



The Dark Side of Fast Fashion: A Tale of Corporate Irresponsibility

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This article explores the detrimental effects of the fast fashion industry, highlighting corporate irresponsibility in various stages of production. It compares fast fashion with slow fashion, examining the use of cheap labor, low-quality materials, and exploitative practices that keep prices low at the cost of workers' well-being. The discussion extends to environmental concerns, including pollution, microplastics, carbon emissions, and deforestation linked to fast fashion, with brands like Zara and H&M contributing significantly to these issues. The article also addresses the social consequences, such as forced labor and poor working conditions in the Global South. Despite some brands adopting sustainability initiatives, the practice of greenwashing persists, where companies appear eco-friendly while continuing harmful practices. The piece concludes by advocating for stricter regulations and a shift toward sustainable fashion to combat the industry's negative impacts, emphasizing the need for legislative action and corporate responsibility in mitigating environmental damage and improving labor conditions.



As new brands and clothing styles continue to emerge and gain popularity, some individuals use their garment preferences to self-express. Choosing to wear a bright jumper can be a way to combat a dreary day while opting for more traditional clothing can showcase a dedication to a corporate style. One way to quickly and inexpensively try a new style is to visit a store or order cheap clothing online. If the newly acquired item fails to meet an individual's preferences or becomes outdated quickly, disposing of it or donating it to recycling or charity would not be a significant loss. From this angle, not all customers consider the causes that make these items relatively cheap. However, it can be assumed that this is primarily due to the corporate social irresponsibility that plagues every stage of clothing production.

Fast Fashion vs Slow Fashion

The apparel business has become a highly profitable industry and one of the driving forces of globalisation.¹ Companies pursuing higher profits accelerate fast fashion development by employing cheaper labour and using lower-quality materials.² Fast fashion describes the new concept where manufacturers can create more clothes for less expense.³ The term “fast fashion” is similar to “fast food” as both concepts have the same idea – to satisfy the needs of a more significant number of customers while spending fewer resources.⁴ Fast fashion also includes quickly adapting catwalk clothes to the usage of ordinary people who can afford them from local stores.⁵ Consumers can purchase similar sandals from Zara for around £30,⁶ resembling the £630 Saint Laurent sandals.⁷ This term also reveals how fashion trends change rapidly, making customers consider older garments outdated and needing to be replaced with new items.⁸ In the European fast fashion industry, Zara (Inditex), H&M, and Primark hold the top revenue positions. According to 2019 statistics, Zara generated over £22 million, H&M over £17

¹ Andrew Brooks, *Clothing Poverty: The Hidden World of Fast Fashion and Second-Hand Clothes* (2nd edn., Zed Books Ltd 2019), 10.

² Sara Idacavage, 'Fashion History Lesson: The Origins of Fast Fashion' (*Fashionista* 17 October 2018) <https://fashionista.com/2016/06/what-is-fast-fashion> accessed 8 April 2024.

³ Subramanian Senthilkannan Muthu, *Fast Fashion, Fashion Brands and Sustainable Consumption* (Springer 2019) 22.

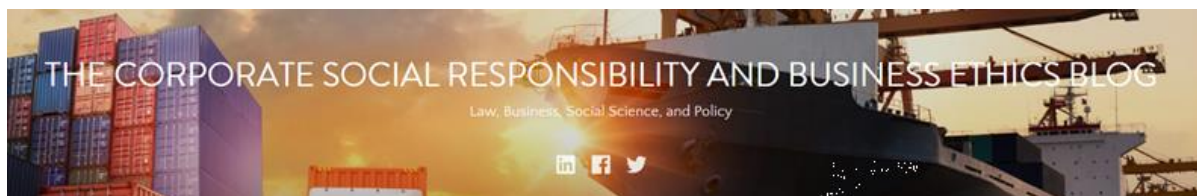
⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Brooks (n 1) 11-12. Julia Bruculieri, 'How Fast Fashion Brands Get Away with Copying Designers' (*HuffPost UK*, 4 September 2018) https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/fast-fashion-copycats_n_5b8967f9e4b0511db3d7def6 accessed 25 June 2024.

⁶ ZARA, 'FLAT CRISS-CROSS LEATHER SLIDER SANDALS' (ZARA 25 June 2024) <https://www.zara.com/uk/en/flat-criss-cross-leather-slider-sandals-p12600710.html?v1=364102155&v2=2353431> accessed 25 June 2024.

