

American fashion industry in 21st century

[Design](#), [Fashion](#)



American Fashion in 21st Century ' Fashion' is the need to adapt to ever changing styles; to dress in distinctive and current trends and a means for one to express their individuality. Fashion refers to keeping every aspect of one's body up-to-date for varying reasons. Some people prefer a simple life style with modest attire whereas most passionately follow the fashion industry and rapidly change accordingly. This increase in demand for individually tailored items including everything from clothing and footwear to makeup and body piercings is what gave birth to the fashion industry.

The roots of this business can be traced to America in the nineteenth century where it grew rapidly and spread across the globe to become the highly integrated industry that exists today. The fashion industry has created thousands of jobs, increased national output and has made significant contributing to increases in GDP (Gross Domestic Product) but is also accompanied by exploitation of labor, eating disorder particularly in models and also the growth of counterfeit products.

The international fashion industry portrays an ideal body type commonly known as the ' size zero' which women often attempt to attain. This leads them down the road of low self-esteem, starvation and even self-mutilation often resulting in eating disorders, health issues and even suicide. Models between the age of 18 and 24 practically give up eating and also resort to using drugs and alcohol to combat the ensuing depression and irritability which eventually leads to some of them dying young, all just to gain entry into the fashion industry.

Natasha Duncan was one such prominent American model who committed suicide at the age of 21 (Rose 1). The global fashion industry projects the <https://assignbuster.com/american-fashion-industry-in-21st-century/>

image of thin and beautiful people that have been airbrushed to perfection thus creating an ideal image of how 'fashionable' people should look. Common women get conscious about their own looks and then try to attain this level of perfection, the road to which often go through eating disorders such as anorexia nervosa and bulimia.

In fact, it is estimated that 8 million Americans suffer from an eating disorder - seven million women and one million men(Fashion 1). Nevertheless it is argued that the American fashion industry has made vital contributions to its in terms of creating employment opportunities and boosting GDP. As a matter of fact, despite the severe recession, the fashion industry is one of the most stable and high-growth industries in the economy.

This is because, irrespective of inflation and wages, people still need to buy clothes, footwear and makeup and the fashion industry is one that can rapidly adapt to provide them. In 2010 American households spent, on average, \$1, 700 on apparel, footwear, and related products and services which is why it generates over \$20 billion in revenue is annually (Fashion 1). Moreover the fashion industry played an important part in giving jobs when other industries were firing people.

Currently it employs over 4 million people under the following areas: design, manufacturing, distribution, marketing, retailing, advertising, communication, publishing and consulting (Fashion 1). Beside creating jobs and increasing GDP, the fashion industry has promoted the freedom of expression by allowing individuals to express themselves through their attire. Fashion designers rapidly come up with innovative and creative ideas

thus essentially enriching the lives of people and making them more interesting.

This is precisely why fashion shows are held: they give models a chance to flaunt their talents and also an opportunity for them to interact with models from other countries, communities and ethnicities which allows them to express themselves and their unique identities. When people are well dressed according to what is in fashion, this would reflect the culture and thinking of the society. Nevertheless, it must be noted that fashion leads to competition amongst people to look better than others which manifests itself through jealousy, resentment and even sabotage.

What is more, this competition extends to designers as well since they strive to differentiate their products introduce innovative styles which can result in an inefficient use of resources and illegal business practices. This need for cost minimization is one of the reasons as to why the fashion industry exploits cheap foreign labor. The glamor, the runways and the exhibitions are just the front of a dark background. This industry works on the basis of subcontracting, where designers place orders with manufacturers who then hire sub-contractor to complete their orders.

Since this industry is highly competitive subcontractor are given only take or leave option with often less payment compared to amount of work which forces them to resort to employing cheap labor in their own workshops which often end up resembling sweat shops. Even if this is not the case, designer brands have their own units to produce their goods. Recently many of the fashion retailers have been accused of underpaying their workers and

violating international labor laws by running sweatshop. These involve extremely low wages, long working hours and poor working conditions.

Earlier this month, factories in Cambodia were investigated for possible violation labor laws. These factories produced clothing for the fast fashion retailer H&M which was found to be paying their workers a measly wage of \$61 a month by a Swedish TV program called ' Kalla Fakta'(Keilla 1). Since America is powerful country, it negotiates trade agreements with developing countries on the basis of free trade agreements. Famous brands then shift their production units to such countries where exploitation is very common. According to a U. S. ommerce department report, the basic wage for garment workers in Honduras is \$0. 473 per hour, or \$3. 47 per day. After deducting costs for transportation to and from work, breakfast and lunch costs of \$2. 59 that leaves \$0. 80 a day for families and other basic needs (the Ethics pg 345). This is considered to be completely unfair when workers are hardly making their ends meet but on the other hand fashion houses are making handsome profits. In addition to these the fashion industry has a negative social impact through the creation of counterfeit products.

These are replicas of original products which are sold at substantially lower prices in black markets all over the world. It is argued that this practice is unfair since some consumers are paying more than other for the same good. In America such problems are even more complex because their legal system only protects functionality and not design or style. Since fashion houses have globalized their production and distribution process, it becomes easier to produce counterfeit goods. This is represented by the fact that the

U. S. customs made 6500 seizures in 2003 worth over \$94 billion (the Ethics pg 346) .

High demand for fashion goods gives other business the incentive to make fake copies of original goods and sell in the market. This not only causes a loss in the sale for fashion businesses but also increases the probability of customers mistakenly purchasing fake items. In its annual “special 301” review, the office of the U. S. Trade Representative (USTR) identified more than 30 countries as centers for counterfeiting and piracy and estimated that American industries lose \$200 Billion- \$250 billion a year to counterfeiting (the Ethics pg 347).

The international fashion industry has significantly transformed from what it started out in the nineteenth century to impact a number of aspects of one’s life as the arguments above have demonstrated. That being said, these changes are not constant and continue to grow and evolve due to a number of factors thus making it difficult for economists, industrialists and policy makers alike to objectively weigh the fashion industries benefits and disadvantages.

What can be said for certain though is disadvantages such as exploitation of labor, eating disorder and coping of thought and ideas causes more harm to the society as compare to its advantages such as creating more jobs and increasing globalization. Work Cited Al-Azzawi, Ali Malik. " Fashion Industry and Media Today: The Negative Impact on Society. " (n. d.): 109. Print. Fashion Industry Stats / Fashion Industry Statistics. © Copyright SiteRapture, Inc. 2012, 26 Mar. 2013. Web. 26 Mar. 2013. . Is Fashion Harmful to Society? " Debate. org. Copyright © 2012 Debate. org, 25 Mar. 2013. Web. 25 Mar. <https://assignbuster.com/american-fashion-industry-in-21st-century/>

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