

Fast Fashion: An investigation into greenwashing tactics high street brands apply to their garments to mislead the consumer and how new innovations designers help reduce our waste to landfill.

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This paper is an investigation into fast fashion- an industry which has been given an “estimated value” of “\$31.4 billion” for 2020 (Research & Markets, 2021), and the negative impact it has on the planet’s carbon footprint. While the fast fashion industry generates huge profit margins, it is difficult to get brands to slow down production and move towards quality garments with a longer lasting “lifespan and length of active use” (Laitala and Klepp, 2021). Fast fashion is the “term coined by retailers to encapsulate how trends move rapidly from the catwalk to the store” (Brooks, 2015). This form of production is always going to be unsustainable. The Sustainable Clothing Action Plan’s (SCAP) most recent paper, published in 2019, states that the nation failed to meet the objective to decrease the amount of textile waste to landfill. SCAP’s target was to reduce clothing waste in the UK by 15% yet the achieved outcome was 4%. This paper engages with the idea that the leading clothing companies are misleading the consumer (2019). There are fashion companies claiming to be sustainable and meeting the proposed SCAP targets. However, are the fast fashion brands producing ethical clothing lines doing so to help the climate crisis? This paper will offer designed tools and approaches to raise awareness for the shopper regarding how they can support the regenerative cultures. Ethical fashion moves away from “an outdated manufacturing process” (Minney, 2016, p10). Fashion and sustainability advocate Kate Fletcher provides her definition that greenwashing is anywhere, a ‘superficial appearance of ecological credibility glosses over damaging practices’ (2012). These approaches are aimed to educate the consumer the threats that civilisation is leaving on the environment and planet from unethical fast fashion practices. Would knowing this information change the consumers mindset for buying cheap clothing? The focused high street brands for the purpose of this essay will be Zara and H&M. Both will be cross-examined to assess their environmental sustainability in their manufacturing of goods, particularly in the materials they use. These two chosen fashion retailers claim that they have a responsibility for making clothes more viable for consumers to buy and to make them last longer.



(Fig.1 Example of Trickle-down theory)

According to Miller (2001) the oldest theory of fashion, the ‘trickle down theory’- see figure 1, which is based upon copying and modifying clothing designs. Economist and sociologist Thorstein Veblen showed that upper class styles gradually pass down to the lower class (Miller, 2001). The fast fashion market adopts this theory but instead takes designer catwalk trends and replicates them for the high street market. In the past three decades the global fashion industry has started from a \$500 billion trade (£374.5 billion) to a \$2.4 trillion (£748.8 trillion) a year (Thomas, 2019, p5).

In the past decade, high street fashion stores and online retailers are dominating the clothing market. Retailers have accomplished this by changing their system from “product driven to buyer driven” (Heuer & Becker-Leifhold, 2018, p. 80). The demand for cheap has led to the shift of outsourcing production to third world countries with cheaper labour and cheaper quality materials. The topic of the climate crisis and the urgency to develop into an eco-friendlier world comes from the science shared by organisations such as United Nations and at conferences on climate change such as COP26, where countries come together to discuss how they can have a positive impact, turn things around and commit to new safeguarding policies. Media coverage has brought the information to the buying public who are now becoming more conscious of their purchases and personal responsibility for the future generations. Gaining an understanding about alternative ways that are being developed to improve the life cycle of a garment, consumers are beginning to look for better alternatives. This essay continues building on previous research into the fashion brands and sustainability, there is now a need to ‘call out’ fast fashion and make the consumer aware.



(Fig.2 Advert for Join Life campaign)

The language that Zara uses within the advert for *Join Life* signifies that they are conscious about the planet and that the brand is re-using materials to create fibres for garments, but there is plenty of evidence to say they are not doing enough, and that this is just part of their sales strategy. The ‘enforced blessings’ sales method is an advertising tactic that convinces the consumer that companies are ethical but “have no ambition beyond wanting to make money” (Sven, 2018). Brands that use this method are manipulating the consumer into purchasing products by misleading the buyer. In recent years, fast fashion brands have brought out separate ‘ethical lines’ to bring sustainable clothing to their stores with names like, *Join Life* and *Conscious*. On the surface, the consumer would presume they are buying into a worthy cause, but when taking the time to delve deeper into these sustainable collections, it becomes apparent that they are very misleading.