⁷ Saint Laurent, 'TRIBUTE Mules in Crocodile Embossed Leather | Saint Laurent | YSL.com' (www.ysl.com) <https://www.ysl.com/en-gb/flat-sandals/tribute-mules-in-crocodile-embossed-leather-572761AACSS1000.html> accessed 25 June 2024.

⁸ Brooks (n 1) 40.



million, and Primark over £7 million.⁹ Fast fashion brands mostly attract consumers of Generation Y and Generation Z social groups.¹⁰ Adolescents often feel pressured to follow the latest fashion trends and are inclined to purchase clothes that their peers will find acceptable.¹¹

On the contrary, slow fashion represents a business model where the garment is produced sustainably, and consumers buy the clothes consciously.¹² Apparel in slow fashion is mainly made from higher quality resources and recycled materials, using timeless designs.¹³ The cost of slow fashion items is usually higher than that of fast fashion, as manufacturers pay more to their employees and use better materials and eco-friendly technologies.¹⁴ As companies generally choose to keep their income private, finding reliable revenue data can sometimes be challenging, especially when targeting a specific market. For this reason, in the field of slow fashion brands, information will be presented on the UK market from companies such as Veja, Palace, and Pangaia.¹⁵

Why are Fast Fashion Items Cheaper than Slow Fashion Items?

The apparel business has become a highly profitable industry and one of the driving forces of globalisation.¹⁶ Companies pursuing higher profits accelerate fast fashion development by employing cheaper labour and using lower-quality materials.¹⁷ Fast fashion describes the new concept where manufacturers can create more clothes for less expense.¹⁸ The term “fast fashion” is similar to “fast food” as both concepts have the same idea – to satisfy the needs of a more significant number of customers while

⁹ P Smith, ‘European Fast Fashion Companies Ranked by Revenue 2019’ (*Statista* 5 December 2022) <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1094176/european-fast-fashion-brands-ranked-by-revenue/> accessed 8 April 2024.

¹⁰ Solene Rauturier, ‘What Is Fast Fashion and Why Is It so Bad?’ (*Good On You* 7 August 2023) <https://goodonyou.eco/what-is-fast-fashion/#:~:text=Millennials%20and%20gen%20Zers%20are> accessed 6 April 2024.

¹¹ Brooks (n 1) 49-50.

¹² SANVT Journal, ‘Fast Fashion vs Slow Fashion | What Are the Differences?’ (*SANVT* 21 April 2020) <https://sanvt.com/blogs/journal/fast-fashion-vs-slow-fashion> accessed 6 April 2024.

¹³ Christopher Marquis, ‘What Does Slow Fashion “Actually” Mean?’ (*Forbes* 14 May 2021) <https://www.forbes.com/sites/christophermarquis/2021/05/14/what-does-slow-fashion-actually-mean/?sh=2c44f5dc73b4> accessed 6 April 2024.

¹⁴ Cally Russell, ‘Is Sustainable Fashion More Expensive?’ (*Unfolded* 15 August 2023) <https://thisisunfolded.com/blogs/unfold/is-sustainable-fashion-more-expensive#:~:text=In%20most%20cases%20sustainable%20fashion> accessed 6 April 2024.

¹⁵ Solene Rauturier, ‘The 50 Most Ethical and Sustainable Clothing Brands from Europe’ (*Good On You* 2 July 2020) <https://goodonyou.eco/most-ethical-and-sustainable-clothing-brands-from-europe/> accessed 26 June 2024.

¹⁶ Andrew Brooks, *Clothing Poverty : The Hidden World of Fast Fashion and Second-Hand Clothes* (2nd edn., Zed Books Ltd 2019), 10.

