# Impacts of the fashion industry

Design, Fashion

Due to the multidimensional approach of the fast fashion industry it has impacts both directly and indirectly on society, environment, consumers and also other businesses. Too broad categories to summarize the impact of this industry are social and environmental.

## Social Impact

It is regarded as one of the most exploitative industries in the world. Due to the rise of fast fashion the production units of these brands are located in labor intensive countries of Asia and Africa. They produce in countries that have cheap labor and also lenient laws. This way they can over exploit their resources, produce more and reduce their costs. This results into a myriad of social problems. Especially at the bottom of the supply chain workers are subject to poor and unsafe working conditions, long working hours and low salaries. According to the Wrad Living website, around 40 million people are employed by the fashion industry, 85% of which are women. Most of the production happens in countries where the average wage for garment workers is as little as $30-32 / month and economic political conditions encourage a system which is highly damaging to the life of the workers and their families. This industry mainly targets women. These women are then stuck in a vicious cycle. They get into these jobs because they don't have skills for other jobs and since the work in these factories is limited to one task for a day, they lack the opportunity to develop any other skills. Thus becoming victims of this vicious cycle. Often salaries are not even enough to fulfill basic needs like food, shelter and clothing. The apparel industry is still guilty of child labor, bad working conditions and low safety standards. Environmental Impact- According to a study by the Danish Ministry of the

Environment, fashion has negative environmental impacts all along its life cycle, starting from the material and production phases until the usage and disposal by the consumer.

For example, to make a cotton dress a considerable measure of water, land and pesticides are needed to develop cotton-crops. For the more specific adjustments like color, style etc. synthetic ad toxic materials are used that then end up in the water. Once the item is made it is expected to be delivered to the store or with today's advancements in the online sector, it might have to be delivered as per someone's individual request. Only 15% of the clothes we discard are recycled and remaining 85% is today trashed in landfills where they can expect to spend anything from 40-200 years, depending on their composition, releasing harmful gasses in the atmosphere and depleting the ozone layer. According to the Wrad Living website, the textile industry is the second largest consumer of water and, according to the World Bank, the cause of 20% of global water pollution. It uses Nine billion kg of chemicals each year to finish their products. They often use highly toxic substances that cause harm to the workers, to the wearers of the clothes and to the environment.

Awareness about the above mentioned harmful effects has given rise to a concept called Sustainable Fashion. The concept of " sustainable fashion" is relatively new — although the idea of sustainability had been around for decades, it was in the early 90's that designers and innovators first stepped outside of the archetype that encapsulated the fashion industry and explored possibilities beyond what had become the norm for clothing production and

consumption. There has been one main reason for this awakening i. e. harmful impact that fast fashion brands have on the environment. With recent insights into the true fast fashion business people have become more aware and conscious towards the environment. Another such phenomena is social media. Social media has become a tool that increases civic engagement and political activism since it enables personalization of collective action, which increases the level of engagement and strengthens networks.

The advent of social media has metamorphosed man's concept of society. The ability to provide and continuously improve the user experience in terms of interactivity and aggregated content is absolutely unprecedented on social media platforms. Social Media has successfully removed the shortcomings of geographical and ideological boundaries. The access to another person's experiences, ideologies, psyche, relations, lifestyle etc. can be through social media. This has resulted in a multi-channel traffic of views and perspectives across cultures, countries, religions and much more. For instance, it is possible for a boy from Hyderabad to consume content related to the first hand experiences of people participating in the Carnival in Rio De Janeiro, Brazil. Social Media has helped establish several business forms such as E- Commerce, Digital Analytics, Mobile Appliances etc. As per statista, there are 2. 62 billion unique social media users in 2018 and it is anticipated to increase to 3. 02 billion users by 2021. The explosion of information has made the world a smaller place safely regarding this phenomenon as ' The Digital Age'.

When we link social media and sustainability we see what a major role they play to increase awareness. This reach of social media has also helped popularize the concept of sustainability. It is through this platform that people are being exposed to information. Over the years there have been some social media campaigns about sustainability that has created a surge in the users.