

2023 JC2 Preliminary Examination
Paper 2 Suggested Answers

1. According to the author in paragraph 1, what are 2 similarities between conscious consumerism and the boycotts in Hong Kong and Qatar? **Use your own words as far as possible.** [2]

<p>Tens of thousands of students in Hong Kong boycotted the first day of school to protest a proposed extradition bill. Globally, there were calls for football teams to boycott Qatar 2022. In both these instances, (A1) ordinary people have used boycotts as the easiest way (B1) to express their discontent about situations they (C1) have no control over. Beyond politics and sport, boycotting is (A2) also used by consumers (B2) to show their disapproval of a business and its practices – even though deep down they know that boycotting (C2) may not have any impact on what the business does. (lines 1-7)</p>	<p><i>Any 2 of the possible points of similarities:</i></p> <p>Both conscious consumerism and the boycotts in Hong Kong and Qatar</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Were initiated by individuals / average persons / the masses // are ground-up movements. Are used to convey / verbalise / show dissatisfaction / condemnation / criticism / censure / rebuke. Are reactions to circumstances of disempowerment / inability to effect actual changes. <p style="text-align: right;"><i>1m for each pair of similarity.</i></p>
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2. In paragraph 2, how does the author illustrate her claim that conscious consumerism is about shopping with a 'clear conscience' (line 11)? [2]

<p>For instance, American consumers boycotted companies linked to former President Donald Trump as they condemned these corporations for indirectly endorsing policies they vehemently disagreed with. These policies ranged from the inhumane treatment and targeting of detained migrants, to Trump's political inaction on climate change and his refusal to regulate guns despite unprecedented mass shootings. (lines 12-16)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Identification of the evidence used:</i> The author uses the example of American consumers who had refused to patronise businesses that supported / aligned themselves with Trump's policies. [1] <i>Context (to unpack 'clear conscience'):</i> They did this as they wish to buy <u>without a sense of guilt</u> from companies which uphold sound values / practise fairness / protect rights.
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3. From lines 12-18, explain 3 ways in which the author uses language to convey protesters' strong feelings about Trump's policies. [3]

<p>For instance, American consumers boycotted companies linked to former President Donald Trump as they condemned these corporations for indirectly endorsing policies they vehemently disagreed with. These policies ranged from the inhumane treatment and targeting of detained migrants, to Trump's political inaction on climate change and his refusal to regulate guns despite unprecedented mass shootings. These consumers had turned outrage into action: a spreadsheet of companies linked to Trump explained why those companies were on the list and what they needed to do to get off it. (lines 12-18)</p>	<p>The author uses words that convey the intense rejection / denouncement / feelings of rebuke protesters had regarding Trump's policies:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Condemned: To show that they found Trump's policies reprehensible / wrong / disapproved of them. [1] Vehemently: To show that they intensely / rigorously / fiercely disagreed with these policies. [1] Outrage: To show that they reacted with anger / shock / indignation to his policies. [1] <p><i>Note: 'Inhumane' not accepted. It was not used to describe feelings/reactions of protesters. Rather, it was used by the author to describe the treatment of detained migrants.</i></p>
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4. In paragraph 3, explain the author's assertion that 'calls to boycotts are more visible on social media' (lines 22-23)? **Use your own words as far as possible.** [2]

<p>Between the two expressions of conscious consumerism, calls to boycott are a lot more visible on social media than rally cries to pledge brand support. Boycotts b) stem from anger, and c) anger spreads faster and further on social media than any other emotion. (lines 22-24)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Unpacking the phrase: By 'visible', the author means that pushes for boycotts appear <u>more*</u> prominent / obvious / apparent on social media. This is because boycotts are borne out of / arise from fury which is infectious // escalates / proliferates / gains traction / influences others quickly. <p>OR</p> <p>This outrage reaches / touches much more people / has extensive reach.</p> <p><i>Point C – only need either the idea of faster or further.</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;">1 pt – 1m</p>
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	2-3 pts – 2m
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5. What does the word 'catchall' in line 33 suggest about conscious consumerism? **Use your own words as far as possible.** [1]

