Forum: Economic and Social Council

Issue: Measures to mitigate planned obsolescence in products around the world.

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Introduction

Also frequently defined as ‘built-in obsolescence’ or ‘premature obsolescence’, the stratagem of planned obsolescence incorporated into the production of a vast array of products is a striking issue that imposes increased amounts of waste and a threat to the quantity of resources used including electricity, fossil fuels etc. Planned obsolescence refers to the development and production of goods that are not long-lasting and lack durability in order to encourage hyperconsumption of the product and increase repeat purchases. The premise behind this practice is essentially to aid in increasing revenue for a certain product through the hyperproduction of brittle commodities to coerce consumers into purchasing a newer model of the product every time an older one ceases productivity. This policy is often said to have been conceived in the United States, where the CEO of General Motors, Alfred P. Sloan introduced the idea of debuting a new vehicular model monthly in order to propel sales during an era where the usage and purchase of cars was dwindling in the late 1920’s/early 1930’s.

Ever since its conception, the implications of planned obsolescence in products have only mushroomed, with the ethical and environmental consequences of the mass standardized production of intentionally non-durable goods proving to be influential on social and economic wellbeing. Since the concept was first introduced during the post-World War II era as an opportunity for manufacturers to facilitate artificial economic growth, the motives held by such parties driving the continued employment of planned obsolescence as a marketing strategy in the present economic atmosphere have grown in

numbers. Prominent rationales behind the utilization of planned obsolescence include profit maximization, where companies will encourage repeat purchases from customers through developing products with limited lifespans and subsequently generating more profit, as well as other factors such as increasing the competitivity of a product within a market; constant novel alterations and models of the product increases consumer demand since consumers are inclined to purchase products with the most current and attractive characteristics. Planned obsolescence is also greatly beneficial in regards to propelling economic growth, where a more rapid turnover of products aids in driving technological advancement and the innovation of products and production processes. However, planned obsolescence tends to benefit producers more than it does consumers.

Although, to some extent, planned obsolescence has a limited positive impact on consumers, such as providing products that are intentionally meant to be non-durable such as baby clothes at a cheap price, the negatives largely outweigh the positives of this construct on consumers. Planned obsolescence revolves around products intentionally being made of materials that contribute to the short lifespan of the good which eventually leads to consumers being forced into repeatedly purchasing a specific good. This can prove to be a weighty financial burden imposed on consumers since it can lead to the straining of budgets and a decrease in consumer trust in a product caused by illusory and exploitative marketing techniques used by brands. The constant production and use of resources to produce such products could lead to the buildup of large amounts of waste and severe product depletion, which could be of great detriment to the environment. Avid engagers in planned obsolescence as a marketing strategy tend to display an oligopoly mentality. The oligopoly perspective maintains that there is little incentive for competitors to avoid replicating you in sectors with high entry barriers because doing so will increase their own profits, thus you can manufacture low-quality products with little fear of being caught. This is a clear-cut demonstration of market failure.

These implications are just a few of the many impacts that planned obsolescence has on various socioeconomic circumstances, with the imposing of various political structures needing to be introduced in order to mitigate these adverse effects.

Definition of Key Terms

Planned Obsolescence

Manufacturers use planned obsolescence as a purposeful technique to create items with a predefined short lifespan. These goods are deliberately designed to age, wear out, or go out of style so that customers will replace them with newer variations.

Functional Obsolescence

A condition where a product loses some of its usefulness, suitability, or efficacy for its intended use, decreasing its worth or appeal owing to antiquated characteristics or design. This is usually of benefit to a consumer since it opens up doors to indulge in the consumption of newer, more efficient, and more developed products.

Perceived Obsolescence

When customers prematurely replace a product because they think it is out-of-date or unfashionable, frequently as a result of marketing or peer pressure. For instance, a smartphone manufacturer's marketing campaign for the most recent model may cause perceived obsolescence and persuade customers to upgrade even if their old phone is still in good working order.

Circular Economy

A circular economy is an economic framework that prioritizes waste avoidance, resource efficiency, and reuse. The old linear "take-make-dispose" model, which

frequently promotes planned obsolescence, is intended to be replaced. The workings of a circular economy directly contradict the key schemas of planned obsolescence.

