

How Companies Gaslight Consumers.

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“People start pollution and people can stop it.” This is an excerpt from the “crying Indian” advert, that won multiple awards. Park, W. (2022, May 6) Like this, blaming consumers and consumerism for everything has been the norm since pollution became an important agenda in the 80’s. Fast-forward to now, environment-friendliness has become like a brand. Like buying a Starbucks gets anyone an illusion of smart, trendy or rich. Buying an ‘environment-friendly’, similarly, gets thoughtful, sensible and educated. While everyone is captivated to this new situation, there’s also something peculiar about the whole situation. Why aren’t big corporates held more responsible? After all, they’re the ones who hold the most power, importance, and ability to execute anything. Shouldn’t they be held more responsible? This argumentative essay aims to tackle exactly that spot. How, and why, aren’t bigger bodies more involved or held responsible for this? Furthermore, we will expand from the viewpoint we reached from discussing such situations, investigating what an ideal stance an individual could take.

Consumerism, especially represented by single use products, is often blamed for pollution in campaigns and adverts. While trying to thwart such practices could be argued beneficial for everyone, it isn’t. According to Park, W. (2022, May 6), such adverts were sponsored by corporations with deliberate intent to disperse public interest in the responsibility corporates hold as mass producers of single use products in the first place. By these adverts, people are nudged to ‘go green’ and consume clean products; the intent being to facilitate collective interest to power environmentalism. However, by logical flow, environmentalism is only pushed to the side, and profit is back on track, just as it was. This phenomenon is also described in Park, W. (2022, May 6) where greenwashing, a word that describes the strategy of using the false image of ‘green’ to sell commodities, is brought up. An instance for this is well shown from the case of a global giant, Starbucks. When Starbucks introduced its plastic straw phase-out policy, saw a much-needed increase in its stock price. Wells, P. (2018, July 9) However, later paper straws found out to be neither beneficial to the environment nor harmless to humans. Macijauskaite, E. (2022, February 28). This is in no means beneficial with the whole situation.

Not only that, but while bending responsibility to individuals is a reason to be a patron of such campaigns, it is also important to note that such campaigns are also directly beneficial to corporations. For instance, Starbucks, when it introduced its plastic straw phase-out policy, saw a much-needed increase in its stock price. Wells, P. (2018, July 9) The paper straw was later found out to be neither beneficial to the environment nor harmless to humans. Macijauskaite, E. (2022, February 28). This is, in essential, profiting on good intent to keep the

environment clean.

Passively avoiding duties or profiting while abandoning it isn't the only thing corporates are doing. In many cases, big bodies such as corporations hold the majority of responsibility in pollution. According to Laville, S. (2019, November 6), ghost gear, which refers to fishing gear thrown off-board consists 86% of the mega-plastic in the great Pacific garbage patch. The gear is littered since it is more profitable than to repair or take it ashore to properly discard it. This serves as a great example of active pollution for profit.

The people who are most capable of turning the world to a better direction, are standing in that place, in essence, because there is some expectation of good will inside them. Such expectations lead people to voting to some political figure or buying some product. While such activities we have examined aren't something that should be obliterated, it also should not be something where people pin their sole hope onto. Imminent danger can be only resolved with proper organization, instead of mutual hope without action. Flashy adverts and consuming products advertised green cannot be a new form of sustainability, and only a new form of consumerism.

In conclusion, while our public narrative on environmental conservation reminds people of their responsibilities, it is important to chase governments and corporations up for their natural obligations. While companies are bulking up money and polluting the earth, this is not a matter of right and wrong, nor is it a matter of who should be held responsible. Instead, it is a matter of survival, finding the solution where we could compose a sustainable society. We should carefully evaluate our current society and find a new way of transaction.

Citations:

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