Materialism curbed using obesity management strategies

Product Service Systems (PSS) offer a flexible approach to reducing material consumption in society, by adding value to a product while still achieving customer satisfaction. Instead of increasing production to meet rising demand, research suggests that PSS strategies can be used as an alternative means of satisfying the needs of the consumer.

A materialistic society encourages behaviour patterns based on over-consumption, product owning and a throwaway culture. In such a society, an individual’s identity may be defined by the material possessions they own. Research suggests that strategies which are successful in managing obesity, which is also a problem of over-consumption, can also be used to curb consumption.

PSS offers a means to drive fundamental changes in society’s production and consumption patterns. It takes a multidimensional approach similar to strategies that have been proved to be successful in managing obesity. Successful PSS include solutions for producing fewer products, of higher quality; offering alternative uses for products and providing customised product and service combinations, as well as marketing products to give the customer emotional satisfaction.

A systemic design can encourage less material consumption by satisfying the customer with more durable and better quality products, while solutions involving temporary use, rather than owning and disposing of products, can fill short-term consumer needs. Examples of PSS include affordable and easy upgrades to extend the life of technical products, bike rental schemes in big cities as alternatives to owning a bicycle and the hiring of sporting equipment at holiday resorts. Here, temporary needs can be met without the customer owning the product.

Researchers suggest that manufacturers can still achieve the same or greater profit margins with fewer products by combining service and extra value solutions to the product, which are, nevertheless, still attractive to the customer. Traditional marketing strategies can be used to promote customised solutions, which combine products with services, to make them emotionally attractive to consumers.

Organisations wanting to design PSS schemes can use a variety of procedures and tools, which incorporate key environmental, economic and social strategies. Successful PSS solutions can be promoted using traditional branding and marketing methods.

PSS can be applied in preference to the accepted product sales model and move society towards a post-material economy. PSS can be used to fulfill consumer needs, while at the same time decreasing consumption and reducing waste.


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