Conscious consumerism is today's catchall phrase to describe a lifestyle invested in a host of progressive values : worker rights, animal rights, low-carbon footprint, recycled and/or renewable materials, organic, local... (lines 33-35)	Conscious consumerism encapsulates (meaning) a list of / varied / diverse causes / ethical standards / principles (context). [1] <i>Accept: all-encompassing / all-inclusive</i> <i>Note: meaning of the word must be captured in the answer.</i>
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6. According to paragraph 5, why is conscious consumerism seen as something that only the elites can do? **Use your own words as far as possible.** [3]

The cost of maintaining such a lifestyle (line 37) a fair amount of disposable income to afford ethical and sustainable options (line 39)	They need a substantial level of wealth to purchase goods and services that meet moral and environmental standards.
the leisure time to research what to buy, (lines 39-40)	They need free time to find out more about items to purchase
the luxury not to choose products commonly available to the masses (line 40)	They have the privilege to forgo items that are easily accessible to the general public in <u>favour of ethical goods</u> that might be more expensive and less accessible (inferred)
a post-graduate degree in chemistry to understand the true meaning behind ingredient labels. (lines 41-42)	They need to be highly educated to discern the real / actual impact of materials declared to be part of the manufacturing process. <i>*idea of expertise/specialised knowledge must be evident in the answer.</i>

1 mark for every point, up to a max of 3 points

7. Explain the author's use of the phrase 'at best' (line 81). **Use your own words as far as possible.** [2]

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<p>At best, the rising popularity of conscious consumerism suggests that the public will at least spend their way to a healthier world; the big problem, though, is that individual monetary action — even when performed collectively — is only a drop in the ocean. (lines 81-83)</p>	<p>The author means that in the most optimistic scenario, [1]</p> <p>the purchasing decisions of people in the community will lead to a more viable ecosystem / a less degraded environment, but have a highly limited / minuscule impact OR can hardly protect the earth from destruction. [1]</p>
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8. In the last paragraph, how confident is the author about conscious consumerism as a way to protect our environment? **Use your own words as far as possible**. [2m]

<p>Where and how we spend our money does matter. But how much it matters depends on what else we do with our money and what governments and corporations do with their (considerably larger) budget. At best, the rising popularity of conscious consumerism suggests that the public will at least spend their way to a healthier world; the big problem, though, is that individual monetary action — even when performed collectively — is only a drop in the ocean. “I cannot imagine that the world is worse off because of conscious consumerism,” says Kennedy, “but I doubt it will be enough to save the planet.” (lines 78-84)</p>	<p>The author is <u>not confident</u>. [1]</p> <p>The authorities and businesses with their bigger pool of finances / financial capacity have a greater impact than the layperson / commoner.</p> <p>OR</p> <p>As all the personal purchases when added up is minuscule in its impact and he is sceptical that the efforts are sufficient to protect the earth from destruction.</p> <p>(Any of the 2 for 1 mark)</p>
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9. Using material from paragraphs 7—9 only (lines 50-78), summarise what the author has to say about the effectiveness of conscious consumerism in bringing about change. Write your summary in **no more than 120 words**, not counting the opening words which are printed below. **Use your own words as far as possible**. [8]

Firstly, conscious consumerism is ineffective because

	From the passage	Suggested Answer
1	The main criticism is that individual product swaps (using metal straws instead of plastic straws for instance) do nothing to change legislation (lines 51-52)	It has no impact on current laws
2	and corporate responsibility . (lines 52-53)	and companies' way of doing things/ companies' accountability to the community.
3	Rather, it is an expensive distraction from the real work at hand. (line 53)	It is a costly diversion from what needs to be done.
4	In the United States, only 55 percent of voters aged 18-29 voted in 2020 but media research company Nielsen found that 90 percent of millennials (aged 21-34) are willing to pay more for eco-friendly and sustainable products . (lines 55-57)	Instead, if the same significant number of young people who do not mind spending on expensive green products
5	Imagine if the entirety of that 90 percent of conscious consumer millennials had turned	elected politicians who are truly concerned about global warming .

