

Right to repair submission

A society based on overconsumption cannot succeed without consequence. The addiction to shopping and overconsumption has resulted in problems relating to environmental (Woodruffe-Burton, Eccles, and Elliott 2005; Cherrier 2007; Newholm and Shaw 2007), political sustainability and global economic inequality, reduced well-being and happiness, overwork, instant gratification and a constant pace of haste, bland cultural homogeneity of life, a fragmented community and society with fragmented social relationships and a reduction of civic connectedness and responsibility (Humphery 2013).

On average, only 1% of what has been purchased is still in use six months later (D. Williams, Fletcher, and Stevenson 2009), and we "consume in a day what it has taken the planet 10,000 days to produce" (Kleanthous in D. Williams, Fletcher, and Stevenson 2009, 18).

I recently complete a PhD, (*The Changing Paradigms of Contemporary Consumerism: sustainability, adaptation and spatial tactics for shopping scapes* at UTAS) on how the *activities* of consuming and the *form/design* of the place we consume, as opposed to the *things* we consume, can, and do, impact on providing sustainable forms of consumerism.

A Right to Repair enables and supports the four tactics that were identified in this research as important for moving towards sustainable forms of consumerism.

Tactic 1: Curious space. Curiosity has been shown to have more lasting behavioural changes as the person has engaged with something that is an intrinsic value rather than an extrinsic value where a 'carrot or stick' approach must be given to create value.

In a study done by the Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce (RSA), addressing the notion of curiosity and energy usage, it was found that "curiosity sustains our interest, and motivates us to inquire or explore. Intrinsic motivation is thought to be stimulated by curiosity" (Rowson 2012, 14). Rowson describes curiosity as, "a focused or exploratory inquisitiveness that motivates us to connect what we don't know to what we do know" (Rowson 2012, 3).

Intrinsic motivators are important for resilient sustainable consumption, as they provide motivations that are linked with inherent values and sustained behavioural changes.

The activity of repair when undertaken by the consumer engages this intrinsic value which can lead to more sustained forms of behavioural change and a greater level of understanding of the products consumed. This in turn can impact on more sustainable forms of consumption.

Tactic 2: Permitting agency. Agency not only provides consumers with a greater level of control over their environments and therefore behaviour but also provides the consumer with greater access to choice and information.

By providing the consumer with an option to repair - either by the consumer themselves, the manufacturer or a third party – agency to choose how to engage with the broken

product is provided, as well as agency to do so. This further engages the consumer with consume practices, products and services and can in turn encourage more sustainable forms of practice.

Tactic 3: Custodianship and access. By revaluing our connection to products as custodians, rather than as owners, the value of access is coveted over ownership and an appreciation for life cycle has an effect. As custodians there lies a responsibility to the community of users, rather than a responsibility only to oneself.

It can be seen that products when broken and cannot be repaired (or expensively repaired beyond the economic value of the object) lack any custodianship or value and are termed waste. A right to repair can increase this notion of custodianship and increase the value of objects, which can be seen to have value, through repair, even though temporarily broken. Access to repair is therefore inextricably connected to this idea of custodianship by the consumer themselves, the manufacturer or a third party.

Tactic 4: Co-option. This involves the interweaving of current practices with sustainable practices to ensure a continuation and movement forward of sustainable practices to in the short to long term be the dominant form of consumerism, while recognising the difficulty of immediate change for the systems already in place.

For the Right to Repair, this involves the cooperation of all of the stakeholders involved recognising the challenges and compromises which may need to be made but also seeing the opportunities these changes can bring. The importance here is that end goal is clear to all.

In summary

The Right to Repair is an important step in moving towards sustainable forms of consumerism, not only as an activity in and of itself, but increases the possibilities for consumers to change other current unsustainable consumer practices to more sustainable forms.

References

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