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
A SOCIAL COMPONENT

- Friendships can include:
  - Inside jokes
  - Activities
  - Social coding
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
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?
WHAT IS ETHICAL CONSUMPTION?

- Ethics of:
  - Production
  - Use
  - Disposal
- Issues include environmental, social, political, 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)
REFERENCES

- [https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/hide-and-seek/201205/our-hierarchy-needs]
- [https://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/814649_2]
- [http://www.apa.org/monitor/jun04/discontents.aspx]
- [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]
- [https://www.marketwatch.com/story/here-are-all-of-the-things-millennials-have-been-accused-of-killing-2017-05-22]