

ENGLISH CLUB

ITT Buonarroti

B2 weekly topic for 09/12/2020:

MODERN SHOPPING

Do we really need everything we buy? Are our shopping choices influenced by outside forces?

Overspending and overconsumption are good for businesses, but maybe not very good for consumers... and the environment. Read the article below to get a few ideas about our buying habits today? Think about what makes you decide what to buy. Fashion trends? Peer pressure? Budget? Functionality? By all means, no matter what your views, it's an important point to think about.

We will base our next meeting on this topic and I want to hear your ideas and opinions.

THE BUY NOTHING MOVEMENT

Social media, magazines and shop windows bombard people daily with things to buy, and British consumers are buying more clothes and shoes than ever before. Online shopping means it is easy for customers to **buy without thinking**, while major brands offer such cheap clothes that they can be treated like **disposable items** – worn two or three times and then thrown away.

In Britain, the average person spends more than £1,000 on new clothes a year, which is around four per cent of their income. That might not sound like much, but that figure hides two far more worrying trends for society and for the environment. First, a lot of that **consumer spending** is via credit cards. British people **currently owe** approximately £670 per adult to credit card companies. That's 66 per cent of the **average wardrobe budget**. Also, not only are people spending **money they don't have**, they're using it to buy **things they don't need**. Britain **throws away** 300,000 tons of clothing a year, most of which goes into landfill sites.

People might not realise they are part of the **disposable clothing problem** because they donate their unwanted clothes to charities. But charity shops can't sell all those unwanted clothes. 'Fast fashion' goes out of fashion as quickly as it came in and is often too poor quality to recycle; people don't want to buy it **second-hand**. Huge quantities end up being thrown away, and a lot of clothes that charities can't sell are **sent abroad**, causing even more economic and environmental problems.

However, a different trend is springing up in opposition to consumerism – the 'buy nothing' trend. The idea originated in Canada in the early 1990s and then moved to the US, where it became **a rejection of the overspending and overconsumption** of Black Friday and Cyber Monday during Thanksgiving weekend. On Buy Nothing Day people organise various types of protests and cut up their credit cards. Throughout the year, Buy Nothing groups organise the **exchange and repair of items** they already own.

The trend has now reached **influencers on social media** who usually share posts of **clothing** and **make-up** that they recommend for people to buy. Some YouTube stars now encourage their viewers not to buy anything at all for periods as long as a year. Two friends in Canada spent a year working towards buying only food. For the first three months they learned how to live without buying electrical goods, clothes or things for the house. For the next stage, they gave up services, for example haircuts, eating out at restaurants or buying petrol for their cars. In one year, they'd saved \$55,000.

The changes they made meant two fewer cars on the roads, a reduction in plastic and paper packaging and a positive impact on the environment from all the energy saved. If everyone followed a similar plan, the results would be impressive. But even if you can't manage a full year without going shopping, you can participate in the anti-consumerist movement by refusing to buy things you don't need. Buy Nothing groups send a clear message to companies that people are no longer willing to accept the environmental and human cost of overconsumption.