

Don't call me shopaholic, okay? A discussion of becoming a responsible shopper

Written by Xin-Yi Peng.

After shopping like crazy, is there a moment in which you feel empty? In fact, nothing is wrong with spending money; however, we should make a spending plan and consider the deeper reasons for our over-spending. Is our shopping satisfying a need, or is it merely for vanity or a temporary increase in confidence?

Dear Peng,

Lately, I have had disagreements with my family because of my bills for last month. My mom called me a shopaholic, blaming me for spending too much while earning a small amount. This really pissed me off. As the saying goes, "The tailor makes the man" I just like to dress myself up in fashionable attire. People will look at me differently when I wear brand-named clothes and accessories! Plus, most of my classmates are also brand-addicted, and I feel like an alien if I don't do the same thing.

I don't make a lot of money. I try to pay the bills using installment plans provided by my credit cards. I do, however, pay for my clothes with my own pocket money. I think I should be fashionable while I am still young. Every time I shop in the fancy stores, I really enjoy the great customer service and the

courteous reception that sales people offer. Although, the things I buy seem to be a little bit expensive, I tend to use the items for a very long time. The quality of brand-named clothing is much higher than than the clothes that I buy from stands. I feel very different when I wear expensive clothes, while walking among the crowds on the campus.

So, am I wrong? Will I spend all my family's money? I don't really want to hear my family accusing me of spending money unwisely.

Confused Van

Dear Confused Van,

I would like to thank-you for sharing your concern and difficulty in this matter. I believe that we are all attracted to things that are new, beautiful and fashionable. It must be difficult for you to justify your actions to your family, especially since you love being fashionable.

Reproducing desirable consumable products at the heart of consumerism in capitalistic society. A variety of fashionable products catch customers' eyes. For higher turnover, newer products must always be available for consumption. While shopping for fashionable items, we can observe our own repetitive consumption behaviors. Paying by credit card, is one of the behaviors of consumption. You are still a student and dependent on your parents; one of the consequences of your consumption behaviors is that your parent(s) questions your excessive spending patterns . In all honesty, your bills turn out to be their responsibility. This does not mean that they cannot understand and appreciate your experience, rather they hope that you can ease their burdens by becoming a responsible shopper.

In fact, nothing is wrong with spending money. Do not repress yourself and what you like to do because of guilt. However, I suggest that you manage your money based on a monthly budget plan. Once you have calculated your monthly income, as well as your family allowance, you can gain a better idea of your spending range. You can also ask your family or friends to remind you of your budget. In this way, you won't spend excessive amounts of money on spur of the moment items.

Before we limit our expenditures or manage our budget, we need to consider the reasons why we like to shop. This attitude towards consumption may be related to personal values toward money, or it could be a clue about our own levels of self-confidence. Perhaps, all we want is to receive praise from others. We may try to bolster our self-confidence based on other people's opinions. This may be caused by an underlying low sense of self. Capitalists applaud any low sense of self that might increase sales ! I encourage the resolutions of your issues through further self-exploration and self-reflection. If you are ready, I am surely willing to explore more about self-values with you.