

# Home learning – Theory & exam style questions

## Planned Obsolescence

Some companies deliberately plan to minimise the 'life' of a product in order to maintain sales of future products. This is called 'built in' or 'planned' obsolescence.

Products such as disposable razors, single use cameras, disposable cups and ball point pens are designed to last only a short time and are often manufactured from non renewable materials. The products are obsolete after use.

Obsolescence can also be due to changes in fusion and the addition of alternative features on a product. Despite the fact that mobile phones can continue to work well for many years they often become obsolete after about 12 to 18 months after release due to changes in styling or technology. Blackberry used to be the phone to have – now touchscreen SMART phones have killed off their business model. What happens to all of those phones that we have finished with? No the answer is not Mazuma or Envirophone its landfill.



**Case Study 1** – In the 1920s the Phoebus cartel was signed by the worlds most major lightbulb manufacturers. This cartel was an agreement that lightbulbs would be **limited from 1400 hours usage which was the current average to a maximum of 1000 hours**. If any of these companies failed to reduce the life span of these bulbs they could be fined by the cartels agreement. This led to the sales of lightbulbs doubling and profits increasing. The limitation of the hours was **building planned obsolescence** into the product.



**Case Study 2** - Apple first generation iPod was designed to **fail prematurely** by designing the **battery** to no longer function. This happened prematurely at 13-14 months when the product had just come out of warranty. This led to a national campaign which forced apple to change its ways and redesign the battery. This campaign is a example of **market pull**. Market refers to customers.



**Case Study 3** - Hydro-tech developed the air conditioned shoes which, are more or less the normal shoes with holes in them. They intend to target the customers who face the problem of having smelly feet. The company claims that they possess a unique filter technology to ward off smells and cost \$70. The designers believed this would be a great product, **pushed** it onto the market with little research and it was a flop! This is a good example of **technology push**, technology refers to the designer/brand.

Air Conditioned Shoes



# Exam Question 1 – Push , Pull & Obsolescence

Explain the meaning of each of the following:

Market pull

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*(2 marks)*

Technology push

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*(2 marks)*

Obsolete

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*(2 marks)*

# Exam Question 2 – Push , Pull & Obsolescence

Smart phones are a recent development in mobile phone technology.



Discuss to what extent mobile phones have developed because of market pull or technology push.

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*(4 marks)*

