

COMENIUS PROJECT
“The Consumer Society and Youth in Europe”
School year 2009 – 2010

Talking about publicity

(Two students meet)

A: Hello Anne.

B: Hello Kate, how are you?

A: Fine. What are you doing?

B: Just reading an article on advertising...very interesting topic, isn't it?

A: Oh yes, today we often talk about the importance that advertising has on us.

B: You're right! This article is about the effect of ads on young people.

A: And what have you discovered?

B: Every day we are bombarded by television commercials that induce us to buy without thinking if we really need something.

A: There is even another problem: advertising lengthens the duration of shows and films ... if you want to see the end of a movie, you must stay awake until 11.15 p.m..

B: I know, I know, but then we can analyze the other mass media: magazines, radio, internet ... advertising is a significant part of each of these.....simply everywhere there is something that tells you BUY.

A: Do you know what? A lot of ads are misleading, they give a message that is not true, they support quality which is not always confirmed by the product. Unlike them, progress ads aren't very used even if they send a positive message and they make us more aware of our society's aspects.

B: I agree. However, we can say that without advertising many products, goods and services, wouldn't be known to a wide number of consumers.

A: Well, perhaps it would be better without it ... so we might think it is better to buy basic goods and to avoid possessing "secondary" goods. You certainly know what I do think about waste....in my opinion buying two bags, three shirts and three trousers in one day is nothing but a big waste.

B: You know, quite often we make our choices on the basis of the price of the product. We don't realize that we are driven to buy "loss leaders", products sold at a low price to attract consumers.

A: Erm....This is what we call consumerism. It is a term used to describe the effects of equating personal happiness with the purchase of goods and services or consumption in general.

B: But, how can we avoid falling into the trap of consumerism?

A: All people should follow the "Ten rules of sustainable consumption" which say that you should:

1. buy less;
2. buy light (without too many packages)
3. buy durable products;
4. buy simple (avoid sophisticated, complicated and therefore more fragile items);
5. buy near (to reduce environmental damage due to transport);
6. buy healthy (fresh food, in season, no preservatives, etc.).
7. buy more in special shops supporting Fair Trade;
8. buy conservative (watch out for products that may endanger the health and environment);
9. buy sincere (avoid products advertised too, don't believe always on advertising);
10. invest in the ethical Bank and in utilities that use less energy.

B: You are very informed...

A: I have just explained that we all must be very careful. But now I have a doubt: consumerism is a recent phenomenon, can it be so dangerous?

B: That's not true. Consumerism has old roots: it started and developed in Italy and in Western Europe in the 1960's but in the USA it was already a big phenomenon in the 1920's.

A: Why did it develop so quickly?

B: In those years thanks to Taylorism the so called assembly line was introduced in factories and this greatly improved production and lowered prices so that people started to consume....

A: to buy...

B: Certainly. Buying was easier because people were allowed to pay in instalments and also credit cards were introduced.

A: But if it's something so wrong why do we continue to favor it?

B: Several factors lead us to buy and thus encourage consumerism: cultural, affective, - for example to gain acceptance from a particular group of people - and false needs..

A: If we buy goods we need, however, there is nothing wrong with it!

B: Of course, but the seriousness is that most consumers purchase unnecessary goods, shifting the emphasis from the basic ones ... this is what feeds the mass consumerism!

A: It is unacceptable that people cannot understand the difference between primary and secondary goods!

B: It is not as simple as it seems because many things influence us constantly about what we buy! For example, advertising or our state of mind!

A: Only to hear about it gives me the urge to buy ... why don't people think it over before buying?

B: Haven't you been doing the same so far ?

A: You're right! but now that I know all these things I'll be more careful about what I buy and what I see!

B: Start immediately and avoid buying all those snacks every day ...

A: Erm ... yes ... I will start ... thanks so much! By the way, what time is it?

B: Ten to seven.

A: Sorry, but I must go now, John is waiting for me. I'd love to talk more about this topic next time we meet.

B: Of course, bye Kate.

A: Bye Anne.

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