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¹⁸ Subramanian Senthilkannan Muthu, *Fast Fashion, Fashion Brands and Sustainable Consumption* (Springer 2019) 22.



spending fewer resources.¹⁹ Fast fashion also includes quickly adapting catwalk clothes to the usage of ordinary people who can afford them from local stores.²⁰ Consumers can purchase similar sandals from Zara for around £30,²¹ resembling the £630 Saint Laurent sandals.²² This term also reveals how fashion trends change rapidly, making customers consider older garments outdated and needing to be replaced with new items.²³

In the European fast fashion industry, Zara (Inditex), H&M, and Primark hold the top revenue positions. According to 2019 statistics, Zara generated over £22 million, H&M over £17 million, and Primark over £7 million.²⁴ Fast fashion brands mostly attract consumers of Generation Y and Generation Z social groups.²⁵ Adolescents often feel pressured to follow the latest fashion trends and are inclined to purchase clothes that their peers will find acceptable.²⁶

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¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Brooks (n 1) 11-12. Julia Brucculieri, 'How Fast Fashion Brands Get Away with Copying Designers' (*HuffPost UK* 4 September 2018) https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/fast-fashion-copycats_n_5b8967f9e4b0511db3d7def6 accessed 25 June 2024.

²¹ ZARA, 'FLAT CRISS-CROSS LEATHER SLIDER SANDALS' (ZARA 25 June 2024) <https://www.zara.com/uk/en/flat-criss-cross-leather-slider-sandals-p12600710.html?v1=364102155&v2=2353431> accessed 25 June 2024.

²² Saint Laurent, 'TRIBUTE Mules in Crocodile Embossed Leather | Saint Laurent | YSL.com' (*www.ysl.com*) <https://www.ysl.com/en-gb/flat-sandals/tribute-mules-in-crocodile-embossed-leather-572761AACSS1000.html> accessed 25 June 2024.

²³ Brooks (n 1) 40.

²⁴ P Smith, 'European Fast Fashion Companies Ranked by Revenue 2019' (*Statista* 5 December 2022) <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1094176/european-fast-fashion-brands-ranked-by-revenue/> accessed 8 April 2024.

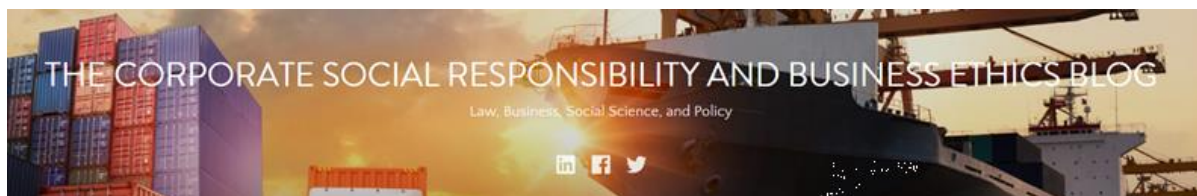
²⁵ Solene Rauturier, 'What Is Fast Fashion and Why Is It so Bad?' (*Good On You* 7 August 2023) <https://goodonyou.eco/what-is-fast-fashion/#:~:text=Millennials%20and%20gen%20Zers%20are> accessed 6 April 2024.

²⁶ Brooks (n 1) 49-50.

²⁷ SANVT Journal, 'Fast Fashion vs Slow Fashion | What Are the Differences?' (SANVT 21 April 2020) <https://sanvt.com/blogs/journal/fast-fashion-vs-slow-fashion> accessed 6 April 2024.

²⁸ Christopher Marquis, 'What Does Slow Fashion "Actually" Mean?' (*Forbes* 14 May 2021) <https://www.forbes.com/sites/christophermarquis/2021/05/14/what-does-slow-fashion-actually-mean/?sh=2c44f5dc73b4> accessed 6 April 2024.

²⁹ Cally Russell, 'Is Sustainable Fashion More Expensive?' (*Unfolded* 15 August 2023) <https://thisisunfolded.com/blogs/unfold/is-sustainable-fashion-more-expensive#:~:text=In%20most%20cases%20sustainable%20fashion> accessed 6 April 2024.



a specific market. For this reason, in the field of slow fashion brands, information will be presented on the UK market from companies such as Veja, Palace, and Pangaia.³⁰

Veja is a sustainable brand producing footwear, which can be quite costly as the brand uses “raw materials that respect fair-trade principles, the environment, and workers’ rights”³¹ and provides services for cleaning and repairing worn footwear to minimise the carbon footprint.³² By the end of 2022, the company had more than £5 million of total assets, less current liabilities.³³ Palace also focuses on sustainable development and follows the UK’s agenda to reach net zero carbon emissions by 2050.³⁴ In January 2023, Palace reported gaining more than £81,000 in income.³⁵ Pangaia is “a brand that embodies sustainability and is dedicated to making a positive impact on the environment”.³⁶ According to the data provided by the Sustainable Review company, Pangaia has a “good” environmental and animal rating.³⁷ At the end of 2022, the company had over \$48 million (more than £38 million) in net current assets.³⁸

