IGCSE Global Perspectives

Group Project

**RESEARCH QUESTION:**

**NAME:**

NAME OF OTHER GROUP MEMBERS:

TEACHER:

Contents Page

Choice of Topic and Rationale: pg. 3

Aims of our Group Project: pg. 3

Project Timeframe, Roles, and Job Descriptions: pg. 4

Information Gathering: pg. 7

Secondary Research: Internet research: pg. 7

Secondary Research: Different Perspectives: pg. 8

Primary Research: Cross-Cultural Collaboration: pg. 9

Primary research: Interview Results: pg. 10

Information Gathering: Conclusion: pg.12

Our Proposals: pg. 12

Rationale: pg.13

Our Outcome: pg.13

Did it work?: pg. 13

Works Cited: pg. 14

**Area of Study**: Food and Agriculture

**Question of Study:** Is factory farming an acceptable means of feeding the population, or is there a sustainable alternative?

**Topic Outline and Rationale**

The issue of factory farming is one that has recently caused much controversy. Being a current and highly debated topic, we were interested in exploring the issue. Factory farming plays a large, yet unrecognised, role in our daily lives, and with on average two in three animal products now being intensively factory farmed (Beta), factory farming has become our primary source of animal products. For many, particularly in less economically developed countries, these products act as their primary source of essential nutrients. It can be argued that, without factory farming, rates of starvation would increase dramatically, especially considering to the rising population. However, animal rights activists like the Humane Farming Association would argue that the animal abuse that takes place towards livestock in factory farming should not be allowed to continue. Both the issues of sufficient food production and animal abuse are very emotive ones, making this issue even more appealing to us. It is possible there are other methods of feeding the world’s population and maintaining food security while still being moral and ethical. As this is a global issue, it is a very important and worthwhile topic to explore.

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| --- | --- |
| **What we know** | **What we need to find out** |
| -Factory farming is unethical and disregards animal rights  -With the world’s growing population, it might be hard to feed everyone without intensive farming  -There are different types of farming, ranging from factory-farmed to organic, free-range and cage-free. | -The disadvantages and advantages of factory farming so we can evaluate whether it is an acceptable means of feeding the population.  -If there are any different perspectives on this, and who holds them.  -Can organic/free-range farming feasibly replace factory farming?  -Are they sustainable & ethical? |

**Aims of our Group Project**

-Firstly, we aim to find out whether factory farming is essential for our survival, ethical and sustainable. However in order to do this effectively, we will first need to conduct research and explore the different perspectives on the issue. In doing so, we hope to find out whether factory farming is an acceptable way to meet the needs of the human population.

-Secondly, we also aim to investigate whether there are any alternative solutions, for example organic and free range farming. In order to answer our question comprehensively we will also need to judge whether these solutions are sustainable and ethical themselves.

-Thirdly, we then aim to use this research to come up with an outcome which will inform our school community of the issues surrounding food production in the world today so that they are made aware of the advantages, disadvantages and consequences of buying food that has been farmed in these three ways and can take this into account when choosing which animal products to buy in the future. By doing this we aim to encourage students to buy more free-range and organic products as opposed to those that have been factory farmed.

