

**A critical reflection of good examples within
Sustainability Leadership in the context of
the Fashion Industry, with suggestions for
the ISF.**



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INTRODUCTION

Sustainable leadership in the context of fashion comes in the form of many areas, from **Brands** that demonstrate sustainable leadership such as Patagonia and Everlane, to **Individuals** such as Orsola De Castro, Christopher Raeburn and Sofia Minney. Additionally, there are **Academics** such as Professor Kate Fletcher, Mathilda Tham and Sandy Black who continuously contribute to the field of sustainable development within fashion through various mediums such as art, education or theoretical frameworks within academic journals and publications.

A number of organisations have arisen within the field of sustainable fashion in the past decade. These organisations contribute to the development of sustainable leadership. Organisations such as Fashion Revolution, and Fashion Roundtable are the accounting for 41-45 percent of the excellent rated experts in the (2019) GlobalScan Sustainability Leaders report.

Building on the research conducted in a previous submission on a change initiative plan to launch the Institute of Sustainable Fashion (ISF), this paper will explore an explicit deliberate, controlled and conscious appraisal, evaluation and critical reflection (Shanks and Johnstone, 1999) in first person narrative of two fashion related sustainable organisations. These organisations are compared to evaluate their contributions to the field. This comparison will be followed by a TOWS analysis Wehrich (1982), to identify opportunities for sustainability leadership development within the fashion industry for the purposes of the launch of ISF.

ORGANISATIONS WITHIN SUSTAINABLE FASHION THAT HAVE DEMONSTRATED A GOOD EXAMPLE OF SUSTAINABILITY LEADERSHIP.

FIRST ORGANISATION REFLECTION, FASHION REVOLUTION OVERVIEW



The organisation Fashion Revolution (2021) is a not-for-profit movement represented by the Fashion Revolution Foundation Community Interest Company (CIC) with teams worldwide. The headquarters are based in London and the organisations started with two founders, Orsola De Caststro who leads as the Global Creative Director, and Carry Somers, who leads as the Global Operations Director. The organisation was founded in the wake of the Rana Plaza disaster in 2013. Fashion Revolution is the largest fashion activism movement worldwide, their vision is clear, “a global fashion industry that conserves and restores the environment and values people over growth and profit” (Fashion Revolution, 2021). This clear vision of their goal however needs to leave some space for interpretation to enable them some flexibility to carry out a number of activities with funds from various sources as long as the activities are relating back to their charitable status (Fashion Revolution, 2021).

Fashion Revolution Aims

The aims of Fashion Revolution align to many United Nations Sustainable Development Goals along the lines of environmental exploitation, living wages, working conditions, redistribution of power, conserving precious resources, regeneration of ecosystems, transparency and circularity. All of the aims are valid and much needed to transform the fashion industry. Noticeable missing areas are the collaboration aspect and education, as well as the psychology of consumerism to which the overconsumption issues contribute.

Fashion Revolution Areas of Change

Fashion Revolution work in three key areas to achieve change:

- Cultural Change whereby raising awareness, collaboration, consumption and providing a platform for visibility between consumers and products take place.
- Industry Change where research is conducted, influence and incentivisation projects occur.
- Policy Change where advocacy activities take place to influence a more active role in enforcing laws and influencing government.

Fashion Revolution Approach

Fashion Revolution takes an action orientation approach rather than being reactive. They also hold a Fashion Revolution Week in honour of the April 24th Rana Plaza disaster. When considering characterising leadership challenges referring to Dean Williams (2005) Six Domains, it can be reflected upon that Fashion Revolution operates within a couple of the Domains. The activist challenge describes as leadership work involving provoking and modifying their assumptions and values so that new realities can be embraced, the Domain creative challenge is also applicable to Fashion Revolution, this can be described as bringing a new solution or a novel strategy into existence (Williams, 2005). I think this demonstrates a transitional leadership approach where the organisation was built in response to the Rana Plaza disaster, but the organisation has since had to focus on transforming people and brands to do better to avoid such a disaster occurring again.

Fashion Revolution Structure

In terms of governance and funding, Fashion Revolution are transparent with their accounts as all charities should be, the British Fashion Council and the European Union were both major funders in 2020/21. The Brexit impact might affect Fashion Revolution in the coming years, adverse consequences of the loss of European funds might have adverse effects such as future employment and economic performance (Di Cataldo, 2017). This type of organisational structure suits the type of work they carry out and is allowing them to receive funds to carry out the work ensuring longevity.