	up and voted how their dollar votes. (lines 57-58) Consumers can do a whole lot more by simply voting for politicians who actually care that the Earth is melting . (lines 54-55)	Accept: Millennials are not electing for politicians who are concerned about the environment.
6	What impact would that have on government policies regarding the environment? (lines 58-59)	there will be immense/real change made to climate change strategies / laws / regulations .
7	Conscious consumerism as a solution to our environmental woes contradicts the aims of conservation and sustainability (lines 60-61)	Conscious consumerism goes against the goals of saving our environment/ regulating the use of natural resources/ environmental protection .
8	The idea of 'shopping' your way to sustainability is fundamentally flawed . (line 62)	The concept of spending to save the environment is inherently/basically unsound/faulty .
9	If we need to slow down growth to protect the environment, then we cannot rely on 'better' consumption . (lines 62-63)	Besides simply buying / We cannot just buy environmentally friendly goods
10	We also have to reduce consumption . (lines 63-64)	We also need to lower usage of resources / cut down on buying
11	Climate activist Greta Thunberg also admonished world leaders at the UN's Climate Action Summit for their oft-repeated delusion that cutting emissions by 50 percent in 10 years will do the trick . (lines 64-66)	It is an illusion / a myth to think that merely reducing greenhouse gases is sufficient .
12	The reality is that the persistent focus on economic growth ,	Consistently / perpetually concentrating on the economy
13	albeit via sustainable means of development, does little to protect the environment . (lines 66-68)	even if it involves green production will not have a significant effect on saving the earth .
14	It is in fact plain dangerous to do so. (lines 67-68)	Doing so can even be purely / flatly fatal / perilous .
15	Often, boycotts of big corporations do not really affect the bottom line of that corporation . (lines 69-70)	Boycotts have little bearing on companies' profit margin/how well the companies are doing,
16	An example is Amazon. Despite calls year after year to boycott Amazon Prime Day over factory conditions, the retail giant repeatedly manages to improve its sales record year after year. (lines 70-72)	with some even doing better/getting richer/earning more profits .
17	There is also limited impact in token actions like swapping products for more environmentally-friendly ones . (line 72-73)	Insignificant/nominal efforts to opt for eco-friendly products to save the environment have minimal effect
18	While using phosphate-free dish detergent in place of the usual dish detergent used by the masses can curb water pollution, research shows that conscious consumers often continue to maintain very large carbon	as conscious consumers are still harming the environment extensively .

	footprints themselves. (lines 73-76)... nice cars and tickets on commercial planes and air conditioning units and so on. (lines 77-78)	
19	After all, conscious consumers tend to be well-educated and well-educated people typically earn a good income – (lines 76-77)	This is because conscious consumers tend to be professionals / highly literate who can afford / splurge on expensive goods / products / items

Point s	1-2	3-4	5-6	7-8	9	10-11	12-13	14+
Marks	1m	2m	3m	4m	5m	6m	7m	8m

10. The author outlines the growing popularity of conscious consumerism and discusses its ability to bring about change. How far do you agree with her observations? Relate your arguments to your own experience and that of your society. [10]

