

How many Stanley Tumblers are enough?

Rafaela Prendi

Department of English, ARCC

English 1121 22: College Writing and Critical Reading

Prof. Chris McCarthy

March 4, 2024

How many Stanley Tumblers are enough?

If you enter a high school, college, or office you might notice see that many people have something in common, which is carrying the Stanley 2.0 Quencher Flow State. There is a great range of colors to choose from, it will keep you hydrated, and they even look stylish. To add up, they come in a great range of colors, and it is very tempting to get a few to match each outfit. Naturally some of them will get used more and others will end up collecting dust in your shelves. Then what is the point of getting so many reusable water containers?

Senna Omar wonders about the same thing in her article “Stanley promotes overconsumption and consumerism” published by The Highlander. In her article she states that “These tumblers, once merely a vessel for transporting beverages, are now seen as a symbol of status and wealth inspiring the masses to collect reusable water bottles like Pokémon cards.” The writer mirrors my thoughts over the topic of overconsumption in the American culture, which becomes more obvious when it comes masked as promoting sustainability instead. The writer goes as far as calling out the company’s “hypocrisy”, using marketing tactics that urge for overconsumption only to increase their revenues. Sadly, this means that the company’s motto “Built for life” mentioned in their page (Stanley, 2024) only reminds us of the irony of the situation. What happened with the Stanley tumbler though is just an example. There are many other products that are designed to be sustainable but are used to display a statement and contribute to overconsumption. To add up, companies use marketing schemes to generate revenue by creating trends and pushing people towards consuming without a need. This is concerning because like many of my peers, I spend a lot of time in social media. Consequently, it’s easy for us to fall into the trap of getting influenced and convinced to buy a product,

especially if we can use it to do our part to help the environment. While social media might be a good resource for new ideas about how to help, it is important to draw the line between ethical products and collectible status items.

The company that created the Stanley cups has been around for more than a century but only during the recent decade they have made more sales than ever with their new products targeted towards teens and young adults. In 2019 Stanley decided to try something new and decided to change their marketing tactics to appeal to women instead. This worked great and they managed to increase their sales more than ten folds (Ravariere, 2024). Their new approach was to pay influencers to create this image of the tumbler by advertising it as something cute, aesthetic, and useful. According to Omar by utilizing influencers as a marketing tool the cups became a sensation amongst their new target demographic, white women. With a change of their target demographic came the dramatic increase in sales, which turned the Stanley tumbler from a product in the verge of being discontinued to becoming a fan favorite. Other companies soon followed the trend, some of them even creating products for babies. Wallace in her article published recently writes “The almost \$10 toy for babies and toddlers is a coffee mug with a handle and narrow base, similar to the trendy Stanley Quencher.” The existence of a Stanley inspired coffee mug for babies is a bit absurd especially when they shouldn’t normally need one (caffeine is harmful to them). Likely, this can be explained by their mothers getting influenced by Tiktok and wanting to get their toddler a matching Stanley. I have to admit it, it does look cute, but this is another example of overconsuming as companies will keep creating toys that look like the next popular product. At this rate it won’t be long until a new toy is designed that will look like the new Apple Vision glasses for babies.

In addition, the idea of using a product as a status display isn't something new and neither it is following the latest trends. Unfortunately, we all feel the pressure to follow them in order to feel accepted by society, to feel like everyone else. Another author named Daisy Maldonado perfectly captures this in her article about feeling the need to chase influencers and trends in "Stanley Cups and the Endless Chase for the Influencer Aesthetic" published at Cosmopolitan. The Stanley Cup is seen as another status symbol, and by owning it you are indicating to the society that you are relevant, are keeping up with trends and care about social issues like the environment. Influencers came up with the idea of the Stanley Status Tumbler by emphasizing the visuals more than the functionality of it. The obvious truth is that it is extremely important to stay hydrated and healthy, and having a reusable bottle is a better alternative than a plastic one. But is it the best alternative or are we just influenced to think so? There are other alternatives out there who are less expensive, leak proof (yes, the Stanley Tumbler leaks) and probably a better choice for the environment. When I first arrived in the US a year ago, one of the culture shocks I experienced was seeing people carrying large water containers with them, which is not common in my country. Initially I thought it was great, since it avoided the usage of plastic bottles which has been problematic back home. However, over time, I realized I had arrived in the middle of a trend, as people are gradually using these containers less and less.