Fashion Revolution, similar to that of Extinction Rebellion who provide provocations and mobility to action, Fashion Revolution offer downloads for posters of #whomademyclothes to enable and encourage people to take selfies in retail stores when asking them who made my clothes, in addition there is also a manifesto for participants to sign which is regularly used to call for government purposes.

Fashion Revolution Evaluation

In my evaluation, Fashion Revolution is a leading voice in Sustainability Leadership when it comes to Fashion, they are incredibly proactive in raising awareness and calls to action, there are some interesting publications from the organisation such as the Fashion Transparency Index that people can engage with when looking to compare how sustainable and ethical a brand is, however the brands participating in the index are self-disclosing with the information which is a potential risk for greenwashing. Fashion Revolution are great at provocations and creating PR stunts. However, what they are lacking in could be of benefit to the Institute of Sustainable Fashion (ISF) and collaborations between the two parties can occur. In the figure 1 below, A TOWS analysis Weihrich (1982), shows further insight into areas for opportunity and development within the organisation.

SWOT and TOWS analysis For Fashion Revolution.

	External Opportunities (O) • Strong brand • Existing network and email base • Collaboration	External Threat (T) • New entrants into the space • Lack of engagement with the call to action • Conflicts with industry
Internal Strengths (S) • Strong Network • Affiliation with HE • Founders are 'well known' • Major donors • Been active since 2013	<i>SO 'Maxi- Maxi' Strategy, using strengths to maximise opportunities.</i> The obvious strategy would be to develop a membership base, this area for opportunity is something that the ISF proposes so is an underdeveloped opportunity, a clear 'gap' in the market	<i>ST 'Mini-Maxi' Strategy, using strengths to minimise threats.</i> Using the existing foundation and trust they have an opportunity to minimise new entrants, however they can collaborate or even support new initiatives.
Internal Weaknesses (W) • Leadership can be improved • Digital Skills lacking in areas • No clear pathway to progression for staff	<i>WO 'Mini-Maxi' Strategy, minimise weaknesses by using advantage of opportunities.</i> Utilising the strong brand and connections, digital skills and leadership can be improved along with progression, there will be some advantages of using existing networks.	<i>WT 'Mini-Mini' Strategy, minimise weaknesses and avoid threats.</i> Upskilling staff and developing talent is a potential way of minimising the weaknesses to avoid threats.

Figure 1. TOWS Analysis of Fashion Revolution (Darcy, K. (2021)

The difference between the SWOT and TOWS analysis is whilst the SWOT (Strengths Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis is a great planning tool, the TOWS Matrix flips the acronym and becomes an action framework tool developed by Weihrich (1982). The table in Figure 1 shows that Fashion Revolution has some areas that can be improved by actions listed within the TOWS. For example, one major development can be highlighted as the utilising of the existing email base becoming a membership base. A membership base, however, is the opportunity that the Institute of Sustainable Fashion (ISF) would like to pursue as an identified gap in the market for sustainable

development within the fashion industry. A potential collaboration with Fashion Revolution could be useful for both parties, as the ISF is a start-up and Fashion Revolution already has credibility within the space of sustainable fashion.

The ISF can learn from the TOWS analysis on Fashion Revolution, that the lack of progression framework for developing staff and talent is a missed opportunity. A clear progression pathway to upskill staff would be beneficial, this could involve development and expansion within new markets and territories. Rather than hire in new talent, Fashion Revolution could look to develop the existing talents within the organisation. This is something that the ISF can develop into its own manifesto to model not just its own ethos and behaviour but to encourage the development of sustainable fashion professionals as a whole.

How the ISF can differ to Fashion Revolution

Weiss (2018) originally published in (1995) simply defined the Theory of Change framework as a theory of how and why an initiative works. The ISF will need to ensure points of clear difference to Fashion Revolution but also to create its own Theory of Change that is strong.

After evaluating Fashion Revolution, it appears that the Theory of Change is to ultimately campaign for a clean, safe, fair, transparent and accountable fashion industry.

The ISF aims to differ by having the Theory of Change to raise the standards of fashion sustainability practices for professionals and the fashion industry as a whole.

Utilising the theoretical framework Fig X by Avery, G.C. and Bergsteiner, H. (2011) on the sustainable or ‘Honeybee’ leadership, this management approach that aims to deliver better and more sustainable returns can be adopted by the ISF and the leading by doing approach can also be disseminated and modelled to the members of the ISF through workshops and guides.

