

REPERCUSSIONS OF RAPID FASHION FROM A GLOBAL SUSTAINABILITY PERSPECTIVE



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Abstract

Since the fashion industry is a highly competent one and everyone wants to maintain their consumers' loyalty, the competition causes them to disregard the environment. The continued demand makes popular brands replenish their stocks frequently. The focus of the fast fashion industry is to quickly and affordably make the newest styles available to a large audience. Movies, haul video influencers, and consumers who don't want to wear the same things again have all contributed to the expansion of these companies. As a result, rapid fashion contributes to environmental damage through increased water usage, textile waste, CO2 emissions, and chemical pollution. It is becoming more and more evident how these trends affect society and the environment, from the carbon footprint that comes with a global supply chain to the dependence on vast amounts of natural resources. The governments of the United States, France, and Australia are employing various tactics to manage the consequences of rapid fashion. But India doesn't have adequate laws to handle fast fashion consequences. However, laws only provide a limited protection of rights in the fashion sector and are frequently unsuccessful in enhancing corporate behaviour. Instead, sustainability programs and corporate social responsibility may fight inequalities in the fashion business and enhance standards and conduct. circular economy and slow fashion can help reduce waste. Additionally, public awareness can also be created to raise awareness among customers regarding the repercussions of the fast fashion industry and how it is impacting the environment as well as society. The paper's goal is to examine all the negative impacts of

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rapid fashion, as well as national and international initiatives designed to reduce these effects and determine what else ought to be needed to control the consequences of the fast fashion sector.

Keywords: *Fashion industry, fast fashion, the environment, consumers, environment, pollution.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Fast fashion is a rapidly changing trend in fashion, leveraging the rapid transition from runway to retail to capitalize on current trends. This trend has gained popularity due to faster manufacturing and delivery, increased customer demand, and increased purchasing power, allowing mainstream consumers to purchase trendy items at a fair price. Fast fashion challenges traditional clothing companies' seasonal collections by releasing fresh goods multiple times in a week, allowing them to compete in the retail market by releasing new collections frequently. Clothing and fashion companies are the second most significant global trade sector, with an estimated annual usage of 30 million metric tons. Their supply network is complex, encompassing manufacturing, logistics, commerce, and petrochemicals. Currently, they manufacture nearly twice as much clothing as in 2000. The rise of fast fashion in industrialized nations has led to air pollution, hazardous substances, and the transformation of raw textile fibers into finished goods. The clothing and textile sectors heavily rely on Earth's resources, such as water, electricity, and basic supplies, which take time to regenerate. Despite rapid production and market access, these resources require time to develop and regenerate, exacerbated by the increasing rate of fast fashion production and consumption. The fashion industry releases harmful substances into the atmosphere, land, and rivers through the production of clothes. These harmful effects persist even after the garments are sold, bought, and worn by buyers. The buyer-use chain continues, with customers frequently cleaning and drying their clothing, leading to increased waste and environmental damage. The production, usage, and end-of-life handling of textiles have significant consequences, increasing waste streams and causing significant environmental impacts.¹

Rapid fashion has a significant environmental and human rights impact, with hazardous chemicals, water pollution, and large carbon dioxide emissions from clothing shipping. It also leads to issues like excessive working hours,

¹Shalini Rukhaya, Saroj Yadav, et.al., "Sustainable Approach to Counter the Environmental Impact of Fast Fashion" 10 *The Pharma Innovation Journal* 517-518 (2021).



unjust compensation, child labor, forced labor, and hazardous conditions of employment. The exercise of human rights is significantly impacted by environmental deterioration. Customers are becoming increasingly aware of the negative consequences of rapid fashion. Rapid-fashion companies are struggling to adapt due to lack of adaptability and false advertising. Customers demand more environmental initiatives, leading to “greenwashing” where brands promise to implement sustainable methods but fail to implement them. This makes it difficult for customers to distinguish between quick fashion and sustainable companies, making it difficult for them to differentiate between the two.²

