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Prof. Cohen
Ten Ways to Know Nature
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At the Mall Consumerism and Nature Script

[Play “Take Me Home” – Cash Cash Intro]

[Constant sound of Mall Ambiance in the Background]

Jon: Hello and welcome back to our podcast “Where’s next?” Last week we left off exploring the farmer’s market. At the farmer’s market, we dove into all of the different venues of how consumers have an effect on nature. Today, as you can hear (Play Mall Ambiance Sound), our new place of exploration is the mall. Right now we will explore how consumer’s here understand nature through their purchases that are eco-friendly. Come on, let’s start walking.

[Play sound of Mall Ambiance] [Bring Sound Up]

Cathy: So here at the mall is where consumers flourish. Every turn, bend, and niche offers some type of product for the consumer.

Jon: Actually, there are countless ways to explore and experience nature in a consumerist lens, but we will mainly focus on the topics of food, clothing, and advertisements. “As a consumer we have the ability to change our world” (Cahill, 2001, p. 628) believe it or not. We are all consumers and we purchase things every day. Our purchases are what have an effect on the environment. By being a conscious consumer and purchasing products that have a better connotation towards nature, helps us to be one step closer towards a “greener” planet.

[Play sound of Mall Ambiance]

Jon: Let’s start off talking about consumer’s attitudes toward nature.

Cathy: I know that “Individual and societal concerns in relation to environmental issues have become progressively more visible and have evolved through several distinct stages: from the 1960s ecology movement, focusing on pollution and energy preservation, to environmental protection in 1990s, up to present times, where environmental issues are associated with environmental justice and environmental quality” (Paco, Alves, Shiel, & Filho, 2013, p. 1532). So, Jon what’s the attitude of the everyday consumer about purchasing products?

Jon: Well, Cotton Incorporated, a corporation that advocates the use of cotton, says that, “Consumers convey attitudes and exhibit behaviors that indicate a strong connection between their economic concerns and their decisions to purchase eco-friendly apparel” (“Consumer Perspectives on “Green” Apparel”, 2013, p. 2).

Cathy: Yeah, they say that “Environmental activism among consumers has steadily progressed due to more individuals adopting eco-friendly habits. More than two out of three consumers (70%) agree that they are happy to be environmentally-friendly as long as it saves them money” (Walmsley, 2012, p. 122). The consumer obviously sees the connection of their purchases with nature just as long as it saves them money.

Jon: “The society of consumers is perhaps the only society in human history to promise happiness through earthly purchases” (p. 122) meaning that humans are the only ones who can gain happiness through purchases that deal with helping the environment.

[Play “Maggie’s Farm” – Bob Dylan]

Cathy: Let’s make our way over there to the food court.

[Play Food Court Sound]

Cathy: Did you know that eating meat can have an impact on climate change?

Jon: How?

Cathy: “A recent study estimates that global livestock production is responsible for around 12% of global greenhouse gas emissions (Boer, Schösler, & Boersema, 2013, p. 11).

Jon: Wow, that’s a lot!

Cathy: This is due to a number of factors, mainly emissions from animals and manure, the cultivation and fertilization of feed crops and pasture, deforestation and grassland conversion, and emissions caused by the production of fertilizers, transporting and processing” (p. 3).

Jon: That’s crazy. I would have never known that eating less meat could actually help our environment by reducing global greenhouse emissions.

Cathy: Speaking about eating less meat, what day is it?

Jon: It’s Monday why do you ask?

Cathy: Well, “in 2003 Sid Lerner proposed a day called Meatless Monday” (Aubrey, 2010).

Jon: Oh, I heard of that! Is it the proposition that every Monday would be a day that people wouldn’t purchase or consume meat?

Cathy: Yep. This proposition had following studies as to how this proposal could actually have an effect on climate change. The studies found that “People who agree with this proposition tend to care more about nature and being more conscious these people will value more about helping the environment, which will stimulate other avenues to help with nature’s climate change” (Boer, Schösler, & Boersema, 2012, p. 11).

Jon: I wish it were the time referred to as the “Golden Age” when consumers knew where their

food came from, farmers earned a decent living, the environment was not degraded, and human health was not threatened” (Dowler, Kneafsey, Cox, & Holloway, 2009, p. 205) because it had a lot less problems. Speaking of food is making me hungry. Let’s go over to Macy’s where we could talk about clothes.

[Play Barcode Scan Remix – by DJ O N]

Jon: Can’t believe Macy’s is putting up Christmas decorations...It’s not even Thanksgiving! Anyway, believe it or not “Consumers believe that domestically manufactured clothing is better for the environment than apparel made overseas.”

Cathy: Well, being from China, people always like the clothing that is not MADE IN CHINA, preferably from the U.S.

Jon: In America, “half of the consumers think that clothing imported from other countries is less eco-friendly than clothing made in the United States. Consumers say the primary reasons that products manufactured in the U.S. are more environmentally-friendly is due to domestic regulation and environmental protection laws. For American consumers, buying domestically manufactured clothing satisfies their desire to act in eco-friendly ways and to support the national economy” (“Consumer Perspectives on "Green" Apparel”, 2013, p. 2). It is our “materialistic conception of a good life that involves environmental goodness” (McKibben, 2007, p. 30).

Cathy: Wow, there is going to be a big change in the clothing industry.

Jon: Well then, since, there is more of a demand for the consumers, the producers are trying to make the processes greener by “starting from the product design stage, raw material selection, to the processing and production decisions, transportation, retailing and waste management” (Eryuruk, 2012, p. 26). They want “to make the textile and clothing production more environmentally friendly by taking precautions” (p. 26). So, Cathy the clothing industry is already on board with becoming greener.

Cathy: I definitely will be more conscious of when I purchase clothing because you know me, credit card in hand I’m deadly.

Jon: Alright let’s head out.

[Play “Fake Plastic Tree” – by Radiohead]

Cathy: Oh, hey look at this.

Jon: What is it?

Cathy: This advertisement is a bit unappealing. Don’t you think?

Jon: It’s just a car.

Cathy: No, look how the car is being displayed. There is beautiful nature in the background

meanwhile this car is what damages it. This is what I call greenwashing.

Jon: What is greenwashing?

Cathy: Greenwashing “refers to false or misleading environmental claims in advertising” (Feinstein, 2013, p. 229). Advertisements these days are so misleading.

Jon: Yeah. “We are inundated by advertisements from television, radio, billboards, newspapers, mail, telephone, the internet and so on. The goal is to not only make people want these goods but to break down their rational resistance to desire and encourage instant gratification” (Fairbanks, 2010, p. 90, 91).

Cathy: Yeah, advertising companies should note that what they advertise has a great influence on the general public. With this power, they should actually promote greener activity to make a greener world.

Jon: Well that concludes our show for today. Stay tuned next week to find out where we are off to next. Hey, Cathy let’s make our way out.

Cathy: So Jon before we finish, what can the audience take out of today’s podcast?

Jon: The audience should note that they, as the consumers, play a large role in the effects of nature and can help with nature preservation.

Cathy: As consumers, we can make a difference in nature!

Jon: So, will you?”

[Play “Take Me Home” – by Cash Cash]