**Unnecessary products we buy just because advertisers want us to.**

There are two ways of creating a [product](https://listverse.com/2018/08/21/10-gross-cosmetic-products-of-the-past/). The first is finding a problem and creating a product as a solution. The other is by converting nonproblems into problems and providing the answer. Businesses seem to enjoy the latter business strategy because it allows them to create profitable niche markets.

There are lots of goods and services we buy because advertisers have convinced us to do so. These things were not considered problems until businesses and advertisers persuaded us that they were. They offered us the solution in exchange for our cash.

## Antiperspirant

A century ago, it was absolutely normal to sweat and [smell](https://listverse.com/2018/05/20/10-fascinating-beliefs-about-smell-from-the-past-and-present/). Then Edna Murphey came along with Odorono, the first commercially successful antiperspirant. Edna did not invent the antiperspirant, though. The first one (called Everdry) was sold in 1903. The first deodorant (called Mum) received its patent in 1888.

Odorono was created by Edna’s father, a medical doctor, to stop his hands from sweating during [surgeries](https://listverse.com/2018/06/04/10-people-who-performed-surgeries-on-themselves-and-survived/). However, Edna discovered another use for it when she realized that it stopped her armpits from sweating. She packaged it as Odorono and tried selling it.

Initially, the product was a commercial failure because no one needed an antiperspirant. Edna’s saleswomen often returned home with their stock unsold. Drugstores also refused to stock Odorono over concerns that it was useless. Stores that stocked it often returned it due to poor sales.

Edna got her break during the 1912 Atlantic City, New Jersey, trade fair. She suffered poor sales at first and had to sell other cosmetics to pay for her stand. However, the summer heat soon got customers flocking to her stand for Odorono. She made so much money at the trade fair that she could afford $30,000 for advertising.

Edna hired J. Walter Thompson Company, a New York–based ad agency to help her drive sales. The ad agency convinced people that sweating was an embarrassing medical problem. However, it added that a doctor (Edna’s father) had created Odorono to cure it. The campaign was successful, and sweating is still considered an embarrassing problem today.

## Diamond Rings

Ever heard the saying “diamonds are forever”? Or that you need a [diamond](https://listverse.com/2018/12/16/10-amazing-things-weve-found-inside-diamonds/) ring to propose to your sweetheart? Well! Thank De Beers’s advertising strategy for that. Diamonds do not last forever, and you do not need a diamond ring to propose.

Diamonds top the list of the worst precious [stones](https://listverse.com/2016/03/30/10-legends-of-ancient-megaliths-and-stones-from-the-british-isles/) you could buy. They are almost valueless and depreciate rapidly. A diamond loses half its worth the moment you take it out of the jewelry store. These gems are also more common than you think. De Beers only hoards them to drive up prices.

De Beers diamond ruse began in 1870 when huge diamond deposits were discovered in South Africa. This made diamonds cheap, which was the sort of thing a man called Cecil Rhodes did not want. So he purchased or partnered with most diamond mining businesses, including the famous De Beers, which he used for the new business.

However, diamonds sales were still on the decline. In 1938, De Beers engaged the N.W. Ayer advertising agency to see how they could improve sales. N.W. Ayer determined that diamonds should be marketed to bachelors willing to get married. Buying your woman a diamond was considered the manliest thing you could do.

Diamonds were marketed to women at the same time. The gem was considered a woman’s best friend and the perfect gift from a man who truly loved her. It worked.

## Shaving Razors For Women

In the early 20th century, women had hairs on their armpits and legs. It was normal because every woman had it. Women were also fully covered, so no one saw the [hair](https://listverse.com/2019/04/12/top-10-weird-and-wonderful-facts-about-hair/) anyway. This changed in 1915 when Gillette introduced its Milady Decollete razor for women. Gillette was not concerned with women’s health or anything. They just wanted to sell more shaving razors.

Gillette often advertised its shaving [razors](https://listverse.com/2018/07/13/top-10-bizarre-barbershop-blunders-and-breakdowns/) in women’s clothing catalogs where it mentioned that armpit hair was “an embarrassing personal problem” that was “ugly, noticeable, and unwanted.” It added that a hairless armpit was a “feature of good dressing and good grooming” reserved for stylish women.

