THE HAUL

SUSTAINABILITY & ACCOUNTABILITY



OVERCONSUMPTION

JULY 2026

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Letter From the Editor-in-Chief.....3
by Emi Domingue

Credits.....4

Shifting our Perspective.....5
by Emi Domingue

Buy Two, Get None Free.....10
by Julie Cervantes

Textile Waste.....16
by Jordan Haddad

The Underlying Message Behind Sonny Angels.....21
by Leslie Rocha

Consumer's Backyard.....26
by Emi Domingue

Ramen & Slop.....27
by Julie Cervantes

BUY BUY BUY.....28
by Jordan Haddad

ConsumerEats.....29
by Leslie Rocha



The focus is consumption: who is consuming the most and why?

Emi Domingue
Editor-In-Chief

Don't worry, this isn't sponsored. That's the biggest tagline given by influencers and creators who spend more to make more. The focus is consumption: who is consuming the most and why? This magazine targets the growing generation of students who are becoming educated through technology. One page at a time, we've aimed to bring a fun but informative perspective on how our daily media affects us personally. Through this lens, we hope to foster a new sense of inspiration to take time away from the noise and focus on other tasks.

The Haul

WRITERS AND EDITORS

University of California: Riverside
WRIT 030



By Adya - "It is okay to wear THAT same outfit for the 18th time."

Image courtesy of Medium.

Editor-in-Chief
Emi Domingue

Creative Director
Julie Cervantes

Managing Editor(s)
Jordan Haddad
Leslie Rocha

Faculty Advisor
Professor Latipa X
Dr. Clare O'Brien

Shifting Our Perspective

By Emi Domingue

On January 15th, 2024, Time magazine invited Jane Goodall to speak on a panel discussion about her hope for a better future. This interview is 13 minutes long and respects and honors Jane's legacy as an environmentalist, trying to shape the minds of people. Her legacy of conservation work spans from the 60s until the 21st century, in a time when Americans faced economic and cultural challenges that shaped public opinion. She grew up dreaming of living with animals in Africa to grow their populations. From her youth, she has always loved animals and the environment for giving us so much. Jane started as a researcher and quickly grew up to become an influential philanthropist and environmentalist. She has seen many challenges within the world that harmed not only the environment, but the people as well. So how does Jane analyze this mess with optimism? The interview is influential because she speaks from passion, not hatred. The discussion is about the reality of biodiversity and suggests steps to finding solutions towards climate change. Interviews like these are often undershared within mainstream media, something that could be changed through Jane's perspective.



Image courtesy of Getty.

"Miss Goodall and the World of Chimpanzees"
CBS Photo Archive

Shifting Our Perspective

By Emi Domingue

Jane Goodall focused on the long-term results that environmental degradation creates. Her legacy of conservation work spans from the 60s until the late 2020s, at a time when Americans faced economic and cultural challenges that shaped public opinion. The interview touches on Jane's ability to speak lightheartedly on critical topics. Her response to this is gratitude, recognizing the environment as her partner to success. Highlighting her relationship to the environment as a successful one is considerable based on her life's mission. At the time of this interview, the U.S. was going through high inflation rates and a major climate crisis. Jane's first message towards this is acknowledging the decline of gas emissions and putting in the effort to live more sustainably. "With the climate crisis and loss of biodiversity which are interlinked looming over us, we need to address every single solution there is" (TIME, 1:25-1:36). Her awareness to change is immense, and practicing her forms of action can be helpful—replanting trees, creating communities for recycling, and volunteering for organizations. These are beginner solutions that won't be automatic, but they recognize what needs to be started to make a significant change. "And they're not seeing that we all need to get together and tackle them together to share the information" (TIME, 2:36-2:41). Seeing how divided society has become, Jane's voice puts a greater strain on efforts to address climate change because people can't seem to agree.



Image courtesy of the Jane Goodall Institute.

Michael Cox - "Jane Goodall"

Shifting Our Perspective

By Emi Domingue

Taking action is the biggest responsibility that we are given from Jane's perspective. The biggest aspect of conservation work that she advocates for is taking action and telling stories across a variety of audiences. Organizations like World Wildlife.org center their work on scientific research, wildlife conservation, and philanthropy. From their website, information about nature and wildlife is given with references to local volunteer work. "Biodiversity sustains nature's contributions essential to our health, safety, and protection. It helps regulate climate, protect us from floods, storms, and other disasters, and support livelihoods and economies around the world" (World Wildlife Org). Nature has its resources to maintain a healthy environment, and it was Jane's life focus to protect this. Her work led to many collaborations with organizations like World Wildlife, where they shared stories on climate change that provided a positive outlook on Earth. "There are still some people who say yes, the climate is changing, but it's part of the cycle.