Cradle to Cradle (C2C) is a regenerative design system that reflects on nature's cycle, to “see waste as food” (Braungart & McDonough, 2009, p. 13). This system looks to nature as model for a circular economy for fashion which can be easily implemented into daily life. This aims to counter the throw away culture that has been created for the fashion system where cheap garments end up in landfill. In a video created for the Earthshot prize it states “waste doesn’t go to waste. What is waste for one is food for another. All materials are shared in cycles, and everything is biodegradable” (Earthshotprize, 2021) which suggests we need to mimic nature to create a less wasteful system.

Roland Barthes (1990), French literary theorist, philosopher, and semiotician, suggests that the fashion system, as he outlines it, works by getting the consumer to impulse buy. This behaviour causes consumers to buy without thinking. During the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown, impulse buying online increased due to civilisation being stuck in doors with direct access to shopping apps. Amazon, one of the biggest delivery services for online shopping, covers a vast range of products, including fashion, greatly benefited during lockdown in 2020 doubling “to reach \$21.3 billion, its market cap rose by over \$700 billion” (Berg & Knights, 2021, p. 50). Proving lockdown increased our buying habits. For retail fashion stores, lockdown benefited the environment with factory work and transport easing, and online shopping only rising by a fifth in August 2020 (Dalglish, 2020). Buying and wearing fashionable clothes has always been favourable with individuals in society. They do it to express themselves and feel good about themselves. According to Barthes the fashion system is about semiotics and the signs, describing that clothing is more than an item, its more that it becomes a perception of fashion within the world (Barthes, 1990). Clothing can always be seen as a measure of wealth of an individual whereby the rich can afford high end designer items and adds to the status symbol, when we shop, we buy into a lifestyle and create a chosen public identity.

Zara is one of the main fashion retailers on the high street, owned by Inditex. Amancio Ortega the originator of Zara made the business the largest international clothing retailer with the aim to “give the customer what they want; get it to them faster than anyone else” (Hitt, Ireland & Hoskisson, 2016, p100). Zara’s turnaround time “takes just two weeks for the company to update existing garments and get them into its stores” (Schermerhorn, 2011). This leads to unnecessary and over consumption of products and is a contributory factor of the amount of textile waste going to landfill. In the life cycle of a garment “Problems arise from the use of toxic chemicals in manufacturing, and from the vast amounts of water used in cotton production” (Holroyd, 2017, p13). To give an insight specified by World Wildlife, it takes “2,700 litres of water to produce the cotton for a single T-shirt” (WWF, 2013). The high-street brands that have introduced eco-lines to fashion are questionable, as the whole brand themselves works to bring out fast track clothing resulting in large negative effects on the environment. Brands have started selling garments with recycled materials or new modern biomaterials. Zara’s *Join Life* ethical line claims to provide sustainable products to the consumer, “a scheme which helps consumers identify clothes made with more environmentally friendly materials like organic cotton and recycled polyester” (Roll, 2020).

In the stores the tags, shopping bags and delivery boxes also follow the ‘sustainable image’ of being made from recycled materials.



(Fig.3 Image of recycling collection in Zara)

Many of Zara's stores provide a recycling program where unwanted clothes can be dropped off with the promise that such clothes will be reused. The message on the drop bin states, "bring any clothes you no longer wear and give them a new life." A video produced by Zara provides more information into where they donate the clothes, "classified to its best destiny, sold for social benefits, reused for industrial materials, upcycled and transformed into my fabrics" (Zara- Join Life, 2021). The program leads the consumer to believe their unwanted clothes are going to be used responsibly.

Zara's annual report 2020 states they produced more than 35% of garments for the *Join Life* label on the market (Inditex, 2020) leaving a massive figure of 65% that are from the original collection being seen as unsustainable.

In an article from *Grazia* (2019) on Zara's new line being launched, the article states the company's guidelines:

By 2020, Zara's factories will aim to produce zero discharge of hazardous chemical for all products at every stage of the supply chain, while all collection will use sustainable cotton, linen, and recycled polyester by 2025.