Considering companies’ profits in the fast and slow fashion industry, companies prioritising responsible and sustainable development and being environmentally friendly can generate equal or even greater profits from their operations. However, the revenues will likely be associated not with the volume of products sold but with the cost of a single product item since products from slow fashion brands are often more expensive than similar ones from fast fashion.³⁹

³⁰ Solene Rauturier, ‘The 50 Most Ethical and Sustainable Clothing Brands from Europe’ (*Good On You* 2 July 2020) <https://goodonyou.eco/most-ethical-and-sustainable-clothing-brands-from-europe/> accessed 26 June 2024.

³¹ VEJA, ‘No Ads | Veja’ (*project.veja-store.com* 2021) <https://project.veja-store.com/en/single/ads> accessed 26 June 2024.

³² Veja, ‘Clean, Repair, Collect | VEJA’ (*Clean, Repair, Collect | VEJA*) <https://project.veja-store.com/en/single/cleanrepaircollect> accessed 26 June 2024.

³³ UK Government, ‘VEJA UK LTD Filing History - Find and Update Company Information - GOV.UK’ (*find-and-update.company-information.service.gov.uk* 13 November 2023) <https://find-and-update.company-information.service.gov.uk/company/12188494/filing-history> accessed 26 June 2024.

³⁴ The Palace, ‘The Palace Focuses on Sustainability’ (*The Palace*) <https://www.thepalaceleeds.co.uk/sustainability#/> accessed 26 June 2024.

³⁵ UK Government, ‘PALACE SKATEBOARDS LIMITED Filing History - Find and Update Company Information - GOV.UK’ (*find-and-update.company-information.service.gov.uk* 1 November 2023) <https://find-and-update.company-information.service.gov.uk/company/08253929/filing-history> accessed 26 June 2024.

³⁶ Sustainable Review, ‘Is PANGAIA Sustainable and Ethical? - Brand Sustainability Rating’ (*Sustainable Review*) <https://sustainablereview.com/brand-ratings/pangaia/> accessed 26 June 2024.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ UK Government, ‘PANGAIA MATERIALS SCIENCE LIMITED Filing History - Find and Update Company Information - GOV.UK’ (*find-and-update.company-information.service.gov.uk* 8 January 2024) <https://find-and-update.company-information.service.gov.uk/company/12213319/filing-history> accessed 26 June 2024.

³⁹ Emily Chan, ‘Why Isn’t Sustainable Fashion More Affordable?’ (*British Vogue* 1 August 2020) <https://www.vogue.co.uk/fashion/article/sustainable-fashion-affordable> accessed 26 June 2024.



Implications of Corporate Irresponsible Behaviour

Cheaper prices for fast-fashion items result from corporate irresponsible behaviour towards employees, particularly the exploitation of workers and the use of low-cost materials. These measures help reduce the cost of clothing production, and there are three primary categories to consider about the costs of clothing manufacturing. Among these expenses is the cost of the raw materials used in production, which comprises around half the total cost of garments. The second category is the direct labour cost, which accounts for approximately 20% of the overall cost.⁴⁰ The last category is related to other business expenses, such as the cost of needles and belts, maintenance workers' salaries, and electricity and water costs, which comprise around 30%.⁴¹

Many fast-fashion retailers strive to keep their prices low to entice customers and maintain profitability. In contrast, manufacturers typically seek higher pay.⁴² For this reason, many retailers rely on workers in countries of the Global South, such as Bangladesh, India, Vietnam, and China, as labour costs are lower than those in Global North countries.⁴³ The average monthly wage rates of apparel workers by country in 2017 were \$194 in Sri Lanka and \$1,864 in the US, which is approximately a 9.6-fold gap.⁴⁴

The production of fast fashion clothing is often associated with many violations and scandals. Among such abuses are forced labour, low wages, health and safety hazards, excessive hours of work, discrimination, and psychological and physical abuse.⁴⁵ According to the data provided by the civil society organisation Verité, the cotton production market still uses forced labour or child labour.⁴⁶ For instance, coercion was widespread in the cotton production business in Uzbekistan.⁴⁷ At first, even children were involved in forced cotton labour. The ban on child labour resulted in many adults being forced into this labour, so the new legislation did not stop the forced labour in

⁴⁰ Michael Jeffrey and Nathalie Evans, *Costing for the Fashion Industry* (Berg 2011) 7-8.

