

Minimalism Trends in Consumption Behavior: Social Inequality and Industrial Dynamics

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ABSTRACT

The trend of minimalism in consumption behaviors has attracted a lot of attention, both in terms of social, economic, and environmental aspects. The main focus of this research is to analyze the influence of the minimalism trend on social inequality in consumption trends and its impact on product diversity and industry dynamics. Minimalism is believed to reduce the negative impact of overconsumption and increase environmental awareness, but its implementation is often uneven. Individuals with limited economic access tend to find it difficult to adopt this lifestyle, while individuals with more resources can enjoy the benefits. This exacerbates social inequality, as wealthier groups can access more environmentally friendly and durable products. The adoption of minimalism also reduces product diversity in the market, as manufacturers tend to favor simpler and more multifunctional products. This can impact innovation, which focuses more on sustainability and efficiency, but less on variety. Given these impacts, it is important for policy makers and industry players to consider the social impact of this trend and encourage more inclusive access to sustainable products, so that minimalism is not just a trend that is accessible to certain groups. This research provides insights into how minimalism affects social inequality and consumption market dynamics.

INTRODUCTION

The consumption trends of the global society have changed significantly in recent years. One of the changes that has taken place is an increased awareness of the importance of living more simply, reducing purchases of unnecessary items, and choosing quality over quantity. Many people are starting choose to only buy things they really need and are opting for items that are more durable and environmentally friendly. This change is also seen in various sectors, such as fashion, home furnishings, and technology, where consumers are increasingly selective in determining which products to buy. This transformation can be seen as part of a response to the overconsumption that has long characterized modern lifestyles.

Groups that prefer to follow the principles of minimalism tend to prioritize simplicity. They seek to simplify all aspects of their lives, from the number of items they own to the way they manage time and

space. This is limited to the reduction of physical possessions, and includes a shift in thinking towards living a more focused, organized, and happiness- and well-being-oriented life. This trend is also closely related to the shifting values in society that prioritize life balance and internal achievement, not just material possessions. This trend has a direct impact on consumption behaviors, which increasingly lead to more thoughtful and environmentally conscious decisions.

The trend of minimalism has gained widespread attention as a more conscious form of lifestyle, but this phenomenon also raises some issues that need attention. An example of this is the potential social inequality that comes with the adoption of this lifestyle. Minimalism is often associated with a certain economic ability and social status, which can create a gap between those who can afford the lifestyle and those who cannot. The minimalist lifestyle can create the impression that consumers who are unable to adopt this consumption behavior

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are considered less prudent or environmentally conscious (Voser, 2020). This has the potential to exacerbate social stereotypes and add pressure to individuals in difficult economic situations.

Another issue that arises is how the minimalism trend can lead to consumption that is more focused on items that are considered 'essential' or high value, but sometimes ignores the diversity of products needed by society (Ahmad et al., 2014). Consumers who adopt minimalism tend to focus on products that are considered more functional and durable, but this often means that they will reduce the diversity of choices in their lives (Mathras & Hayes, 2019). Consumer behaviors that focus only on products that are considered 'essential' make the industry focus on products that fulfill these basic needs (Kimmel & Kimmel, 2018). This can reduce creativity and innovation in the industry, where unique and creative products that usually arise from more diverse market demands can be overlooked. For example, in the fashion industry, the desire to have more "essential" items can make more niche and creative sectors less developed (Williams & Dubois, 2019).

The minimalism trend can also create a paradoxical cycle of consumption. Instead of significantly reducing consumption of goods, some individuals turn to more expensive and exclusive products with claims of high quality and environmental friendliness. This can lead to increased consumption in more expensive categories of goods, albeit for different reasons, and potentially replace one form of overconsumption with another that is more selective but still increases carbon footprint. Research conducted by Jackson (2017), found that while the minimalism trend reduces the purchase of lower quality goods, it can also lead to a surge in demand for premium goods that still contribute to wider environmental problems.

The trend of minimalism in consumption behaviors is noteworthy for its far-reaching impact on changing consumer behavior and the economy. As more individuals adopt this lifestyle, overall consumption behaviors are shifting, affecting the consumer goods industry, and other sectors such as fashion, technology, and even social culture. It is likely that if this trend continues to grow without a deeper understanding of its long-term implications, it could lead to greater social inequality and reduce the diversity of products available in the market. It could also affect production and consumption policies globally, both in terms of sustainability and resource efficiency. Companies must adapt their production and marketing strategies to more efficient and focused consumption trends.

