

# 8.1 Moral, social and cultural issues

## Built in obsolescence

Tendency towards a “throwaway” culture—when they stop working or break, they are just thrown away. In engineering terms some products are designed to stop working after a certain amount of time. This is known as “**built in obsolescence**”

### Advantages of built –in obsolescence

- When a product stops working, the consumer often buys a new one. Therefore the manufacturer makes more money.
- New, improved and more expensive products are gradually brought to the market, so the consumer often replaces an outdated product with a newer more expensive version. This means the manufacturer makes more money.

### Disadvantages of built –in obsolescence

- Sometimes consumers buy replacement products from a different manufacturer, fearing one from the same manufacturer may break again.
- Consumers have to spend more money on replacing products or upgrading software.
- Broken or out of date products often end up in landfill sites.

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## Offshore manufacturing

This is the practice of large manufacturing companies relocating their businesses to another country. They do this because the workforce is cheaper in other countries.

### Advantages of offshore manufacturing

- Companies can use cheaper labour rather than pay the higher wages in the UK, or another developed nation.
- Fewer and cheaper costs, for example energy and labour costs, than in the UK due to local practices and prices.

### Disadvantages of offshore manufacturing

- Loss of jobs and workforce in home countries of business
- Transporting products around the world results in high energy costs and creates pollution
- Loss of secondary jobs, which are based on providing parts and suppliers to the relocated business.

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## Respecting cultures

Designers have to be aware that some other countries have differing views on cultural, social and moral issues. Therefore designers need to be aware of the aesthetics of the products so groups of society that they have designed products for are not offended by the products’ design.