Rapid fashion offers customers low prices and constant fashion trends, but it also impacts not only customers but also clothing producers, making it problematic to define this sector solely focusing on consumer benefits. A more comprehensive analysis is needed. Rapid fashion production in developing nations is no longer optimal due to cheap materials, labor, and real estate. Sweatshops, the industry’s foundation, contribute to waste and pollution, highlighting the need for sustainable practices and environmental damage due to rapid growth. Fast fashion offers both advantages and disadvantages for customers and employees. It reduces classism by allowing lower-income individuals to buy stylish apparel and stay updated with fashion trends. However, it also has both positive and negative economic, social, and environmental impacts on customers and workers.³

The study uses secondary data analysis to evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of rapid fashion from an environmental, social, and economic perspective. It examines data from other academics and researchers to determine the overall impact of the industry on all parties involved. The analysis aims to support arguments in favor of and against fast fashion, highlighting its overall advantages and disadvantages. The study will explore strategies to mitigate adverse effects of the fast fashion business, aiming to make informed decisions based on the advantages and repercussions of these measures, in conjunction with secondary data research results.

²Annabelle Van Der Maarel and Elena-Laura Álvarez Ortega, “The Human Right to a Healthy Environment and the Fast Fashion Industry” 7-8 (2022)

³Emma Williams, “Appalling or Advantageous? Exploring the Impacts of Fast Fashion from Environmental, Social, and Economic Perspectives” 13 *Journal for Global Business and Community* 1-2 (2022).



2. DEVELOPMENT OF RAPID FASHION

“Fast fashion” was first introduced by Zara in the 1990s, aiming for garments to take only 15 days from design to retail. It was first used in the post-war period, when massive retailing and the Post-Battle Supply System (PBS) structure pushed manufacturing towards major companies. Understanding these factors is crucial for comprehending rapid fashion. The progressive bundle system (PBS) was a more efficient manufacturing method in the 1970s, allowing large producers to offer large quantities at reduced prices. Offshore supply networks allowed big manufacturers to produce goods at low costs, despite longer lead times and less flexibility. However, lower import costs offset these inefficiencies. Traditional retailers lost market share to major manufacturers, leading to a rise in brand manufacturers developing offshore suppliers. By 2015, only 3% of clothing was made in the US due to labor outsourcing trends, with many US clothing manufacturers relocating to developing nations by the mid-1980s. Manufacturers relocated to abroad to stay profitable amid declining product prices. However, they faced longer lead times than demand for fashionable clothing. To address this, they focused on global supply chain coordination, establishing a large distribution network for offshore firms. Retailers can now deliver stylish apparel in two weeks. Despite an 8.2% increase in income in 2017, the short lead time between runway and customer adds to the low quality of clothing.⁴

The fast fashion shift originated from traditional manufacturers moving to emerging nations, where consumers now shop online instead of at established businesses that manufacture in rapid fashion. These companies, which have never made their clothing in industrialized countries and lack physical shopfronts, aim to provide stylish clothing at affordable prices. Rapid fashion retailers like Shein, Zaful, and Fashion Nova have experienced rapid growth since the mid-2000s, coinciding with the COVID-19 pandemic. With a global market of \$33 billion, these retailers are expected to reach \$40 billion by 2025. With up to 88% of US shoppers enjoying these retailers, this growth is not surprising. As fast fashion firms gain popularity, customers are becoming more aware of their business methods, including environmental hazards, labor abuse, and sweatshops. This has led to increased public awareness and controversy surrounding fast fashion. In 2022, many customers are aware of the negative effects of fast fashion, but some choose to restrict their shopping or exclusively buy sustainable clothes, while others continue to purchase due to affordability, convenience, and “up-to-date” styles.⁵

⁴*Ibid*

⁵*Ibid*



3. RAPID FASHION'S DETRIMENTAL EFFECTS ON THE ENVIRONMENT

The fast fashion industry's short-lived production process, high material and energy consumption, and disregard for environmentally friendly manufacturing contribute to pollution and waste, while also promoting affordability over sustainability, making less eco-friendly options more practical and affordable, ultimately negatively impacting the environment. The fashion company's detrimental effects on ecosystems are a significant issue that needs urgent attention.