Well, it may be part of the cycle but is enormously influenced by human activities" (Time, 5:35-6:07). Biodiversity is the reason for natural changes to occur. As Jane stated, human activity only worsens these changes by mixing harmful toxins and wastes into older ecosystems. Her concerns are clear and the evidence shows from climate change temperature rates shown. Climate.gov shows a global temperature rate from years as early as 1940 to now. In 2024 the global temperature rate was states as the warmest year since the 1850s. Since then, temperatures have only increased and Jane's perspective points directly to the root cause for these issues. She became a role model for showing empathy and power against monetized systems and desensitized behavior. "I think some Nations have lost trust in others, and I certainly think people have lost trust in their politicians" (Time, 8:40-8:48). She is a notable figure because of her continuous optimism for a healthier future. It is from this optimism that research can continue to progress so that natural habitats can flourish.

Shifting Our Perspective

By Emi Domingue



Image courtesy of Netflix.

Ivan Dudynsky - “Famous Last Words”

The final element to her interview is “the window of opportunity”. The window represents time, and this is shown through evolution and climate change. Biodiversity needs a healthy environment to survive on because there is so much variety within these habitats that need the necessary resources to grow. The window of opportunity becomes the outlet for putting our hands in the mud. Jane’s perspective allows younger generations to have hope in healing the future, but not forcing anything either because it should come from the heart. “The world is a mess. We can turn things around, but only if we take action now, but we are approaching the end.” (Time, 11:45- 12:00). Today, social media becomes the biggest window of opportunity for many sources of information. Through YouTube interviews like TIME, mass audiences can control their algorithm and grow the attention of each piece of media consumed. Jane’s focus on action is very apparent, and her emphasis on time means that we have already lost so much. Without people gathering and sharing stories that represent what is lost, then the histories will be forgotten, and soon repeat themselves again. Her worries are fair, and her messages are clear, but not enough people are given this information by default. To learn about these stories, it has to be researched, but it should automatically be suggested like a new music video is. Even while it is accessible to most, it is not always presented within people's algorithms. New generations should be given these sources of information daily, and by doing so, more people can be aware and hold space for environmental change.

Shifting Our Perspective

By Emi Domingue

The point of this essay is to touch on Jane Goodall's impact as a speaker and mentor to younger generations so that more people could grow aware of how their lifestyle affects the future. From collaborating with wildlife organizations and presenting notable information about how biodiversity works, research, and Jane's experiences work together in presenting how every living thing is a factor in change. It's prevalent that the information given to the public is not relevant in fighting climate change or learning about new issues. Consequently, the world is growing in population every day, and innovations are meticulously researched, all while the environment can't keep up with these inventions. Time magazine inviting Jane to speak with them is significant because it means they are one source that is willing to call for help. The legacy behind Jane's work continues to thrive as philanthropic communities use her name as a beacon of hope. Advocating in marches, signing petitions, and creating space for open discussion are the first steps to taking action. Retelling important stories and changing the way social media is used can activate a shift in environmental awareness. Consumerism does not need to be used through social media, but also to shift environmental harm. Jane's work proves that it is not easy, but it is the most fulfilling when done right.

Work Cited

TIME. "Davos 2024: Jane Goodall on Maintaining Hope on a Messy Planet." YouTube, 16 Jan.
2024, www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z8z7e4q_rns. Accessed 30 June 2026.

"What Is Biodiversity? | WWF." World Wildlife. Accessed July 23, 2026.
https://www.worldwildlife.org/resources/explainers/what-is-biodiversity/.

"Climate Change: Global Temperature | NOAA Climate.Gov." Climate.gov. Accessed July
23, 2026.
https://www.climate.gov/news-features/understanding-climate/climate-change-global-temperature.

Buy Two, Get None Free

By Julie Cervantes



Image courtesy of @Rose_blossom88 on Lemon8 - "Target Book Sale Steals"

From King James Bible to Hoover's It Ends with Us, books have been tools of both knowledge and novelty since their invention, though there has been a decline in their popularity with the advent of the internet. However, the emergence of online book-sharing communities such as BookTok have sparked interest in them once more—so much so that creators, such as @heyitsmeonetwothree17 on TikTok, show off their massive book hauls proudly. Though a book haul may seem less shameful due to its contents, a haul is still a haul, and like other haul videos online, they are often the result of an algorithm and society that idealize overwhelming abundance, and the strategies of corporations to reach into the pockets of consumers. One strategy used by corporations in particular is a sale—surely a "Buy Two, Get One Free" sale is for the buyers' benefit. A book haul TikTok video by @heyitsmeonetwothree17 highlights how modern-day book consumption is not solely based on wanting to gain knowledge, but can also be used to satisfy impulses, much like other forms of consumption. Additionally, it suggests that consumers who watch haul content may have smaller budgets for luxuries, but are still willing to splurge larger sums of money when they feel that they are getting the most value for their dollars.