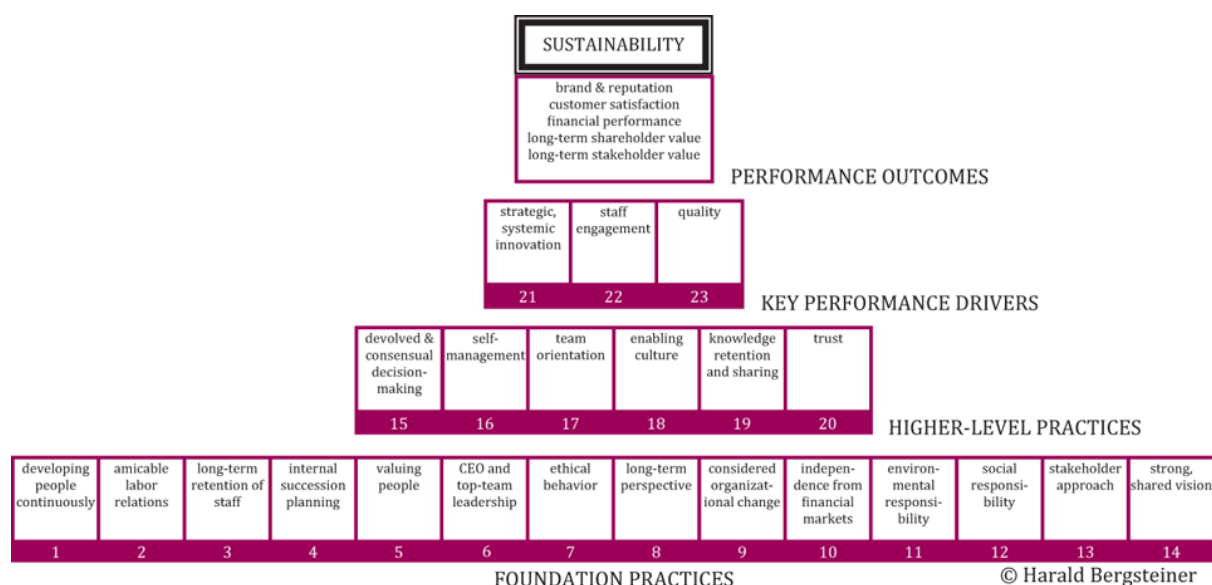


Figure 2. Sustainable Leadership Pyramid, Avery, G.C. and Bergsteiner, H. (2011).

The self reinforced leadership modelling is the new way for performance of a business that also looks at the prospects for survival and sustainability as a whole, it is opposed to the historical and typical shareholder-first approach which is still widely promoted Avery, G.C. and Bergsteiner, H. (2011). The ISF is in an effective position to educate the professional members to embed some of the Foundational Practices as shown in the Sustainable Leadership Pyramid from Avery and Bergsteiner. The higher level practices can be utilised through masterclass workshops that the ISF can offer as a form of CPD to sustainability professionals, the key performance indicators and performance outcomes can also be utilised as modules for systemic level change for the fashion industry as a whole.

SECOND ORGANISATIONAL REFLECTION, FASHION ROUNDTABLE



Fashion Roundtable Overview

Fashion Roundtable are a leading think-tank for the fashion industry aiming to improve people's lives by influencing policy and governmental outcomes. They work towards the "transition to an economy which is environmentally sustainable and inclusive, levelling up across the UK and our global partners" (Fashion Roundtable, 2021). They also work closely with the All-Party Parliamentary Groups (APPGs) to develop policy ideas and strategies. They are notably lesser known than Fashion Revolution but operate solely to transform the UK fashion industry at present.

Fashion Roundtable Aims

Fashion Roundtable is "committed to a fairer, greener and more inclusive fashion industry" (Fashion Roundtable, 2021). These aims are similar to those of Fashion Revolution, however, the ISF will differ by focusing on the fashion sustainable professional as an individual as they are the ones who will be leading the systemic changes.

Fashion Roundtable Areas of Change

Fashion Roundtable (2021) states that the three strategic pillars are Education, Inclusion and Sustainability. "These are the foundations to our work, recognising the causes of inequalities, addressing the impacts on our industry, its workforce and the environment". These are similar to that of Fashion Revolution and the ISF, I know this is an area I need to work on to create a point of difference. Perhaps the pillars of the ISF

will become more aligned to Professionalism, Systems Change and Education within Sustainable Fashion.