Curiously, Gillette never told women that they needed the razors to “shave” because shaving was considered a male thing. The company used the word “smooth” instead. As in, women needed shaving razors to make their legs smoother.

Gillette also avoided using words like “razor” and “blade.” The ads were helped by the fact that sleeveless clothes were becoming a fad at the time. So women soon started shaving their armpit hair.

## Bottled Water

Soda sales have been on the decline in recent years as people have become more health conscious. This is why top soda makers have shifted their battleground to a healthier drink: [water](https://listverse.com/2016/03/11/10-intriguing-stories-about-real-life-water-oddities/). Bottled water, specifically.

Bottled water is basically an alternative to tap water. But manufacturers knew that it would be almost impossible to compete with tap water. So they decided to compete with soda instead. Today, bottled water is marketed as a healthier alternative to soda. They have positioned bottled water as a “refreshment beverage.”[[4]](https://www.investopedia.com/news/bottled-water-marketing-trick-century/)

The bottled water craze started in the 1970s when Gustave Leven, the chairman of French-based Source Perrier, wanted to expand into the US. Leven already sold his famous bottled water to top US restaurants and hotels at the time. However, he realized that he would make the most money if he marketed it to regular Americans.

Leven also realized that Americans would not pay for bottled water because they already got it from their taps. In 1977, he spent $2.5–$5 million on television ads to promote bottled water as a nonalcoholic drink for cool people. He also spent huge amounts on sponsoring several [racing](https://listverse.com/2014/11/19/10-dark-secrets-from-the-world-of-horse-racing/) events, including the 1977 New York City Marathon. The rest is history.

## Cereals

Ever heard that [breakfast](https://listverse.com/2019/05/02/10-food-inventions-that-changed-the-way-we-eat-breakfast/) is the most important meal of the day? Or that skipping breakfast could be dangerous for your health? Or that vitamin-fortified cereals are the perfect breakfast meals? Thank advertisers for that.

Not everyone ate breakfast two centuries ago. And when they did, it was definitely not cereal. People in the 19th-century United States ate almost anything for breakfast. This was often [eggs](https://listverse.com/2018/11/20/10-bizarrely-edible-eggs/) or whatever was left of the previous night’s dinner. Eggs were the perfect breakfast because they were easy to prepare. Hens also laid eggs in the mornings.

However, religion and advertising changed that when the Industrial Revolution came along. People left their farms to work in factories. Most started complaining of indigestion, which was blamed on the heavy meals they ate in the mornings.

In truth, it was because they did not need as much food because they did less intensive work in factories than they had on the farms. However, some members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church came to the rescue by inventing the “healthier” cornflakes to cure indigestion and other problems like masturbation.

However, cereals went mainstream when vitamins were discovered in the 1940s. Cereal makers added vitamins to their cereals and started promoting their products as the perfect breakfast. To ensure that more people ate breakfast, the companies advertised breakfast as the most important meal of the day.

The bacon-and-eggs industry did not just sit around and watch the cereal industry take over their market. Top bacon maker, Beech-Nut Packing Company, hired Edward Bernays to promote bacon as the perfect breakfast food. Bernays persuaded 5,000 doctors to agree that a heavy protein-rich breakfast is healthier than a light cereal breakfast.

Bernays had newspapers publish the results, which he styled like a regular scientific study. This made bacon and eggs another breakfast option. Although it countered cereals as the perfect breakfast meal, it reinforced the cereal industry notion that breakfast is the most important meal of the day.

## Popcorn

[Popcorn](https://listverse.com/2019/05/25/10-people-who-have-lived-in-a-tree/) became popular in the US in the 1800s. It was sold everywhere except theaters. Yes, popcorn has not always been synonymous with theaters because these establishments were initially targeted at the rich. And theater owners did not want popcorn ruining their expensive carpets.

That started to change when poorer people began visiting [cinemas](https://listverse.com/2019/01/19/10-offbeat-stories-you-might-have-missed-this-week-1-19-19/) in 1927. They often brought bags of popcorn, which was probably the only snack they could afford. Popcorn sellers soon caught on and moved their businesses closer to the cinemas.