(Grazia, 2019)

Yet, Zara's annual report in 2020 did not mention this. The brands guidelines do not seem to be aligned with their action. The Inditex Report (2020) continues that "450,146 tonnes" of sustainable materials were placed on the market, with if you calculate the three eco-friendly

materials and “Organic, BCI and recycled cotton” (Inditex, 2020), equal to 93,092 tonnes. Yet if you subtract those two figures you get a result of 357,054 tonnes, which suggests these materials are un-recyclable. Over the report Zara have failed to provide clear and transparent details on their environmental guidelines within the report. Ultimately, the business model that Zara continues to utilize still contributes to amount of textile waste. Activist Greta Thunberg makes it clear in a quote “You cannot mass produce or consume ‘sustainability’ as the world is shaped today” (Euronews, 2021). Zara’s *Join Life* campaign (Inditex, 2020) is a step into the right direction, but the clothes they produce need to become more sustainable to make a difference.

The claims that fast fashion brands’ ethical lines maybe deceiving to the consumer has led to this investigation into high-street stores H&M & Zara. Specifically, the materials they use within the production. The primary research, a visit to local Zara & H&M branches was executed in Swansea city. The two shops differ as Zara has a collection called *Join Life* and H&M have ‘Conscious,’ which sells ethically made garments throughout the store. Zara has a white *Join Life* tag alleging the collection has “at least 40% of recycled polyester + produced using less water” and ‘100% recycled polyester’ (Zara, 2021). To have a better understanding, the in-label tag was looked for that provides the full description on the materials used on the outer and inner shell of the item



(Fig. 4 Zara Textured Blazer)

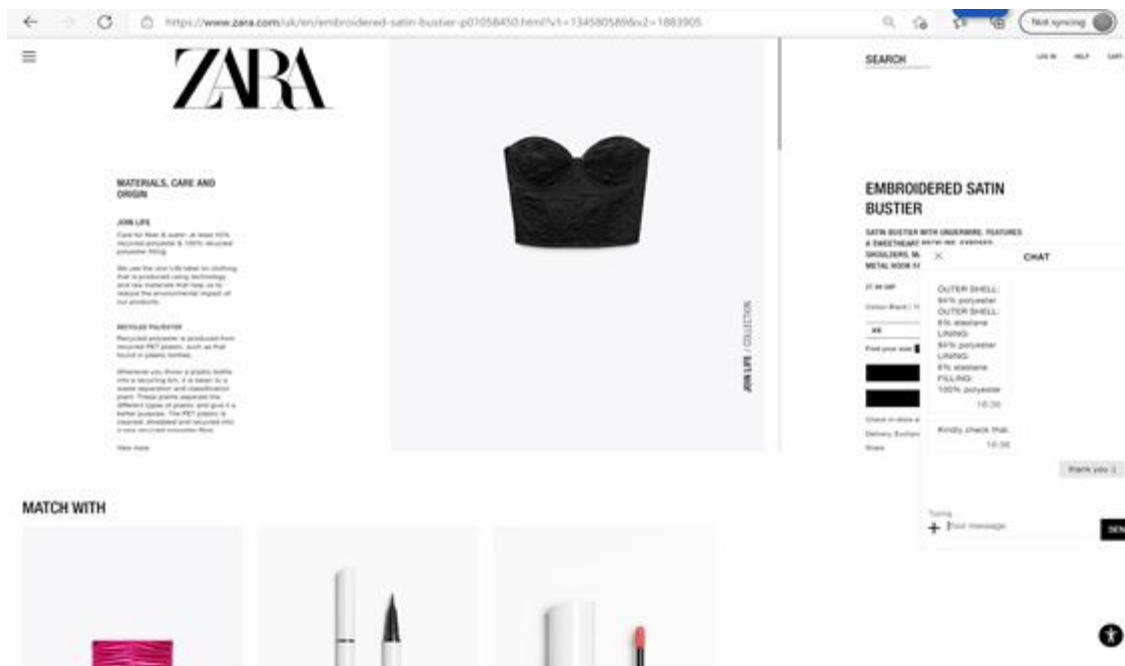
A similar garment has been selected to compare at both stores. A blazer contains multiple fibres in their fabric composition for the lining and outer shell. Fig.1 is a textured blazer available in Zara with a price tag of £79.99. This price point as a fast fashion brand is expensive, as the material description on the outer shell is 76% cotton and 24% polyester. Even though cotton is a natural cellulose fibre, to produce this fibre it uses water supplies “requiring an incredible 11,000 litres of water for every kilogram” (Brooks, 2015, p19). Apart from the sustainability of the fibres utilized in production, what fast fashion brands have also overlooked is the customers health. “Skin is the largest and most complex organ in the body” (Mueller, 2017, p. 86). Skin is the outer layer that breathes and protects humanity. When it comes to pesticides, consumers seem unknowingly happy to wear them through their clothes but may not intend to ingest them. To produce the amount of cheap clothing the world demands within current society pesticides are used. “Proportionally cotton uses a far greater degree of chemical input than most food crops because there is less concern over consumers health” (Brooks, 2015, p19). The rise in fast fashion have made brands like Zara forced to cut back on their quality of cotton that they use.

