

# Waste – Course 4

## MOOC

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### *CHOOSING YOUR WASTE*





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## INTRODUCTION: BECOMING A CONSUMER 'ACTOR

Being a consumer'actor means choosing to regain control of one's consumption and protect oneself from the shortcomings of hyper consumption induced by the "society of goods and services" in which we are evolving today. It means choosing to act rather than to be subject to the consumption. Finally, it is an opportunity to take the time to reflect and become aware of our daily actions in order to give them interest, and even meaning. It is, in fact, taking decision-making power and keep informed. It means choosing to use the purchasing power to defend values. Purchasing power will always remain in the hands of the consumer. Actually, the act of buying itself can become symbolic, and a militant choice. Favoring this or that product is a guarantee of a certain commitment to all the stakeholders in the production and supply chains. It is up to the consumer to hold the purchasing power. He must make these choices with full knowledge of the facts, and must sometimes free himself from preconceived or stereotyped ideas.

It is this vision of reality that must be instilled to the clients. In current societies, it will even be tourists who will be in demand for this type of approach. Some logos, guarantee of a certain quality, have been put in place in order to guide the consumer.

Understanding needs of tourists by accompanying them is fundamental in order to avoid waste production as much as possible. To do so, it is important to understand the relationship between consumption habits and the various existing issues. When a product is for sale, the following aspects may be wondered:

- What is approved through this act of purchase?
- How does the company participate in the good evolution of the society?
- Who worked to make this product and under what conditions?
- Does this brand promote the well-being of the planet?

Some consumers have chosen to boycott large supermarkets, to favor producers with direct sales, markets or small local shops. They are questioning their consumption patterns and choosing to return to healthy, local and more environmentally friendly products. This means choosing where to spend their money and supporting projects and economic sectors that are in line with their vision of the world. Citizens exercise their free-will by freeing themselves from the dictates of marketing and fashion effects.

Responding to this need of consumers and of tourists, it's making choices to limit its impact by identifying its real needs and those of customers. Products that are consumed unnecessarily and excessively, on a global scale, require impressive amounts of energy and generate just as much waste. So before buying, let's have a look at a well-known concept that explains why certain objects tend to be thrown away faster than expected: the programmed obsolescence.

## 1. Lesson 1- Programmed obsolescence

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### 1.1- THE CHALLENGE OF PROGRAMMED OBSOLESCENCE

Programmed obsolescence, also known as "artificial wear", is a technique implemented by major industrialists that aims to reduce the performance and accelerate the degradation of certain components of a product in order



to limit its lifespan. This contributes to an increase in the replacement rate of everyday objects and equipment, and therefore encourages more consumption. This concept, which appeared in 1932, was defended by the American Bernard London as a solution to the economic crisis. This practice finally became widespread in the 1950s, notably through the work of industrial designer Brooks Stevens, who introduced the notion of fashion for everyday objects. Furthermore, Joseph Schumpeter's notions of the "innovation cycle" and "creative destruction" are also closely linked to the economic model of programmed obsolescence.

### The different types of programmed obsolescence

- **Technical or functional obsolescence:** this is when a good stops working when one of its components reaches the end of its life and cannot be repaired (components that cannot be dismantled, incompatibility with technical developments or new parts). Indirect technical obsolescence occurs when the spare part no longer exists or is no longer produced.
- **Aesthetic or psychological obsolescence:** is when a product has gone out of fashion. It is no longer marketed and is replaced by other, more efficient products. It becomes obsolete through the manufacturer's various types of advertising campaigns, or promotions. The effect of owning an out-of-fashion good affects the user : marketing techniques push the consumer to buy, by instrumentalizing his emotions (development of new functionalities through the frequent introduction of new models on the market, fashion effect through design changes that make people want to change faster than expected).
- **Software obsolescence:** this is when a good, a software or an application becomes incompatible with newly developed functionalities. Because of its format and age, it is no longer possible to update it. Software slows down the performance of your devices by installing heavy updates.

### A wide variety of examples

Most electronic and electrical equipment are concerned. Among the best known are the following:

- The limitation of the life of incandescent light bulbs to 1,000 hours in the 1920s by the Phoebus cartel, when they could actually last for decades;
- More aesthetic cars and a multitude of new models created by the General Motors company that succeeded in dethroning Ford;
- The iPhone 5, which has been decried for its large environmental footprint and its incompatibility with previous models and accessories;
- Printers incorporating a microchip that is ready to fail after a set number of copies. A microchip can also signal the end of an ink cartridge when it is not actually empty;
- Washing machines that cannot withstand more than 2,500 washing cycles;
- Televisions that break down after 20,000 hours of operation.

The problem of programmed obsolescence does not only affect high-tech products. For example, nylons are also affected, as are low-priced socks, which are designed not to withstand more than a certain number of washes.

