**The following appeared in a memo from the vice president of marketing at DuraSocks, Inc.**

**"A recent study of Dura-Socks customers suggests that our company is wasting the money it spends on its patented Endure manufacturing process, which ensures that our socks are strong enough to last for two years. We have always advertised our use of the Endure process, but the new study shows that despite the socks' durability, our customers, on average, actually purchase new Dura-Socks every three months. Furthermore, customers surveyed in our largest market — northeastern United States cities — say that they most value Dura-Socks' stylish appearance and availability in many colors. These findings suggest that we can increase our profits by discontinuing use of the Endure manufacturing process."**

**Write a response in which you discuss what questions would need to be answered in order to decide whether the recommendation and the argument on which it is based are reasonable. Be sure to explain how the answers to these questions would help to evaluate the recommendation.**

The argument reaches the conclusion that DuraSocks must discontinue their use of the Endure manufacturing process to increase their profits. This conclusion is based on the apparent results of a recently conducted study, citing that customers like the socks’ style, but purchase them every three months, on average. In reaching this conclusion, the author of the argument fails to answer three important questions, the answers to which could dramatically change the validity of the argument.

First, is the survey truly representative of the customers of DuraSocks? It may be possible that the study was only conducted in the United States, ignoring other consumer bases, perhaps, Canada or the United Kingdom. By ignoring these other countries, the study may be biased primarily towards the US, and it is possible that people tend to buy socks more often in the US than in other countries, due to climatic conditions like extremely cold weather. Socks may be worn for almost the entire day by people in the US, but used sparingly in hotter countries like Mexico. This would lead to American respondents potentially wearing off the socks faster, needing to buy them more often. It is also likely that only a few batches of the socks manufactured were not durable; this however does not provide a valid argument against the Endure process as a whole. There may be overrepresentation of customers who use socks for longer durations than average. If the study is shown to be representative of the consumer base, and the answer to this question is ‘yes,’ only then would the author’s trust in the survey be valid.

Second, even if we assume that the survey is representative, does the increased purchasing frequency of socks indicate that they are not as durable as the company intended? It is possible that a majority of the buyers of DuraSocks use it as gifts for family or friends, in which case, one may even buy a dozen pairs of them at a time. In no way is this indicative of a decreased durability; it potentially indicates that people like it so much that they want to have more, or to gift more of them to their loved ones. The survey, by not asking its respondents about the reason for the frequency of their purchases, fails to answer this question, and hence creates room for other possibilities like the aforementioned one. If evidence arises in favour of a negative answer to this question, then the argument stands unwarranted.

Third, when the consumers of northeastern American cities reported that their favourite features of the socks were their colours, did they indicate that they did not appreciate its durability? A related question to this one would be: Would shifting to a different manufacturing process retain the consumer base of DuraSocks? It may be the case that people often rate socks based on their appearance and comfort, potentially taking their durability for granted. It may be an afterthought to some, to think of how long they have been using a certain pair of socks. Their appreciation for the colours, thus, might not indicate a different list of priorities; perhaps, if the socks were not to be manufactured using the Endure process, they may also lose their attractiveness and comfortable feel. In this case, a move to get rid of the Endure process may lead to a huge loss if the other features of the sock are affected, or if the customers stop liking its appearance after it wears out faster. The author of the argument has provided no evidence that consumers will continue to purchase the product if the production process is changed, and hence makes an unpersuasive argument in this regard.

In conclusion, the argument, as it stands now, considerably fails in its ability to answer the three questions discussed. These questions are strongly tied to unstated assumptions that the author (the Vice President of Marketing) has made, limiting their perception about the product’s sale. They must conduct a more comprehensive study to answer these questions, and to make a more informed argument that considers all avenues for the company’s success. The current state of the argument does not address these questions, and hence does not form a cogent argument in favour of its conclusions.