Consumerism

The pursuit of collecting and consuming goods and services, frequently in excess, is a cultural and economic phenomenon known as consumerism. Because it promotes frequent purchases, planned obsolescence is tightly linked to consumerism.

Product Lifecycle

The stages a product traverses from its release to the market, sales growth, maturation, and ultimately decline are referred to as the product lifetime. The latter stages are often influenced by planned obsolescence as it promotes replacements.

Right to Repair

A consumer rights campaign known as "right to repair" advocates for the public to have access to repair knowledge, replacement parts, and tools so they can restore and maintain the goods they purchase. It seeks to overcome the obstacles that planned obsolescence brought about.

Consumer rights

Consumer rights are the legal privileges and protections granted to customers, such as the right to equal opportunities, truthful information, and access to reliable goods. When planned obsolescence incorporates dishonest tactics, consumer rights may be questioned.

E-waste

Computers, smartphones, and other electronic equipment that has been retired are referred to as "e-waste." Due to shorter product lifespans, planned obsolescence adds to the rapid accumulation of e-waste.

Transparency

Transparency in the manufacturing of goods is the openness and clarity with which information is shared regarding the design, components, and anticipated lifespan of a product. Consumers may be unaware of planned obsolescence methods due to a lack of openness.

Sustainability

Sustainability describes actions that guarantee the responsible consumption of resources to satisfy present needs without endangering the capacity of future generations to satisfy their own demands. Planned obsolescence stimulates waste and resource depletion, which contradicts sustainability standards.

Key Issues

Electronic waste

Apple is a company which has been notorious for engaging in the practice of planned obsolescence for years now, with a minimum of one new model of the iPhone being released annually. Their products are designed to display characteristics of diminished qualities within at least 2 years of purchases, a structural aspect specifically tailored towards encouraging consumers to purchase a newer and largely more costly prototype. This leads to the disposal of old phones - a factor that is linked to the growing issue of electronic waste. As stated by the WEEE (Waste from Electrical and Electronic Equipment) forum in 2022, approximately 5.3 billion mobile phones were predicted to be

thrown away in the year 2022 *(Ngo)*. It is also important to note that although Apple is one of the most predominant roots of this concern, it is not alone in its contributions.

Electronic waste is extremely detrimental to the ecology, with some of the most common elements of electronic equipment such as mercury and cobalt possessing largely toxic and environmentally harmful traits. Furthermore, a study conducted in Irvine displayed results correlating the excess of electronic waste with vast amounts of greenhouse gases being emitted into the atmosphere with there being a 53% increase in e-waste-linked emissions between the years of 2014 and 2020. The number was estimated to be around 580 metric tons within solely the year 2020. It has also been speculated that producing technology with lengthier life spans and more efficient frameworks would aid in reducing such GHG emissions by possibly below 28 million metric tonnes than emitted in the year 2015. Hazardous substances like lead, mercury, and flame retardants are frequently found in discarded electronic equipment, endangering ecosystems and human health.

Environmental deterioration is further exacerbated by the mining of raw materials for new goods, which results in habitat devastation and resource depletion. Longer product lifespans, sustainable product design, and ethical electronic waste handling are all necessary to address these problems.

Resource depletion

The approach of planned obsolescence is closely related to the serious issue of resource depletion. Planned obsolescence has a tremendous influence on our environment and finite resources, as shown by a multitude of data and evidence from different sources. The electronics sector provides a vivid illustration. Electronic garbage (also known as "e-waste") is one of the fastest-growing waste streams globally, with the globe producing an astounding 53 million metric tons of it per year, according to a 2020 report by the United Nations University. These abandoned electronic devices contain enormous

amounts of rare earth metals, precious metals like gold and silver, and minerals like copper and coltan, as well as valuable and non-renewable resources. Short product lifespans, accelerated advances in technology, and the consumer culture fostered by planned obsolescence all contribute to the problem.

