

Name: Emerald Goldsworthy

Student number: 2204674

Programme of study: Do people really know how much damage fast fashion causes and if there is anything, which can be done to stop it?

Module: ADAD4018/C Ways of Perceiving

Word count: 1500

Tutors name: Julia Lockheart

Do people really know how much damage fast fashion causes and if there is anything, which can be done to stop it?

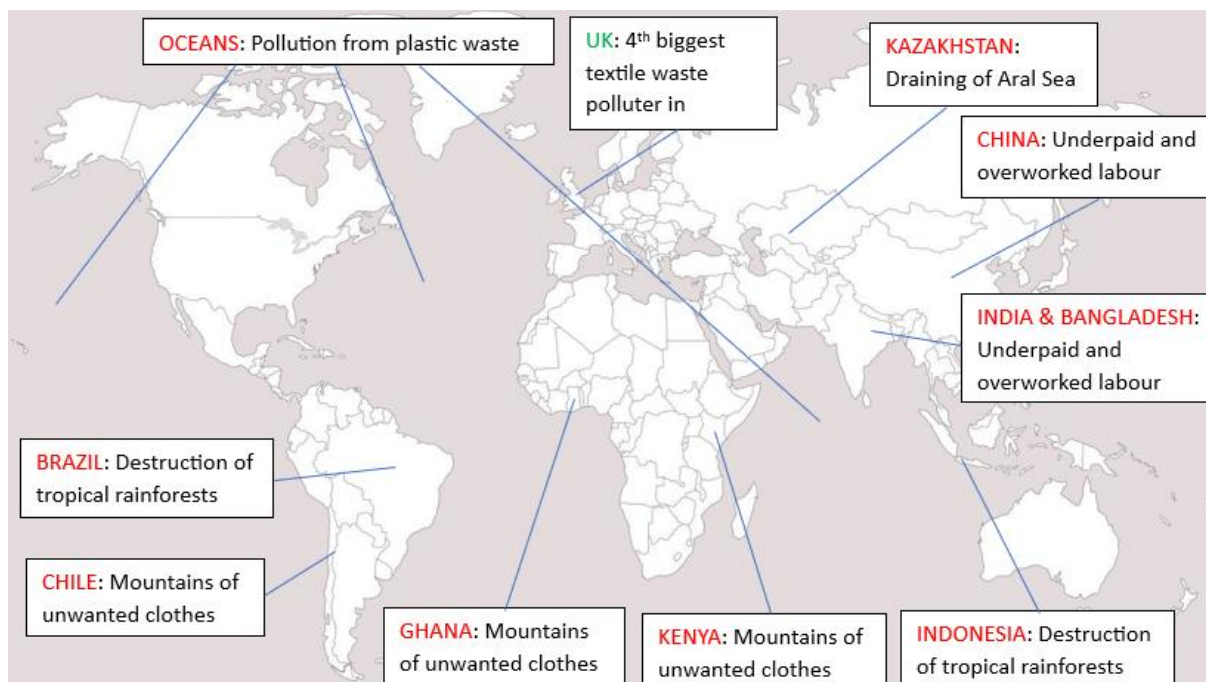


Figure 1: Map of world showing textile disasters

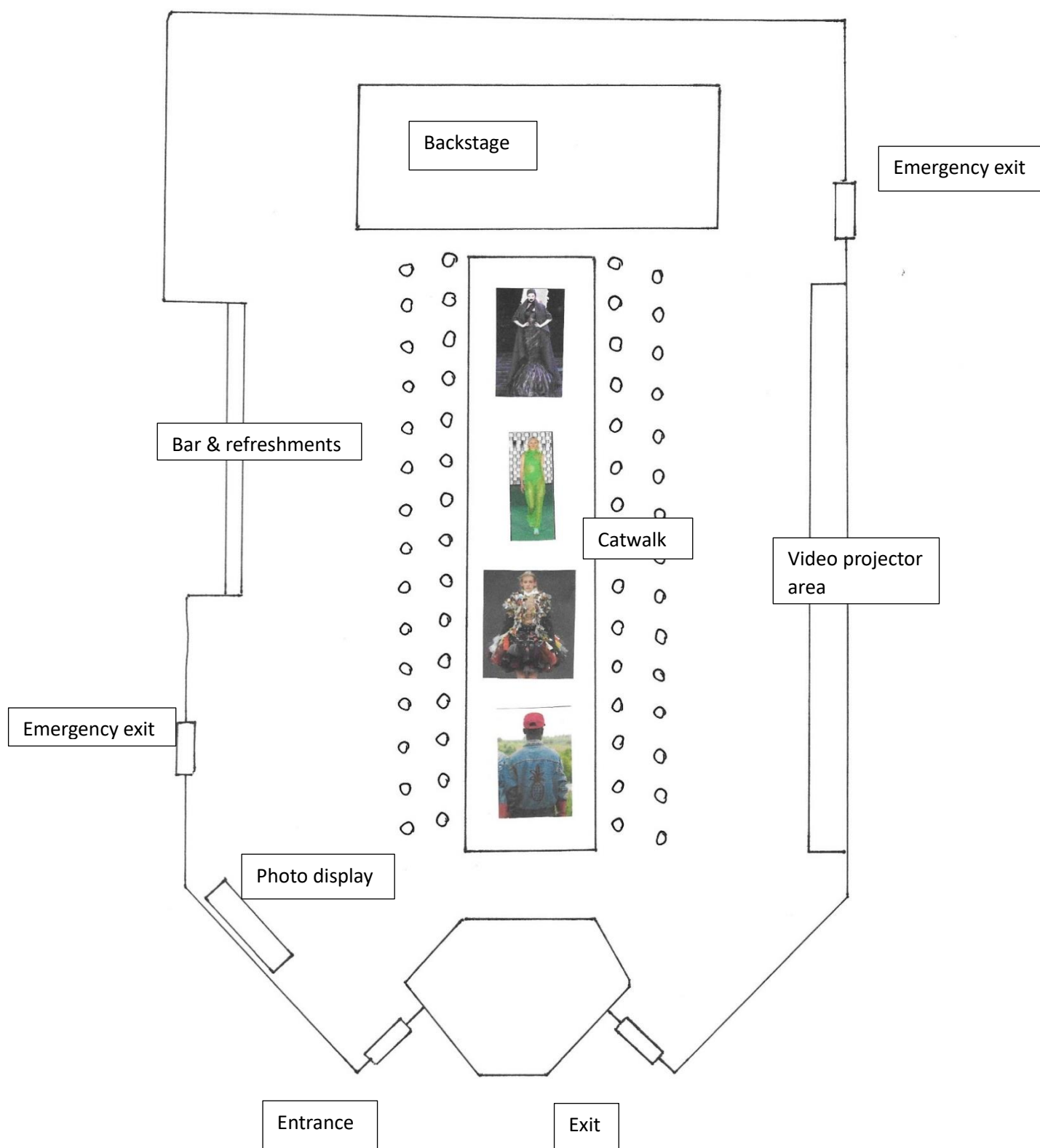


Figure 2: Map of fashion show

Introduction:

Fast fashion causes enormous damage to countries around the world, in particular countries in figure 1. This is a term used to describe the process where clothes move quickly from design into the shops providing cheap clothing responding to latest trends. It started in the 1990s and results in environmental damage, water pollution, use of toxic chemicals and increase waste which are problem people face in countries shown in figure 1.

Figure 2 shows a map of the venue of this fashion show which will include a selection of garments from the four designers referred to below. The purpose of this fashion show is to highlight the problems of fast fashion and the ways different designers try to publicise them. This is important now as the environment is being affected not only by fast fashion but also greenhouse gases, global warming, and poverty. Many companies and individuals are trying to find ways of reducing the impact on the environment. There are many things that can be done and this fashion show will highlight the work of some of these campaigners like Stella McCartney, Alexander McQueen, Viktor and Rolf and Yayra Agbofah.