## Legislation

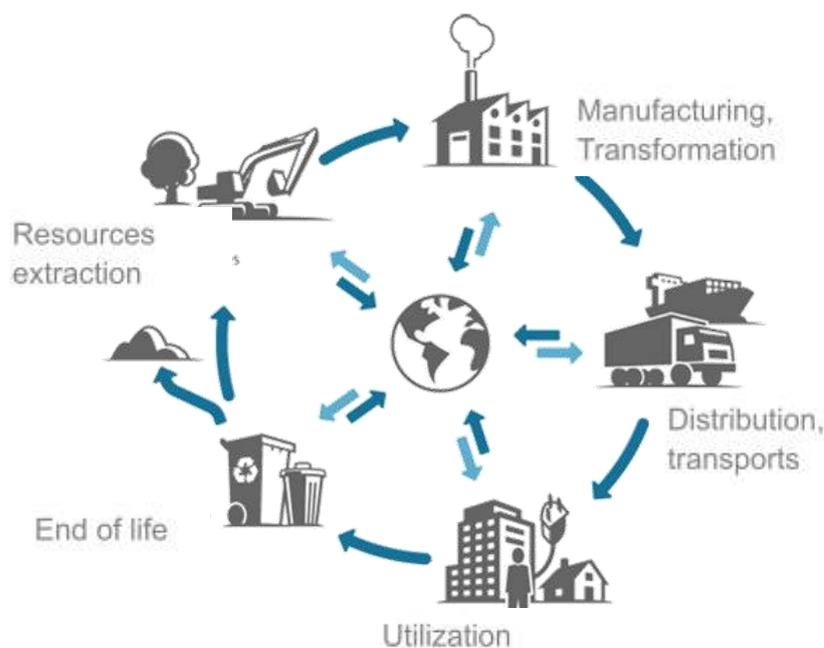
Legislative initiatives are being adopted, in particular to extend the guarantee period for consumer goods. In spite of these laws, manufacturers are using all kinds of unimaginable techniques to achieve their goals. Some devices, for example, contain electronic chips that make them obsolete after a certain period of time. So, buying new is not always synonymous with longevity!

### 1.2- PRETEXTS ENCOURAGING CONSUMPTION

Under the pretext of acquiring new appliances that are more environmentally friendly and consume less energy, manufacturers and public policies encourage the disposal of old appliances, even if they do not show signs of wear and tear. While this may save money in the long run, it will not necessarily benefit the environment. Encouraging people to consume new appliances remains a way of supporting the economy and the labour market as we know it today. Driving an old car will emit more greenhouse gases than driving a new vehicle over the same distance. However, if the old vehicle is still in operation, it is probably because users use it very little for their daily needs. In terms of carbon balance, the production of the new vehicle's equipment and materials will result in the emission of more gases than could have been avoided during the use phase. This means that its carbon capital will be consumed in the short term. Think about it!

#### ***The life cycle of our consumer products***

All the products and services we consume on a daily basis have an impact on the environment. Raw materials are extracted and processed during the manufacturing process. Energy is consumed in manufacturing, transporting and storing them from the point of sale to the place of use. The Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) approach makes it possible to quantify all the impacts linked to these stages of the product's life, "from cradle to grave".



Source : [www.owega.net](http://www.owega.net)

## 2. Lesson 2- Fighting against programmed obsolescence

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Stratagems more complex than others push people to consume. However, do not panic! You do not need to be an expert in the field to solve them. To avoid falling into the trap, it is important to ask yourself the right questions before buying. The way you are going to value these goods is also important.

### 2.1 - VOTING WITH YOUR SHOPPING TROLLEY, THE "BISOU"

#### METHOD

Reducing waste consumption means first asking oneself about the impact of daily decisions. This goes as far as questioning their acts of consumption, which may appear to be the most insignificant.



**Adopt the BISOU\* method**, "Kiss", in everyday life to apply these concepts. This method, developed in France by \*Marie Duboin Lefèvre and Herveline Verdeken, co-authors of the books *"L'abus de consommation responsable rend heureux"* - La méthode BISOU" and *"J'arrête de surconsommer"*, aims to guide choices of everyday life by putting into practice five simple principles:

**B, as in "Need" (Besoin):** To which need(s) is the purchase related?

- This feeling of need can arise from a feeling of lack linked to a vital physiological constraint such as the need to eat or sleep.
- It can also be linked to a "conscious" or "unconscious" desire to fill a feeling of deprivation related to the desire for a good that is thought to be lacking. Here, we are touching the psyche of a person.

*In practice:* To question oneself about the interest of a purchase. Is the desire to acquire this new object dictated by a well-developed marketing strategy, a need to conform to a social norm or a fashion?

**I, as in "Immediate" (Immédiat):** Asking questions about the immediate need to make a purchase avoids getting carried away by emotions. However, most marketing and advertising methods are based on the emotions. Immediacy is the best ally of compulsive buying, itself symptomatic of much more problematic behavioral problems!

*In practice:* Give yourself more time to think before making a purchase if you are uncertain about the value of your investment. Give time to study a budget accordingly.

**S, as in "Similar" (Semblable):** Have I already acquired objects with the same purpose? Minimalists will invest in multi-purpose and multi-tasking objects to avoid duplicate purchases.

*In practice:* Make sure that no similar objects or objects offering the same utility are in your possession.

**O, as in "Origin" (Origine):** Where does the property come from? Under what conditions was it produced? What is the impact of this purchase on the environment?