This problem is best exemplified by the planned obsolescence of smartphones. They have an abundance of priceless materials in them. In fact, a single smartphone requires between 10–15 kg of ore, containing significant amounts of rare and precious metals. These resources' exploitation frequently includes mining methods that are harmful to the environment and can result in habitat loss, deforestation, and water pollution. Further aggravating climate change is the energy-intensive extraction and processing of raw materials, which adds to greenhouse gas emissions. One of the main causes of environmental deterioration and the overuse of limited natural resources is planned obsolescence. This emphasizes the essential need for environmentally friendly product design, longer product lifespans, responsible recycling, and a move towards a more circular and waste-free economy to reduce the negative effects of planned obsolescence on our world.

Tension regarding sustainability and innovation

Within the context of intentional obsolescence, the conflict between sustainability and innovation is obvious. On the one hand, manufacturers regularly release new features, designs, and technologies in an effort to persuade customers to upgrade or replace their products, which is one of the driving forces behind planned obsolescence. A crucial component of planned obsolescence's success is the allure of the newest technological advancement. However, this unrelenting drive for innovation may have a serious negative impact on the environment. According to the World Resources Institute, the fast replacement of electronic gadgets brought on by planned obsolescence

exacerbates resource depletion and presents problems with electronic trash (e-waste). In a time when sustainability is a top global goal, this is a pressing problem.

The struggle to strike a balance between innovation and sustainability causes the conflict. Durability, repairability, and resource efficiency are prioritized in sustainable design and production techniques. Striking this balance is a difficult task for manufacturers as they must satisfy consumer demand for innovation while also taking care of the ethical and environmental issues raised by planned obsolescence. It is possible to move forward with sustainable breakthroughs like modular design and recyclable materials, but doing so necessitates a fundamental change in the way products are thought of, created, and sold. As a result, the conflict between sustainability and innovation highlights how complicated and dynamic the planned obsolescence problem is.

Influence on the job market

Planned obsolescence has a complex impact on the labour market, with positive as well as negative consequences. In one scenario, planned obsolescence can encourage expansion in the economy and the creation of jobs in sectors where the average lifespan of a product is shorter. For instance, in the technology industry, the need for roles in research, development, manufacturing, and sales is frequently driven by periodic product turnovers, which expands job prospects.

The possibility for job instability is the other side of this dynamic, particularly in sectors where planned obsolescence is common. A project-to-project employment paradigm in which employees are employed for a particular item launch but risk uncertain employment opportunities when those goods become dated, could arise from restricted product longevity. Additionally, the accelerated pace of innovation brought on by planned obsolescence may render some workers' skill sets outdated. It will take a coordinated effort to balance the economic benefits of planned obsolescence with actions

to support impacted workers through training and recruitment programs, in addition to promoting environmentally friendly design methods that value job stability alongside new product development, so as to tackle these difficulties with employment.

Legal and ethical unease

Planned obsolescence raises humanitarian concerns about manufacturers' obligations to provide durable, long-lasting products that reduce waste and resource depletion. Legal experts disagree on the issue of whether planned obsolescence strategies qualify as dishonest or unjust corporate tactics. Such actions may violate consumer rights by misleading customers about the quality and worth of the products. Another major problem is the lack of candor in planned obsolescence disclosure, where decisions about product design are frequently concealed from customers. These moral and legal considerations highlight the necessity for more stringent laws and increased consumer education in order to effectively combat planned obsolescence's problems.

Companies have faced a number of suits and legal actions for engaging in deceptive planned obsolescence techniques. For instance, a class-action lawsuit was filed against Apple in the United States in 2017 over claims that the company purposefully slowed down older iPhone models through software updates to entice people to buy newer devices. This situation brought up moral questions regarding equality and transparency in the technological sector. Planned obsolescence is unethical because it runs counter to the values of sustainability and ethical manufacturing. It promotes an ideology of waste disposal that damages the planet and exhausts resources. It can also undermine customer faith in corporations and cast doubt on the financial accountability of businesses. Planned obsolescence can maintain a cycle of overconsumption that disproportionately impacts lower-income people and areas, therefore ethical implications also extend to social justice concerns. A well-rounded strategy that stimulates transparency in product design and marketing fosters longer product lifespans, prioritizes

consumer rights and environmental sustainability, and addresses these constitutional and moral challenges is vital.