**Project Timeframe**

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| Task | Description | Start Date | Completion Date | Who | Issues |
| Research | Conduct some initial research to gain a basic knowledge of the subject. | 03/11/2014 | 06/11/2014 | All, as we all need to have a knowledge of the subject. | Due to difficulties finding reliable, non-biased sources, our research took us a few days longer than anticipated. |
| Discuss personal experiences | -Views?  -Experiences?  -What do we usually buy? | 07/11/2014 | 07/11/2014 | Z, Y and X as Wwill be completing the questionnaire this lesson. | None. |
| Write Interview | Come up with questions to ask people from different cultures to gain an insight into their perspectives on factory farming. | 07/11/2014 | 07/11/2014  (Needs to be completed before we go on Horizons Week) | Was she has previous experience in writing interviews and questionnaires from Statistics. | None. |
| Discuss cross-cultural angle | Decide exactly who to conduct the interview on so we can gain a cross-cultural perspective.  Consider:  -What will influence the different perspectives?  -Who can we interview who will hold opposite perspectives? | 07/11/2014 | 07/11/2014 | All, so that we can make full use of all the possible contacts everyone may have. | Unfortunately, none of our group members had contacts with anyone working in the factory business, so we had to conduct research on their perspectives through the internet. |
| Conduct Interview | Interview a variety of people from different cultures. Analyse responses. | Horizons Week  10/11/2014 | 14/11/2014 | We can all conduct this when we go on Horizons week. This way we can gain perspectives from different countries. Y is also visiting Germany for Christmas so can conduct it there. | Especially in Cambodia and the Philippines, we had some trouble with language barriers, which meant there was a limited number of people we could interview. (Only some could speak English confidently) |
| Discuss research findings to help decide on our outcome | We need to use the results of our research to come up with a proposal, so that we can then begin to plan our outcome. | 17/11/2014 | 17/11/14 | All, as we should all be involved in deciding our final outcome. | None. |
| Contact necessary people to gain permission to launch our poster campaign. | Talk to the school and Chartwells. | 19/11/2014 | 19/11/14 | Z, as she is especially skilled in being persuasive and will be good at selling our campaign. We can all help her prepare. | None. |
| Complete Report | Write up and put together all of our planning and cross-cultural collaboration and findings. | 22/11/2014 | 4/01/2015 | All, we will delegate specific sections to everyone so the work is equally split. X will check over it and edit, as she is good at English. | Our Mocks meant that we fell behind schedule as everyone was focussed on other subjects. |
| Make out posters. | Complete the three posters in the poster campaign. | 04/12/2014 | 4/01/2015 | X and Z, as they are particularly creative. | The posters ended up taking an extremely long time to make, especially with only two group members designated to work on them. |

**Information Gathering**

**Secondary Research: Internet Research**

We will gather the information we need about the different types of farming through secondary sources on the internet as it is fast and effective. However we will need to ensure the sources we are using are reliable, by finding out who wrote it, when it was written, and why. We can also check for credibility by ensuring the same information is present on more than two sites.

**Definition of Factory Farming:**

“A system of large-scale industrialised and intensive agriculture that is focused on profit with animals kept indoors and restricted in mobility.” (dictionary.com)

Although it can be seen as unethical due to the inhumane treatment of animals, it is low-cost and efficient, providing high yields of cheap eggs as well as job opportunities. With 68% of eggs being produced by factory farming (Nierenberg), it can be inferred from this that there would not be enough affordable eggs without this method of farming, suggesting there may not be an alternative solution and it is beneficial to humanity. On the other hand, its large contribution to global warming (the waste produced causes pollution) suggests it may not be environmentally sustainable, and should not be accepted as the primary way of feeding the population. Therefore although factory farming may be inhumane and breaches animal rights, it is a sustainable method of feeding the growing population due to its efficiency (only a small space is needed, quick harvesting, affordable). However, it may not be environmentally sustainable in the long term due to the harmful effects it has on surroundings and people’s health alike (waste material, spreading of disease, use of hormones).

**Definition of Organic Farming:**

“Farming in which artificial fertilisers and pesticides are not used.” (freedictionary.com)

Poison-free and more nutritious, it is more environmentally sustainable than factory farming due to the lack of hormone use. However, organic products are produced in a much smaller yield, so are more expensive. Many cannot afford to buy them and organic farming alone would not produce sufficient amounts of food for the world’s population. Contrary to common belief, the conditions of animals are just as inhumane- many are still confined to tiny cages and hens in the egg industry are debeaked to stop them injuring each other. Therefore organic farming is not only cruel to animals (just as morally wrong as factory farming, contradictory to popular belief), but is also not sustainable as yield is too small, production time is too slow and price is too high. It is more environmentally sustainable than factory farming due to hormones not being used, but surroundings can still be flooded with waste materials that can pollute, cause global warming, and spread disease.