Something similar happened a few years ago with the trend of using tote bags and reusable metal straws. Originated by the idea of avoiding plastic items and using reusable ones instead, tote bags and metal straws became massively popular, and influencers jumped in with their own products to advertise the cutest tote bag or the best metal straw. As soon as the trend died and influencers jumped into whatever was popular next, meanwhile people had already

stacked their shelves with many tote bags and metal straws that weren't cool anymore to use. As many did, I also fell for the tote bag trend and bought a few cute ones. To be honest, I was driven more towards looking the certain minimalistic aesthetic with the tote bag on my shoulder which of course had a book inside which I rarely read. I felt like I needed to look a certain way in order to get acknowledged and be accepted by my friends. I am certain thought that they would accept me either way, and time proved that when I started to let go of trends and wore whatever I felt comfortable in. I was just convinced that I had to stay relevant, I was influenced by social media and advertisements that that was the way to go. As Nurayn Khan mentions in their article "The Influencer Revolution: Increased Accessibility & Super-Fast Fashion" published last year, the constant fast-changing trends are problematic as they in fact discourage people to experiment and find their own style, while encouraging to buy on impulse. People feel pressured to catch up with the trends, and those who cannot afford them turn to cheaper options who are more often than not unethical and worse for the environment.

The irony of eco-friendly products unravels while we question the environmental impact of these products. To get back to the main focus, Stanley as a company claims to be design sustainable products, yet their marketing campaign urges for collection of these products. The most recent case was their limited-edition color scheme for Valentine's which apparently caused fights in local Targets between customers to get their hands into the latest tumbler (Fernandez, 2024). The whole point of using a reusable bottle is that you have one or two and use them repeatedly to avoid using plastic. According to research by Goleman and Norris, you need to use a reusable bottle about 500 times to become more sustainable than a plastic bottle. Similar research put an emphasis on the frequency of usage of the product since it's not enough to just purchase a reusable bag or bottle. A study conducted by McKinsey & Company states there is a

noticeable sales growth for products that are advertised to promote sustainability and are environmentally friendly. This proves that most of us care about the environment and are willing to put in some effort to avoid single use items. The problem arises when companies use our awareness to their advantage, turning their products as a status symbol of the new “sustainable eco-friendly fashion”.

In conclusion, I find the article by Omar to perfectly sum up what happened with the Stanley Cup trend and how that is the perfect example of our society’s tendencies to overconsume. To add more, the Stanley cup was just an example that further highlighted the main problem with the partnership between companies and influencers which is used to promote that tendency to gain more profit. It is even more ironic when this happens with reusable products that are meant to save the environment. The solution for replacing single use items, doesn’t have to look good or fit a certain aesthetic to work well. For example, before tumblers were a thing, water fountains worked perfectly well to avoid plastic bottles. Even though we have noble intentions, it is important for all of us to research each product and not fall into the trap of influencing. There is no need to have a collection of Stanley tumblers, tote bags or metal straws even though we might be tempted by the different designs and colors. To live responsibly, we have to do more than look the part by purchasing status symbol items, instead we need to purchase responsibly and do our research. We owe this to ourselves, our pockets, and our planet.

References

Fernandez S. (2024, January 23) Target shoppers get in fight waiting in line for Valentine's Day Stanley Cups. The Daily Dot. Retrieved from <https://www.dailydot.com/news/target-stanley-cups-fight/>

Goleman D. and Norris G. (2009, April 19) How Green Is My Bottle? The New York Times. Retrieved from https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/interactive/2009/04/19/opinion/20090419bottle.html?_r=1

Khan, N. (2023, August 27). The Influencer Revolution: Increased Accessibility & Super Fast Fashion. Harvard Politics. Retrieved from <https://harvardpolitics.com/the-influencer-revolution/>

Maldonado, D. (2024, January 19). Stanley Cups and the Endless Chase for the Influencer Aesthetic. Cosmopolitan. Retrieved from <https://www.cosmopolitan.com/lifestyle/a46446090/stanley-cup-craze/>

McKinsey & Company. (2024, February 6). Consumers care about sustainability—and back it up with their wallets. Retrieved from <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/consumer-packaged-goods/our-insights/consumers-care-about-sustainability-and-back-it-up-with-their-wallets>

Omar, S. (2024, January 23). Stanley promotes overconsumption and consumerism. The Highlander. Retrieved from <https://www.highlandernews.org/89084/stanley-promotes-overconsumption-and-consumerism/>.

Ravariere, K. (2024, January 14). 4 Ways Stanley 10x'd Its Revenue in Just 4 Years by Rebranding a Failing Product. Inc. Retrieved from <https://www.inc.com/kai-ravariere/4-ways-stanley-10xd-its-revenue-in-just-four-years-by-rebranding-a-failing-product.html>

Stanley. (2020, April 22). WHAT IS MORE SUSTAINABLE THAN GEAR THAT LASTS? Retrieved from <https://eu.stanley1913.com/blogs/sustainability/gear-that-stays-in-use-and-out-of-landfills>

Wallace, A. (2024, February 2). The Stanley tumbler is a status symbol that is trending even for babies. NorthJersey.com. Retrieved from <https://www.northjersey.com/story/entertainment/2024/02/02/the-stanley-tumbler-status-symbol-trending-babies/72425797007/>