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# Consumerism in World History: The Global Transformation of Desire (Themes in World History)

*Peter N. Stearns*

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## Consumerism in World History

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The global transformation of desire  
*Second edition*

Peter N. Stearns

 **Routledge**  
Taylor & Francis Group  
NEW YORK AND LONDON

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**Peter N. Stearns : Consumerism in World History: The Global Transformation of Desire (Themes in World History)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Consumerism in World History: The Global Transformation of Desire (Themes in World History):

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five StarsBy Matthew GoodierVery nice book thanks9 of 9 people found the following review helpful. Is consumerism good or bad?By A CustomerBefore reading this book I was not consciously aware that consumerism is a movement with a history of many centuries. I also did not realise that mass consumerism in Western Europe started in the 17th century. This book will give you real insight in what consumerism is all about unless you are a specialist in consumerism. The book combines a good historical perspective as well as the

good analysis of the forces that drive consumerism. The book also shows that in all countries there has been and still is tension between those promoting consumerism as good and unavoidable and those that oppose it. A few points of detail. The book contains almost no statistics other than anecdotal information like the sugar consumption in Paris in 1790 and similar interesting figures. The historical perspective is rather incomplete when it comes to Greece, India and classic Rome. Buddhism is not described quite correctly. Buddha was not opposed to wealth but only insisted that it should be earned honestly and used properly. It is correct that prominent Buddhists such as the Dalai Lama and a prominent monk scholar in Thailand Payutto oppose mindless consumerism and are very concerned about the impact on the environment. However consumerism is flourishing in Thailand even though it is a Buddhist country. It is a typical example of a society moving in one direction and spiritual leaders pulling in another direction. One great merit of the book is that it is only 142 pages long and very readable. 4 of 4 people found the following review helpful.

Consumerism examined By Customer Historian Peter Stearns has looked at a topic that is often derided by Historians as irrelevant or unimportant. Not so...the rise of consumerism throughout the modern world has shown an enormous shift in social attitudes and values. Any student of social history would be advised to read this book in order to gain a valuable insight into the mind of the modern man (or woman). Stearns has shown how modern society judges its own self worth and that of its neighbours by the possessions it has and how buying the 'right label' bestows you with status. Of course, throughout the poorer sections of society and in poorer countries, it is a struggle to buy enough to live on let alone increase status. This book has chapters looking at various different nations approach to consumerism, such as the Islamic Middle East, Russia, Asia and so on. It also examines the darker side of the massive rise in consumerism and its negative impact on some sections of society. All in all a fascinating book both for the historian and the social scientist. On a personal level it makes you re-evaluate your own approach as to what makes you 'worthwhile'.

This second edition of *Consumerism in World History* draws on recent research of the consumer experience in the West and Japan, while also examining societies less renowned for consumerism, such as those in Africa. By relating consumerism to other issues in world history, this book forces reassessment of our understanding of both consumerism and global history. Each chapter has been updated and new features now include: a chapter on Latin America Russian and Chinese developments since the 1990s the changes involved in trying to bolster consumerism as a response to recent international threats examples of consumerist syncretism, as in efforts to blend beauty contests with traditional culture in Kerala. With updated suggested reading, the second edition of *Consumerism in World History* is essential reading for all students of world history.

'This is a clever book.' - Business History

About the Author Peter N. Stearns is Provost and Professor of History at George Mason University. His books include *The Other Side of Western Civilization* (5th edition, 1999), *Childhood in World History* (Routledge, 2005) and *Gender in World History* (2nd edition, Routledge, 2006).