Fashion Roundtable Approach

Fashion Roundtable work across the fashion industry with touchpoints across education, technology and policy. Policy being one of the most prominent touchpoints (as seen in Figure 3 below), Fashion Roundtable have a systematic approach to policy, which starts with identification of issues by researching and or working closely with industry. They then lobby the parliamentarians, utilising the fact that they are also the secretariat to the APPGs concerned with the fashion and textiles industry they are in an optimum and unique position to do so.

Alongside the first stage they create campaigns to bring awareness to the issue, this then leads nicely to the second stage where they actively start policy shaping, again utilising their unique position as an insider group. They bridge the gap between the industry and legislators to create, shape and influence the policy.

Fashion Roundtable then use their dual status as an outsider group to influence the policy change. The former steps then culminate in the policy monitoring and evaluation where emphasis is put on the 'who is accountable' actions, and the overall amendment of policy. What this is lacking is the reporting of success or failure. The framework lacks the vital step of measuring KPIs or benchmarking forms of impact, though evaluation and feedback is not explicit compared to other sections within their systematic approach (Fashion Roundtable, 2020).

Fashion Roundtable Structure

Fashion Roundtable is the secretariat for the two APPGs for the fashion industry, giving them a direct relationship and connection with government officials enabling direct opportunity to change or create policy. This is a competitive advantage as an organisation.