**Definition of Free-range Farming:**

“Farming where animals are permitted to graze or forage for grain, etc., rather than being confined to a feedlot or a small enclosure.” (dictionary.com)

As well as being healthier for the consumer than factory farmed eggs, they are also cheaper than organic eggs, however still too expensive for many people living in poverty to afford. The amount of eggs produced per acre is much less than in factory farming, but more than organic farming, and are more nutritious. However the treatment of the animals is much more ethical as they are allowed to roam freely. Therefore free-range farming is not only least cruel to animals, but is also more sustainable than organic farming due to it being cheaper in price, while yield is higher and production time being siXr. It is more environmentally sustainable as hormones are not used and animals can clean themselves, preventing them from spreading disease and from having a build-up of waste material. Therefore free-range farming is the most sustainable alternative to factory farming in the long term, although people’s eating habits must change so that less food is being discarded, and people must be more willing to pay more for better quality goods in order for free-range farming to take over factory-farming. It could also help if free-range farmers are given subsidies or supply-side policies that could lower the price and increase the efficiency of free-range farms, in order for the type of farming to replace factory-farming.

**Secondary Research: Different Perspectives**

Just from doing some initial research on the internet, we can begin to grasp the controversies surrounding factory farming, due to the range of different perspectives:

-Animal rights charity, Peta, argues against all three types of farming mentioned above, suggesting that veganism would be the only sustainable alternative. They state that although free-range and organic products claim to be more friendly to animals, the animals are actually still mutilated. Therefore people should stop eating animal products all together, in order to put an end to the animal cruelty. (Peta)

-However, people from poorer backgrounds argue that they rely on the cheap animal products produced in factory farms for essential nutrients. (Smith, Jason)

-It is certain that many intensive factory farming companies would present arguments supporting factory farming, as it as it is the cheapest way of creating large amounts of produce. This view is hard to sympathise with however, as in most cases the welfare of the animals is completely dismissed in the pursuit for for large profits.

**Primary Research: Cross-cultural Perspectives**

We will be gathering information about different perspectives from various cultures on factory farming through an interview, which we will conduct during Horizons Week. During this week we are all going to different countries, so we will get the opportunity to gain the viewpoints of people in different professions and countries. The countries visited will include Hong Kong, Cambodia, Philippines and Germany. These countries offer us the perspectives of people from countries of different economic status and culture. Below are the questions we asked, and to whom.

1. Have you heard of factory farming? If so, what do you think it involves?
2. What is your opinion on it?
3. Does this influence what food you buy?
4. Do you know where the majority of your food comes from?
5. Are you aware of the advantages and disadvantages of factory farming?
6. Are you aware of any sustainable alternatives?

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Name** | **Nationality** | **Age** | **Socio-Economic Status** |
| John Tucker | American (living in Cambodia) | Sixties | Running an orphanage on funds. |
| Jessiebel (Last name was not given) | Filipino | 34 | Earning lower than the minimum wage. |
| Mel (Last name was not given) | Filipino | 50 | “ |
| Joshua (Last name was not given) | Filipino | 21 | “ |
| Erin Brown | British | 15 | Middle Class |
| 27 other West Island Students | Mixture (including Cantonese, American, European and Indian) | 11-16 | Middle to Upper-Middle Class |
| Y’s friend from Germany | German | 16 | Middle Class |

**Primary Research: Interview Results**

After analysing the answers to our interview, we have found out that although everyone we interviewed knew what factory farming was, they all held different perspectives on it, and only some knew of any alternatives and their sustainability.

1. Cambodian resident John Tucker, Founder of New Hope for Cambodian Children Orphanage, presented a viewpoint that strongly supported factory farming. Feeding their children on food subsidies from the government, he said that the only way they can afford to feed the 1400 children that live there is by intensively farming chickens and pigs for meat and eggs on site. He admitted that although he knows the conditions aren’t perfect for the animals, it is the only feasible way of feeding the children, because other forms of farming, such as organic, would just not provide them with a sufficient amount of food within their budget. Without this form of farming many of the children would starve, so we can certainly understand and sympathise with their plight.
2. When interviewing 3 villagers from Cebu in the Philippines, it also appeared that intensive factory farming was heavily relied on for food. Even though they disagreed with the treatment of animals in factory farming, all 3 said that they were unable to afford alternatives and so are forced to buy the cheaper, factory farmed products. The majority of the food they buy has been factory farmed, a decision which is financially rather than ethically determined. As the Philippines is an LEDC, the majority of people in the villages were living in poverty, so with barely sufficient amounts of money to buy food anyway, the way it has been farmed is understandably insignificant. The fact that factory farmed products are so cheap in comparison to organic and free-range products, was clearly a major advantage to factory farming. However, when asked, they did not seem to think there were any alternatives.
3. After interviewing 27 other students at West Island School, we discovered that although most people said they were against factory farming, the majority (80%) were not aware of any alternative solutions. However, even of the 20% who were aware, it was a common misconception that organic farming was the only sustainable solution. However, from our secondary internet research, we have found out that this is not the case.
4. On the other hand, when Erin Brown, a British student in Hong Kong, was asked about her views on factory farming she said she was on the side of Animal Rights Organisations. As an expat, she came from a wealthy family and so could therefore afford alternatives to factory farming such as organic meat.
5. Y’s friend from Germany was also not well informed on the issue. Living in a village where organic farming is common, she often hears the farmers complain about factory farming as it’s inhumane and causes pollution, but does not know anymore about the issue and whether there are any sustainable alternatives. She said that she tends not to pay much attention to the origins of her food, as it does not really concern her.