Further to the blazer (figure 1), the lining being 100% acetate. This fibre is a plant-based material. It is said to be better than virgin plastics but is only biodegradable depending on where and how its disposed (HEALable, n.d.). According to statics “In the UK, £10 billion worth of clothes are bought and not worn” (The F Team, 2020, p3). The look of the Zara jacket is smart and looks high quality from the woven outer shell. This is a ‘stand out’ jacket and from a consumer’s point of view may only be worn on special occasions, meaning it does not get overworn. Greenwashing can be seen within Zara’s *Join Life* collection with the statements they use on their website, “we work to reduce the environmental impact of our products from the beginning of their life cycle” (Zara, 2021). This may be true but where is the evidence? They claim that everything is perfect with emphasis on small green attributes like using ‘new raw materials’ when yet they still produce products that use virgin synthetics like cotton. “The synthetics material which takes hundreds of years to breakdown” (Samanta, Awwad and Algarni, 2020, p.139). In Zara’s sustainable pledge, their website states “Before 2025 ends, Zara’s collections will be made with 100% sustainable/recycled cotton, linens, and polyester” (Zara,2021). The brand has implemented recycled fibres into their collection yet, from findings on the website the materials still leave microplastics back into the water.



(Fig.5 Image of the 'Join Life' tag)

Misleading accusations similarly are unearthed with the symbols on the tag of the clothing. On the top right the tag shows the logo of the 'Forest Stewardship Council' (FSC). The principle is to "promote responsible management of the world's forest" (Cerutti et al., 2014). Furthermore, they aim to encourage "social and environmental stewardship required to maintain biodiversity" (Morgan, et al., 2013, p. 1). The FSC is a certification promoted by "environmental and social groups along with businesses and governments" (Morgan, et al., 2013, p. 1). The stamp on the tag would indicate to customers that the entirety of the collection is trademarked by FSC. Through discovery the FSC stamp is only stating that the *Join Life* tag attached to the clothing.



(Fig.6 Screenshot of a top from Zara Online)

Looking at secondary research on this topic, and referencing to Zara's website, the *Join Life* section describes in the left-hand margin what the collection promotes is "We use the Join Life label on clothing that is produced using technology and raw materials that help us to reduce the environmental impact of our products" (Zara, 2021). For the consumer to know what the composition of fibre/ type of fabric that is used in the garment, there is a lengthy process of reading to gain this information. The site is not easy to navigate to obtain this information, a customer would have to put trust in the brand to assume the element of sustainable materials in the garment. From this discovery, I wanted to reach out to the brand to see if they would help me understand why the company is selling garments in the *Join Life* collection if they are not abiding by the pledges stated on the website. The first line of contact to reach out to the brand is on the website they provide a customer service chat line in which they declined my questioning on the materiality of the satin bustier which contained unclear outlines of the recycled fibres in the garment. Furthermore, the 'reaching out' justifies the companies' actions are not ethical to make a change with the growing problem of textile waste.

Biomaterials have been implemented into the ethical lines, Zara has introduced the material called "TENCEL™" also known as Lyocell, a cellulose fibre which "reduces the raising hazardous waste" (Gardetti & Muthu, 2020, p. 73). Within the *Join Life* collection, they use recycled materials or produce the garments using less water. Applying recycled materials uses less energy than creating virgin materials, the recycled fibres make use of materials what would otherwise end up in landfill. On the *Join Life* website, it declares "we are committed to continue working on each stage of the life cycle of our garments to achieve sustainable development" (Zara, 2021). This statement shows that their 'ethical' line remains on-going and requires more work to become an improved ethical brand. Even though Zara is producing 'ethical lines' should they aim to make the full clothing line more sustainable? A single collection is not enough to help the fight for climate change, it needs to be Zara's collections as whole. Zara may be seen as ethical, as they want to maximise utility in the long term. But through the analysis the main issue remains in the overproduction.

