

Green is the new colour for Holi

Holi, a Hindu festival celebrated in the spring as a way to honour Krishna. It is often referred to as the festival of colours where friends and family douse each other in powdered colour and water. This festival brings out laughter and love; but all fun and games aside, this celebration has adverse effects on the third party. This article will talk about the negative consumption externality in relation to the use of powdered colour; with a connection to sustainability and how it can be achieved.

What is negative consumption externality? The negative consumption externality is a type of market failure in which a third party is negatively impacted due to the consumption of a particular good or service. Then what is market failure? Market failure is simply the inefficient allocation of resources (either underallocation or overallocation); in the case of negative externalities, it is always an overallocation of resources for which government intervention is required in order to cut back on the externality, hence the term 'negative'. Now you may be wondering, how exactly does celebrating Holi lead to a negative consumption externality? Well, that's because the benefit that an individual receives from using the powdered colour is way lesser than the cost it has to society.

Now that it has been understood that this is a market failure and is classified as a negative externality, what exactly is the adverse effect it creates on society? Most of the time Holi is played with colours which are inorganic and full of harmful chemicals such as copper sulphate, mercury sulphide, chromium iodide and aluminum bromide. Although using these coloured powders may bring joy to an individual when playing, it can also harm the other people that the powder is being thrown on. These powders as mentioned are filled with these chemicals which can cause eye allergy and temporary blindness, skin cancer, asthma and renal failure. Not just that, but these often land up in waterways and rivers, polluting them. This not just toxicates the water, but also harms the marine life by killing any life that exists in those bodies of water. This is considered as an unsustainable practice as the resources are being depleted at a rate that is much faster that they can be generated. All in all, these chemical-filled powdered colours are extremely toxic and generate negative impacts to a third party, and are therefore not considered ideal at all. In order to prevent the use of these inorganic powdered colours, the government can intervene by banning or regulating the good, imposing taxes or by negatively advertising the product; and at the same time advertising organic powdered colours. Banning the good will reduce its supply, making it less accessible to all; therefore reducing the negative impact its consumption creates. Negative advertisement will portray the product in bad light, allowing the consumers to be influenced by it to reduce their demand for inorganic colours. Advertisements can promote the use of organic colours instead, which will bring about sustainability as the natural resources would not be depleted and/or toxicated. Now some might say that organic colours are more expensive, and that is true; however if the demand for organic colours increases, then the prices of it will naturally decrease, making it affordable to everyone.

If the people can learn to move away from inorganic powdered colours and turn to organic colours instead, they can continue to celebrate the festival of Holi without the fear of harming the people around them, nor polluting the environment and making it unsustainable. Be safe, be sustainable, and have fun.

<https://artsandculture.google.com/story/science-behind-holi-the-festival-of-colors-national-council-of-science-museums/VQXxht4neVRtLw?hl=en>
<https://www.bakeri.com/blog/6-ways-to-celebrate-holi-in-an-eco-friendly-way/>