<p>Paragraph 2</p> <p>Conscious consumerism is motivated by a desire to shop with a ‘clear conscience’ and thus involves buying or boycotting companies that align, or misalign, with one’s ethical values and beliefs. (lines 10-12)</p>	<p>As a digitally wired society with high Internet penetration rate, more Singaporeans have access to information about brands and what they do. The media also reports on misdemeanours by brands, which have made consumers more aware of the power of their purchases in endorsing or condemning brands. For instance, recent news reports investigated local brands like Twelve Cupcakes, which had underpaid its seven foreign employees for over two years between December 2016 and November 2018. In November 2022, the indictment of Norvan Tan En Jie, co-founder of food chain Beef Bro, for sexual assault also sparked consumer outrage. Even global franchises are not spared scrutiny. News of South Korean consumers’ boycott of bakery chain Paris Baguette (PB) shaped some consumers’ sentiments towards the brand in Singapore. PB had allegedly mishandled the death of a 23-year-old employee, who was crushed by a mixing machine at its factory. Paris Baguette's parent company, SPC Group, was lambasted by online users for making their employees work near the accident site a day after the incident. The company was also criticised for its "insensitive" gesture of sending bread for guests at the victim's funeral. As Singaporeans become more informed, they have come to scrutinise how they buy and respond to brands that align with their ethical compass. YouGov’s Brand Boycotters report found that a quarter of Singaporean consumers have boycotted a brand. Product recalls are the top reason for boycotting a brand (60% of those who have stopped using a brand have done so for this reason). Nearly four in ten (37%) stopped using a brand because of animals being mistreated, while 24% boycotted a brand for mistreating workers in the supply chain. Overall, half the Singaporean population (51%) say they “only buy products</p>	<p>While the ideals of conscious consumerism are slowly taking root in our purchasing habits, not all Singaporeans primarily make purchase decisions on an ethical basis. The rising costs of living have made price a determining factor for the pragmatically minded Singaporean. Between shopping for practical considerations of price and convenience, versus that of more sustainable and ethical purchases, it is mostly the former that characterises the average consumer’s habits. This can also be attributed to our time-starved culture where convenience reigns. It is perhaps time-consuming and unrealistic to investigate and scrutinise every purchase decision we make to ensure that what we buy does not flout any ethical guidelines along the supply chain. Furthermore, it is arguably futile to do so, as Singapore is an import-driven open economy where total goods imports accounted for 95.3% of our GDP in 2021. It is impossible for Singapore to boycott brands completely, as seen in how multinational fashion companies like SHEIN and H&M continue to expand their consumer base locally, despite various allegations of labour exploitation and copying ideas wholesale from reputable fashion houses.</p>
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	from companies that have ethics and values that I agree with". This rises to 57% among those who have boycotted a brand and no longer use it as much as they used to (if at all).	
<p>Paragraph 3</p> <p>Conscious consumerism in its milder form of brand support has become more prominent. More people are choosing to vote with their dollars by supporting companies that they perceive as ethical or socially just... it is easier and more effective to support ethical brands than to boycott brands they consider unfair or unjust. (lines 25-29)</p>	<p>With greater awareness of how consumption is tied with various issues such as exacerbation of climate change, exploitation of workers' rights and animal cruelty, young Singaporeans are more educated about how their consumption choices have social impacts. This, coupled with the increase in disposable incomes across middle income households in Singapore, meant that younger Singaporeans can afford and have a greater desire to buy from more ethical and sustainable brands. According to a Straits Times report in 2021, a UOB study found that more younger consumers in the ASEAN region want to spend their money on sustainable products. Gen Z consumers - those aged 18 to 23 - and millennials (24 to 39) are driving this trend towards a greener future. 51 percent of Gen Z respondents in ASEAN said they were spending more on sustainable products - a huge jump from the 7 percent in 2020. The UOB study also found that respondents in Singapore have been making lifestyle changes to live more sustainably. About 31 percent said they are willing to pay more for sustainably sourced goods and services, while 36 percent have been replacing their current sources of goods and services with more sustainable alternatives. This could be attributed to also the expansion of more brand options for conscious consumerism. The zero-waste scene has been growing in Singapore, with the likes of grocery stores such as Unpackt and Scoop Wholefoods sprouting across the island, encouraging purchases of consumables in bulk without plastic packaging. When it comes to participating in the circular economy in fashion, there are more sustainable options besides buying from fast fashion brands. Shopping for secondhand clothing in Singapore at stores like The Fashion Pulpit, which organises clothes swaps, or The Style Lease, which rents out</p>	<p>Even though there is greater awareness of the importance of sustainable consumption, most Singaporean consumers remain price-conscious when it comes to their purchasing decisions. This is no doubt due to the high costs of living in the country. The inaugural 'Conscious Fashion' survey by DBS revealed that 7 in 10 Singaporeans do not ensure that the clothes they buy are sustainably made and sourced. This is even when 60% of respondents said they were aware that fashion is one of the largest contributors to pollution globally. The survey was conducted by YouGov and interviewed 1,060 Singapore residents aged 18 years old and above in October 2019. When asked to rank the main barriers to changing their consumption behaviour, cost (35%), followed by apathy (25%) and a lack of variety and style (18%) came up tops. On a brighter note, the survey also found that if given the right nudge, 7 in 10 Singaporeans are open to recycling, swapping or upcycling their clothes to play their part in slowing climate change. Given the fundamentally consumerist culture in Singapore, and the fact that practical considerations of cost make conscious consumption less appealing, it is perhaps less likely for the average Singaporean to be willing to pay more for sustainable options to support ethical brands. A 2020 study by Accenture and the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) Singapore also showed that sustainable options are not sufficient for Singapore consumers to consistently make green choices. While 4 out of 5 Singaporeans are concerned about the environment, only 35 percent of these Singaporeans are willing to pay up to 10 percent more for eco-friendly goods.</p>

