

What is Conservation Commerce?

Conservation Commerce is any retail item(s) that impacts humanity, education, preservation, eco systems, environments, animal welfare, cultural traditions or reclaims, reuses or repurposes goods for the betterment of the world.

- **Handmade Crafts:** Handmade crafts are a big part of Conservation Commerce because they provide work to indigenous people to help them support their families. They also help with carbon foot printing and keeping cultural traditions alive.
- **Education items:** These items are anything with a story that educates the buyer about conservation and humanity. They should try to inspire the buyer to take action to help with a cause.
- **Recycled and repurposed goods:** These are items that have been made out of post-consumer goods and helps relay a message that items can have other purposes rather than being put into landfills.
- **Environments:** This is a very important part of Conservation Commerce as we must make sure we are NOT buying products that destroy endangered plants and animal's homes; thus the stance on non-sustainable palm oil used in many retail products because it destroys animal environments.
- **Carbon Foot Printing/Pollution:** We have to ensure the product we are buying is being made in a clean environmentally friendly way and not causing substantial harm to our world and resources.
- **Ethical treatment of People:** As a buyer we have the responsibility to ensure the people/companies we are purchasing from treat their workers humanely and are given a fare wage for their work.
- **Funding:** Products that fund a conservation organization can also be considered under this umbrella of "Conservation Commerce" because the money that is made from an item goes back to directly support a good cause. Please keep in mind; if the item is bad for the environment or the product is produced in an inhumane way, then the product should NOT be supported for fundraising.

- **Partnerships:** Sometimes organizations are formed to help people, the Earth or animals but need a way to fund the organization through retail sales. This is a great way to help organizations grow by buying products that impact people and a cause in a positive manner all at the same time.
- **Materials:** Be aware of the materials used in the products you buy. For example: use only byproducts from farm raised food if needed for crafts. Avoid all animal products taken from their natural environments. Use plant materials that help protect forests and rainforests from slash and burn. The Tagua nut is a great example of how people see value in the rainforest. They protect the trees because they produce the raw materials for their crafts without harming the rain forests. Also try and keep things “organic” and “sustainable” in the products you buy.
- **Women empowerment:** In today’s world we seek justice and fairness for everyone. It is very important to give women work in many developing nations as their treatment can be very oppressed and dominated by laws, men and tribal traditions. Money is power and funding women projects helps them become independent and rise above some of the oppression.
- **Packing Materials:** Ask how items are shipped and know the packing material’s origin. Sometimes packing materials are made from freshly cut rainforests and this is unacceptable and must not be used. Check companies that have trusted sustainable or post-consumer packing materials. Avoid new Styrofoam peanuts if at all possible and ask for corn based peanuts to be used in all packing if needed.
- **Rewards:** Some conservation organizations reward people for helping with their efforts to protect a plant or animal. For example: Snow Leopard Trust rewards families with jobs making crafts if they do not kill a snow leopard. In many places of the world a job is a reward because this provides a means of getting food and shelter for your family.
- **Sharing:** When we buy products from people that live in other nations we are sharing their ideas and culture with our visitors. Sharing creates understanding and helps bridge ideas and calms fears. This also helps

connect the “global village” and gives people a chance to take a piece of someone else’s culture home in the form of a gift.

- **Selling Alternatives:** As buyers we must always offer a “green” alternative from the mainstream products. For example: offer corn plastics in place of petroleum based ones, sell refillable water bottles in place of bottled water and sell dried insects in place of beef jerky. As of now the majority of mainstream products should still continue to be sold but we need to give the shopper a “greener” alternative within our stores.

This is just a brief outline of conservation commerce because it is as big as the world and the world changes constantly and so will conservation commerce. As new issues impact our world in conservation, our buying habits will have to change to make for a better tomorrow. We as supporters of conservation have to stay educated on what is happening in the world around us because things can change in a single day and it is our responsibility to stay current on these topics to ensure we are “doing the right thing for the planet.”

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