Changes in consumption behaviors influenced by minimalism have the potential to shape a new paradigm in the way we view the ownership and consumption of goods. While a reduction in purchases can be seen as a positive step towards reducing our environmental footprint, there is a potential paradox where premium products that are perceived to be more environmentally friendly or of high quality replace cheaper and more widely purchased goods (Drozdenko et al., 2011). This opens the door for the creation of a consumption cycle that remains high albeit for different reasons (Darmawan et al., 2019). This phenomenon opens a gap for the formation of consumption behaviors that focus on quality over quantity with a purchase orientation of premium goods. If this phenomenon is not carefully observed, its impact on the environment and the economy may be overlooked, creating unintended consequences in the long-term.

This study aims to analyze the influence of the minimalism trend on social inequality in consumption behaviors, especially related to the access and economic ability of individuals to adopt this lifestyle. Another objective of this research is to explore the impact of the minimalism trend on the diversity of products available in the market, as well as how this affects innovation and dynamics in the industry.

RESEARCH METHOD

The research method used in this study is a literature study approach, researchers will review various relevant literature sources to understand the trend of minimalism and its impact on consumption behaviors. Literature study make researchers to collect and analyze information from various books, journal articles, and existing research reports. Researchers will explore various perspectives on how minimalism affects consumer behavior. The sources used in this research will involve previous studies on sustainable consumption, changes in consumer behavior, and the social and economic impacts of the minimalism trend (Dittmar, 2014; Elgin & Mitchell, 2019).

This approach also allows researchers to understand different perspectives on how the minimalism trend interacts with other factors, such as social inequality and product diversity in the market. The approach can help researchers identify patterns that have emerged in previous research and compare relevant findings. This provides a stronger basis for drawing broader conclusions and provides a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. Guided by reliable sources, it is hoped that the results of this study will make a significant contribution to understanding the changes taking place in global consumption behaviors and their impact on society (Kasser, 2002; Schor, 2010).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Impact of Minimalism Trend on Social Inequality in Consumption

The trend of minimalism, which emphasizes living simply by reducing the consumption of unnecessary items, has gained popularity in recent years. The influence of this trend on social inequality in consumption behaviors, especially in terms of individuals' economic access and ability to adopt this lifestyle, needs to be carefully considered. While minimalism can be seen as a positive step towards reducing overconsumption, not all individuals have the same economic ability to apply these principles to their lives. According to most people, adopting a minimalist lifestyle may not be entirely feasible due to financial limitations or lack of access to items that are considered essential in this lifestyle.

The government and related institutions must ask for individuals with low incomes or families living in poverty, reducing consumption of unnecessary items may be more difficult. They may already be living with very limited items, and implementing minimalism may seem irrelevant or even unrealistic to them. Wealthier individuals may be able to easily adopt a minimalist lifestyle by purchasing items that are more durable, high-quality, and environmentally friendly (Blonski & Witek, 2020). As such, the minimalism trend may exacerbate social inequality, where groups with more economic resources are able to access the benefits of the lifestyle, while disadvantaged groups are unable to do so (Bauer & Wilkie, 2015).

More selective and quality-focused consumption behaviors not only benefit wealthy individuals who can afford premium goods, but also expose inequalities in access to information and greener products. Many of those in better economic conditions have more options, both in choosing high-quality products and getting information related to minimalism trends. In contrast, people with economic limitations may struggle to access products that are considered more environmentally friendly or durable. In a study conducted by Evans (2011), it was found that this inequality in access to goods and information further exacerbates the gap between rich and poor groups in adopting a more sustainable lifestyle.

Most items that are considered part of a minimalist lifestyle, such as high quality or environmentally friendly products often come at a higher price. This creates further inequality, as only certain groups can afford these products. As a result, this trend tends to be accessible only to upper-middle-class consumers, who have enough income to invest in premium-priced items, while those at the lower end of the scale are more focused on their basic needs and

have little opportunity to choose high-quality products. Research by Ghemawat (2018) reveals that this limited access to sustainable quality goods further widens the social inequality gap, as not everyone can follow the minimalism trend in the same way.