Buy Two, Get None Free

By Julie Cervantes

Currently, the state of book consumption has shifted away from its original information-sharing and literary roots, becoming yet another item to overconsume, like any other novelty. In the book haul TikTok video by @heyitsmeonetwothree17, the creator expresses that she, "[doesn't] remember what [she] ordered...because [she] had a couple hours left before the sale ended," and was "going crazy," because of that time crunch (@heyitsmeonetwothree17, 0:24-0:31). Immediately, the creator's quick, frantic tone and words confirms that she was most likely not placing much care into deciding which books she was purchasing, and that her goal was simply to buy as many books as possible before the sale ended. With such little care placed into considering her purchases, the book haul is no different than any other makeup, skincare, or trinket haul seen on TikTok. Contrary to the creator partaking in a modern trend of a mindlessly-purchased haul, historically, books have been more highly valued both monetarily and culturally for their information. As Ralph Waldo Emerson stated in The American Scholar, “Books are the best of things...they are for nothing but to inspire” (Emerson, 4), meaning that books bought with little care and to satisfy avaricious impulses are not fulfilling their roles as books.



Image courtesy of Target - “Buy Two, Get One Free” Promotion.

Those discounted haul books will not inspire or educate if they are only used to add to a pile of “to be read” on a dusty shelf—books bought in such a way are merely another tool of overconsumption, contrary to their historical purpose.

Part of what makes modern day book consumption stray away from its historical purpose of passing around information is the increased accessibility caused by their decrease in price, as well as the creation of online shopping. Currently, the average price of a book in America, where @heyitsmeonetwothree17 resides, is anywhere from $10 to $35 (Ebook Writing Experts 2024), while the average daily wage is anywhere from $205 to $255 (Social Security Administration 2024).

Buy Two, Get None Free

By Julie Cervantes

Almost 150 years prior in the year 1876, Ralph Waldo Emerson stated, “If we encountered a man of rare intellect, we should ask him what books he read” (Emerson, 157), highlighting the intertwined nature of books and intelligence. However, at this point in time, books were not as accessible to the general public as they are now and to the creator. In 1876 America and with inflation adjustments, the average price of a book was between $31 to $47 (Shove, xiii), and the average daily wage was $68.28 (U.S. Dept of Labor Bulletin #18 1898). In the time of Emerson, one could expect to spend almost an entire day’s wage on a single volume, while a modern American could purchase several with their daily wage. With much more disposable income than their ancestors, the average working class person can afford to partake in unprecedented levels of consumption. The invention of online shopping further increases the rate at which people spend their money, as the physical barrier to obtain items like books is nearly eradicated. With just a few clicks on a website, a person similar to @heyitsmeonetwothree17 can buy several books during a sale just like her, without the need to haul around heavy volumes or dig through store shelves.

However, the unprecedented accessibility of books and increased disposable income for the average person does not automatically mean that a large haul can happen at any given time.

Though the price of books has lowered in the recent century, economically speaking, the consumption of books demonstrated by the @heyitsmeonetwothree17’s TikTok haul video highlights how despite audiences the urge to impulse buy, they often have smaller budgets to work with, and will splurge under the condition that they feel that they are getting fair deals. In the video, the creator unboxes a total of eight books stemming from an online Target book sale. With the average price of a book ranging from $10 to $35 (Ebook Writing Experts 2024), a consumer can expect to spend anywhere from $80 to $280 for the same amount of books, not including extra expenses such as taxes and shipping. However, the Target book sale was a "Buy Two, Get One Free" deal, meaning that the book cost would have been brought down to a range of $60 to $210.

Buy Two, Get None Free

By Julie Cervantes

This decrease in price makes the prospect of purchasing so many books at once seem more obtainable for the average consumer, as the sale guarantees that they will be rewarded with a "free book" if they meet the minimum of two books. Even if the consumer only needed a single book, the allure of the sale, coupled with the influence of haul content, can be enough to convince an otherwise hesitant consumer to purchase more than they need, all because they feel like they are getting the greatest value for their money. Haul content has the allure of displaying abundance that viewers may aspire to achieve, and this book haul is no exception. However, the accessibility of haul content made by influencers, who may come off as more "relatable" to an audience, has made the allure manifest into urges, which then becomes impulsive shopping. However, consumers will not let the impulses immediately come into play, as they still recognize that spending money is an investment, and that investment should have the greatest yield for the amount put in.

A simple book haul video made by @heyitsmeonetwothree17, a creator whose content centers on reading and book-related content, may seem like a scholarly bookworm giving into their passion when given the chance. However, the current trend of mass-purchasing books reveals that many of the purchased books are not being valued as tools of information, but as another item to consume via impulsive shopping. Despite impulses, consumers are not always willing to give into them, only satisfying their urges if they feel as though their money is buying them as much as possible. Books, despite having a reputation of being mediums of information, are reduced to novelties when consumed so blindly and abundantly. What allows for such blind buying is a combination of the monetary value of books decreasing, disposable income becoming more widely available, and the lack of physical barriers due to online shopping. Naturally, fewer barriers existing can lead to overconsumption and impulse buying, though impulses can be inhibited or promoted by the existence of discounts and getting “the best bang for your buck”.

