ETHICAL CONSUMERISM
WHAT IS A NEED VERSUS A WANT?
MASLOW’S HIERARCHY OF NEEDS

- **Physical**: (the need for air, water, food, rest, health)
- **Security**: (the need for safety, shelter, stability)
- **Social**: (the need for being loved, belonging, inclusion)
- **Ego**: (the need for self-esteem, power, recognition, prestige)
- **Self Actualization**: (the need for development, creativity)
MASLOW’S HIERARCHY OF NEEDS

- Created in 1943 by American psychologist Abraham Maslow
- Believed in hierarchy of basic “deficiency” needs versus “growth” needs
  - Lower needs must be met to allow for higher needs to develop
- Based on Maslow’s observations rather than empirical evidence
- Potentially useful framework for considering needs versus wants
THE CHEMISTRY OF CONSUMPTION

- Shopping increases dopamine in reward pathways
  - Similar spike seen in addictive behaviors such as drug use and overeating
- Association between “holiday” and discounts also activates dopamine
  - Discounts as bargains leads to competitive “thrill”
  - Thinking about purchases activates dopamine as much as actual purchase
  - Seasonal shopping viewed as a socially acceptable indulgence
- Pavlovian reinforcement by retail discounters
BUT WHEN DO HOLIDAYS END?
FAST FASHION

- Trend in clothing designed geared around cheap, disposable fashion
  - Made possible with modern manufacturing techniques and marketing
- Cheaply made clothing geared around less wear-time and fewer washes
- Lower cost makes it feel like a value
  - More expensive over long term
- 52 micro-seasons for fashion
  - Designed to make customers feel out of fashion after the first week
FAST FASHION ISSUES

- Clothing may contain lead or other health hazards to wearer
- Often made with child labor
- Heavy environmental cost during manufacturing
  - Many toxic chemicals used in textile process resulting in tons of waste water
- Heavy environmental cost after disposal
  - Average American throws away 68lbs of textiles into landfills each year
  - Synthetic fabrics made with petroleum-based fibers so they don’t biodegrade for decades
- Heavy human cost after disposal
  - Many clothing donations end up in developing nations, which competes with local textile industries
A MINDSET ACROSS ALL INDUSTRIES

- Marketing promotes fast consumption and disposal of a product
- In manufactured goods, this includes planned obsolescence or constant advertising
- In media, this includes constant advertising and pressure for social conformity
What is a product you enjoy consuming? (should go without saying, but list something that is not illegal or inappropriate from work)
A SOCIAL COMPONENT

- Friendships can include:
  - Inside jokes
  - Activities
  - Social coding
EXAMPLE: FORTNITE

- Manufactured Discontent:
  - https://youtu.be/dPHPNgIihR0?t=300
MARKETING FOR CONSUMPTION

- Must “game” the system to have product stand out

- Search Engine Optimization (SEO) grew as Internet became a platform for revenue and marketing
  - In early 2000s, use of spam links, comments, and keywords prevalent for boosting site’s ranking
  - Arms race between SEO tactics and search engines
  - In late 2000s, social media became increasingly important component of page rank
  - Sites expected to produce a constant stream of user-generated content
EXAMPLE: BOTS AND CONTENT-GENERATION

- “It’s not so much that bots are now passing the Turing test – it’s that humans are failing it.” – Matt Kaemmerer

- Bots can churn out social media much faster than humans (and are cheaper!)
  - Prevalent on Twitter, Youtube, and many others
  - Leads to derivative content at best
  - Leads to disturbing, manipulative content (often targeting kids) at worst
BOTS, CONTENT-GENERATION, AND THE HUMAN RESPONSE
CONSUMERISM AND WEALTH INEQUALITY

- Millennials have been accused of killing (among other things):
  - Napkins
  - Golf
  - Soap bars
  - Vacations/cruises
  - Homeownership
  - Wine corks
  - Diamonds
  - Department stores

- Downside of a consumer-based economy is that we all have to contribute by constantly consuming things!
HOW DOES MARKETING IMPACT SOCIETY?
Which of these is the most important aspect of ethical consumption for you?

A. Environmental
B. Social
C. Political
D. Economic
GROUP ACTIVITY

- Break into groups of 3 or 4 and discuss the following questions:
  - What do you consider ethical consumption?
  - How do you try to consume ethically?
  - When do you cut corners?
  - What are some practical strategies for consuming ethically?
  - What are some practical strategies for producing ethically?
  - Whose responsibility is ethical consumption? (i.e. governmental, business, personal)
EXTREME OUTLIER: BHUTAN
REFERENCES

- <https://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/12/15/psychology-materialism_n_4425982.html>
- <https://www.huffingtonpost.com/shannon-whitehead/5-truths-the-fast-fashion_b_5690575.html>
- <https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/a-brief-history-of-search-seo>
- <https://medium.com/@jamesbridle/something-is-wrong-on-the-internet-c39c471271d2>