The fast-fashion industry contributes significantly to global pollution, emitting nearly a billion metric tonnes of CO₂ annually. It currently accounts for 10% of global emissions and is predicted to increase by 30% by 2030. The industry also uses 1.5 trillion litres of water annually for fiber production, particularly cotton, which requires extensive irrigation, depleting natural water supplies and causing soil salinization. The industry generates 20% of the world's water waste, which contains hazardous materials harmful to aquatic life and those living near water bodies. 72% of clothes are made from synthetic fibres like polyester, elastane, acrylic, and polyamide. These non-biodegradable plastics can take up to 200 years to break down if not properly disposed of. Polyester, the most used synthetic fibre, is produced using petroleum, requiring energy and chemicals, and releasing pollutants into the atmosphere. Around 700,000 unique microfibres are discharged into water during synthetic clothing laundering, contaminating aquatic species and water bodies. Even the smallest microfibres can enter human drinking water. Every year, 190,000 tonnes of textile microplastic fibres end up in the ocean, a 16 times higher amount than cosmetic plastic microbeads. Some microfibres end up as sewage sludge when they travel through wastewater from homes to treatment facilities. Microfibers from fish consumption contribute to plastics in our food supply chain, potentially contaminating rivers and seas, eventually reaching people's plates.⁶

Chemicals are a significant part of clothing, with each kilogram requiring up to three kilograms of chemicals for fiber, dyeing, and bleaching. Over 8000 synthetic chemicals are used in creating a single garment, negatively impacting the environment, workers, and customers. These chemicals can irritate skin and cause allergies, especially in underdeveloped nations where workers lack adequate safety gear. These chemicals also harm workers across the supply chain, causing harm to both the workers and the environment.

⁶Maria Karvonen, "Why Fast Fashion Industry is a Problem" 13-16 (2022)



A Greenpeace investigation revealed that 52 out of 78 global fashion items contain nonylphenol ethoxylates, a harmful environmental pollutant linked to fetal harm, hormonal imbalances, and cancer. Brands like H&M Clothing, Gap, Adidas, Calvin Klein, Converse Clothing, Nike, and Puma were involved, with Gap being the only brand without the chemical.⁷

3.1 Rapid fashion's social impact

Advancements in technology and consumer purchasing patterns have led to rapid fashion evolution, providing consumers with vast clothing options at low costs. However, this spending is often transferred down the supply chain to workers who face hazardous working conditions, poor pay, and contaminated air and water supplies. Overconsumption in the fast fashion industry has led to increased efforts to change, including consumer activism, clothing unions, anti-sweatshop groups, and “slow fashion.” Large companies have established sustainability boards, set new goals, and produced sustainability reports to improve their reputation and address fast fashion issues. Large clothing brands have released sustainability reports detailing their policies for ethical garment production, but some argue this is a form of “sweat washing” or “greenwashing,” where businesses promise improvements without actually altering their operations.⁸

Along with environment and social impact fashion industry also alleged to practice moral misconduct. Like Chinese fashion company Shein has been accused of unfair business practices in 2024, including modern slavery, cloning small businesses, and breaking labor rules. A recent study indicates Shein hasn't changed much since ethical concerns were raised. As TikTok users showcase their #sheinhails, an estimated 2,000 to 10,000 new articles of potentially dangerous, chemical-laden clothes are being uploaded to their website. Shein, an e-commerce company, has been accused of producing hazardous clothing, plagiarizing designs, selling Nazi symbols, and underpaying employees. The company relies heavily on digital social media marketers and has been criticized for its “help me” notes, which Shein refers to as “confusion,” but has not responded to allegations of taking advantage of employees.⁹ Shein

⁷*Ibid*

⁸Jennifer Back, “Sustainable and Ethical Practices for the Fast Fashion Industry” 9-10 (2017)

⁹Ava Gilchrist and Amy Bradney-George, “The True Cost of Shein is One We’re Not Willing to Pay”, *Elle*, Oct. 04, 2024, available at: <https://www.elle.com.au/fashion/fashion-news/why-is-shein-so-bad-27846/> (last visited on Mar. 5, 2025).



is not only a brand; other businesses have also been the target of numerous identical accusations.