Theater owners joined the popcorn fad and started charging popcorn vendors for selling outside their theaters. Later, cinemas began making their own popcorn. They even ran ads at the beginning and in the middle of their movies to urge viewers to race to the lobby and grab a bag of popcorn. The ads successfully increased popcorn consumption

## Toothpaste

To be clear, it is good to brush your [teeth](https://listverse.com/2017/11/26/10-secrets-locked-in-ancient-teeth/). However, some think that toothpaste is not necessary because a toothbrush without toothpaste will clean our teeth perfectly.

Brushing wasn’t a thing in the early 20th century. It was so un-American that what we consider bad teeth today was the norm. During [World War I](https://listverse.com/2018/05/13/10-weird-realities-of-aerial-combat-in-world-war-i/), most US Army recruits had such terrible teeth that the Army declared bad teeth a national security risk.

The US teeth culture changed when Pepsodent hired the successful ad executive Claude Hopkins to devise a campaign to help them sell more toothpaste. Hopkins got to work immediately. During his research, he noted that human teeth were naturally covered with a film. Consuming foods like apples will remove this film in the same way that a toothbrush with toothpaste would.

Hopkins somehow managed to convince people that this film was the reason that they did not have beautiful smiles. He suggested that they use Pepsodent toothpaste for the best teeth and perfect smile. The campaign was successful because of Hopkin’s prowess at persuasion and Pepsodent’s mint flavor.

At the time, most toothpastes were flavorless and tasted bland. However, Pepsodent’s minty flavor gave users a feeling of freshness. Several competitors caught on and added flavors to their toothpastes. They also made the toothpastes foam because people loved it and associated it with a clean mouth.

## Teeth Whitening

[White](https://listverse.com/2019/05/09/10-great-white-sharks-that-came-in-a-bad-second/) teeth are considered perfect even though they are not necessarily so. For starters, natural human teeth are light yellow and not white. So yellow is normal and white is abnormal. However, advertisers are currently convincing us that white is normal and yellow is abnormal.

Our teeth are yellow because our dentine (aka dentin) is [yellow](https://listverse.com/2019/05/22/10-yeti-reports-involving-more-than-footprints/). Dentine is the part of the teeth beneath the enamel, the outermost layer of the teeth. The enamel itself is white with a tint of blue. However, it is transparent, which is why we can see the yellow dentine.

Most teeth-whitening ads these days claim that yellow teeth are abnormal. The companies promote their businesses on social media, especially Instagram, where they pay influencers to recommend their products.

The major ingredient in their teeth whiteners is hydrogen peroxide, a liquid agent that passes through the enamel and into the dentine. There, it breaks apart the compounds that make the dentine yellow. However, there are concerns that hydrogen peroxide could damage the enamel and cause other permanent or temporary dental problems.

## Almost Every Holiday Out There

Most days of the year have been marked as [holidays](https://listverse.com/2018/12/31/10-holidays-with-twisted-dark-and-unusual-histories/) to celebrate one event or another. Most of these days are considered Hallmark holidays—that is, holidays that only exist to increase sales for businesses. They are named after Hallmark Cards, Inc., which sells greeting cards for almost every occasion.

There are holidays like Sweetest Day, which was created by a [candy](https://listverse.com/2012/10/31/origins-of-halloween-candy/) company with the sole intention of selling more sweets. There is also Tax Day, Clergy Appreciation Day, National Boss Day, and Ferris Wheel Day. Curiously, the tag has been extended to traditional holidays like Valentine’s Day, Father’s Day, and Mother’s Day.

In fact, Mother’s Day is one of the most commercialized holidays. It was proposed by Anna Jarvis in the early 1900s to celebrate all mothers. In May 1914, President Woodrow Wilson declared it a national holiday in the US. The holiday soon turned to horror for Jarvis as she watched businesses create all sort of items for Mother’s Day.

Jarvis considered this greed because the day was supposed to be about mothers. She tried canceling the holiday but failed despite using press releases, lawsuit threats, protests, and meetings with US presidents. US businesses still rake in billions of dollars on Mother’s Day every year.