Impacts on Consumer Well-being

The general premise of planned obsolescence is highly reliant on the deception of consumers, with the manner of manufacturing of goods using resources that intentionally lead to a lower product lifespan. This is crucial in manipulating consumers to make repeat purchases for a specific product constantly, which can prove to raise several ethical concerns especially if the product is monopolized and has limited substitutes. The cost imposed on customers is one of the most apparent effects of planned obsolescence. Budgets for households are strained by regular repairs and improvements attributed to planned obsolescence. The average person in the United States spends over one thousand dollars annually on new mobile devices, based on analysis by the New York Times, indicating a substantial portion of many people's disposable money. This monetary stress may culminate in reduced savings, greater debt levels, and a general decline in economic health.

Planned obsolescence has a cognitive toll that additionally impacts consumer well-being. Consumers may feel obligated to continually keep up with the most recent developments and advancements as an outcome of the continuous commercialization of new and improved items. Individuals who are unable to afford or follow up with these frequent commodity shifts may experience stress, anxiety, and a sense of inferiority as a consequence of this pressure. Additionally, planned obsolescence is an element of ecological damage which impacts the well-being of customers. inadequate handling of the huge volumes of electronic debris (e-waste) generated by decreased lifespans of goods can frequently result in environmental damage and medical risks in areas where electronic waste is treated. As previously mentioned, Apple's "Batterygate" incident, which emphasizes the ramifications for consumers, is another illustration of this. Apple

received criticism in 2017 for purposefully stalling previous versions of the iPhone via software updates, an action that prompted customers to invest in more recent models. This had an adverse effect on the wellbeing of people who felt duped by the company's activities in addition to eroding consumer trust.

Major Parties Involved and Their Views

France

France is infamous for being the very first nation to make the practice of planned obsolescence punishable by law in 2015, imposing up to a 300,000 euro fine, 2 years of imprisonment, and potentially around 5% of a company's annual turnover. The law mandates producers to supply replacement components and maintenance information for a specific time frame, typically two years, and to inform buyers about the projected lifespan of their goods.

Furthermore, France has taken an active role in European attempts to tackle planned obsolescence, aiding the European Union in establishing benchmarks and standardizing procedures. The French government has been extremely proactive in imposing measures and legislations that coerce companies who previously enforced planned obsolescence into nurturing strictly ethical and transparent marketing strategies that positively account for consumer wellbeing. For example, specifically in regard to planned obsolescence in the technological industry, France's legislative council has contrived a 'durability and repairability' rating that is directly projected onto the vast majority of electronic products manufactured. This system was first employed in 2021, with the country being the first ever to develop and instate an initiative surrounding this premise.

The guidelines followed by this EEE (Electric and Electronic Equipment) repairability index, which as of now has been constrained to a set range of electronic goods including phones, washing machines, televisions, lawnmowers etc, but hope to expand their reach to a plethora of other such devices in the future while the cause is joined by other organizations and institutions. The index judges products based on a variety of factors - availability of spare components, the price of these components, documentation, deconstruction, and other product-specific constituents. These criteria are all then assessed fairly and are amalgamated into producing an overall score out of ten. The greater the score obtained, the greater the repairability of the product. A novel durability index will be employed in conjunction with the actively exercised repairability index in order to integrate both the repairability and reliability aspects of a product, consequently allowing a more layered analysis of a product's alignment with planned obsolescence. These initiatives were first introduced in 2019 by the European Committee for Electrotechnical Standardization (CENELEC) in response to the largely deceptive and unethical issue of planned obsolescence. These initiatives developed by France are all designed towards directed the framework of their economy to a more circular and sustainable future.

European Union

Given its effects on consumer rights, sustainability, and the general condition of the financial system, planned obsolescence is of particular importance within the European Union (EU), where it has become a major issue. By recognizing the dire need for more environmentally friendly goods, the EU has taken preventative steps towards avoiding planned obsolescence. In order to successfully discourage planned obsolescence, the EU authorized the Ecodesign Directive in 2019, featuring specifications that enhance the resilience and serviceability of goods. Manufacturers must consider the wide-ranging effects of these laws on their product development and manufacturing procedures. Additionally, discussions about extending product lifespans

and lowering waste production have been led by the EU. For example, the EU Circular Economy Action Plan, which was launched in the year 2020, establishes an objective to transform the conventional economic model into one that is environmentally conscious and cyclical and in which products are manufactured to be durable and reusable. Public sentiment and consumer demands reaffirm the EU's keen interest in these issues.