3.2 Several reports on how rapid fashion affects the environment

- I. THE CIRCULARITY GAP REPORT TEXTILES (2024)-according to this report majority of secondary materials used in textile production come from PET bottles, accounting for over 99% of the industry's 3.25 billion tonnes of materials used annually. The majority of raw materials are synthetic fibers from fossil fuels, such as polyester, which account for 70% of the industry's raw materials. Along with this the textile sector faces challenges due to overproduction of low-quality garments, with 30% of clothes remaining unsold. To combat overconsumption and textile waste, prioritizing quality over quantity, focusing on durable, timeless clothes, and offering repair and rental services could significantly increase the industry's circularity. Another issue with this sector is Over 43% of workers in low-income nations are unemployed without legal contracts, often facing risky working conditions, low pay, and limited social safeguards. Although the industry has made progress in addressing these issues, more work is needed to ensure fair pay and safe workplaces for all. The report reveals that China, the world's largest textile manufacturer, accounts for 40% of the materials used in textile production, while the United States, the largest user, significantly contributes to water shortages and climate change, both locally and internationally.¹⁰
- II. FASHION CRIMES: THE EUROPEAN RETAIL GIANTS LINKED TO DIRTY BRAZILIAN COTTON (2024)-under this report The Brazilian Amazon has been significantly harmed by industrial agriculture, which has resulted in the destruction of half of the biome's original flora for agribusiness growth. In 2023, deforestation in the Cerrado habitat, which is home to 161 animal species and millions of human beings, increased by 43 percent. Earthsight's analysis finds that both businesses and customers in Europe and North America have contributed to the degradation by wearing cotton from fast fashion behemoths H&M and Zara. These corporations, with combined earnings of around US\$41 billion in 2022, get their garments from Asian vendors that turn raw cotton into completed items. . The investigation has

¹⁰Circularity Gap Report, "Textiles" 28-41



revealed that SLC Agrícola and Grupo Horita, two of Brazil's largest producers, engage in illicit cotton cultivation in western Bahia, a region of the Cerrado biome extensively damaged by industrial-scale farming.¹¹

III. UNITED NATIONS FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE (UNFCCC) (2023)-The UN Climate Change's Fashion Industry Charter for Climate Action has published two new reports emphasized at lowering greenhouse gas emissions from raw material extraction, manufacture, and processing. The publications build on the 2021 study Exploring Low Carbon Sources of Cotton and Polyester, incorporating animal fibers and man-made cellulose. They provide as a single source of details on global greenhouse gas effect statistics across every raw material category, highlighting data gaps and problems. The studies will assist Fashion Charter members in identifying emission-reduction strategies and working toward net-zero emissions by 2050. Textile Exchange spearheaded the preparation of these reports, with participation from other Charter members.¹²

IV. U.S. GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE (U.S. GAO) (2024)- The Global Action Task Force (GAO) has identified textile waste as a significant environmental issue, with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency predicting a 50% increase in waste from 2000 to 2018. The problem is attributed to rapid fashion, insufficient collection and sorting systems, and lack of recycling technology. The U.S. Department of Commerce and the Department of State are working together to reduce textile waste and promote recycling. The EPA plans to establish a nationwide textile recycling policy within 5-10 years. However, government institutions' approaches to textile waste and recycling are varying, with most still in their early stages. The GAO suggests interagency coordination and best practices for collaboration to increase efficiency.¹³

V. GREENPEACE (2024)- A Greenpeace report 'Fast Fashion, Slow Poison: The Toxic Textile Crisis in Ghana', reveals that over half

¹¹EarthSight, "Fashion Crimes: The European Retail Giants Linked to Dirty Brazilian Cotton" 27-29 (2024)

¹²"New Analysis Shows How Fashion Industry Can Lighten its Carbon Footprint", UNFCCC, July 31, 2023, available at: <https://unfccc.int/news/new-analysis-shows-how-fashion-industry-can-lighten-its-carbon-footprint> (last visited on Mar. 5, 2025).