Despite hesitation existing in modern day consumption, the fact that overconsumption exists, and has even found a place within the literary space, ultimately means that the medium of overconsumption—in this case, the books—will have its cultural value watered down. sale comes to many.

Buy Two, Get None Free

By Julie Cervantes

Where books once stood as humanity's choice of medium to relay stories and knowledge to each other, they now serve as yet another trendy item to buy in bulk when a sale comes to many.

Work Cited

1. heyitsmeonetwothree17. “BOOK HAUL :).” *TikTok*, 5 July 2026, https://www.tiktok.com/@heyitsmeonetwothree17/video/7659104983488548110. Accessed 8 July 2026.
2. Emerson, Ralph Waldo, 1803-1882. “Letters and Social Aims.” *Gutenberg.Org*, 2023, https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/71393/pg71393-images.html. Accessed 10 July 2026.
3. “Ebook Writing Experts.” *Ebookwritingexperts.Com*, 2025, https://ebookwritingexperts.com/blog/how-much-does-a-book-cost. Accessed 11 July 2026.
4. Social Security Administration. “National Average Wage Index.” *Www.Ssa.Gov*, 2023, https://www.ssa.gov/OACT/COLA/AWI.html. Accessed 11 July 2026.
5. Emerson, Ralph. *“The American Scholar.”* 1837, https://la.utexas.edu/users/hcleaver/330T/350kPEEEmersonAmerSchTable.pdf. Accessed 10 July 2026.
6. “Cheap Book Production In The United States, 1870-1891 - Raymond Howard Shove (University of Illinois Library, 1937) : Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming : Internet Archive.” Internet Archive, 2021
7. United States. Bureau of Labor. "September 1898 : Bulletin of the United States Bureau of Labor, No. 18, Volume III," Bulletin of the United States Bureau of Labor, Nos. 1 - 100 (September 1898). https://fraser.stlouisfed.org/title/3943/item/477571, accessed on July 11, 2026.



Image courtesy of Dreamstime
Manuel Milan Checa - “Untitled”



Image courtesy of Louisiana Channel.
Klaus Elmer - "Mika Rottenberg"

Would we consume so much if it was not glamourized?

Analyses of Consumption

Textile Waste

By Jordan Haddad



Image courtesy of Green Peace Africa.
Kevin McElvaney - "Untitled"

Textile waste is one of the many devastating effects of overconsumption. Unused clothes often end up in landfills or, worse, as pollution. A short documentary posted by Big Dog Productions called "Obroni Wawu - The Revival" reveals what happens to this waste when it does not reach the landfill. "Obroni Wawu" translates to "dead white man's clothes" and is a term used in Ghana to refer to the piles, almost hills, of used clothes that come from other countries. The documentary being posted on YouTube demonstrates how social media can spread positive messages about environmental issues. The documentary itself showcases The Revival, a non-profit organization based in Ghana that aims to combat this textile waste in different ways. Similarly, the issue of textile waste is also being tackled by individuals. Emilee Shield is a content creator on TikTok who promotes sustainability by making content that shows her process of frogging yarn from thrifted sweaters. Frogging refers to the action of unraveling a knitted or crocheted item, usually to restart a project or fix a mistake. In this case, to turn entire articles of clothing back into yarn, essentially recycling them. Many efforts are being made to bring attention to the issue of textile waste. Activism can be achieved on many different scales. Whether it is entire institutions or just individuals sharing their sustainable practices, social media can work to educate the public on these practices. It can shift people's perspectives from seeing environmental issues as out of their hands to something they can participate in solving.

Textile Waste

By Jordan Haddad

The waste generated by the fashion industries of industrialized nations ends up in places outside the countries where it originated. These industries make a profit for themselves in their own domains while devastating the environment of others with no regard. In the YouTube documentary, a beach in Ghana is shown with an entire layer of trash, mostly clothes, covering a vast stretch of the sand, with the founder of The Revival, Yayra Agbofah, stating, “I don't think you in Europe or in the global North leave your beaches to be this dirty. Why does it have to happen to us?” (Big Dog Productions 0:48-0:56). He compares the global North’s beaches to his own to show that they have little care for others and want to avoid dealing with the negative effects. They keep their own beaches clean while dirtying others’ beaches, all while making a profit for themselves. This comparison of beaches highlights the environmental injustice that is created through improper waste management. The fact that the majority of the waste seen in the video consists of clothing helps visualise how significant the issue of textile waste actually is. The people who live near the pollution that was not even created by themselves are then left to clean it up themselves.

Because the waste is pushed so far away from the consumers that create it, it is almost impossible for them to see the devastation that they are contributing to. The documentary serves to hold these industries accountable and presents the environmental costs they perpetuate to the consumers. With the documentary being on social media, viewers can become aware of this problem and the many initiatives like The Revival that exist to solve it.