**Information Gathering: Conclusion**

-After looking at both the primary and secondary research, we can conclude that, although factory farming is not an ethically acceptable means of feeding the population it is the only method of farming that creates a sufficient amount of produce at prices that are affordable in LEDCs. Our cross-cultural collaboration was incredibly useful in helping us discover this, providing us with the views of those in different economic situations.

-We have also discovered that there are currently no sustainable alternatives in LEDCs; veganism is not feasible for poorer people and organic and free-range products are too expensive.

-However, in MEDCs where more people are able to afford alternatives to factory farmed products, there is a sustainable alternative- free-range. This is much more humane that factory and even organic farming, and should create large enough yields to feed the people who are able to afford it. Organic farming, on the other hand, only presents some benefits. (listed previously)

-However from our interviews we were able to infer that the majority of young people in our school in Hong Kong (a MEDC) were not aware of this sustainable alternative.

**Our Proposals**

We therefore propose to educate the students at our school on the three main types of farming; factory farming, organic farming, and free-range farming, through a poster campaign. Since we attend an international school, we can assume relative wealth of all students, meaning that buying free-range products is feasible for them and the campaign could actually decrease the consumption of factory and organically farmed products in Hong Kong. We will make sure to inform them of the horrors of factory farming, make sure they learn that organic farming is not the best sustainable alternative they currently think it is, and inform them of the advantages of free-range farming.

In order to make the campaign accessible to everybody we have used a theme of eggs to illustrate each form of farming, as they are an animal product everyone will hopefully be able to relate to. Our posters will be eye-catching, ensuring our message remains in peoples’ heads long after they see the poster. This will hopefully help us to achieve our aims in the most successful way possible, and have the largest effect on the students, persuading them to buy less factory farmed products. Hopefully, word will spread to others outside the school community and more awareness will have been raised. We will be placing these posters in the school canteen.

**Rationale for choice of outcome**

We have chosen to do a poster campaign as, not only is it low cost, but it is an effective way to get our message across quickly to a lot of people. It’s very important that our poster campaign reaches a large audience in order for it to actually make a noticeable difference. Thus we have chosen to place the posters in the queueing areas of the school canteen, as it is a place visited by the majority of the school population. We have also chosen this location to get people to think more carefully about what they eat for lunch and whether the canteen food is the best option for both their health and the treatment beforehand of the animals involved.

**Our Outcome:**

**Did it work?**

After reading through the feedback given by students who viewed our posters, we can infer that our poster campaign was successful in educating and informing them about the disadvantages and advantages of each type of farming. There was a significant increase in the number of students who are now, not only aware that free-range farming was the most sustainable solution, but are also much more informed on the details of each farming type. Many said they would try to avoid buying factory farmed products as much as possible.

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**INDIVIDUAL EVALUATION**

**IGCSE Global Perspectives**

**Group Project**

Contents Page

Introduction: pg. 18

Project Plan and Process: pg. 18

Strengths: pg.18

Weaknesses and Improvements: pg.19

Project Outcome: pg.19

Individual Contribution: pg.20

What have I learnt?: pg.20

Cross-Cultural Collaboration: pg. 20

What have I learnt?: pg. 21

For our Group Project we decided to investigate the question ‘Is factory farming an acceptable means of feeding the population, or is there a sustainable alternative?’ We chose this due to the issue’s current controversy and our interest in both the highly important issues of animal cruelty and sufficient food production.