	occasion wears, have helped consumers in Singapore balance the desire for novelty with sustainable shopping.	A 2021 article by Rice Media reported that a sample of more than 210 household products shows that the average mark-up of eco-friendly household goods is approximately 156 percent – a massive premium. Even other non-durable household goods like sustainable toilet paper or reusable bags—the least expensive item on the list—still see an overall price increase of 22 percent. Thus, unless more is done to offset the costs of sustainable consumption in Singapore, it is unlikely for conscious consumption to become a mainstream lifestyle that the average Singaporean can wholeheartedly embrace.
<p>Paragraph 5</p> <p>Conscious consumerism's popularity can also be linked to its elite nature. (line 36)</p>	Conscious consumerism's elite nature surfaces in Singapore due to the cost involved in sustainability choices. From the type of cars Singaporeans opt for, to the food they eat, sustainable choices just cost more and the ordinary citizen guided by pragmatism and increased cost of living is more likely to be deterred by price differences. For example, a small electric car can cost as much as \$150,000, while one could potentially get a small petrol car under the \$120,000 mark. Given that cars in Singapore are a lot more expensive than in other countries, paying the difference could be well beyond the wallets of the ordinary Singaporean family. Additionally, organic vegetables are 5 times more expensive than conventional ones which most Singaporeans, accustomed to affordable takeaway options in the ubiquitous food in every residential precinct, would not be willing to pay. Therefore, it is true that conscious consumerism would require one to be of a higher economic class to afford the price differences without feeling the pinch.	While it may be true that wealth is necessary to purchase more expensive sustainable items and a higher educational level needed to understand the impacts of ingredient bottles, this assumes that sustainable choices are always more expensive than less sustainable ones. In Singapore, more environmentally sustainable transport options in the form of public transport is the more affordable option and air-conditioning which is an energy guzzler in the homes is switched on for longer hours in more affluent homes. Last but not least, overseas travel which has seen a tremendous uptake since the end of Covid era restrictions is predominantly the activity of those who can afford to travel. As such, notwithstanding the issue of affordability and intentionality, it is the non-elite that might be finding it easier to make choices for sustainability.