Hennes and Mauritz a company known on the high-street as 'H&M' is the other competing fast fashion brand to Zara that have also introduced an ethical fashion line. They have

over “1000 stores in 21 countries around the world” (Leeman, 2020). Much like Zara, they produce lower end of market clothing that can be manufactured rapidly and purchased at affordable prices. Their ‘Conscious’ line was first launched in 2010 with the aim to produce more sustainable clothing to reduce the amount of textile waste that contributes to the destruction of the planet. Their website affirms “All our products are made with care and consideration for the people who make them and for the environment” (H&M, 2018). Unlike Zara who have only produced a ‘line’ that is moving towards becoming more sustainable, H&M’s (2018) ethical pledge claims “Garments containing more sustainable materials can be found across all our departments all year round”. This demonstrates the company is trying to make a difference to move to sustainable materials throughout the whole of their fashion collections. H&M are showing that they are the ones to be in the lead when it comes moving in the right direction sustainably. The ‘Conscious’ garments can be spotted with the green tag with a statistic of the percentage on sustainable material is used within the product “To qualify for a green hangtag, a product must contain at least 50% sustainable materials” (H&M, 2011).

H&M have also introduced a clothes deposit scheme within the retail chain. Customers can leave unwanted garments ‘in any of the 3,300 stores’ claiming they will reuse them or subsequently recycle them into new clothes. To help reduce the carbon footprint, recycling clothes is an effective method to help combat this. When clothing is made, it utilizes substantial amounts of resources. The H&M program states that when you deposit clothes to recycle, the program plants one tree for every 22.6kg of garments donated (Hassellöf, 2021). Within the scheme, H&M delivers an exchange of a 15% discount off new clothes in store. The campaign promotes the consumer to buy more garments, which increases consumption and increases textile waste. This could be seen as having greenwashing in its initiatives to generate profits. Zara likewise has the equivalent initiative but offers no vouchers to induce customers.

From the findings above, H&M have proved they are more ethical within the dimension of sustainable materiality. Although sustainability is a topic in fast fashion that needs to be resolved to help reduce waste, “poor people across the developing world grow cotton, dye materials and stitch fabric, and are paid low wages, which keep clothes cheap for those consumers to buy” (Brooks, 2015). The Rana Plaza collapse in 2013 gave consumers the insight into the labour conditions of the poor working conditions the employees that produce those garments. The fair wages and no excessive working hours need to be added in the account of the brands system being ‘sustainable’ as a whole.



(Fig.7 H&M Blazer)

The H&M ‘Conscious’ blazer is valued at £24.99, which is a considerably cheaper than the Zara alternative. With H&M’s version, the composition of the blazer is made up of 65% recycled polyester. Recycled Polyester is an alternative material to original polyester, as it is made from Polyethylene terephthalate (PET) plastic bottles. The material “is the most widely used fibre in the apparel industry, accounting for around 52% of the total volume of fibres produced globally” (Textile Exchange Preferred Fibre & Materials Market Report 2020). The PET recycled polyester also utilises plastics from our seas, fabric scraps and unwanted polyester textiles (TextileExchange, 2020). The website gives more detail of the material description stating “Lining: Polyester 100%Shell: Polyester 65%, Viscose 34%, Elastane 1%” (H&M GB, 2021). Within the ‘Conscious Blazer’ it contains ‘Viscose.’ The advantage of this blazer is that it can be dressed up or dressed down, making it a versatile wardrobe piece. H&M and Zara use the viable material ‘Viscose’ and ‘Lyocell,’ which are high quality fabrics. Fibres that have also been introduced into the ‘Conscious’ collection are ‘Tencel Lyocell,’ they are a new “regenerative fibre produced from the cellulose of wood pulp...which is from a natural origin” (Goswami, Anandjiwala and Hall, 2004, p63). H&M have also been using ‘Tencel’ within their ‘Conscious’ garments since 2011 (H&M, 2021), which means they have been taking steps in the right direction for sustainability early on to tackle the textile waste crisis. The H&M collection online currently has 7759 items, many of the items are neutral colours. This may suggest the colours that are applied to the garments can be thought of as greenwashing, as the brand uses ‘earthly’ tones to suggest their clothes are eco-friendly.

