



Environmental Impact And Fast Fashion

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ABSTRACT:

Fast fashion is the mass production of inexpensive clothing, it is the rapid turnover of trends. Fast fashion has developed over time by increasing consumer spending and profits by satisfying the consumer's need to participate in a fashion trend. The number of times a garment is worn has declined because of the fast fashion industry, even if the consumers want to wear them for a longer time they can't because of their low quality. Fast fashion clothing often has a short lifespan which is less than 10 times. This research paper examines and highlights the impact of the fast fashion industry. Resource depletion, pollution, and waste generation are how the fast fashion industry affects society. For instance, water-intensive practices, release of hazardous/toxic chemicals during textile production, clothing disposal leading to landfills and workers' plight are some concerns related to fast fashion. The impact extends beyond climate change and plastic pollution, it also poses a threat to biodiversity.

The paper examines how Millennials and Gen Z have huge influence on the rapid growth of fast fashion industry and consumer behavior through literature analysis. Gen Z and millennials care about sustainability but there is a lack of awareness about the environmental and social impact of fast fashion. Advertising plays a major role in influencing consumers which will change their buying behavior. This paper also examines the socio-economic factors and effects of fast fashion industry and evaluates potential strategies for controlling its environmental impact, including sustainable production practices and consumer education and awareness. The findings of this study talk about the urgent need for a shift towards more sustainable and ethical fashion by both fashion industries and consumers to reduce the ongoing environmental crisis.

Keywords: Sustainability, Fast Fashion, Consumer behavior, Environmental impact, and Ethical Fashion.

INTRODUCTION:

Fast fashion has an impact on the environment at each stage from the production to the consumption cycle,

starting from the first step which involves extraction of raw materials, manufacturing, and transportation. All these states use significant amounts of

resources and energy causing environmental degradation and climate change through the emission of greenhouse gases. Fast fashion also plays a role in plastic pollution. The use of synthetic fabrics like polyester, polypropylene, acrylic, and nylon are made using fossil fuels and these materials are commonly used in fast fashion because of their low-price range. All these synthetic fabrics are non-biodegradable and washing them allows microplastics to enter the waterways and when they escape the filters, they end up in the rivers and oceans causing harm to aquatic life. Promoting second-hand clothes like thrift stores is very important and plays a significant role in promoting sustainable fashion practices like Goodwill Industries. Goodwill diverts textiles from landfills, provides an affordable and sustainable alternative to traditional consumption patterns, and contributes to social and economic sustainability (Sunil Hedge, *et.al*, 2023). Goodwill supports the circular economy.

Fashion influences the way we carry ourselves. Fashion is not only restricted to self-expression but also a means of self-empowerment and confidence. Fashion has a massive influence on both people and the environment (Anjali B Gohel and Anand Shankar Raja, 2023). As time changes, the fashion industry evolves a lot which leads to the bloom of fast fashion. Fast fashion has become a prominent force

in the modern retail industry, which is well known for its collection of the latest designs at inexpensive prices. Fast fashion provides an opportunity for low-income people to dress in similar styles as affluent people, thus reducing the class discrimination generated by clothing (Williams, E., 2022). Fast fashion businesses have built a name for themselves by letting consumers acquire low-cost, designer-looking clothing for next to nothing. On the other hand, their sales practices significantly impact consumer behavior worldwide. Fast fashion is a type of retail that regularly releases new products throughout the year and is significantly less expensive than other fashion industry sectors. As it is advantageous to business models for their profit, we also must consider the environmental impact of fast fashion.

While considering the ecological impact we can say that fast fashion practices are responsible for substantial environmental damage, a decline in biodiversity, an upsurge in carbon emission, and the exhaustion of local water supplies. Fast fashion is currently experiencing unsustainable growth, upsetting the entire economy, and causing a significant shift in consumer behaviour. Apart from environmental impact fast fashion also affected the worker's rights (Boyi Fang, 2023). The production of wastewater and textile waste from fast fashion is no exception. The United Nations names the fashion

industry as the second most polluting of all industries, resulting in 8% of all carbon emissions and 20% of all global wastewater (Kerrice Bailey, et.al, 2022). The fashion industry consumes enormous amounts of water and generates huge amounts of wastewater. (Niinimäki, K et.al, 2020) As a result, the fashion industry is responsible for the consumption of 79 trillion of water annually, contributing to about 20% of industrial waste. From excessive water usage and chemical pollution to be generation of vast amounts of textile waste, the industry's impact on the ecosystem is substantial. This aims to explore and shed light on the detrimental environmental consequences of fast fashion, urging a deeper understanding of the need for sustainable alternatives in the global apparel industry. To lessen the damaging effects of fast fashion on the environment, industry must respond to these issues by creating eco-friendly supply chains and adopting sustainable methods. Even the customers are concerned about the environment but there is a lack of awareness about sustainability among people. This study will take a significant role in conducting a comprehensive analysis of fast fashion while emphasizing the importance of environmental responsibility and labour rights in clothing consumption, in addition to proposing solutions centered on minimalism, sustainability, and adopting recycling.

FAST FASHION:

The literature review method was used to analyze the data to acquire a more comprehensive understanding of the complex interrelationship between fast fashion and environmental impact. Fast fashion is popular among people for its rapid production of new-style garments that replicate the design of high fashion at low prices. Fast fashion has a positive impact on the fashion and textile industry by increasing production and it also fulfills the customer's needs by giving them stylized garments at an inexpensive price. (Cachon and Swinney, 2011) Fast fashion systems may be very valuable and favorable to customers, but they can cause unfavorable externalities at every stage of the supply chain, which causes a problem for environmental justice globally).