The impact of this social inequality is also seen in the different lifestyles shaped by the culture of consumption. While for some, minimalism may be a status symbol or a way to demonstrate environmental awareness and an organized lifestyle, for many others, it is more of a life demand imposed by limited economic conditions (Chayka, 2020). For those living on a limited income, the choice to live a minimalist life is not the result of a conscious decision, but rather the result of limitations in terms of goods and consumption. For wealthier people, the minimalism trend is often a choice to improve their quality of life, rather than a way to overcome material limitations (Obendorf, 2009; Schwartz, 2016).

Other trends such as the adoption of a minimalist lifestyle can lead to the perception that those who do not follow it are part of a group that is not environmentally responsible or wise enough to manage their consumption. This can lead to the potential marginalization of groups that cannot access the minimalist lifestyle, especially those with economic limitations (Pollak, 2016; Burchill, 2008). Awareness of environmental impacts or the need to reduce consumption of unnecessary goods may be irrelevant or even unaffordable for individuals struggling to meet their basic needs, thus widening the gap of social inequality (Dittmar, 2014).

While the trend of minimalism may raise environmental awareness and encourage reduced consumption, differences in the ability to adopt this lifestyle risk creating social discrimination. This is because those who cannot afford to follow a minimalist lifestyle may be perceived as not caring about sustainability or not doing enough to reduce their consumption. Those who are able to adopt this trend may feel superior or wiser in choosing a simpler lifestyle, creating a gap in values and views between individuals from different economic backgrounds.

While the trend of minimalism has great potential to reduce the negative environmental impact of overconsumption, the social inequality created by the inability of different groups of people to access this lifestyle shows the importance of considering the social dimension in analyzing consumption trends. The minimalism trend, although seen as a progressive step in consumption life, can exacerbate social inequality if it is not seen in relation to the different economic capabilities of individuals.

Impact of Minimalism Trend on Product Diversity and Industry Innovation

The adoption of the minimalism trend in consumption behaviors can affect the diversity of products available in the market in a significant way. The minimalism trend makes consumers tend to prefer items that are more functional, durable and multifunctional, which often leads to a reduction in the variety of products offered by manufacturers (Olivia, 2020). Companies that focus on efficiency and sustainability may prefer to produce items with simpler and more standardized designs, leading to less variety in product offerings in the market. This can be seen in the fashion sector, which has seen a decrease in the number of collections and designs focusing more on quality rather than quantity (Tanner, 2019). Products with simpler or more practical designs tend to replace more diverse options, reducing the space for self-expression through consumption.

The impact of this reduction in product diversity can be problematic in a market previously known for innovation and variety. Many companies in the fashion and technology industries, for example, face the dilemma between following the minimalism trend that leads to simpler product designs or maintaining greater variety to cater to consumers' diverse tastes. The minimalism trend can force companies to choose between efficiency and variety, and this decision affects the dynamics of market competition. While some consumers welcome the simplicity and sustainability offered by minimalist products, it can reduce choice for consumers who prefer items with more specific features or designs (Schor, 2020). Products with more design options and variations were previously often developed to meet more diverse consumer preferences (Stäblein et al., 2011).

Innovation in industries affected by the minimalism trend often changes direction. Instead of developing new products with more complex features or designs, companies may focus more on creating simpler, more efficient and more environmentally friendly products (Wahab et al., 2017). Innovations associated with minimalism more often focus on improving long-term durability and quality, rather than introducing a variety of product variants to meet diverse consumer needs (Harper & Simonsen, 2018). The minimalism trend in the electronics industry allows companies to focus on sleeker designs and more durable products, but reduces innovation in terms of features or variety offered (Niemann, 2018). This creates pressure for companies to balance between the desire to meet consumer demand for simplicity and the need to continue to innovate to deliver more diverse products.

While the minimalism trend seems to lead decrease in product diversity, there are also positive impacts in terms of sustainability-focused innovation. Companies that adopt the principles of minimalism tend to invest more in environmentally-friendly product design, more efficient use of resources, and less waste (Chim & Blebea, 2013). This innovation in terms of reducing environmental impact is becoming more prominent, especially in sectors automotive, fashion and electronics, which are now more focused on creating products that are more durable and easier to recycle. This trend also encourages companies to innovate in a more environmentally responsible, although the number and type of products available may be more limited (Joy et al., 2012).