Based on the analysis of the sustainability of materials used within the two largest high street fashion retailers Zara and H&M, the outcome is they both need to reevaluate their business models to put planet over profit. What these brands need to do is follow suit of others like Toast and People Tree, where being conscious is at the heart of the brand. Safia Minney the founder of People Tree suggests companies needs to be more “transparent” and “follow a more sustainable business practice” (Minney, 2016, p21). Her ethos is using ethical processes to manufacturer and sell her clothing brand. The current fast fashion system is a

system that is not beneficial to the environment, Rogers's (1983) quote relates to the life span of a garment "An innovation is perceived as having a life cycle, that is, it is born, matures, and dies" (Ellen Macarthur Foundation, 2021). Designing a circular economy is what the Ellen Macarthur Foundation have created, a concept for the future of the fashion with three notions, "used more, made to be made again and made from safe and recycled or renewable inputs" (Ellen Macarthur Foundation, 2021). The model is aimed at designers in the production process to find solutions to close the loop in their cycle to help reduce waste. This circular model has been seen on BBC news when it broadcasted a segment on how a whole town is transforming textile waste into clothing.



(Fig. 8 A Town in Italy creating a circular economy)

A method in Prato, Italy is being used to create an almost perfect circular economy 'With it processing 15% of all recycled clothes in the world' (Recycling fashion: The town turning waste into clothes, 2020). The small town comes together and utilizes clothes that would otherwise be in landfill and gives them a second life. As previously mentioned, nature's cycle is what is mimicked to develop a circular economy and this rotation is used to produce ethical fashion, "considering every circumstance within its context and becoming of the impact" (Marcketti and Karpova, 2020) Garments are 'sorted by colour, torn apart, washed.' Following this, they are turned into wool fibres and are ready to be used to create something new. Based on collaboration of the locals and the awareness of clothing consumption this is a way forward where the entire industry could benefit. The United Kingdom has understood the climate crisis and agreed on "zero carbon emissions by 2050" (Bravo, 2020, p97). This is a step in the right direction but also a system needs to be put in place. A local theorist produced exactly that, to redesign any cycle that can adapt to become liveable.

Donella Meadows formed a nine-part system which by each point gave a more improved impact. Produced in 1999 the list gives a business model for other companies to follow Point Six- Driving positive feedback loops discuss in Kate Fletcher book gives an example of applying to our ever-growing consumption expressing "The more consumer interest there is in the environmental and social issues, the more products will be offered by fashion companies keen to have a share of the market" (Fletcher, 2008, p65). Although this point can be beneficial, relating back to fast-fashion brands they will use this interest and create 'ethical' lines that are not conscious to the planet. As seen in the evidence above, being more

eco-friendly has become popular, they implement this idea within their stores to stay in with being on trend.

Reclaiming the power of mending that was used in the previous centuries. Amy Twigger-Holroyd, Associate Professor in Nottingham Trent University, and a sustainable fashion designer, approaches her medium with the quote from Farline (1992) that “recycling offers businesses an environmental excuse for instant obsolescence.” She voices this quote as “provocative” and “true” describing that as a society if we recycle it is accessible to produce and sell more (Leeds Arts University, 2018). This reiterates the ethical lines / recycling bins being implemented by both fast fashion brands mentioned. With them producing few ethical clothing within the company, makes it acceptable to entice consumers to buy more. She shared the importance of fashion much like Barthes with his words of “new is not a fashion, it is a value” (Ingham, 2015 p1). To know where clothes come from is important. Twigger- Holroyd’s label, ‘Keep & Share,’ gives the feeling of an attachment to the garments as the supply chain is smaller, and in turn with the consumer keeping it for longer. (Leeds Arts University, 2018). The act ‘slow fashion’ is what her practice involves referring to garments that are made to last (Fulop, 2020, p12). Her ideas could inform business to improve their practices and strategies with larger brands could implement

The process of deconstructing an existing garment and reworking it to create something new. Is what Twigger-Holroyd has applied within her practice. “She introduced the initiative of ‘Reknit- Revolution’ providing learning, knitting skills and techniques of how to repair/alter existing items of knitwear. Her pledge is ‘rework other than make new things.’ This poses the question “What happens if we try to design something that will last, repair and continued for 100 years?” (Leeds Arts University, 2018). Her book ‘Folk Fashion’ describes what needs to be done about the clothing consumption crisis. “We need radical strategies that will dramatically reduce the volume of garments produced and rapidly discarded” (Holroyd, 2017, p14). The consumer does not realise the damage they leave on the environment through buying inexpensive clothes, as there is a huge market of shoppers that buy cheap and short life clothing, which makes it feel okay to follow suit.



