

So we've created a world of consumers... now what?

 By [Chemory Gunko](#)

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The relentless marketing and advertising drives of the last century have landed us in the midst of a world of consumers driven by instant gratification - and to be fair, advertising is completely to blame.



Flxabay

We often hear talk of how we, as the advertising and marketing industry, have created low self-esteem and body issues in women, but you hear a lot less about the impact of creating a world of consumers.

A simple look around you will verify the fact we do live in a world of people who do nothing but consume, consume, consume though... so much so that we have concepts like 'retail therapy', and people will list shopping as a hobby or preferred activity.

Is it time for the marketing and advertising industry to start paying attention to this – and is it time for us to think our moral and ethical approach to how we position product?

Out of control spending

It's definitely not news that we're in an economic recession worldwide – and yet spending over the holiday season continues to rise at an unparalleled rate, with Christmas and Black Friday shopping tallies continuing to rise year on year.

In fact, in the USA it's so bad that retail sales over the holiday period will surpass the GDP of 181 countries around the world. Let's say that again so that it sinks in... US consumers will spend more money on Christmas gifts than 181 countries will generate in the entire year.

What's even more scary is that around 40 – 60% of this spend will take place on credit cards – and many of the people will not be able to pay that debt back come 2017.

Suicides & financial woes

If you're not aware of it, then you need to know that suicide rates around the world have been rising dramatically over the

past few years – and importantly there has been a major spike in suicides directly related to financial woes.

On average, suicide rates have risen by 40% around the world, with at least 37,5% of all suicides directly related to financial and economic struggle. If you've ever had money troubles, then you know how difficult it is to function in that space – this is your very survival we're talking about after all.

So yes, depression is understandable when someone is facing bankruptcy or is not able to feed their children... but go do this simple experiment: ask people if they would consider going without presents at Christmas?

You're going to be surprised that even the poorest will look at you like you've crawled out from underneath a rock.

My family does not celebrate Christmas traditionally, as in we don't do gift exchanges, and often not even celebrating Christmas day. So I get to have this conversation with people quite often – and you'd be quite surprised at how offended people get by the idea that they should 'miss out' on a round of Christmas presents.

Entitlement & instant gratification

I had an Alcatraz t-shirt that was given to me as a gift when I was a little girl, and the design on it has always stuck with me:

Alcatraz Regulation #5: Privileges. You are entitled to food, shelter and medical attention. Anything else you get is a privilege.

Around the world unemployment figures are sky high and business is cutting back more and more and more. People are losing jobs, being made redundant, losing their homes and everything they've worked for – and Christmas spending is higher than it's ever been before?

How does that make sense?

When you listen to poorer people complain, you'll often come across complaints like "I can't buy my kids Christmas presents" or "I was so deprived because we didn't get gifts"... but where in life exactly is the promise that you will get gifts, and everything else that you want?

I'll tell you – marketing, media and advertising.

As marketers we've gotten into the habits of personalising our messaging, reaching lonely people who are desperate for connection.

Our media is filled with pictures of glamorous people living the high life... and clearly getting everything they want, whenever they want it.

That creates an expectation of fulfilment and entitlement – and all the promises we make for quick delivery have created a culture of instant gratification.

“Come to our drive-through – we’ll give you hot food in 30 seconds.”

“If we aren’t fast enough, you get it free.”

“Buy Now.”

“Don’t Delay!”

No wonder people have gotten used to getting everything they want in the moment they want it – we’ve trained them to expect it.

Spoilt Brats

Charlie and the Chocolate Factory so beautifully illustrates what happens when you give a child everything they want – Veruca Salt is a whinging, painful, demanding and entitled spoilt brat... and you kind of just want to give her the clout she deserves.

The consumers we’re creating are no better though.

The impact we’re creating is worse.

This is real-life

The person you are marketing to is a real person, with real responsibilities and real problems to deal with – and most of us are not even slightly geared towards dealing with financial struggle.

Any financial struggle will also be exacerbated by the pain and lack that the person feels when they compare themselves to the others around them who seem to be able to spend freely.

So people rush to fulfil that immediate need to spend and impress others, or at least lift themselves to the level they believe others are at... and come January their lives are falling apart.

How many of those people will turn to suicide?

If you’ve been in that space before... can you remember how easy it is to think you have no worth when you can’t meet your basic survival needs? How the anxiety, worry and pain eat away at you until you feel like there is no option for you but to be dead and gone?

Do you really want to be responsible for someone’s death?

Ethics & morals in media and advertising

In all my years of studying and working in marketing and media, I’ve never seen a class or course in ethics and morals – and I think it’s time we went there.

As the marketing and media industries we are singlehandedly responsible for creating the vision people have of their lives, and we need to take that responsibility more seriously.

Yes we’ve learned all these amazing media, marketing, retail, advertising and POS tricks to engage customers and get them to impulsively part with their money – now we have to learn when and how to apply that knowledge for the greater good of all humanity.

Every time we do something that makes a person more selfish and self-focused, we are doing that to the very world we live in – and we're all getting tired of how selfish and self-focused people have become.

As the copywriter, designer, creative director, art director, producer, account manager and more, you have the direct power to influence what messaging is offered to the client in the first place – and by changing what we show our clients, we can change what we're putting out into the world.

For years now media and marketing have been the bad guys, because they're right: we created this mess – and we do have the power to change this.

The gift that keeps on giving

In 2017, let's give a gift that goes on giving... let's help people take back their sanity and lives.

Let's get real about products and services and start employing tricks only when they are wise.

It will only serve to make the world you live in a better, happier and more loving place... and all the money and product in the world can't trump real happiness.

ABOUT CHEMORY GUNKO

Chemory Gunko is a seasoned Creative Director, a certified NLP Practitioner, Ericksonian Hypnotherapy Practitioner, Energy ReSourcing Practitioner & Life Coach, among others. She works as a marketing consultant and provides copywriting, SEO, graphic design and Joomla! website services.

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