⁴¹ Ibid 13-14.

⁴² V Ann Paulins and Julie L Hillery, *Ethics in the Fashion Industry* (2nd edn., Fairchild Books 2020), 122.

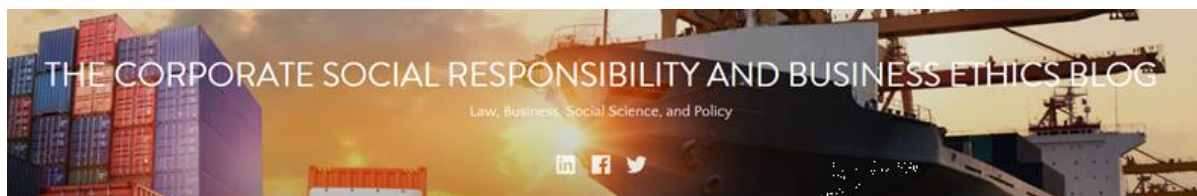
⁴³ McAndrew Leadership, 'Fashion's Global Footprint: Fast Fashion's Toll on the Global South – McAndrew Leadership' (McAndrew Leadership 8 January 2024) <https://mcandrewleadership.uk/fashions-global-footprint-fast-fashions-toll-on-the-global-south/#:~:text=To%20keep%20prices%20low%2C%20most> accessed 8 April 2024.

⁴⁴ V Ann Paulins and Julie L Hillery (n 14) 123.

⁴⁵ Marsha Ann Dickson and Suzanne Loker, *Social Responsibility in the Global Apparel Industry* (Molly Jean Eckman ed, Fairchild Books 2009) 6.

⁴⁶ Verité, 'Cotton Commodity Atlas Research Page with a Map' (Verité) <https://verite.org/project/cotton-3/> accessed 2 April 2024.

⁴⁷ Hugh Williamson, 'Uzbekistan Ends Systemic Forced Labor, Civil Society Says' (*Human Rights Watch* 11 March 2022) <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/03/11/uzbekistan-ends-systemic-forced-labor-civil-society-says> accessed 2 April 2024.



Uzbekistan.⁴⁸ Eventually, coerced labour of both children and adults was gradually banned in Uzbekistan, which shows the positive tension for this industry's development.⁴⁹ Nevertheless, the situation still needs to be improved, as the legislation did not enhance the situation entirely, and Uzbekistan remains on the list of countries using forced labour.

How Does Fast Fashion Affect the Environment?

Fast fashion clothes are made primarily of flammable materials such as nylon, polyester, and polypropylene⁵⁰, as these materials are "lightweight, durable, affordable and flexible".⁵¹ In addition, these materials include plastic.⁵² When washing clothes, certain chemicals and tiny plastic particles can easily find their way into the water supply, ultimately reaching the world's oceans.⁵³ Microplastics have the potential to quickly enter the ocean habitats and marine life, such as fish.⁵⁴ At the next stage, consuming a significant amount of seafood can result in ingesting microplastic particles, which can cause serious health issues.⁵⁵

With its significant contribution to carbon dioxide emissions, fast fashion is the second most polluting industry, responsible for 10% of overall pollution.⁵⁶ Cotton cultivation is also a huge environmental issue. Though it takes up only 2.5% of agricultural land, it consumes over 15% of all insecticides and more than 6% of all pesticides, leading to soil infertility, biodiversity loss, and water pollution.⁵⁷ The fast fashion industry is also a reason for the growing deforestation. Every year, millions of trees are chopped down to produce textiles for clothing.⁵⁸ The number goes up to over

⁴⁸ Annie Kelly, 'Uzbekistan Ban on Child Labour Forces More Adults into Cotton Workforce' *The Guardian* (14 November 2014) <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2014/nov/14/uzbekistan-ban-child-labour-forces-adults-cotton-work> accessed 2 April 2024.

⁴⁹ Anti-Slavery International, 'The Historic Elimination of State-Imposed Forced Labour in Uzbekistan' (*Anti-Slavery International* 10 March 2022) <https://www.antislavery.org/latest/elimination-of-state-imposed-forced-labour-in-uzbekistan-now-protect-decent-work/#:~:text=labour%20in%20Uzbekistan-> accessed 8 April 2024.