Context:

The damage caused to the planet through fast fashion can come at any time including the start of the process with the destruction of tropical rainforests and natural water supplies or at the end of the process with the dumping of large amounts of unwanted clothing. Many campaigners have been working for many years on guides to help the industry become more environmentally friendly for example the books of Kate Fletcher and Matilda Tham. In one of Fletcher's books she makes the point that "business as usual or more to the point fashion as usual is not an option". (Fletcher,2014) In other words she explains that if we continue the way we are we will end up doing irreversible damage to the planet, our lives and to the environment.

Any plan to deal with the problem needs to include: Sustainable designs and the use of sustainable materials and production methods, educating people and encouraging them to change their shopping habits, particularly by clearly ecolabelling sustainably produced garments (Figure 3) and considering repair, reuse, upcycling, and recycling of unwanted garments BEFORE dumping, particularly non-degradable items. It is dangerous to rely on labelling because

many retailers have been accused of 'greenwashing', where sustainable claims are either lies or exaggerated.



Sainsbury

Nike

H & M

Figure 3: Examples of ecolabelling

The fashion show will highlight the work of four designers who, in various ways, have been trying to tackle the problems of fast fashion.

The show will be in Leeds, a city which has suffered from the move of clothing manufacturing to cheaper countries. It will take place in Sunny Bank Mill, a former textile mill, which operated from 1829 until 2008 and now converted into creative business space with exhibitions, workshops, and other activities.

The audience will be small comprising social media influencers and will be live streamed to reduce the carbon footprint of the event.

In addition to the shows of each designer, there will be a photographic exhibition and videos will be shown to highlight particular issues, including: Ted Talk "the revival upcycling culture" and Stacy Dooley's BBC documentary "Stacey Dooley Investigates: Fashion's dirty secrets".

Designers and their work:

Yayra Agbofah

Yayra Agbofah is a designer in Ghana. He was concerned with the amount of clothing being dumped in Ghana and set up The Revival, an organization producing recycled clothing and creating employment. He argues that “Sustainability should be a culture.” (Agbofah, 2021) This means that sustainability should be considered at every stage of the process from the original design, how long garments are going to last and what is going to happen to them when the garments are no longer wanted.

Figure 4 shows an example of the work of his company. Denim is one of the materials causing the most damage to the environment because of the large amount of water used in the manufacturing process. (Agbofah, 2021) These old denim clothes were imported into Ghana to be dumped but his company took them and recycled them into uniforms for pineapple growers.



Figure 4: ted talk called “the revival: upcycle culture”

Stella McCartney

Stella McCartney is a leading campaigner and sustainable designer. “I am a big believer in something is better than nothing”, (McCartney, 2015) which while she

may not be doing a lot, she has a big audience and can, therefore, have a bigger influence and encourage everyone to try to do something.

Figure 5 is taken from Stella's 2022 Spring collection and shows one of her leather designs made entirely from mushrooms. She argues that her mushroom handbags are very expensive "but it's not killing any animals; it's not cutting down any trees." (Madsen, 2021) She pushes the boundaries of sustainability and is always trying to come up with design ideas, which may not be considered normal.

Stella McCartney is a specific designer who puts sustainability first but there are different campaign that try to encourage all involved such as "the earth logic research action plan" (Fletcher and Tham, 2019). This is a programme to get people thinking about the environment first.



Figure 5: The summer 2022 runway in France Stella McCartney

Alexander McQueen

Alexander McQueen was a controversial designer who was known for using his interpretation of historic styles. He was not a sustainable designer but was

critical of fast fashion. In 2009, a year before he died, he was quoted as saying “The turnover of fashion is just so quick and so throwaway”. (McQueen, 2009) He believed that mass production was damaging good design.