Image courtesy of Getty Images.
Martin Bernetti - “Untitled”



Image courtesy of Ecotextile News.
Joe Pinkstone - "Textile waste challenging planetary boundaries"

While this issue seems bleak, steps are being taken to resolve it. The Revival's homepage features a section that displays its impact. This includes 13,009,216 textile waste diverted from landfills, 76 jobs created, 12,329 upcycled products, and an estimated 27,196 tonnes of CO2 emissions avoided (The Revival). By providing the actual effects of their initiative, The Revival gives hope for tackling the daunting task of reducing textile waste. It combats the idea that environmental destruction is too vast and irreversible for any efforts to be actually impactful, which is a major roadblock in getting people to contribute to sustainable efforts. Despite the unfair situation they were put in, The Revival is still able to create a positive impact in their community. They represent how people can actually make a difference when so many things are working against them. Past their homepage, another section on their website introduces an upcoming Upcycling Club launch for people in their community to participate in (The Revival). The Revival not only shows that they have made an impact, but they also invite their community to do the same. This Upcycling Club would bring more people into their cause and teach people about how to also combat textile waste themselves. With more people involved in sustainable practices, issues like textile waste can be solved more easily. These people can also become aware of how prominent this problem actually is and possibly find even more ways they can be part of the solution. Just through their website, The Revival shows their fight against textile waste, while involving their community in their efforts to show that people do actually make a difference.

Another example of people making an effort towards getting rid of textile waste is Emilee Shield's content. She is an example of the ways individuals can make an impact, and by sharing her experience, she proves that social media platforms can send positive messages to a great number of people. The creator presents the problem of textile waste to her viewers, describing it as "suffocating," while simultaneously presenting her solution, taking used sweaters from thrift stores and returning them to yarn, all in her video title (Shield). She addresses a large issue and shares her experience in combating it to raise awareness. The title gives viewers a background to what her actions actually solve. Instead of just telling people about this issue, she shows an accessible and useful process that benefits the environment and also serves as a way to save money on yarn. In the actual contents of the video, Emilee Shield shows her entire process of recycling old sweaters, starting by taking them from a thrift store, turning them back into yarn, and laying out the end product after doing so. She ends up with a few bundles of yarn from just one sweater (Shield). Showing her process helps convince the viewers to do the same by demonstrating how simple the process is. By showing the results of this process, the audience can also see how much material goes into the clothes, which gives a reference as to the waste that is produced by discarded clothes. It makes it more convincing that textile waste is actually a problem when people start seeing the waste not just as a couple of items of clothing, but as many bundles of materials. Ultimately, Emilee Shield shifts the perspective of an overwhelming environmental concern and turns it into a sustainable practice through social media.

To conclude, activism can be found in many places, as seen through the documentary of The Revival, The Revival's website, and Emilee Shield's content, which all address textile waste. The documentary informs the public about the issue, the communities that face the issue, and who is doing something about it. Pointing viewers towards things that have a positive impact can have a positive impact itself.

To add, The Revival physically brings people together to work towards solutions to textile waste. They show how groups can work towards a desirable goal, which is eliminating textile waste in this case. On the other hand, Emilee Shield personally combats textile waste and encourages her viewers to do the same. She represents the individual and how one person can be significant to a cause. When combined, all of these depictions of activism cover the different ways environmental issues are being remedied and how there are many ways to be activists. The documentary and Emilee Shield show that spreading awareness is a way to improve the environment. The creator and The Revival exemplify actions that can be and are being done to resolve textile waste. With so much news about the negative aspects of environmental issues, it is easy to think that there is nothing to be done. However, when looking at the ways people fight against these circumstances, it provides hope that it is possible to do something about it.



Image courtesy of Imperial College London.
Tim Mitchell - "Untitled"

Work Cited

Big Dog Productions. "Obroni Wawu - The Revival Short Documentary" YouTube, 10 November 2025, youtu.be/HHXbEMCCEQE?si=sPFltwCL6wYterDc}

"Home" The Revival, youtu.be/HHXbEMCCEQE?si=sPFltwCL6wYterDc

Shield, Emilee. "I take thrift store sweaters and return them to yarn because our planet is suffering from textile waste," TikTok, 23 May 2026, www.tiktok.com/t/ZP8GbKj7v/

The Underlying Message Behind Sonny Angels

By Leslie Rocha



Image courtesy of Sonny Angel. "Flower Series"

Thump, thump, thump, the heart races in excitement. One person scrolls through TikTok, another finds themself in a store. Both lay their eyes on a blind box. A blind box contains figurines or plushies hidden until opened. Popular blind box brands include Sonny Angel, PopMart, and Smiski. Blind boxes have exponentially grown to be loved. Specifically, Sonny Angels have become very popular through TikTok. Currently, there are about 445.7K posts with the #sonnyangel, with most of the creators being young adults (TikTok). These posts include videos such as unboxings, trading events, or collection updates. On July 1, 2026, a young creator named Arianna posted a TikTok video where she unboxed a full set of Sonny Angels. By exploring this video, it is revealed that Sonny Angels influence overconsumption by functioning as an escape from adulthood.