¹³United States Government Accountability Office, "Textile Waste: Federal Entities Should Collaborate on Reduction and Recycling Efforts" (2024)



of abandoned fast fashion items in Ghana are unusable and cause environmental and public health damage. This contradicts studies by the Ghana Used Apparel Dealers Association and GIZ, which found only a small percentage of imported used apparel could be classified as trash. Greenpeace discovered three public baths in Ghana polluted with harmful chemicals, including carcinogenic substances such as benzene and poly aromatic hydrocarbons. Clothing trash from Kantamanto Market and unstructured dumpsites is primarily plastic, which degrades into microplastics that contaminate air, water, soil, and the food web. Approximately half a million things wind discarded in open spaces and unstructured dumpsites, intruding on natural regions, suffocating habitats for animals and biodiversity, and polluting the air with deadly black smoke. Brands and authorities in the global north must evaluate the data, listen to local perspectives, and devise practical answers.¹⁴

4. INITIATIVES TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

4.1 Initiatives by companies towards sustainable development

H&M's 2015 sustainability report emphasizes long-term sustainability and efficiency while maintaining capitalist principles. The company believes purchasing goods from developing nations like Bangladesh and Cambodia can reduce poverty and open global markets. H&M consults with NGOs, unions, and international trade unions, has agreements with Industri ALL and IF Metall, and has made seven sustainability pledges: ethical fashion, climate-smart partnerships, waste minimization, resource use responsibly, and community empowerment.¹⁵

SiiZu is a sustainable clothing company that designs and sells eco-friendly, premium clothing at reasonable prices. They purchase textiles from around the world and maintain local fabric producers and factories. SiiZu lists factories they work with, such as a fabric supplier in Tokyo, a garment factory in Beijing, an apparel company in New York, a jumper manufacturer in Inner Mongolia, and a fabric provider in Suzhou. Each factory has a rationale for their cooperation or is accredited by OEKO-TEX Standard 100.¹⁶

¹⁴Greenpeace Africa, "Fast Fashion, Slow Poison" 3-8 (2024)

¹⁵ Supra note 10 at 9

¹⁶Id at 11



Reformation, founded in 2009, is a clothing brand that focuses on eco-friendly practices. They use the RefScale scale to measure environmental costs and offer a variety of eco-friendly products. The brand sells exclusively online or in stores to reduce retail markups. They procure materials locally and domestically to minimize environmental impact and maintain ethical labor standards. Their website lists eco-friendly items used in their workplaces and activities. Reformation's sustainability is attributed to their commitment to moral labor standards and environmentally friendly operations.¹⁷

Forever 21's website primarily discusses the corporation's charitable initiatives, with a sustainability policy section focusing on their stores' energy-efficient lighting systems and promoting eco-friendly practices, but lacks specific examples.¹⁸

Abercrombie & Fitch's sustainability website, "A&F Cares," promotes the "three Rs Principle: Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle." The company has implemented water conservation, reduced toxic chemical release, and energy-saving measures through recycling and new lights. The company's carbon disclosure initiative focuses on emissions from 2011. The company only includes shops and distribution centers in its energy usage data and collaborates with Renewable Energy Specialists and AEP of Ohio for energy-efficient products.¹⁹

4.2 Sustainable fashion: A positive move

The rise of sustainable or ethical fashion has emerged due to the ecological and social destruction caused by modern methods of manufacturing. This approach aims to provide a platform for craftspeople and ethnic groups, pay workers fairly, and reduce environmental impact. Designers cultures and ethnic identities without acknowledging or crediting their cultural traditions or craftspeople. Traditional manufacturing processes involve minimal factory interaction, sourcing clothing and raw materials from experts and clients. However, ethical designers engage skilled workers and craftspeople in the designing process, providing credit and payment for their work. This allows craftsmen to receive market feedback and profit from their expertise in fibers, textiles, and processes. This approach is considered ethical fashion.²⁰Fashion that is sustainable consists of:

¹⁷Id at 12

¹⁸Id at 13

¹⁹Id at 14

²⁰Sudeshna Mukherjee, "Environmental and Social Impact of Fashion: Towards an Eco-Friendly, Ethical Fashion" 2 *International Journal of Interdisciplinary and Multidisciplinary Studies (IJIMS)* 31-32 (2015).