⁵⁰ V Ann Paulins and Julie L Hillery (n 14) 129.

⁵¹ UNEP, 'Fashion's Tiny Hidden Secret' (*UNEP* 13 March 2019) <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/story/fashions-tiny-hidden-secret#:~:text=About%2060%20per%20cent%20of> accessed 9 April 2024.

⁵² Brooks (n 1) 350-352.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Rebekah Clarke, 'Fast Fashion's Carbon Footprint' (*The Carbon Literacy Project* 17 August 2021) <https://carbonliteracy.com/fast-fashions-carbon-footprint/> accessed 8 April 2024.

⁵⁷ Francesca Romana Rinaldi, *The Responsible Fashion Company* (Salvo Testa ed, Greenleaf Publishing Limited 2015), 66.

⁵⁸ Arizona Muse and Etelle Higonnet, 'Arizona Muse on the Devastating Link between Deforestation and the Fashion Industry' (*Vogue* 21 September 2022) <https://www.vogue.com/article/deforestation-fashion-industry-arizona-muse-op-ed> accessed 12 May 2024.



200 million trees annually, destroying ecosystems and leading to biodiversity loss.⁵⁹ Zara and H&M, the top revenue holders in the European market, are the massive companies behind the deforestation problem.⁶⁰

Where Do Fast Fashion Clothes End Up?

After wearing fast-fashion clothes, many items are discarded as waste.⁶¹ In the UK, the equivalent of £140 million of clothing ends up in landfills yearly.⁶² Consumers often get rid of clothes that are still usable only because of social pressure when society regards them as old-fashioned.⁶³ As the amount of apparel industry products has doubled between 2000 and 2014,⁶⁴ almost 60% of all garments are expected to end up in landfills.⁶⁵ Some will be left in the Atacama Desert in Chile, which has already become a massive dump for clothes.⁶⁶ This trash yard is so huge that it can already be seen from space.⁶⁷ The infrequent rainfall in this region, which occurs due to natural causes, creates a dry environment that increases the risk of clothing catching fire.⁶⁸

Recycling or Greenwashing?

While fast fashion is often associated with irresponsible practices, retailing companies have adopted the concept of sustainable fashion. Though it may vary in interpretation, this term primarily revolves around economic prosperity, environmental preservation, and ethical working conditions.⁶⁹ However, it is crucial to note that some

⁵⁹ Lindey Helwage, 'Fast Fashion and Its Devastating Impacts on Forests Revealed' (*Earth Day* 31 July 2023) <https://www.earthday.org/fast-fashion-and-its-devastating-impacts-on-forests-revealed/> accessed 12 May 2024.

⁶⁰ Euronews Green, 'Is Your Favourite Clothing Brand Selling "Tainted" Cotton from Brazil?' (*euronews* 11 April 2024) <https://www.euronews.com/green/2024/04/11/zara-hm-the-european-retail-giants-tied-to-land-grabbing-and-deforestation-in-brazil> accessed 12 May 2024.

⁶¹ Brooks (n 1) 120.

⁶² Business Waste, 'Fashion Waste Facts and Statistics' (*Business Waste*) <https://www.businesswaste.co.uk/your-waste/textile-recycling/fashion-waste-facts-and-statistics/#:~:text=It%20takes%20around%202%2C700%20litres> accessed 8 April 2024.

⁶³ Brooks (n 1) 121.

⁶⁴ UNECE, 'UN Alliance Aims to Put Fashion on Path to Sustainability' (*UNECE* 12 July 2018) <https://unece.org/forestry/press/un-alliance-aims-put-fashion-path-sustainability> accessed 8 April 2024.

⁶⁵ Business Waste, 'Fashion Waste Facts and Statistics' (*Business Waste*) <https://www.businesswaste.co.uk/your-waste/textile-recycling/fashion-waste-facts-and-statistics/#:~:text=It%20takes%20around%202%2C700%20litres> accessed 8 April 2024.

⁶⁶ John Bartlett, 'Chile's Atacama Desert Has Become a Fast Fashion Dumping Ground' (*National Geographic* 5 March 2024) <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/environment/article/chile-fashion-pollution> accessed 8 April 2024.