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT:

Fast fashion has a good impact on the fashion industry. But it hurts the environment. The fashion industry is the second most polluting industry, resulting in 8% of all carbon emissions and 20% of all global wastewater. (Kirsi Niininaki et.al, 2020) although there is a range of estimates, the industry produces 8-10% of global CO₂ emissions (4-5 billion tonnes annually). The fashion industry is also a major consumer of water. (79 trillion Liters per year), responsible for 20% of industrial waste pollution from textile

treatment and dyeing, contributes 35% (190,000 tonnes per year) of oceanic primary microplastic pollution, and produces vast quantities of textile waste. (>92 million tonnes per year), much of which ends up in landfill or burnt, including unsold products. And there is pollution from resource consumption in the production process. Cotton is one of the primary materials and it is in high demand in the fashion and textile industry, (Miller, Jordan, 2020). Yet the unnoticed fact is that producing a single kilogram of cotton requires 20,000 Liters of water, this tremendous amount of water use has caused significant harm to water resources.

CLOTHING DISPOSAL:

Fast fashion results in the short lifespan of clothing which results in the pollution created by the process of clothing disposal. (Bick, R., Halsey, E. & Ekenga, 2018) Annually, the average American discards about 80 pounds of clothing and textiles, constituting roughly 5% of the total capacity of all landfills. Some discarded garments become solid waste, blocking water flows, green spaces, and parks while posing additional environmental health risks in some countries. Every time a synthetic garment (a garment made of polyester, nylon, or several other man-made materials) is washed, roughly 1,900 individual microfibers are

discharged back into the water cycle (Sustain Your Style, 2017).

IMPACT ON WORKERS:

Another issue caused by fast fashion is worker's rights. Due to the growing demand for fast fashion, some brands reduce production costs, using cheap materials and depriving workers. Because of a lack of awareness, many workers experience harsh working environments, work for long hours, and get low incomes. Even workers face occupational hazards during production, including debilitating and life-threatening conditions such as lung disease and cancer, damage to endocrine function, adverse reproductive and fatal outcomes, accidental injuries, overuse injuries, and death (Sant'Ana M.A., Kovalechen, F., 2012 and Gebremichael, G., Kumie, A., 2015). As a solution to the problems created by the growth of fast fashion, fashion brands, the textile industry should concentrate more on sustainability and sustainable materials. Even though consumers are concerned about the environment, they don't know about sustainability. So, awareness should be created among consumers and brands about sustainability, minimalism, and recycling.

FINDING OF THE STUDY:

Fashion influences people, people start to wear clothes to be trendy rather than for necessity. The growing

population demands more clothes which is estimated to be 99 million tonnes per annum which cannot be met completely by natural fibre (Mukherjee A,2017). So synthetic fabrics came into the role to meet the necessity which leads to the problem of decomposing clothes. As a solution, we must shift towards sustainability and recycle textile waste into clothing. Once the fabric/cloths are not wearable we throw or discard them in landfills but in many countries, they give it to orphans (Dr. S. Aishwariya,2018). Goodwill is one such charity house that works by making one person's waste into another man's wealth (Koch K, Domina T,1999 and Koch K, Domina T,1999, 2017). Creating awareness among people is very important to create greener products, so the advertisement and marketing strategy also shifted to eco-friendliness (Charter M, Polonsky MJ,2017). Prolonged use of garments has the potential to reduce the overall impact of the supply chain. (Allwood, et al.,2006) reported, "Extending 207 the life of clothing so that demand for new products is reduced by 20% leads to a reduction of about 208 20% in all measures in the producing country".

Fast fashion typically targets Millennials and Gen Z people, as they are the most likely to be persuaded by fashion trends and have the desire to adapt and change their style based on current trends and fads (Jordan Miller,2020). So, it's very important to

educate people about sustainable fashion. There is another way to influence people to follow sustainability and change buying behavior is through social media. So, influencers who have a huge number of followers should be careful while advertising fashion brands, they should take the initiative in advertising the followers about sustainability. The campaign is the most important thing to change and educate fast fashion consumers. Three methods of marketing and advertising these educational resources to this audience include the creation of a sustainable fashion window display, the use of social media, and promotional flyers that can be printed into physical papers and banners, as well as being used for electronic purposes on company websites and in emails (Jordan Miller, 2020).

CONCLUSION:

As various factors influence the growth of fast fashion in the fashion and textile industry, it's important to highlight and identify the environmental impact of fast fashion. The target audience of fast fashion is Gen Z, so it's very important to educate youngsters about sustainable fashion. Wearing new clothes often is not good for the environment, rather we can shift to capsule clothing/wardrobe which transcends seasons and trends by being functional, it's the best alternative for repeating clothes. We must educate and

change the consumer's mindset on their buying behavior. They should know that it's okay to repeat clothes and spend more on sustainable products. Social media plays a major role in our day-to-day lives, where Gen Z gets influenced by influencers. Social media influencers should be more particular in what they advertise mainly in the fashion industry, they should start giving advertisements for more sustainable brands by which people can get inspired and influenced.

Even industries should start using more sustainable fibers and sustainable processes or supply chains. The sustainability of fiber refers to the process of making it. Fabrics such as Lyocell, made from the cellulose of bamboo, are made in a closed-loop production cycle in which 99% of the chemicals used to develop fabric fibers are recycled (Bick et al.,2018). The use of sustainable fibers will be the key element in reducing the environmental impact of the textile industry. The workers/laborers are made to work for a long time and given low wages. It is important to create awareness for the workers and educate them about worker's rights and laws.

Adapting to slow fashion will help in sustainability and reduce the environmental impact. The fashion industry should create or construct a functional system for textile recycling. People should start adopting minimalism, recycling, and reusing fabrics/ clothing in different ways by

donating them and creating new things out of the old and worn-out fabric/clothes.

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