

Emotional Obsolescence: A Sinister Threat to the Planet

ABTSWOUDSEWEG, AMSTERDAM, NETHERLANDS, May 16, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- When we talk about threats to the planet, we frequently imagine what is most frequently talked about: Emissions from vehicles and factories, plastics in landfills and oceans, deforestation, massive urbanization, mining, and so on. What we often fail to comprehend is that besides human activities, another big threat to the environment is our changing minds. Most people have the constant need to upgrade their lifestyles or to find new meaning in their lives through shopping environmentally friendly products and material consumption. The belief that new products can bring new meaning to us often leads most consumers to replace old products with [eco friendly accessories](#) and new products even when the old ones are still functional: a fallacy that is commonly referred to as "Emotional Obsolescence," We do not just consume for our needs, we also consume for our want to use the newest version of a product or the socially most significant version.

When products leave factories, they come with their lifespans during which they are expected to be optimally functional save for damage or breakdown. But in reality, most products are discarded well before the end of their functional lives, either because the manufacturer released an upgraded version of the product or the user himself/ herself got emotionally bored of the product. While the manufacturer releasing a newer version might frequently be an important update: a more energy-efficient bulb or a more fuel-efficient engine, it is the latter case that is of concern. People outgrowing and replacing products just because they no longer find socially relevant meaning in them is a major source of uncalled-for waste that could have been avoided if people just had a more stable sense of preference and sought less social validation. Imagine replacing your perfectly functional pair of shades just so that you can buy the trending ones or replacing perfectly fine outfits in your closet with the color of the season.

If we were to enlist all the threats to the planet that we know of, 99% of people will probably not include Emotional Obsolescence in the list. The reason is simple, it is not talked about as frequently as it should be in the media. Most companies draw a significant amount of sales from their users' continued boredom with completely functional products. All they need to do is set a new trend and demonstrate that using the newest product can give you new status in your social circles. It is a mind game that we have all fallen for: believing that new products mean new meaning in our lives. Nothing can be further from the truth. When we seek to derive life meaning from material goods, we only get into an endless rat race to socially fit in with products

that will, in no way, define our actual personality. According to the figures, 68% of respondents change their products after less than 3 years since they want something better or receive a new product as part of their contract. And if numbers were shown, people will be astounded by the gigantic proportion of the waste we generate through our boredom with perfectly fine products. Such is the underhanded impact of the sinister problem called “Emotional Obsolescence.”

Author Bio:

Prarthana Majumdar is a founder of the sustainable lifestyle brand, Dzukou (www.dzukou.com) which aims to replace plastics from products with alternate eco-materials. Dzukou also works with rural craftsmen in East India to tinker and experiment with them. The aim is to innovate new eco-materials for products and also help these

craftsmen to reach western markets. Prarthana is also a researcher in the field of Sustainability and Design for Emerging Economies. She is currently pursuing a PhD from Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati and Technische Universiteit Delft (The Netherlands).

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+31 6 41081212

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