Reuse and remanufacturing- Reuse and remanufacturing are crucial in waste management as they reduce waste production economically and environmentally. They involve keeping the entire product and requiring minimal work to maintain its usability. Refurbishment involves cleaning, lubricating, or making improvements, while redeployment and cannibalization involve using functional components elsewhere. End-of-life clothing is a lucrative commodity, with second-hand markets in Africa, Asia, and Eastern Europe. In the industrialized world, organizations collect clothing and provide substantial cash incentives, making it a valuable resource for waste reduction. High-quality, rarely used clothing is highly sought after, but even damaged or stained clothing can be recycled into fibers for use in automotive, audio, and mattress industries or sold as inexpensive wipers.²¹

Anastas and Zimmermann's Green Engineering Principles emphasize the importance of nonhazardous substances and energy inputs, waste prevention, and efficient design. They advocate for a shift from "input pushed" to "output pulled" using energy and materials, considering unpredictability and complexity in recycling decisions. Design objectives should focus on durability over immortality, avoiding "one size fits all" solutions, and minimizing material variety in multi-component items for disassembly and value retention. They also emphasize the need for integration with accessible energy and material flows, designing systems for business "afterlife," and ensuring renewable material and energy inputs.²²

Ethical fashion relies on consumer conscientious consumption and customer interaction, rejecting trends and standardization for long-lasting, aesthetically pleasing, and high-quality construction. Local fashion initiatives aim to improve producer-customer interaction, raise consumer awareness of physiological and physical demands, and encourage consideration of clothing's life cycle from raw materials to disposal. Purchasing locally preserves local resources and expertise, and reduces the environmental impact of international garment shipping by purchasing clothing near the manufacturing location.

Growth restrictions- The fashion industry faces financial challenges in reducing its environmental impact due to growing manufacturing and consumption. To improve sustainability, the industry should develop alternative growth models, reduce manufacturing rates, prioritize higher-quality clothing, and reduce production volumes. Encouraging extended producer responsibility,

²¹*Ibid*

²²*Ibid*



where manufacturers and importers are responsible for product disposal and recycling, can encourage more eco-friendly practices and reduce waste.²³

Promote circular economy-By increasing product usage and reducing waste, the fashion sector may embrace a circular economy to improve environmental sustainability. Increased person-product attachments and product satisfaction can help achieve this. Recycling materials at the end of the lifespan of a good may also support the circular fashion sector. When compared to processing virgin fibres, textile recycling, mechanical recycling, chemical recycling, and thermal recycling can all lessen their negative effects on the environment. In certain situations, energy-recoverable textile burning could be a more sustainable option than material recycling. Future clothing must be made with recycling and material loop closure in mind, necessitating industry-wide adjustments.²⁴

Technology recycling-Technology recycling can reduce textile and material waste, but redesigning the fashion system is necessary to avoid excess inventory. Clothing waste can be avoided reactively through reuse, recycling, and disposal, or proactively through prevention and minimization. Innovative manufacturing techniques and collaboration between design and manufacturing can make the model low-waste and sustainable.²⁵

Use of Sustainable fibres-Sustainable fibres are practices and regulations that reduce environmental contamination and use of natural resources for lifestyle demands. Natural cellulosic and protein fibres are considered healthier for the environment and human health. Synthetic fibres are often considered more sustainable, but natural fibers like Lyocell, made from bamboo cellulose, are generally considered healthier. The closed-loop production cycle of textiles using sustainable fibres can have a less negative environmental impact.²⁶

4.3 Initiatives on Fast Fashion by Various Countries

- I. UNITED KINGDOM-With more people searching for “sustainable fashion” and “second-hand clothing” than in any other nation on the list, it appears that the general public is quite interested in slow fashion. Second, even the government has intervened to discourage quick fashion and encourage more environmentally friendly apparel. The