*In practice:* Find out from your supplier. Also consult the informative labelling of the product. For more clarity, rely on existing environmental logos.



**U, as in "Useful" (Utile):** This is like asking about the long-term use of the object. Will this object provide essential comfort in everyday life? Perhaps it is better to choose another way to obtain it: by renting it, for example? In particular, it is advisable to ask yourself how you could do without it before.

**Eco gestures:** You can lead tourists in all these questions, by displaying the KISS method in the entrance hall, for example. To help tourists reduce their consumption, you can replace the disposable with the washable, involve tourists in the design of the menus, etc.

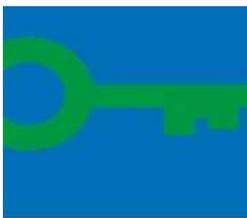
## 2.2 - BUYING DURABLE AND ENVIRONMENTALLY SOUND GOODS

First of all, to overcome the problem of programmed obsolescence, it is important to be alert! The first reflexes to acquire to fight against this phenomenon will be at the time of purchase. It is preferable to buy objects made of recycled raw materials or to use robust and durable materials that will last longer. It is also possible to buy second-hand objects that are still quite usable. In a sense, quality is preferable to price. However, be careful, because today price does not necessarily guarantee quality. Some more expensive products are not necessarily more durable. To help people understand this, certain initiatives have been put in place, such as environmental logos that certify the quality of a product or service, and are beginning to take into account the product's lifespan.

## 2.3 - IDENTIFY ENVIRONMENTAL LOGOS

Today there are more and more logos and various labels that guarantee an environmental approach to a product or service, highlighting the approach and giving added value to the offer. Different types of labels exist for different fields with different criteria. A large number of organizations offer specifications focusing on waste management.

Among the most emblematic logos:



**Green Key**

**"The Green Key":** The first international environmental label, it is for tourist accommodation and catering establishments. The conditions for obtaining the Green Key label require: control of water and energy consumption, environmental management of waste, leisure activities that do not harm nature and enhancement of the area's cultural heritage.

**"Green Globe":** Green Globe is an international label for sustainable travel and tourism. It responds to the commitments made by the tourism industry at the Earth Summit in Johannesburg in 1992.





"**Gîtes Panda**": concerns seasonal accommodation establishments of the "lodge" type built within a protected territory, such as Regional or National Natural Parks, to which the WWF (World Wide Fund for Nature Protection) grants its label under certain conditions:

- be located in a quality natural environment,
- offer nature observation equipment and specific information documents,
- be managed by owners who are concerned about the preservation of the environment.

### Organic Farming European logo:

The European organic farming certification "Euro-leaf" guarantees a quality attached to a production method more respectful of the environment and animal welfare.



## Eco-labels

Within the category of logos, there are also ecolabels that must meet specific criteria. Here are some examples:



**European Ecolabel:** Created in 1992 by the European Commission, at the initiative of Northern European countries and France. It concerns 35 product categories (37,000 goods and services available in Europe). Its criteria guarantee the fitness for use of products and a reduction in their environmental impact throughout their life cycle.

**Blue Angel:** Created in 1978, this German ecolabel is the oldest ecolabel in Europe. It covers 125 product categories (12,000 goods and services).



**Energy Star:** Created in 1992 in the United States, managed by the European Union since 2001. It covers 14 product categories (in the field of office equipment) in Europe.



## 3. Lesson 3 - Favouring alternatives to buying

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### *THE ECONOMY OF FUNCTIONALITY*

The economy of functionality invites you to **rent** rather than sell, while offering an additional service compared to buying: use rather than possession is favored. This concept invites to sell services related to products rather than the products themselves. The basis of the economy of functionality pushes the manufacturer, who no longer sells the product but the use of the product, to offer a good whose lifespan and functionality will be optimised over time. This therefore obliges manufacturers to eco-design their products so that they are sustainable and generate less impact on the environment throughout their life cycle.

Finally, this concept is simply a revival of common practices such as lending and exchanging services.

This provision of the good or exchange of services may be remunerated or not. Here are some examples of inspiring applications observable in different sectors of activity:

- Self-service modes of transport: such as car-sharing, self-service bicycles, electric bicycle hire, car-pooling.
- Shared housing: pooling investment costs for the purchase of common goods by sharing common and functional spaces such as the laundry, the audio room, etc.
- Fabs labs, shared workshops, third places: these are places open to the public in which shared work areas, common catering areas and all kinds of tools, including computer-controlled machine tools, for designing and making objects available to the public.

Other groups of associations or consumers also wish to develop self-service exchange and the provision of everyday objects. To this end, they propose the provision of local infrastructures or digital platforms where anyone can offer or request a service from other registered members. The idea is to bring borrowing and mutual aid between neighbors back into fashion. For example, you could put a sticker on your mailbox to suggest to your neighbors to use a drill or to share a list of items you would like to borrow.

There are many approaches, each more inspiring than the last. So why not take inspiration from them, and suggest, for example, to:

- Share certain goods or services with other neighboring establishments?
- Make available to tourists by renting or lending, a whole range of objects that they can use during their stay?

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