Image courtesy of Sonny Angel. "Strawberry Love"

When watching this TikTok video, one would assume Sonny Angels were created for children (Ariannaa.i). However, Toru Soeya, the creator, created them to comfort young women facing economic hardships. This purpose has successfully developed. This is because Sonny Angels evoke comforting feelings that many young adults long for when facing stress. Sonny Angels are angelic, babylike boy figurines. Therefore, they work as symbolic figures to show that a lot of consumers, especially young adults, undergo a psychological regression. According to Freud, "The impulse will find occasion to regress in this way when the exercise of its function in a later and more developed form meets with powerful external obstacles, which thus prevent it from attaining the goal of satisfaction" (Freud 286). This means that when people find themselves in very difficult and stressful situations, they unconsciously regress back to comforting developmental stages. In young adults where stress overpowers their emotional well-being, this means regressing to their childlike preferences.

The Underlying Message Behind Sonny Angels

By Leslie Rocha

These preferences are reinforced by baby schema, which describes infantile physical features that are perceived as cute and trigger caretaking behavior (Glocker et al.). Sonny Angels illustrate this as they have big eyes, light pink blush spread on their cheeks, and are pocket-sized. According to a study, "Both women and men gave higher caretaking motivation ratings to high and unmanipulated baby schema infants than to low baby schema infants" (Glocker et al.). This means that consumers are likely to form a caregiving attachment to the Sonny Angels because of their baby appearance. By forming this attachment, studies have shown it improves stress and relaxation levels (Ko et al.). As a result, consumers are influenced to purchase multiple Sonny Angels as they bring comfort and escape from adulthood stress.

Another important element to explore in this video is the psychology behind a Sonny Angel being labeled rare. By being labeled "rare," consumers who face pressures in adulthood are influenced to purchase multiple boxes for a sense of validation.



Image courtesy of @shutupkole on Instagram.

"Sonny Angels Unboxing"

In this video, Arianna states, "We are definitely Robby hunting this series" (Ariannaa.i, 0:08). In this series, there are eight different figurines, one of which is a secret, and another is a Robby Angel. Robby is the name of the rarest figurine. The chance of pulling a Robby is a 1 in 144 chance, so pulling one is considered "high rank" or "superior." So the words "Robby hunting" influence consumers to purchase multiple boxes and sets for the chance of pulling a Robby, even when the chance of pulling a duplicate is high. This is due to a psychological term called a variable reinforcement schedule. A variable reinforcement schedule is defined as an unpredictable reward system. This means that someone cannot predict the number of tries it will take to get the item they desire the most. Because the consumer does not know which figurine they will get, they will keep purchasing the same box until they get the "rarest" one, like a Robby. To reinforce this idea, loot boxes in a game called Overwatch mirror the same layout as Sonny Angels.

The Underlying Message Behind Sonny Angels

By Leslie Rocha

They contain random items such as skins or emotes, where some are ranked more rare than others. In this research, 57 university students watched 49 videos of loot box unboxings (Larche et al.). According to the research, “findings also suggest that items of greatest rarity were the most subjectively and physiologically arousing, hedonically pleasing, and importantly the mode inducing of urge to open another box” (Larche et al.). By being labeled rare, consumers believe that an item is worth more only because there are not many. Consumers therefore will purchase multiple boxes for the chance of acquiring the rare item. For a young adult who may be struggling, acquiring a Robby would be a great achievement, giving them a sense of validation. This is because rareness symbolizes being “high status,” so purchasing multiple boxes for a chance of obtaining a Robby may become a necessity to them.

Furthermore, another important element in this video is the packaging. The packaging of this series is very alluring. It reveals that colors on packaging can symbolize what a consumer identifies as summer.



Image courtesy of Sonny Angel. “Summer Vacation”

Given that this series is summer vacation themed, colors such as yellow, green, and pink wrap around the package (Ariannaa.i). The color yellow has been associated with words such as happy, excited, and joyful. The color green has been associated with words such as calm, relaxing, and growth. According to a study, most participants stated that “The color yellow was seen to be lively and energetic and elicited positive emotions including happiness and excitement because it was associated with the sun, blooming flowers, and summertime” (Kaya). Young adults who are constantly working and feel like they don’t have a “summer” rely on these products to feel in place. These bright colors appeal to them as a way to feel that they are not missing out. In addition to the colors, in the video, when Arianna unboxes the Sonny Angel, she doesn’t rip open the box, she counts down “3,2,1” and pops the top of the box open (Ariannaa.i). Before popping the box open, Arianna releases a rush of dopamine. Dopamine, which is the brain’s reward system, is released when something enjoyable or rewarding happens.

