In this paper I reflect on the comments brought forward by George Carlin in his comedy clip, where he joked about people's need for personal possessions. I shall do this by firstly discussing whether we, as a society, are collecting too much stuff and the implications of the consumer society to the environment and our wellbeing. Then I shall reflect on my own consumption and discuss what I have done and currently do to control my consumption and how successful I am at doing so.

Not all societies are collecting too much stuff. Consumerism is more prevalent in wealthier societies because they can afford to spend more. However, in impoverished societies there is less consumerism because the people can barely afford the basics of life such as food and shelter. This difference in consumption practices may stem from the level that an individual is on, on the hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1987). Once our basic needs have been fulfilled, we tend to buy more to fulfil needs higher up the hierarchy. Advertisers are therefore able to take advantage of this by evoking emotions in products that make us feel like we shall be fulfilled by purchasing the product and, as stated by Berger (Berger, 2015) consumers are not rational when making purchases. Credit is also easily accessible to people who live in wealthier societies, which simply fuels their consumption.

This high consumption leads to waste and as documented in the *global waste management outlook* (Wilson, 2015); global waste quantities are increasing, which is putting a strain on local municipalities' waste management facilities, causing pollution, and contributing to carbon emissions that cause climate change, through the incineration of waste. At the individual level, the increase in consumerism leads individuals into debt and bankruptcies. The stress of being in financial difficulty also puts a strain on people's mental health (Gunasinghe, 2018) that leads some people into depression.

I personally have low consumption, this is due to my having been brought up in a low-income household, where I could not afford to waste. I am a very frugal person but not necessarily cheap. I buy expensive high-quality products and use them well until there is no more use for them. Purchasing high end quality products means I have to save up for things, which gives me enough time to research the products but also helps me not to impulse buy, so I only buy what I need. I donate to charity because I feel very bad when I throw things away, and I try to find another use for everything. I turn old clothes that cannot be donated into cleaning clothes, broken cups into plant holders and only buy a new phone when my current phone is no longer functional. For example, I have had my phone for four years, the mic on it does not work so I have to use earphones, but I still have not replaced the phone. I have also kept all my old broken phones with the intent of fixing them one day. I do hoard stuff, but I do not have a lot of stuff because I only buy what I use and if I have something that someone else can make use of, I give it away.

In summary, I believe wealthy societies are collecting too much stuff, but impoverished societies are not. One contributing factor could be the accessibility of credit in wealthier societies. The waste production levels of the world in general have increased partly due to consumerism, leading to problems caused by waste disposal. Consumerism does also have a high correlation to the accumulation of debt which may lead some individuals into depression and mental health issues. I however do not collect too much stuff, due to my ingrained feelings towards waste and I am therefore able to successfully reduce my waste production and consumerism.

References

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