<p>Paragraph 7</p> <p>The main criticism is that individual product swaps (using metal straws instead of plastic straws for instance) do nothing to change legislation and corporate responsibility. (lines 51-53)</p>	<p>The argument that individual product swaps have limited impact on changing legislation and corporate responsibility holds true, particularly when considering the context of Singapore. While individual product swaps have become increasingly popular, the take-up rate remains low and most Singaporeans remain deeply rooted in their old consumeristic habit as they prize convenience over protecting the environment. This inevitably has an impact on how corporations act: largely doing nothing because by and large, consumers in Singapore prefer to still use certain products. Similarly, the Singapore government may be hesitant to introduce stricter or more radical environmental laws for fear of upsetting the local or business population.</p> <p>This is illustrated by the example of single-use plastic. While individuals may choose to use eco-friendly alternatives like reusable bags, the broader environmental challenges in Singapore are deeply rooted in the nation's reliance on plastic and single-use materials – for instance, takeaway containers at hawker centres, plastic bags freely given out at every store or supermarket or the amount of plastic packaging that comes with our online shopping purchases. This reliance on single-use plastic in consumeristic buy-and-throw Singapore, by small and large businesses alike, makes it very difficult for the Singapore government to impose draconian laws restricting or even banning the use of single-use plastics as this may create unhappiness amongst the business community (and perhaps even the residents). Hence, when it comes to plastic waste, despite some citizens making efforts to reduce plastic usage, the lack of legislation and change in methods by corporations meant that Singapore still generates a significant amount of plastic waste, and it continues to be a concern for the environment. Ultimately, while individual actions are commendable, meaningful progress in Singapore's sustainability goals necessitates a holistic approach involving legislation, corporate responsibility, and collective efforts from all sectors of society.</p>	<p>Calls for individual product swaps tend to be led by individuals or small groups of activists, rather than by corporations leading the way. Nonetheless, while it is true that individual actions alone may not lead to immediate systemic changes, they play a crucial role in driving awareness and influencing larger shifts. For instance, Singapore has witnessed a surge in the use of reusable bags in recent years, thanks to the collective efforts of environmentally conscious individuals. This growing demand for eco-friendly alternatives has compelled businesses to rethink their practices and offer more sustainable options. In response to public pressure, several companies in Singapore have taken steps to reduce plastic packaging and adopt greener alternatives. For instance, fast food restaurants in Singapore like KFC and Burger King are no longer offering plastic straws. Others like Starbucks offer incentives for consumers bringing their own cups, tumblers or containers when purchasing takeaway food and beverages. Some shops have also started charging a nominal fee for the use of plastic bags (even before the legislation on plastic bags kicked in).</p> <p>Additionally, individual initiatives have sparked conversations around environmental issues, leading to increased public awareness and support for legislation aimed at curbing plastic waste and promoting sustainability.</p> <p>Over time, the accumulation of these individual actions can generate significant momentum, eventually pressuring authorities to implement stricter regulations. For instance, from July 2023, the Singapore law mandates that large supermarkets must impose a minimum charge of 5 cents for the use of each disposable carrier bag. The decision to implement a bag charge came after years of public and parliamentary debates on its effectiveness as well as nationwide campaigns aimed at reducing the excessive use of plastic bags and disposables. It also follows recommendations from a citizens' workgroup, which convened in September 2020, to implement a bag charge. Thus, while</p>
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		individual product swaps may not be the sole solution, they undoubtedly contribute to the larger goal of fostering positive changes in legislation and corporate practices in Singapore.
<p>Paragraph 7</p> <p>Consumers can do a whole lot more by simply voting for politicians who actually care that the Earth is melting. (lines 54-55)</p>	<p>The significance of policy and legislation relating to environmental conservation is true in the Singapore context where the government actively provides leadership by setting environmental goals, building green infrastructure and providing incentives to aid businesses in going green – all in order to meet the governmental goal of halving Singapore’s 2030 peak greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. This can be seen in the Green Plan 2030 to plant 1 million more trees and increase green spaces to bring to fruition the vision of City in Nature. There are also plans to bring about an energy reset by expanding the network of electric vehicle charging points to 60,000 and raising the sustainability standards of our buildings. With regard to the economy, Singapore is looking to develop Jurong Island to be a sustainable energy and chemicals park. There is also a New Enterprise Sustainability Programme to help local enterprises adopt sustainability practices. It is evident from the examples above that the environmental sustainability on the scale illustrated above is far beyond the impact of the consumers and therefore, the author is right in arguing that politicians matter more than even the collective power of consumers.</p>	<p>While voting for politicians who care about the environment can bring about structural change, patterns of consumption can also significantly affect our environment. In the 2021 OCBC Climate Index, Singaporeans were reported to have high awareness of the environmental issues across four lifestyle themes - transport, home, food and goods - unfortunately, this awareness was not reflected in terms of their adoption of green practices. In the survey, ninety-five per cent of the respondents who can drive were aware that travelling by car generates 12 times more CO2 emissions than travelling by train. Yet 78 per cent of them drive for over 30 minutes a day, on average. Some 81 per cent knew that one plastic bag takes 500 years to degrade. Yet 78 per cent do not bring reusable bags with them whenever they go shopping. This disconnect between beliefs and practice is disconcerting and will surely have an impact on the environment. Furthermore, without a change in convictions and support for the ambitious environment policies, it would hardly be fathomable that the forward-looking politicians would be voted in moving forward. As such, one should not take for granted the power of the masses in a democracy, especially when the measures proposed would impact their chosen lifestyle.</p>
<p>Paragraph 8</p> <p>Furthermore, green shopping in itself is ironic: conscious consumerism as a solution to our environmental woes contradicts the aims of</p>	<p>Conscious consumerism can still feed into buying more than what we need, even if these purchases are more sustainable. Ideally, by buying more sustainably, we can extend the longevity of a product that is made to last longer, and hence reduce waste by purchasing less to replace faulty items. However, domestically, waste generation remains a problem due to the increasing affluence driving consumption. The allure of the Great Singapore Sale (GSS) may have waned two decades on, but not</p>	<p>Whether conscious consumerism contradicts the aims of sustainability depends fundamentally on how it is understood and approached by the individual. We can interpret conscious consumerism as buying better (products made more sustainably, involving cleaner supply chains) and participating in the circular economy of secondhand shopping. Undeniably, if one simply buys better without being conscious of waste that can also be generated, then indeed conscious consumerism will defeat its</p>

