Focus Group Research Comments on Marketing and Consumption

1. "I really don't understand young people these days. Why do they want to tie themselves down with all that debt? It must be so stressful. In my day, you saved your money and only bought things when you could afford it. I'm proud to say that I've never borrowed money in my life."
2. "I earn good money. I'm not even 30 and I already earn \$100,000. I've got another 30 years of ever-increasing income to enjoy. That means I don't need to worry about saving - I just buy what I want, when I want."
3. "I find that it's my kids that want all the new things. Like the latest PlayStation, and their own computer and a whiz-bang mobile phone and, of course, a wide-screen TV. I mean all their friends have them, so you don't want your kids to miss out."
4. "I try to live a simple life, but that's becoming harder and harder. For instance, how can you live without a mobile phone these days? And I've recently bought myself a computer for home just to access the internet."
5. "I think things are quite different these days. Look at me for example - my wife and I both have good jobs and we've decided not to have kids. That's so different to my parent's generation where people usually only had one income and a family to support."

Student Discussion Questions

1. Review the above statements; do you think that they are common viewpoints?
2. The statements seem to suggest that, in today's world, many consumers want to buy more products. Is this the result of marketing activities by firms or simply a change in consumer's lifestyle and expectations?
3. Do you think that society would be better off without marketing activities, or do you think that marketing contributes to a better society overall?