The Underlying Message Behind Sonny Angels

By Leslie Rocha

This can be when one achieves their goals, eats something delicious, or in this case, opens a new blind box. Arianna releases a rush of dopamine right before unboxing the blind box, so her excitement only lasts for a couple of seconds. After Arianna unboxed one Sonny Angel, she rapidly unboxed another one (Ariannaa.i). This reveals that it is very easy for consumers who may be feeling stressed to fall into this loop of buying multiple Sonny Angels for a longer rush of dopamine. Overall, through this video, it is shown that the Sonny Angel packaging psychologically influences young consumers to buy multiple blind boxes by functioning as an escape from adulthood full of dullness and stress.

The TikTok video created by Arianna, where she unboxes a new Sonny Angel summer vacation series, reveals that Sonny Angels influence overconsumption by functioning as an escape from adulthood. This happens because most young consumers are psychologically influenced by childlike appearances, rarity, and packaging.

Adulthood is a very stressful period where, with the rise of social media platforms, overconsumption has become normalized. Since most young adults use retail therapy for their emotional well-being, it is easy to fall into the loop of continuously buying. It is important to remember that in the moment, an item may bring happiness, but in the long run, how it's consumed can be harmful. Ultimately, bringing awareness and focusing on sustainability will positively impact consumer culture and overconsumption.

Work Cited

Glocker, Melanie L, et al. Baby Schema in Infant Faces Induces Cuteness Perception and Motivation for Caretaking in Adults, Mar. 2009, pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC3260535/.

Ko, Cheng-Hung, et al. Exploring the Relationship Between Transitional Object Attachment and Emotion Regulation in College Students, 29 Dec. 2024, www.mdpi.com/2227-9032/13/1/39.

@ariannaa.i. "Video." TikTok, 1 July 2026, https://www.tiktok.com/t/ZTSVjUmsT/.

Freud, Sigmund. Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis. Translated by Joan Riviere, by Ernest Jones, G. Allen & Unwin, 1922.

Kaya, Naz. Relationship between Color and Emotion: A Study of College Students, 2004.

Larche, Chanel J, et al. Rare Loot Box Rewards Trigger Larger Arousal and Reward Responses, and Greater Urge to Open More Loot Boxes , 23 Nov. 2019, pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC7882574/.

"Screenshot." TikTok, 9 July 2026, https://drive.google.com/file/d/1WyekU0jrWYBk1pBTkgDaFf9RdW8DTntI/view?usp=sharing. Accessed 9 July 2026.

BLIND CONSUMERISM



Created by artist Ivan Farias

This image represents blind consumerism leading to overconsumption, which perpetuates the cycle of sustainability.

Visual No. 1

CONSUMER'S BACKYARD

By Emi Domingue



Collage features "Photographs: Anthropocene — Edward Burtynsky.", "Martha Rosler. House Beautiful: Bringing the War Home. c. 1967–72 | MOMA."

This collage takes inspiration from Martha Rosler's photomontage by keeping its original structure. The image displays a woman positioned in her home, cleaning and looking out her window through the large curtains. The inside space is met with muted black-and-white tones to create a controlled and calm atmosphere. Her expression is playful yet moody from being framed by the large drapes. The contrast between the cleaning and the outside atmosphere emphasizes the calm space that humans often create for themselves to feel separated from reality. Her gaze is set on the beige curtains that follow the texture of home decor and fabric. The choice of beige curtains transforms the visual elements from inward to have the viewer's gaze outward. Between the drapes, the outside shifts in texture to replace Rosler's original setting with landfills of waste that mimic natural grasslands.

The position of the trash becomes a center fold interrupting the smooth interior that the woman resides in. By choosing this, it becomes a metaphor about consumerism stripping the environment of its beauty. The contrast between the inside and outside is sharp between the calm homespace and visual tension displayed beyond the curtains. The mini robot Wall-E is centered within the window frame, which brings saturated colors that stand out against the dull environments. His gaze is set on the woman who becomes a focal point for the image. The impact of this collage is timeless because it heightens the viewer's awareness of how still domestic space feels compared to the chaos outside. The collage uses visual interruptions through the landfill centerfold because of the chaos it adds compared to the soft interior established by the woman's drapes and expression. Together, these elements create a playful interaction of color, texture, and spatial depth that highlights the visual differences between the interior and exterior world.

Visual No. 2

RAMEN SHOP & SLOP

By Julie Cervantes



In the artwork, the ramen bowl, Labubu, and water bottle shadow frame the piece in a way that creates an empty space at the center of the composition, suggesting a lack of fulfillment despite being surrounded by goods. The composition, while not visually busy, is occupied by detailed sections such as the ramen bowl filled with ingredients and the textures of the Labubu and bottle shadow. However, the noticeable lack of items at the very center besides some wood-like texture draws the eye towards it. With the central focus and “bald spot” in the piece, the eye will naturally draw the eyes towards it, placing the viewer in the seat of the painting’s perspective. From that perspective the viewer is in a position or comfort, as they have a delicious meal to their left, an expensive water bottle out of frame at the top, and a hyped toy at the right. Despite these luxuries, the viewer does not have anything directly in front of them sitting in the composition’s empty space, surrounded by luxuries, but caged in by them too.