In 2019, 77% of Europeans, as reported by Eurobarometer, took concerns about the environment into account during their decisions about their purchases, indicating a growing need for items which are not arbitrarily envisioned for obsolescence. Given its immense market and dominant standing on the global stage, the EU's role in confronting planned obsolescence is of utmost importance. The EU has the power to establish a precedent and affect international manufacturing quality by passing legislation promoting ethical procedures and safeguarding consumers. In fact, a new set of rules which was initially proposed in March of 2022 by the EU commission detailed an innovative and combative stratagem working against planned obsolescence within Europe. With 8 abstentions, 12 against, and 68 votes in favour, an overwhelming majority of parties involved were seen to be in avid support of bringing the pandemic of planned obsolescence to a halt. The proposed approach involved new digital passports which would be passed to both consumers and manufacturers with key knowledge regarding making educated purchases. Such intricacies would include methods of recycling and reusing a product, in addition to the ecological repercussions the item has. Consumers would even be able to compare passports via an online platform. Another aspect of this initiative also tackled another lingering after-effect of planned obsolescence - the influx of waste. The European Commission proposed a complete ban on the extermination of unsold goods such as electronic devices, textiles, footwear and other appliances. This ban also entailed that a manufacturing firm must provide precise details regarding the amount of products disposed of and a valid justification for doing so.

Due to its size and influence as a key economic syndicate, the EU is an essential player in the greater campaign against planned obsolescence and in favor of a healthier and more environmentally friendly manner of both consumption and manufacturing.

Germany

Germany, a nation renowned for its stringent consumer protection laws and commitment to sustainability, is especially concerned about planned obsolescence. Germany has taken a leading role in combating planned obsolescence thanks to a strong legal system and consumer lobbying. The movement known as "Right to Repair" is one noteworthy feature. This movement has experienced significant growth and public support in Germany. It underlines the necessity of giving consumers the freedom to fix existing items rather than making them buy new ones. Both the general population and decision-makers have expressed support for this campaign, including the Federal Environment Minister, who has firmly defended the Right to Repair principles. Germany's role in the campaign against planned obsolescence is of the utmost importance considering its status as the EU's leading economy and its track record for superior and meticulous craftsmanship.

The nation's strict laws and customer-focused philosophy constitute a precedent for other member states of the EU and are supportive of larger European Union projects focused on strengthening product durability and capacity for repair. Roughly 60% of German customers, according to a survey conducted by the German Environmental Agency, indicated they were interested in repairing their electronics, illustrating a growing desire for sustainable purchasing habits. In fact, the European Customer Centre Germany has been extremely active in enforcing the 2022 digital passport legislation and ban on the unnecessary destruction of unsold products within various regions spread throughout the country. However, the initiative has not reached a vast array of areas within the country and is also, as of now, constricted to repair requirements for the set list

of products discussed within the rules, leaving a large proportion of appliances out of the picture. Regardless, it is vital to keep in mind that Germany is a key contributor to the global drive to counteract planned obsolescence because of its proactive involvement in promoting the Right to Repair and environmentally friendly design of products.

Japan

In Japan, a country with a strong cultural respect for innovation and technology, planned obsolescence is an acute issue. Through its legislative framework, consumer awareness campaigns, and sustainable design initiatives, Japan has taken a proactive role in tackling the problem of planned obsolescence. The existence of planned obsolescence in Japanese housing and architecture is one distinctive aspect of the problem. A lot of residences in Japan are built with a design concept that encourages regular remodeling or reconstruction considering the country is notorious for its small living areas. Every thirty to forty years, due to this approach, houses are often entirely rebuilt or renovated, resulting in an enormous adverse impact on the surroundings. The Japanese government has been promoting energy-efficient and durable dwelling designs since it is aware of the sustainability issues raised by this approach.

