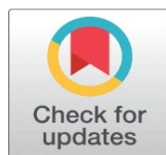
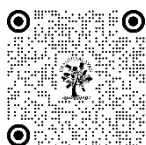


FAST FASHION: ECONOMICALLY SOUND BUT A DISASTER FOR ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Navjot Kaur ¹, Dr. Varinder Singh ²

¹ Research scholar, GNDU, RC, Jalandhar

² Associate Professor of laws, GNDU, RC, Jalandhar



ABSTRACT

Fashion trends come and go; meanwhile, a society's values are established and evolving according to its beliefs and culture. Fashion is not an ambitious projected image interpreted as good old value to fulfil some function or agenda but rather an evocative and refreshing concept worthy enough to be portrayed for society's appreciation which makes us even more instinctive. Fashion, in and of itself, is a reflection of social, economic, political, and cultural developments. It represents modernism and the spirit of the times. The product is no longer the centre of attention: it is the brand that does. Fast fashion is a word used to characterise today's instantly available, low-cost fashion. The term "fast" refers to how quickly merchants can transport designs from the runway to stores to keep up with the ongoing desire for more and new styles. While fair trade companies can attempt to compete with fast fashion retailers, markets for fair trade and eco-friendly textile manufacturing remain small and ethically and environmentally sound supply chains are difficult and expensive to audit. High-income countries can promote occupational safety and environmental health through trade policies and regulations. But in reality, there are no legally binding environmental standards enacted through government regulation. Left unregulated, the industry will be responsible for more than 25% of the world's global carbon budget by 2050. Reducing emissions, water and energy use, increasing collection and reuse: MEPs want ambitious science-based targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the entire lifecycle of the textiles sector. Fast fashion is big business, and while the environmental costs are rising, experts say there is another way: a circular economy for textiles. Environmental justice is defined by the United States Environmental Protection Agency, as the "fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, colour national origin, or income, concerning the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies. The term 'fast fashion' has become more prominent in conversations surrounding fashion, sustainability, and environmental consciousness. In this article, the researcher wishes to discuss the impact that expanding fashion has on the environment and offer some clever solutions to assist it decline.

Corresponding Author

Ms. Navjot Kaur, vyotbaath@gmail.com

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Keywords: Fast-Fashion, Pollutants, Environment, Brands

"The greatest threat to our planet is the belief that someone else will save it"

-Robert swan

1. INTRODUCTION

Fashion trends come and go; meanwhile a society's values are established and evolving characteristic to their beliefs and culture. Fashion is just not an ambitious projected image of are interpreted good old value to fulfil some function or agenda alike but rather an evocative and refreshing concept worthy enough to be portrayed for society's appreciation that makes us even more instinctive. In the society, the individual's appearance is the ticket to transmit nonverbal

communication signals such as possible cues about his / her social stature, values and lifestyle¹. Fashion, in and of itself, is a reflection of social, economic, political, and cultural developments. It represents modernism and the spirit of the times. The product is no longer the centre of attention: it is the brand that does. And attractive clothing and accessories are such items that assist people in communicating who and what they are. Among the various issues regarding fast fashion and how its industry has been able to boom, the various destructive effects on the environment remain a major concern. To manufacture clothes, the fast fashion industry exports its production business overseas for cheap labour to avoid the high minimum wages implemented by many developed governments². Fast fashion is a word used to characterise today's instantly available, low-cost fashion. The term "fast" refers to how quickly merchants can transport designs from the runway to stores in order to keep up with the ongoing desire for more and new styles. With the emergence of globalisation and the expansion of a global economy, supply chains have become transnational, transferring the growth of fibres, textile production, and garment construction to places with lower labour. Increased demand fuels the manufacturing of low-cost clothes, with costs kept low by outsourcing production to low- and middle-income countries (LMICs)³.

2. FAST FASHION AND ITS FEATURES

Fast fashion consists of garments made at cheap quality, low price, mass produced, machine made and are seen to end up in the landfills very soon. Slow fashion in contrast is handmade, time consuming, uses the talent of artists, better quality and highly priced. Slow fashion garments create an identity for the person in this world. They are natural warm and comfortable over a period of washes. Sustainable fashion is concerned with use of fibres from organic, recycled, repurposed, upcycled materials⁴. Fast fashion is so-called because the fashion industry currently publishes new lines every week, as opposed to four times a year previously. The term 'fast fashion' has become more prominent in conversations surrounding fashion, sustainability, and environmental consciousness. The term refers to 'cheaply produced and priced garments that copy the latest catwalk styles and get pumped quickly through stores in order to maximise on current trends'⁵. Fast fashion is the term signifying clothing quickly manufactured at a low cost, meeting temporary trends. The sector's leading brands create nearly 52 collections annually. To develop large quantities of apparel inexpensively, companies engage in ecologically degrading practices⁶. Fast fashion is making its way in the life of individuals because its more affordable, trendy and easy to access. According to the documentary on fast fashion, social media and smartphones are to blame for the rise of rapid fashion in our technological age. 5 out of 6 people shop often on a daily basis—not because they lack clothing or equipment, but rather because they discovered the deal of the day on their phones while they were relaxing. Now, no one needs to take the time to visit a store and choose the ideal item for their needs; all they need is a break from work and a beautiful image of the item to post on social media.