**Project Plan and Process**

Certainly, in terms of the end result, I believe that we produced a comprehensive project plan, enabling us to specify a suitable project outcome to meet our aims. By firstly clearly addressing what we already knew and what we needed to find out about the issue, we were able to successfully focus our research on the areas needed and specifically answer our question. However, unfortunately, conducting this research proved to be more difficult than imagined, as due to the controversy of the issue, it was hard to find a website that provided an unbiased view on each of the three types of farming. It was important for us to use impartial sources in order to gain an objective knowledge of each of the farming forms, so that we could analyse both the disadvantages and advantages and come to our own conclusion on whether they were sustainable.

This research, along with our cross-cultural collaboration and research on different perspectives, then enabled us to easily finalise our aims. It was clear that in MEDCs, where more people were not reliant on factory farmed foods and could afford free-range and organic products, that intensive factory farming presented more disadvantages than benefits. Since Hong Kong is an MEDC, this led us to decide to convey factory farming from a negative perspective in order to try and make more people think about the origins of the food they are buying, and encourage the purchasing of free-range foods. Throughout our interviews, we also discovered that many students at our school were under the impression that organic farming was a sustainable alternative, which is not the case. Although it is less harmful to the environment than factory farming due to the decreased use of artificial hormones, animals are still treated inhumanely and the process is very expensive. We therefore planned to include this on our organic poster in order to correct this common misconception.

**Strengths**

When creating our outcome, we didn’t deviate from our plan, in that we created three posters (each on a different type of farming), as we had proposed to. Planning to make three posters proved successful, as it allowed us to inform our audience in depth of the advantages and disadvantages of each farming type, and whether it was sustainable or not. Throughout our project plan I believe we also succeeded in justifying all of our decisions through the writing of detailed rationales. Writing these helped us to ensure we were making the correct decisions throughout.

**Weaknesses and Improvements**

In hindsight, I think that our project timeframe proved to be too ambitious. The interruption of our Mock Examinations towards the end of November caused a distraction for everyone in our group. As a result, much of our project plan and outcome was completed at the last minute and the original group roles had to be adapted in order to complete the project in time. Unfortunately, this then meant that the work was distributed unequally within our group. In order to improve and avoid this, we should have taken our exams into account when constructing our project timeframe, planning to finish the majority of our project plan before our revision became a priority.

As a whole, I think that our project plan could have been more succinct, as it exceeded the word limit. Although we were trying to ensure that we included all the required information, in retrospect, I think that we could have improved it by making each of our points more concise.

**Project Outcome**

We proposed to make a poster campaign consisting of three different posters, one of which was on factory farming, and the other two were on its alternatives; organic and free-range farming. As mentioned in our project plan, we chose to illustrate the different farming forms through eggs, as we thought this would make the issue more accessible for our audience as the majority of people are familiar with this animal product. In addition, we thought that this, along with the use of bright colours, would make the posters eye-catching, which was incredibly important in order for us to achieve our aims, which were to educate our school community about the different types of farming, so that they can be mindful of the advantages, disadvantages and relative sustainability of each when deciding what animal products to buy in the future.

Our campaign needed to attract the attention of as many people as possible in order to have a sufficient impact. I believe that we certainly succeeded in conveying our message to the school community; many walked away with a newfound knowledge of the alternative solutions and their sustainability. One of the strengths of our posters was definitely our use of bright, block colours to catch the attention of students. Our decision to include shocking statistics and facts in big bold letters also helped to achieve this. However, we were only given the opportunity to present our outcome to our year, hence the impact our outcome had was limited. If we had been abled to place our campaign in the cafeteria, our message would have reached a wider audience, and the impact of our outcome would have been improved significantly.

Other improvements, such as producing a more tangible outcome as well as the posters, for example a leaflet, would have meant that students had something they could take away with them afterwards, ensuring they would not forget any of the details we had given them. This would have been possible if we had allowed ourselves more time to create our outcome, another improvement which could have been made.