Additionally, the presence of varied tones in the ramen bowl compared to the brown tones in the rest of the composition serve to suggest that the ramen carries more significance than the Labubu or water bottle to the viewer. The piece features various shades of brown, which can be found in the wooden table background, the bowl of the ramen, the shadow of the bottle, and the Labubu’s fluff. However, the ramen bowl features pops of color in the form of the yellow-toned egg yolk and noodles, green onions, and burgundy pork. White the central blank area addressed previously is one focal point of the work, another point is the ramen bowl itself due to the abundance of colors featured in it. Since the eye is drawn to the ramen bowl and since it features so much more detail than the rest of the piece, it takes precedence over the bottle and Labubu.

Overall, the work conveys the message that in a world where overconsumption exists, the products bought on a whim will never provice the same sense of fulfilment that an item enjoyed out of passion will provide. A trendy labubu and water bottle may temporarily tame an urge, but they will never compare to a fresh bowl of ramen, whcih will fill the heart, mind, and body with warmth and enjoyment.

Visual No. 3

BUY!! BUY!! BUY!!

By Jordan Haddad



This piece is called BUY!! BUY!! BUY!!, which I made to represent the influence social media has on consumers. I usually practice art by doodling, which I tried to turn into a more cohesive illustration. Instead of drawing a full scene, I decided to stick to more doodle-like drawings as it is more natural to me. It also helped me include more products in the artwork while allowing me to draw more focus on these products instead of trying to portray a whole scene, which may distract from the message. The scattered items also give a more chaotic feel, which helps reflect how social media feeds can feel. I also included a character to help bring more emotion to the piece and have something viewers can connect with. Additionally, I decided to add common marketing phrases to further bring ideas of consumerism into viewers' minds as they see my artwork. Through this illustration, I bring attention to issues that social media creates, especially its negative impact on consumer choice.

In my artwork, I put different common products that social media tends to promote, such as cologne, water bottles, makeup, and clothes. These are accompanied by common quick marketing slogans that attempt to trigger impulsive spending. Viewers who use social media may have seen advertisements or influencers that promote products such as these. Seeing these examples can help people realize how they themselves have been influenced and how prevalent this influence is. People often trust influencers enough that they put no effort into making sure what they are buying is actually a good product and that there are no better alternatives. This creates a problem of causing people to lose some autonomy over their spending, as it becomes much easier to follow whatever people on social media say. Being aware of how influential social media is can help buyers avoid this problem, make more informed purchases, and avoid buying unnecessary products.

This issue of social media causing people to lose their autonomy is amplified by the overwhelming amount of products actually advertised and sold online. I express this overwhelm through the character in the illustration having a confused expression with spiral eyes and lines above his head that represent a clouded mind. The character is overwhelmed by the daunting number of goods, representing how people on social media face the same thing. Having to sift through all of these different items when trying to buy something makes it much more tempting to just listen to an influencer's recommendation. Social media creates this problem of overwhelming choices while selling its own solution. It essentially makes choices for buyers, stripping them of a chance to do so themselves. *BUY!! BUY!! BUY!!* aims to highlight this issue and bring people to consider making their own decisions when faced with social media's influence.

Visual No. 4

CONSUMER EATS

By Leslie Rocha



This work is called ConsumerEats. I designed it using the free version of Canva. Personally, when I think of the word consumption, I think of food. ConsumerEats is an advertisement for an "online marketplace," that uses food as a metaphor. The main element in the advertisement is the plate. Instead of there being food on the plate, receipts are layered on top of each other to show the items that are most overconsumed. This includes clothing, reusable water bottles, and blind boxes from different brands. Given that modern consumer culture is heavily influenced by social media platforms, the plate also works as a metaphor to show how consumers are being "fed" through algorithms, trends, and advertisements like this one. To illustrate this, the hand coming from the top left represents consumers grabbing the plate full of money, receipts, and phrases. The phrases say "BUY ONE GET ONE FREE," "FREE SHIPPING," and "$25 off $50." These phrases are commonly used by platforms to market, which consumers "eat up" and fall into a continuous loop of spending money and buying.

Further important elements in this advertisement are the background and the colors. For the background, Earth is rotating to represent how the issue of overconsumption is happening all over the world. Additionally, the main colors present in the advertisement are green, blue, and brown. Just by looking at the advertisement, the colors illustrate eco-friendliness. So I used these colors to juxtapose consumerism and sustainability. The goal for this is so that when people start reading the receipts and the exaggerated prices, they associate buying so much with harm done to the environment and promoting sustainability.

Overall, ConsumerEats aims to bring awareness to the issue of social media platforms and their influence on overconsumption. I hope this work helps influence modern consumer culture into learning more about the harm being done to the environment and about making sustainable choices.


Image by Amelia Eleiter -Debrand