⁶⁷ Chloe Cawood, 'Shocking Images Show Mountain of Unworn Fast Fashion Visible from Space' (*The Independent* 20 June 2023) <https://www.independent.co.uk/climate-change/news/fast-fashion-chile-desert-space-b2361069.html> accessed 8 April 2024.

⁶⁸ Julia Shipley and Muriel Alarcón, 'A Mountain of Used Clothes Appeared in Chile's Desert. Then It Went up in Flames' (*Wired* 13 January 2024) <https://www.wired.com/story/fashion-disposal-environment/> accessed 9 April 2024.

⁶⁹ V Ann Paulins and Julie L Hillery (n 14) 133-134.



fashion brands resort to a deceptive practice known as greenwashing. This marketing strategy aims to convince customers of a company's commitment to responsible fashion production while they continue to engage in polluting practices.⁷⁰ Some clothing stores, such as Primark⁷¹ and H&M⁷², have designated bins where customers can leave their unwanted or worn-out clothes to be recycled. H&M gives customers discount vouchers for participating in their recycling program to attract them to buy more clothes.⁷³ Retail companies such as H&M do not have reduced consumption on their agendas.⁷⁴ Vice versa, these companies seek to maximise the number of customers by providing new trendy clothes and shortening the time it takes to wear them.⁷⁵ While H&M has implemented a recycling program to reduce post-consumer waste, it could also encourage customers to purchase more clothing.⁷⁶ Although some companies claim to use recyclable packaging and sustainable methods in some of their apparel production, it does not necessarily mean that their entire supply chain is ethical and sustainable.⁷⁷

Even though recycling is an eco-friendly way to get rid of unwanted clothes rather than throwing them into landfills, it is a more responsible choice for the environment to purchase fewer clothes to produce as little waste as possible. However, companies like H&M and Primark do not inform their clients about the adverse outcomes of their purchasing habits and do not encourage them to buy fewer clothes with better quality and durability.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This article discussed the two main issues in the fast fashion industry: cheap labour and low-quality materials. However, the problem of fast fashion encompasses various other concerns, such as animal cruelty, environmental pollution, lack of transparency, overconsumption, and the influence of fashion icons. It is a multifaceted problem that demands collective efforts to address. One solution for those who can afford it is switching to slow fashion items and avoiding buying fast fashion clothing.⁷⁸ It is encouraging to see younger generations turn to second-hand stores while charity shops offer good quality clothing at lower prices for those in need. However, not everyone can

⁷⁰ United Nations, 'Greenwashing – the Deceptive Tactics behind Environmental Claims' (*United Nations* 2023) <https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/science/climate-issues/greenwashing#:~:text=By%20misleading%20the%20public%20to> accessed 8 April 2024.

⁷¹ Jodie Spragg, 'Let Your Pre-Loved Be Re-Loved!' (*Primark* 29 July 2020) <https://www.primark.com/en-gb/a/inspiration/sustainable-fashion/let-your-pre-loved-be-re-loved> accessed 8 April 2024.

⁷² H&M, 'Let's Close the Loop | Repair & Recycle | H&M' (*H&M* 2024) https://www2.hm.com/en_gb/sustainability-at-hm/our-work/close-the-loop.html accessed 8 April 2024.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Brooks (n 1) 370-371.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ V Ann Paulins and Julie L Hillery (n 14) 17.

⁷⁷ Madeleine Hill, 'How Can You Tell When a Fashion Brand Is Greenwashing?' (*Good On You* 12 June 2023) <https://goodonyou.eco/how-can-you-tell-when-a-fashion-brand-is-greenwashing/> accessed 8 April 2024.

⁷⁸ Brooks (n 1) 372-373.



afford the pricier alternatives, and consumers should not be held accountable for their choices. Retail companies are responsible for promoting fair sustainability and improving working conditions. Although non-governmental organisations have made significant progress in this area, more is needed to resolve all the issues. Lasting change can only be achieved when governments collaborate and pass mutually agreed-upon legislation, particularly in regions with labour issues. Action must be taken to regulate the industry as soon as possible since environmental problems will only worsen in the future, and people have suffered from low wages and poor working conditions for decades. The problem associated with fast fashion is critical for the United Kingdom since this state consumes the most clothing per person compared to its European neighbours.⁷⁹

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