However, overall, I think that our outcome as successful and we accomplished what we set out to do in out plan. As mentioned above, our cross-cultural collaboration contributed greatly to the angle we took in or outcome, as it helped to shape our aims. After interviewing our audience (students in our year) we were able to deduce that their knowledge on the sustainable alternatives to factory farming were both limited and incorrect, leading us to aspire to correct their misconceptions and deepen their knowledge.

**Individual Contribution**

Unfortunately, due to the poor planning of our group’s project timeframe, I do not think that everyone contributed equally in our group. When writing the timeframe, we made sure we took advantage of everyone’s strengths. Due to our creative skills, Z and I took the role of producing the posters. My linguistic skills led me to also take up an editorial role in the writing of the project plan, as well as writing up the aims and the cross-cultural collaboration findings. However, some group members did not successfully carry out their roles, and it is because of this that I feel that I have made the largest contribution to the group. In the end I have written the vast majority of the Project Plan myself and worked on two of the three posters. I definitely feel that I had to take the leadership role in our group in order to try and ensure that all deadlines were successfully met. Although, I realise the intention of the task was to co-operate with one another, as a conscientious person, I found it hard not to intervene when my other group members were not completing their designated sections, which resulted in me completing most of the plan.

Furthermore, due to the interruption of the Christmas Holidays and the absence of one group member from Hong Kong over this time period, it was difficult for our group to communicate effectively, also causing the workload to be distributed unequally. It is because of this that I do not think our group worked as well together as they might have done if we had improved our communication. Effective communication is definitely one of the largest challenges present in group work. Hopefully, although this did increase the difficulty of the process, it did not have too much of a negative effect on our outcome.

On the other hand we did easily agree on our aims and outcome, collectively using our knowledge and ideas to come up with the most creative and eye-catching way to display our research, contributing to the success of our outcome. As we all hold strong opinions, it meant that we already had a starting point for the different perspectives on factory farming, as we each held different opinions within our group, which was incredibly useful. Sharing our opinions and experiences about the issue gave us an important grounding on the topic, which allowed us to focus our research. These were clear benefits to working in a group.

**What have I learnt?**

From this group project, I have learnt that sometimes I find it hard to take a back seat in group work. On the positive side, I have also developed essential skills in terms of researching and finding reliable and credible information. Furthermore, I have also developed my analytical skills through evaluating the different forms of farming and their sustainability, as well as evaluating the different perspectives. I am now aware of the consequences of buying differently farmed foods and will consider this in the future when choosing what animal products to buy.

**Cross-Cultural Collaboration**

As we were carrying out our cross-cultural collaboration during Horizons Week we were restricted in terms of who we could interview as most of the trips were within Asia. However, luckily Y was visiting Germany for Christmas, so we were able to gain the perspectives of people living in Europe. In order to improve our cross-cultural collaboration, I would have liked to gain the perspective of someone living in Africa or Australasia, to vary the cultures interviewed even more.

When planning our cross-cultural collaboration, we discovered that none of the group members had personal contacts with people from factory farming companies or animal rights groups, so we were unable to collect primary research on their perspectives on factory farming. We could have prevented this by considering which contacts we had before we chose our question. Even so, we overcame this obstacle by conducting secondary research on their perspectives, through the use of their websites. However, in order to improve our cross-cultural collaboration, we could have gained more accurate information on their viewpoints, by attempting to email the contacts provided on their websites. This way we could have also asked them directly for their opinions on the sustainability of factory farming and whether there are any sustainable solutions. This would have made our research more applicable to our question.

Luckily, Horizons Week fitted in perfectly with our project timeframe. This gave us the ideal opportunity to gain the perspectives of people from different cultures through the interview questions we wrote. For one group member in Cebu, the language barrier meant that there was a limited number of people she could talk to. If we had the resources and time, we could have hired a translator to overcome this problem. While writing our interview questions we made sure they were not too personal in order to avoid them offending anyone. This proved to be successful as no one was unwilling to answer our questions, as long as they could speak English, making conducting our interviews easily.

**What have I learnt?**

From our cross-cultural collaboration I have increased my knowledge about the different viewpoints on factory farming. Previously, I was only aware of the viewpoint of animal rights organisations, and didn’t even consider the importance of ensuring the entire population is fed. I now have an appreciation of the fact that some people don’t have a choice but to eat factory farmed foods as it is all they can afford. This has led me to realise that this choice is a luxury only available to the privileged few.