<p>conservation and sustainability. (lines 60-61)</p>	<p>Singapore's love for shopping – Singaporeans were ranked top online shoppers in South-east Asia in a 2014 Visa Consumer Payment Attitudes Study. Frequent sales and discounts by e-commerce websites like Shopee and Lazada on a monthly basis have entrenched the consumerist culture here. This is worsened by a prevailing buy-and-throw-away mentality, which generates huge amounts of waste, both from unwanted things and throwaway packaging, and the destruction of natural resources. It does not help that in Singapore, disposal of our waste is all the more convenient with each household equipped with a rubbish chute which breeds an “out of sight, out of mind” mentality. Unsurprisingly, most Singaporeans are falling short of the Reduce, Reuse and Recycle adage that our Zero Waste Masterplan encourages. According to the Straits Times, more waste was generated in Singapore in 2022, while domestic recycling rate fell to 12 percent – the lowest in more than a decade – because less paper, cardboard, textile and leather were exported for recycling. For textiles, only 2% was recycled last year. This was partly due to increased domestic consumption and high freight costs, making exporting such waste more costly. Part of the solution would be to cut back on consumption, whether it is to buy from conscious brands or those that are not. Ultimately, buying conscious should not be understood as simply buying more quality products, as increasing consumption of sustainable products can still lead to waste generation.</p>	<p>purpose of conserving precious resources. However, practising a circular economy can help to align the ideals of conscious consumerism with sustainability. In Singapore, the thrifting culture has gained traction in recent years, especially amongst the younger demographic. This “treasure hunt” style of shopping for clothing and accessories can be addicting for enthusiasts, and keeps thrifters — especially those from Generation Z — hooked on thrift stores and the unique ‘thrift style’. Behind the movement lies a group of passionate environmentalists, who recognise thrift as a platform for advocacy. Riding on the waves of fashion and individuality, thrift culture also encourages thrifters to appreciate reusing and upcycling, and to move away from a buy-and-throw-away mentality. This helps extend the lease of life of preloved clothing that would otherwise wind up in a dumpster. Considering that only 2% of textile waste was recycled last year, thrifting helps extend the lease of life of preloved clothing that would otherwise wind up in a dumpster. Today, due to thrifters posting “thrift guides” on their Instagram pages, youths are sharing interesting thrift finds from neighbourhood stores that are off the beaten path. This has not only spotlighted smaller thrift stores, but also created a refreshing buzz amongst youth exploring alternative means of self-expression. Thanks to thrift stores like Honsieponsie, who leverage on social media platforms to call for local donations, there is now a new avenue to tackle textile waste. Conscious consumerism can strike a balance with waste generation if it is approached from the perspective of supporting a circular economy. Thrifting makes good, wearable pieces of clothing accessible to those who need it, putting a positive spin on “hand me downs”, and giving people more avenues to donate and rehome clothes that would otherwise be thrown away. Conscious consumerism in this form will then not contradict the aims of conservation and sustainability.</p>
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