²³Supra note 3 at 520

²⁴*Ibid*

²⁵*Ibid*

²⁶*Ibid*



UK government launched a 10-year initiative in 2022 to encourage the transition to sustainable fashion. The goal is to provide top-notch infrastructure for recycling and sorting while empowering the fashion sector to adopt new business models.²⁷

- II. JAPAN-Japan is leading the slow fashion trend via the Japan Sustainable Fashion Alliance (JSFA). By encouraging collaboration and regulatory changes, this project aims to bridge the gap between sustainable fashion providers and customers. Second, Japanese designers and garment firms are pioneering sustainable fashion. Several businesses are using 3D representations of their designs to save rubbish during sample preparation. Other firms are creating biodegradable garments from wool's protein resin.²⁸
- III. SINGAPORE-Singapore's initiative promoted innovation, technology, sustainability, and Asian crafts. The Singapore Fashion Council (SFC) helps fashion industry players make more ecologically responsible decisions by providing additional resources, networking opportunities, and prioritizing sustainable technologies. A few Singaporean fashion companies have used circular fashion models, another major advancement. The circular model states that buyers may buy clothes and return them to the company for a discount, usually store credit. This works well for children's clothes, which is used less often than adult clothing.²⁹
- IV. UNITED NATIONS- Nairobi, March 14, 2019: Launched today at the UN Environment Assembly, the UN Alliance for Sustainable Fashion aims to stop the fashion industry's socially and environmentally damaging practices and instead use it as a catalyst to improve global ecosystems. Through the analysis of UN agencies' efforts to make fashion sustainable, the identification of gaps in their actions and solutions, and the presentation of these results to governments to spur policy, the Alliance is enhancing cooperation among UN agencies.³⁰

²⁷"Earth Day 2024: Top Countries Fighting Fast Fashion", Expat Explore, Mar. 27, 2024, available at: <https://expatexplore.com/blog/top-countries-slow-fashion/> (last visited on Mar. 5, 2025).

²⁸*Ibid*

²⁹*Ibid*

³⁰"UN Alliance for Sustainable Fashion Addresses Damage of 'fast Fashion'", UNEP, Mar. 14, 2019, available at: <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/press-release/un-alliance-sustainable-fashion-addresses-damage-fast-fashion> (last visited on Mar. 5, 2025).



- V. FRANCE- French laws support sustainable and circular business practices, notably the Duty of Vigilance Law, which mandates firms to report human rights violations. Businesses must recycle or reuse unsold apparel and footwear or face a €15,000 punishment under a 2020 regulation. A recent study found the law’s effectiveness poor and not meeting its goals. The French government also wants Senate permission to ban fast fashion advertising. By 2030, textiles and clothes, especially fast fashion, might be fined up to €10 per piece. Funds will support clothing recycling facilities. The law seeks to improve French producer responsibility and promote sustainable economic practices.³¹
- VI. Australia- Australia is aiming to circularize its fast fashion industry by 2030 through the Seamless National clothing Stewardship Scheme. The initiative promotes sustainable design, rental, re-manufacturing, repair, and reuse, and better clothing collection and sorting. However, the Australian government has threatened to tax the industry if it fails to improve. Despite criticisms of Australia’s lack of recycling infrastructure and tariffs, six Australian firms have joined Seamless.³²
- VII. THE UNITED STATES- A “fast fashion regulation bill” that would take effect in 2027 has been introduced in Washington state, joining California and New York. The proposed legislation aims to raise consumer awareness and enhance supply chain transparency by mandating businesses to identify at least half of their supply chains, identify areas causing environmental harm, and address low wages. Fines of up to \$5,000 can be imposed for non-compliance, with the collected funds used for environmental programs. The “Americas Act” is a US trade law aimed at reducing Chinese manufacturing dependency by encouraging “near shoring.” The measure includes \$1 billion for research and development, \$10 billion in loans, \$3 billion in grants for manufacturing and reuse, and a 15% tax cut for companies adopting circular processes.³³

³¹Gian Bonanni, Justine Nolan, et.al., “Explainer: What is Fast Fashion and How Can We Combat its Human Rights and Environmental Impacts?”, Australian Human Rights Institute, available at: <https://www.humanrights.unsw.edu.au/research/commentary/explainer-what-fast-fashion-human-rights-environmental-impacts> (last visited on Mar. 5, 2025).