How Fashion Roundtable Influences Policy

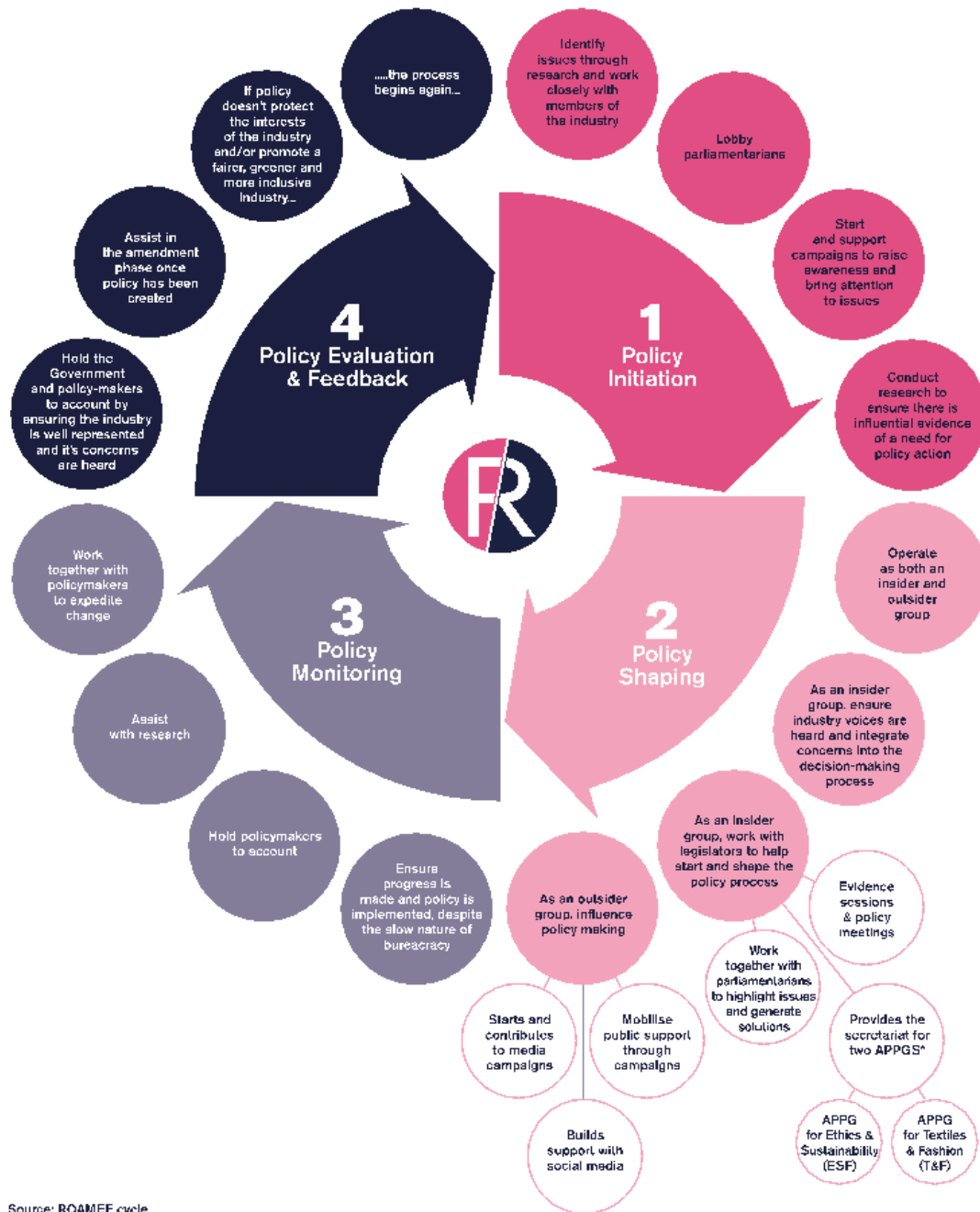


Figure 3. (Fashion Roundtable Policy Influence Diagram, 2020)

Fashion Roundtable Evaluation and TOWS Analysis

Fashion Roundtable are creating and demonstrating sustainable leadership to an excellent standard within relations to policy activism but lacks real demonstration of change at an individual level.

	External Opportunities (O) • Strong brand • Existing network and email base • Collaboration with industry individuals	External Threat (T) • New entrants into the space • Lack of engagement with the call to action • Conflicts with industry by being so embedded in the political space
Internal Strengths (S) • Strong network especially so with government • Affiliation with HE • Have a very strong board • Split the organisation to a profit and not for profit status.	<i>SO 'Maxi- Maxi' Strategy, using strengths to maximise opportunities.</i> The obvious strategy would be to develop a membership base, this area for opportunity is something that the ISF proposes so is an underdeveloped opportunity, a clear 'gap' in the market	<i>ST 'Mini-Maxi' Strategy, using strengths to minimise threats.</i> Using the existing foundation and trust they have an opportunity to minimise new entrants, however they can collaborate or even support new initiatives.
Internal Weaknesses (W) • Leadership can be improved due to Tamara being self-invested • Digital Skills lacking in areas • No clear strategy for growth of the org • Government ties could take too much time and focus away from their mission	<i>WO 'Mini-Maxi' Strategy, minimise weaknesses by using advantage of opportunities.</i> Utilising the strong connections, digital skills and leadership can be improved.	<i>WT 'Mini-Mini' Strategy, minimise weaknesses and avoid threats.</i> Establish themselves as industry first, government second. Take the CEO Tamara off the centre stage and put their members or underrepresented voices on the centrefold.

Figure 4. TOWS Analysis of Fashion Roundtable (Darcy, K. (2021)

CONCLUSION AND REFLECTIVE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ISF



Throughout this critical reflection I have been able to identify the areas that the ISF can develop sustainability leadership both for the organisation and its members, an analysis of both Fashion Revolution and Fashion Roundtable in relation to their sustainability leadership showed that there are opportunities to;

1. Raise the standards of Fashion Sustainability Professionals by offering a Continuous Professional Development (CPD) membership that gives accreditation to the individuals ability to operate within the emerging field.
2. Further the development of sustainable fashion for the good of the planet and all of its inhabitants through collaborations of members and the ISF.
3. Offer developmental leadership skills relating to sustainability on both a practical and theoretical level. Enabling learning by doing culture.

The chart in Figure 5 below from the (2019) report by GlobeScan Sustainability Leadership report shows that collaboration is seen as one of the key attributes that define leaders. This is a great piece of supporting evidence to boost the way I have been building the ISF. I want to foster collaboration as one of the core values within the manifesto of the organisation. The development of the ISF in its infancy will be started with 40 students from London College of Fashion as part of their collaborative challenge program, they will be able to support and engage with the start-up of the membership, branding, marketing and accreditation. The students on the collaborative challenge will become the inaugural members. Also, within the report by GlobeScan (2019) is the setting of standards as one of the prominent attributes a sustainable leadership organisation should embrace, which the ISF will do by having a set of criteria the members will need to meet in order to move through the membership tiers.

Continuous Professional Development (CPD) can be seen as one of the ways in which to respond to the (VUCA) Volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity setting that we now embrace as a population. Offering rapid responses to such issues by partnering with educational institutions, industry and other stakeholders to deliver cutting edge develop as it goes learning, implement and reacting. Examples of such can be seen as; A workshop bringing together members on the opportunity to shift consumer focus to a rental market space and how operationally, financially and strategically this can benefit all.