(Fig.9 Clothes in landfill in Africa)

Second-hand buying can contribute to a decline in the eco problem for fast fashion and waste and is economical. As well as this re-wearing a garment or outfit needs to be normalised. The amount of clothes that are thrown away could fill a truck load of clothes (2625kg) every second, “which is enough to fill the Empire State Building 1.5 times every day or Sydney Harbour every year” (TheFTeam, 2020, p. 3). This would help decrease the carbon footprint by buying timeless pieces that can be re-worn and paired with many outfits. Thrifting can be a sustainable social step and has become popular with the younger generation. The word refers to form of second-hand shopping. “Thrift is simply the application of intelligence to expenditure” (War Loan Organization, 1920, p 29). Buying pre-loved garments are more affordable for the consumer but also expands the life of the product. Furthermore, reiterates a system that where there is less waste, making use of what already exists while promoting a circulating fashion system.

To effectively change, brands will have to follow a business model that utilizes slow fashion. Conscious shifts towards a circular economy would need to be implemented by putting in government policies and guidelines. The United Nations Global Compact is an organization that has a ten-principal plan to “embrace, support and enact, within their sphere of influence, a set of core values in the areas of human right, labour standards, the environment and anti-corruption” (Rasche and Kell, 2010). Organisations that adopt sustainable policies and framework show they have a consideration “to people and planet, but also setting the stage for long-term success” (The Ten Principles | UN Global Compact, n.d.). Unfortunately, this is a non-binding plan meaning that business’ do not have to comply. The plan has no legal power to reinforce laws onto companies. Currently, fast fashion brands do not have to abide by rules with the number of sustainable materials they use within their garment production. The low-quality materials used within the fast fashion industry encourages the problem resulting in civilization having a ‘throw away culture,’ leading to an ever-increasing landfill issue, impacting on the environment. Twigger- Holroyd’s initiative as previously mentioned encourages consumers to go into their wardrobe to “rework other than buy new things” (Leeds Arts University, 2018). To help make use of what they already own.

The lifecycle of modern clothes has become painfully short. Living 100% ethically has become impossible. In the present, the state of the planet and the urgency of the fashion industry to reduce waste, manufacturers must bear in mind that “you cannot mass produce fashion or consume ‘sustainably’ as the world is shaped today” (Elan, 2021). The clothing system is a whole labyrinth of complicated and legal system that is unstoppable. Through discovering fast fashion corporations’ ethics as a researcher, the greenwashing initiatives to gain profit, stay on trend, and overall improve their image that suit action plans to reduce waste needs to be to protect the planet. Both companies mentioned within the investigation have followed the necessity and ‘trend’ for sustainable clothing with their campaigns, while engaging in active greenwashing to mislead consumers. As well as companies playing their part in becoming totally sustainable, it is human’s responsibility to take care of the planet. Professor Wangari Maathai specifies “You cannot protect the environment unless you empower people, you inform them, and you help them understand that these resources are their own, that they must protect them” (Kickul and Bacq, 2012). The investigation has highlighted the greenwashing strategies the biggest high street fashion stores use to convince the consumer into believing they are buying into a compelling cause. Advertisements, power strategies, unachieved pledges along with blatant lies have been unearthed throughout the essay and have highlighted that their customers have been misled. Neither Zara nor H&M are entirely ethical due to the vast amount of clothing they produce each week. There needs to be a change in the fashion system, places like Prato and designers like Amy Twigger-Holroyd have demonstrated how the cycle can be changed, as Albert Einstein once said, “The world will not evolve past its current state of crisis by using the same thinking that created the situation” (Sturmberg and Martin, 2013, p1). The fast fashion system is an issue that cannot be ignored towards protecting our planet.

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