Additionally, the nation runs public awareness programs to promote more environmentally friendly construction and restoration techniques. Because of Japan's large environmental imprint in housing and building, this issue is particularly important there. Due to its position as an economic powerhouse and its potential to serve as a role model for other countries, Japan must take a proactive role in promoting sustainable design and resolving planned obsolescence. The "Home Eco" campaign, run by the Japanese Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport, and Tourism, which promotes durable and energy-efficient housing, is one concrete illustration of Japan's commitment. The campaign was successful in changing customer preferences and increasing awareness of sustainable construction methods.

Development of Issue/Timeline

Date	Event	Outcome
1920's	Conception of planned obsolescence	This is when the concept of planned obsolescence as a marketing technique to increase profit margins first was outlined, with General Motors being one of the first companies in recorded history to engage in the manufacturing of a new model of a product with an intentionally short lifespan in order to widen the breadth of revenue they generate. Each model was minimally different yet still encouraged repeat purchases due to technological development.
1932	Bernard London's Proposal	A real estate dealer named Bernard London writes a piece titled "Ending the Depression Through Planned Obsolescence." He suggests using planned obsolescence as a strategy to boost economic expansion amid the period known as the Great Depression in this piece of writing. London noted that in order to increase demand and employment, products ought to have expiration times and individuals should be obliged to replace them.

1930s-1940s	The Bulb Conspiracy	This was a period where a plethora of at the time, widely known light manufacturers such as Phoebus and General Electric (GE) were declared guilty of taking part in the 'Phoebus Cartel', which was a multinational conglomerate that regulated the manufacturing of incandescent light bulbs within regions such as Europe and North Africa for a large proportion of this timeframe. The organization was accused of restricting the lifespan of the bulbs to a mere 1000 hours as a manipulation tactic designed to encourage repeat purchases.
1950s-1960s	Golden Age of Consumerism	After several large organizations and manufacturers, the Phoebus Cartel being one of them, being shut down during the World War II era, consumer culture as a phenomenon witnessed a huge surge in popularity post WWII. The growth of the consumer culture and a substantial economic boom were witnessed in the United States and other Western nations. To promote frequent product replacements, manufacturers actively adopted planned obsolescence as a marketing tactic.
1960	Vance Packard's 'The Waste Makers'	This was a novel authored by Vance Packard revolving around the premise of planned

		obsolescence and its links to consumerism. The novel was a bestseller at it's time of release, famously known for heavily criticizing the approach of planned obsolescence as a marketing technique for a variety of large brands and manufacturers. The book raised awareness about the issue and questioned the sustainability of a throwaway society. It also drew light to how American consumers tend to consume in excess, and how that is a habit that is of deep detriment.
1970s	U.S. Federal Trade Commission Hearings	Hearings were held by the American Federal Trade Commission (FTC) concerning planned obsolescence. These hearings centered on investigating methods to mitigate the matter through fostering the labeling of goods, transparency, safeguarding the freedom of customers to make repairs to their electronic devices, and pushing for a competitive market where manufacturers offer durability and sustainability. The FTC sought to promote ethical business practices that lessened waste products, preserved the interests of consumers, and developed a more environmentally friendly method of product development and production.

1975	FTC Guidelines on Durability Claims	To address planned obsolescence, the FTC issued standards on durability-related issues. The need for honest and forthcoming advertising concerning the product's lifespan and longevity had been highlighted by these standards. They sought to stop deceptive claims that would persuade consumers to buy products based on incorrect information. The rules aimed to increase consumer knowledge, safeguard the interests of consumers, and promote ethical company practices. By encouraging a greater degree of transparency in the market, they helped to reduce planned obsolescence.
The 2000s-2010s	Rapid evolution of technology	The technological industry saw a large spurt in the rate of advancement within several sectors of the field, which only further propelled the frequency at which various prototypes of products were produced within short time frames, leading to a mushrooming in the amounts of e-waste generated.
2012	'The Light Bulb Conspiracy' documentary by Cosima Dannoritzer	The traction this documentary gained, which focused on the planned obsolescence taking place in the lightbulb industry between the 1930s to 1940s aided in shedding light on the deceitful tactics employed by manufacturers during that era which are parallel to various