Figure 5. How experts define NGO Leadership (GlobeScan, 2019)

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FIGURE REFERENCES

Figure 1. TOWS Analysis of Fashion Revolution, Darcy, K. (2021)

Figure 2. Sustainable Leadership Pyramid, Avery, G.C. and Bergsteiner, H. (2011).

Figure 3. Fashion Roundtable Policy Influence Diagram, (2020)

Figure 4. TOWS Analysis of Fashion Roundtable (Darcy, K. (2021)

Figure 5. How experts define NGO Leadership (GlobeScan, 2019)

APPENDICES

Competitor analysis table Fashion Revolution and Fashion Roundtable

Name Location Audience	Vision / Mission / Activities	Pricing
Fashion Roundtable Great Britain HQ London Educators Industry Government	Fashion Roundtable is the leading think-tank for the fashion industry, improving people's lives by influencing policy and outcomes. We work towards the transition to an economy which is environmentally sustainable and inclusive, levelling up across the UK and our global partners, committed to net zero and supporting the green economy with a roadmap of jobs and opportunities. Fashion Roundtable work closely with Government and Parliament, through our All-Party Parliamentary Groups (APPGs), and to support the diverse voices of the sector and across the public, private and third sectors to develop our policy ideas and strategies. Our three strategic pillars are: education, inclusion and sustainability. These are the foundations to our work recognising the causes of inequalities, addressing the impacts on our industry, its workforce and the environment, offering real and long-lasting change with solutions-orientated strategies, democratising sustainability, empowering marginalised and diverse voices and championing creative talent through events, campaigns and policy. We are committed to a fairer, greener and more inclusive fashion industry.	£15 billed monthly or £150 billed annually as a FR Member Or £150 billed monthly or £1500 billed annually as an Unlimited Member

	We work across the fashion and textiles industry, technology, innovation, education, skills and sustainability policy. Fashion Roundtable is the secretariat for the only two APPGs which work with the sector, allowing us a pivotal and powerful voice in the intersection between the industry, creativity and policy. The expertise, authority and credibility of our research and recommendations is key to who we are and we uniquely support our industry across its complex value chain. Our research is independent and evidence-based, we collaborate with experts, business leaders and creative partners, to share our research with stakeholders and parliamentarians from all sides of the political spectrum to amplify impact successfully. Fashion Roundtable promotes a united thriving and sustainable fashion industry, addressing challenges with expert insights and solutions. From working on Brexit strategy, to the impacts of Covid-19 on business, from our work on climate change and modern slavery, to sustainable business models and our research on representation and inclusion, we have consistently been the first to address challenges, using our platform to highlight inequalities across the fashion industry, to effect long-lasting social, business and environmental change with a focus on a greener, fairer future. Our unique team of experts drawn from fashion, business, economics and politics offer transformative solutions and strategies. We support the diverse voices of the industry, creating the potential for long-term, inclusive, sector growth through policy, political intelligence and public affairs. Fashion Roundtable are a non-partisan, independent voice.	
Fashion Revolution Worldwide HQ London Consumer Educators Industry Government	Fashion Revolution was founded in the wake of the Rana Plaza disaster in 2013, Fashion Revolution has become the world's largest fashion activism movement, mobilising citizens, industry and policymakers through our research, education and advocacy work. We are a global movement of people who make the fashion industry work. We are the people who wear clothes. And we are the people who make them. We are designers, academics, writers, business leaders, policymakers, brands, retailers, marketers, producers, makers, workers and fashion lovers. We are the industry, and we are the public. We are world citizens. We are Fashion Revolution. OUR VISION A global fashion industry that conserves and restores the environment and values people over growth and profit. OUR AIMS • An end to human and environmental exploitation in the global fashion industry • Safe, dignified working conditions and living wages for all people in the supply chain • Redistributed and more equal balance of power across the global fashion industry • A bigger and stronger labour movement in the global fashion industry • A global fashion industry that works to conserve precious resources and regenerate ecosystems • A culture of transparency and accountability across the value chain • An end to throwaway culture and shift to a system where materials are used for much longer and nothing goes to waste • Heritage, craftsmanship and local wisdoms are recognised and valued	£0 you can sign up to the newsletter for free.