Figure 6 is from the autumn winter collection in 2009 titled “the horn of plenty.” (McQueen, 2009) His designs incorporated his own style with classic couture like Christian Dior and Chanel. For this fashion show, he has a pile of rubbish in the middle of the stage and the models wore sculptured rubbish and lampshades juxtaposing the models who are dressed glamorously. He was making a comparison between his clothes and the rubbish but it is not clear if this was a publicity stunt or he was trying to shock his audience with the reality of fashion.



Figure 6: The autumn / winter runway 2009 Alexander McQueen

Viktor and Rolf

Viktor and Rolf are Dutch designers and are highly appreciated for using past collections' designs and recycling them by weaving together different types of materials to create a new collection.

The photo from figure 7 is one of their collections titled “vagabonds” where they used fabrics from past collections that were torn, misplaced, and ruined to create new designs. Designs were made to be haute–couture garments meaning that the design is exclusive and one of a kind.

Although the two are not vocal advocates for sustainable design they are included in this fashion show because of their use of recycled fabric. In their 2019 spring collection all their garments incorporated “memes” (quotes from the internet) like “less is more”, “trust me I am a liar” and “no photos please.” (Horsting and Snoeren, 2019), which is an example of a way to communicate a message through clothes.



Figure 7: Viktor and Rolf’s vagabonds wear haute–couture garments 2016

Conclusion:

A lot of people are trying to influence shoppers in their own ways. All the designers in this fashion show have different ways of getting their messages

across from Stella McCartney using sustainable designs to Viktor and Rolf using memes on their dresses. Viktor and Rolf's 2019 collections is a good example of synthesis with their expensive dresses that most people cannot afford put together with quotes that people can relate to producing an understandable message to their audience.

There are a lot of people trying to solve the problem of fast fashion and the damage caused in various countries around the world. All the hard work will hopefully benefit the next generation.

Bibliography

Agbofah, Y. (2021) *Upcycling culture, The revival*. Available at: The Revival: Upcycle Culture | Yayra Agbofah | TEDxAccra - YouTube

Amed, I. (2015) *business of fashion voices*. Available at: Thebusinessoffashion.com, accessed 16th April 2023.

Fletcher, K. (2014) *Sustainable fashion and textiles : design journeys*. 2nd. ed. London [u.a: Routledge.

Fletcher, K. and Tham, M. (2019) *Earth Logic: Fashion Action Research Plan*.

Madsen, A. C. (2021) *Stella McCartney Spring 2022 ready to wear*. Available at: www.vogue.com, accessed 16th April 2023.

Wilson, E. (2009) *McQueen leaves fashion in ruins* available at: www.NYTimes.com, accessed 16th April 2023.

List of figures:

Figure 1: Map of world showing textile disasters made by author

Figure 2: Map of fashion show made by author

Figure 3: Examples of ecolabelling

Figure 4: *Ted talk by Yayra Agbofah The Revival: Upcycle Culture | Yayra Agbofah | TEDxAccra - YouTube (accessed by 6th April 2023)*

Figure 5: *Stella McCartney fashion show*

<https://www.stellamccartney.com/gb/en/stellas-world/summer-2022-runway-show.html> (accessed by 16th April 2023)

Figure 6: Alexander McQueen fashion show [https://www.vogue.com/fashion-](https://www.vogue.com/fashion-shows/fall-2009-ready-to-wear/alexander-mcqueen/slideshow/collection#43)

[shows/fall-2009-ready-to-wear/alexander-mcqueen/slideshow/collection#43](https://www.vogue.com/fashion-shows/fall-2009-ready-to-wear/alexander-mcqueen/slideshow/collection#43)

(accessed by 16th April 2023)

Figure 7: *Viktor and Rolf's fashion show*

<https://www.dezeen.com/2016/07/07/viktor-rolf-vagabonds-autumn-winter-2016-haute-couture-garments-recycled-fabrics/> (accessed by April 2023)