

5 Reasons Apple Fans Don't Care About Its Factories

Crowds grew unruly outside Apple's flagship store in Beijing last Friday. But they weren't there to protest over [working conditions](#) at Apple's Asian manufacturers — they were after the new iPhone 4S.



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That day, Apple [released a report](#) stating that 62% of its suppliers failed to comply with working-hour limits and five facilities employed underage workers. There has also been a spate of worker suicides at a major Apple supplier, Hon Hai Precision Industry Co. in Taipei, Taiwan. Apple, which declined to comment, has not been accused of any wrongdoing in relation to the suicides. "We are saddened and upset by the recent suicides at Foxconn," Apple said in a statement last year (Foxconn is the trade name of Hon Hai.) And the company's 27-page report into working conditions in its factories says, "We require that our suppliers provide safe working conditions" and "treat workers with dignity and respect."

But while Apple says it's taking the report seriously, experts say consumers have been far less concerned. In fact, many are just as worried about the battery life of the [iPhone 4S](#), what the voice-activated search engine "Siri" will or won't and whether the [iPad 3](#) will be released by Feb. 24 – the birthday of the late founder Steve Jobs. Indeed, many fans are more interested in getting their hands on new gadgets than what goes into making them, says Tina M. Lowrey, professor of marketing at the University of Texas in San Antonio.

Here are 5 possible reasons our experts say Apple's report has been largely overlooked by consumers:

1. Convenient Technology Trumps Controversy

The unauthorized concept videos for what the iPhone 5 might look like when it's released – extra thin, holograph images, a laser keyboard – attracted over 47 million hits on YouTube. "Most people are not asking, 'was the factory in compliance when they made this?'" says Rick Singer, CEO of GreatApps.com. Only if the upgrades stopped coming, or failed to impress, would their focus change, says Yung D. Trang, president of TechBargains.com. "Then, consumers might take working conditions in Chinese factories into consideration."

2. Apple Is Part of the American Dream

Consumers see Apple as a powerful symbol of American innovation and regard the manufacturing problems as par for the course or even a price worth paying, says Robert Passikoff, co-founder of marketing consultancy Brand Keys. Even older products like the iPod will have value as collector's items, he says. As SmartMoney.com reported, the death of Steve Jobs last October sealed Apple's place in U.S. corporate history, according to L. J. Shrum, president of the Society for Consumer Psychology. "Jobs was one of the few people who had that rock star status in a quintessentially non-hip industry."

3. iFans Are Tweeting About Other Issues

While Apple fans appear to be to be the very type of consumer who would be a little more activist-oriented, Lowrey says, many of these consumers are busy campaigning against more populist issues like [bank fees](#) and high earners on Wall Street – or the so-called "1%" as described by the Occupy Wall Street protests. "This is ironic," she says. "Appleites don't want to believe that their beloved company could possibly be engaged in such practices."

4. People Are Addicted to their iPhones

Many customers are simply unwilling to part with their iPhones, which means they have less reason to care where or how they are made, experts say. According to a new [study by the University of Worcester](#) in the U.K., many owners are addicted to their smartphones, become obsessed about checking their email and hear phantom rings/buzzing in their pockets. It's easier to persuade people to give up fur than a smartphone that connects them to the world, says Seth Rabinowitz, partner at management consultancy Silicon Associates: "Apple has created a desire for new products that people didn't know they wanted."

5. Apple Is Good At Damage Control

Experts point out that Apple's report on its suppliers will help steal the thunder from any independent reports or news stories, says Rick Singer, CEO of GreatApps.com. "Apple is saying all of the right things and seems to be taking the proper steps to full disclosure," he says. Plus, as long as Apple outsources its production, the problem remains thousands of miles away from the Apple brand, he says. The title of Apple's report makes this clear, he says. It's called "Apple Supplier Responsibility" – not "Apple Responsibility."