

The Curse Of The New:

How the accelerating pursuit of the new is driving hyper-consumption

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Abstract

This paper advances the argument that it is the high value attached to the new and the novel that is the major source of hyper-consumption in modern Western, and indeed developing, societies. Three different forms of the new are identified – the new as the fresh, the innovative, and the novel – each of which is then related to an analytically distinct form of consumption. Each is examined in turn and evidence presented to show that the extent to which consumers engage in this form of consumption has accelerated in recent years. The reasons for this increase are then found in both the rapidity of technological advance and the decline in the average cost of products. The possibility of a slowing of this accelerating consumption of the new is then considered in the face of the central value attached to the new in Western civilization.