The impact on related industry dynamics can be seen in terms of competition and marketing strategies. Companies that follow the minimalism trend may face challenges in maintaining a wider market share, as they offer fewer products (Padma et al., 2018). To overcome this, these companies may improve service quality and focus on customer experience, as seen in companies in the furniture or home appliance sector. This leads to limited innovation in the products themselves and in the way they sell and distribute products. Companies may turn to more sustainable business models, such as product leasing or offering long-term product repairs (Cohen & Kietzmann, 2014).

The impact of the minimalism trend that leads to less product diversity may cause concern for consumers who want variety in their product choices. According to some consumers, reduced product diversity may mean less opportunity to express their personal identity through the consumption of certain goods. Consumers with specific preferences or needs may feel that the product selection no longer reflects their lifestyle or unique needs. This can reduce consumer satisfaction and affect brand loyalty in the long run (Darmawan, 2019). The anticipation that producers can do to deal with these cases is to focus on more detailed market segmentation, trying to tailor products to specific consumer groups (Keller, 2016).

The positive impact of reducing product diversity can create new opportunities for more individualistic product design. The trend of minimalism may lead to simpler and more uniform products, but some companies are trying to bring innovation in the form of more flexible or modular designs (Palafox, 2020). This aims to customize products according to consumer needs or preferences, while still maintaining the simplicity of design in accordance with minimalist principles. This innovation can be a solution for consumers who want more choices within the constraints of minimalism (Beckman & Barry, 2012).

The adoption of the minimalism trend affects product diversity in the market in complex ways. The minimalism trend may reduce the variety of products on offer, especially in the category of simpler, multifunctional goods, but it may encourage innovations that focus more on quality, sustainability and efficiency. The dynamics of the industry are changing along with the shift in consumer demand towards more durable and eco-friendly goods. Product diversity with this trend may be limited in some sectors, but it is driving the development of new business models and innovative approaches to meet the needs of increasingly environmentally conscious consumers.

CONCLUSION

The minimalism trend has significantly affected consumption behaviors, both in terms of social inequality and market dynamics. While it is hoped that the minimalism trend will reduce overconsumption and its impact on the environment, the reality is that its adoption is often uneven, especially in relation to individuals' economic means. Those from higher economic brackets may find it easier to adopt a minimalist lifestyle, while those with financial limitations may find it unaffordable or irrelevant. This exacerbates social inequality, where the wealthy can enjoy the benefits of the lifestyle, while the poor remain limited in their consumption options.

The impact of minimalism on product diversity is also worth looking into. This trend tends to reduce the variety of products on the market, as manufacturers focus more on simple, durable and multifunctional items. This may lead to a reduction in innovation in some sectors, especially when companies prioritize efficiency over creative exploration in product design. The minimalism trend also opens up opportunities for innovations that focus more on sustainability, quality, and durability, which could lead to more environmentally-friendly and efficient products. These positive impacts sometimes do not always align with consumers' desire to have more choices in the products they consume.

The adoption of the minimalism trend is also affecting industry dynamics, with companies focusing more on creating products that conform to the principles of sustainability and efficiency, even though it may risk reducing diversity within the market. Companies need to innovate in order to maintain a balance by taking into account consumers' need for variety, but still maintaining the values of simplicity and sustainability. Such innovations may indicate that while the adoption of minimalism may wane, the trend still offers the potential for a more positive shift in how companies approach environmental and social issues.

Given these findings, it is important for researchers, policymakers and industry players to continue evaluating the impact of the minimalism trend on various aspects of society, especially social inequality. Suggestions include that it is important to improve access to information and sustainable products, so that the minimalist lifestyle becomes the preserve of certain more economically advantaged groups. The industry also needs to be more creative in creating products that follow the principle of simplicity, and maintain diversity and innovation so as not to neglect the various needs of consumers. The last suggestion is that there needs to be greater attention to the social impact of this trend, including efforts to ensure that less affluent consumers are not marginalized in the shift to more conscious and environmentally friendly consumption behaviors.

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