		techniques still used by several brands even now. The documentary helped provide insight into what possible action could be taken to combat this prolonged issue and the various impacts it has on several parties.
2010's - present-day	The Right to Repair movement	The 'Right to Repair' movement, which had its start as a grassroots initiative in the US, calls for legislation that would offer buyers the freedom to fix their own products. By ensuring that consumers have access to replacement parts, repair knowledge, and reasonably priced repair services, it seeks to combat planned obsolescence and ultimately give users the power to extend the life of their gadgets. Due to its focus on the larger issue of manufacturers creating goods with limited repairability, encouraging a culture of sustainability, and minimizing electronic waste, this movement has achieved international prominence. Alongside this movement, as mentioned before, various other large organizations holding global power such as the EU have also established laws that prohibit the practice of planned obsolescence and aim to decrease its negative repercussions.

Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

Right to Repair movement

Originating from the US, the Right to Repair movement is now a globally imposed initiative that encourages the widespread availability of repair manuals, affordable repair services, spare repair parts, and other sources of information regarding that capacity of a products repairability to the general public. This campaign aims to promote ethical manufacturing processes, backed up by legislative measures, and ensure that consumers are not taken advantage of by corporations. The "Right to Repair" movement helps create a market that is more sustainable and consumer-friendly by tackling planned obsolescence. With polls revealing that over 60% of Europeans take repairability into account when making purchasing decisions, this solution is in line with evidence demonstrating that consumers are becoming more interested in mending their equipment. With more nations, states, and regions passing laws in support of the "Right to Repair," consumers have the resources they need to use products longer, create less electronic waste, and combat the culture of planned obsolescence.

Consumer education

This is a method of alleviating planned obsolescence through, instead of focusing on the firms manufacturing intentionally non-durable products, the limelight is placed on enlightening consumers of their rights and instructing them on how to make sustainable and healthy economic decisions. Planned obsolescence and its economic and ecological repercussions have been made more widely known through initiatives like online resources and consumer advocacy campaigns. For instance, websites like iFixit promote a culture of repair and reuse by offering thorough tips and resources for mending goods. Additionally, groups like the Repair Café Foundation, which operates over 2,000 repair cafés globally, assemble volunteers to help people restore their own products, reduce waste, and promote sustainability.

Collaborative initiatives made by industries

One goal of several business operations is to minimize planned obsolescence altogether. For the electronics industry as a whole, the Consumer Technology Association (CTA) has created sustainability criteria that encourage businesses to give priority to eco-friendly design, durability, and repairability. These kinds of cooperative initiatives push businesses to use more ethical methods.

Possible Solutions

Strengthening legislations and regulations

An effective approach for reducing planned obsolescence is bolstering laws and regulations. These efforts have been pioneered by nations like France and Belgium, which have enacted statutes requiring manufacturers to reveal a product's anticipated lifespan and offer spare parts for a predetermined amount of time. Integrity, transparency, and consumer protection are all the objectives of these rules.

By requiring the provision of spare parts, they enable the repair of products and the extension of their useful lives, ultimately prohibiting manufacturers from using procedures for planned obsolescence. Directives from the European Union have also aided in the advancement of eco-design laws, the promotion of product durability, and the reduction of electronic waste.

Introducing the framework of a circular economy

By developing products for durability and numerous life cycles, this strategy places an emphasis on sustainability, resource efficiency, and waste reduction. A circular economy eliminates the need for frequent replacements brought on by planned

obsolescence by restoring, refurbishing, and repurposing items. Such a change would have a significant economic impact; the Ellen MacArthur Foundation estimates that by 2025, a shift to a circular economy could save $1 trillion in material costs. Additionally, a key component of preventing planned obsolescence is reducing electronic waste. According to the Global E-Waste Monitor, roughly 53 million metric tons of e-waste were produced in 2019; as a result, a more sustainable strategy is required. By adopting a system of circular economy, we can foster a more environmentally conscious and ethical approach to both consumption and manufacturing by reducing the environmental impact of consumer goods, promoting resource conservation, and challenging the culture of planned obsolescence.

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