³²*Ibid*

³³*Ibid*



- VIII. EUROPEAN UNION- For a decade, the EU has mandated waste prevention and management measures for member states. The EU accepts that these initiatives lack precise, quantitative objectives, making it impossible to relate them to waste creation. The EU launched its Approach for Sustainable and Circular Textiles in 2022 to improve textile quality, ethics, and safety, eliminate quick fashion, minimize textile waste, and raise EU textile sector competitiveness and innovation. The Revision of the Waste Framework Directive mandates member states to develop standardized Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) schemes for textiles, footwear, and accessories. Manufacturers will pay eco-modulated fees for circular end-of-life infrastructure.³⁴
- IX. THE NETHERLANDS-The Netherlands has implemented an EPR plan for textiles, including apparel and home linens, starting in July 2023. The plan aims to recycle 50% of textiles sold by 2025, with a goal of 75% by 2030. Producers and importers who release buyer apparel, business attire, bed linens, tables, and domestic linens on the Dutch market are subject to EPR laws. To fulfill their Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) duties, producers are advised to register with Stichting UPV Textiel, the Netherlands' own PRO for textiles. The PRO represents 70% of textile manufacturers, more than Seamless aims to achieve through a voluntary program. For textiles sold in the Netherlands, Stichting UPV Textiel charges a tax of EUR 0.10 per kilogram, expected to increase to EUR 0.20 per kilogram in 2025.³⁵

5. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Fast fashion is a rapidly evolving trend in the fashion industry, leveraging the transition from runway to retail to capitalize on current trends. It has gained popularity due to faster manufacturing, increased customer demand, and purchasing power, allowing mainstream consumers to purchase trendy items at a fair price. The clothing and fashion sector is the second most significant global trade sector, with an estimated annual usage of 30 million metric tons. However, the rise of fast fashion has led to air pollution, hazardous substances, and the transformation of raw textile fibers into finished goods. The fashion industry heavily relies on Earth's resources, which take time

³⁴Nina Gbor and Olivia Chollet, "Textiles Waste in Australia Reducing Consumption and Investing in Circularity" 20 (2024)

³⁵Id at 21



to regenerate. The fashion industry releases harmful substances into the atmosphere, land, and rivers, persisting even after the garments are sold, bought, and worn by buyers. Rapid fashion has a significant environmental and human rights impact, with hazardous chemicals, water pollution, and large carbon dioxide emissions from clothing shipping. It also leads to issues like excessive working hours, unjust compensation, child labor, forced labor, and hazardous employment conditions. Sustainable fashion is a response to the environmental and social damage caused by modern manufacturing methods. It focuses on supporting craftspeople and ethnic groups, paying workers fairly, and reducing environmental impact. Traditional manufacturing processes involve minimal factory interaction, while ethical designers engage skilled workers and provide credit. Local fashion initiatives improve producer-customer interaction, raise consumer awareness of physiological and physical demands, and encourage consideration of clothing's life cycle, preserving local resources and expertise and reducing international garment shipping environmental impact.

Some of the suggestions are: -

1. Consumers should limit their fast fashion lifestyle and approach for sustainable fashion.
2. Need for legislation to limit the uncontrolled growth of fast fashion and to address the consequences of fast fashion. Policymakers and stakeholders should also come forward.
3. Reuse, repair, and recycling of textiles and fiber products. There should also be a circular economy in the fashion industry.
4. There should be use of more suitable products like handloom products, organic products, and other eco-friendly products, etc., in the textile industry.
5. There should be social awareness about how fast fashion is harmful for health and the environment.
6. The second-hand market or e-commerce for pre-owned products should be pushed.