3. FAST FASHION STATISTIC

The proof is there in the data. In 1995, the textiles industry produced 7.6 kilograms of fibre per person on the planet. By 2018, this had nearly doubled to 13.8 kilograms per person — during which time the world's population also increased, from 5.7 billion to 7.6 billion people. More than 60 million tonnes of clothing are now bought every year, a figure that is expected to rise still further, to around 100 million tonnes, by 2030⁷. Fast fashion has increased the material

¹ RESEARCHGATE, fashion trends and their impact in society, Dr. D. Saravanan, *available at*:

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/282571020_Fashion_trends_and_their_impact_on_the_society, (last visited on 5th aug, 2023, 7:09 p.m).

² PSCI, The impact of fast fashion on environment, Ngan Le, *available at*: <https://psci.princeton.edu/tips/2020/7/20/the-impact-of-fast-fashion-on-the-environment>. (last visited on aug 2nd, 2023, 11:23 p.m.).

³ ENVIRONMENT HEALTH, The global environmental injustice of fast fashion, Rachel Bick, Erika Halsey & Christine C. Ekenga, *available at*: <https://ehjournal.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12940-018-0433-7>. (last visited on 3rd aug, 2023),

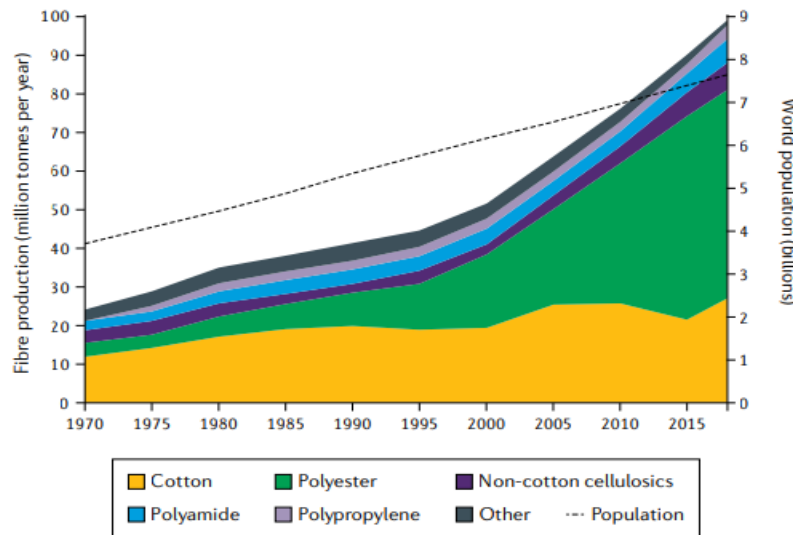
⁴ RESEARCHGATE, Fast Fashion vs Slow Fashion, S. Aishwariya, *available at*: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/340273377_Fast_Fashion_vs_Slow_Fashion#:~:text=Fast%20fashion%20consists%20of%20garment%20s,better%20quality%20and%20highly%20priced. (last visited on 4th aug, 2023),

⁵ EARTH.ORG, fast fashion and its environment impact, *available at*: <https://earth.org/fast-fashions-detrimental-effect-on-the-environment> (last visited on, aug 23rd, 2023).

⁶ ENVIRONMENT, The Fast Fashion Environmental Impact, jane marsh, <https://environment.co/the-fast-fashion-environmental-impact>. (last visited on 6th aug, 2023),

⁷ NATURE, How fast fashion can cut its staggering environmental impact, *available at*: <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-022-02914-2> (last visited on 8th aug, 2023),

throughput in the system. Fashion brands are now producing almost twice the amount of clothing today compared with before the year 2000⁸.



4. IMPACT ON ENVIRONMENT

Environmental justice is defined by the United States Environmental Protection Agency, as the “fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, colour national origin, or income, with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies”⁹ Producing clothes uses a lot of natural resources and creates greenhouse gas emissions which are responsible for climate change. Overall, the fashion industry is responsible for 8-10% of global emissions, according to the UN - more than the aviation and shipping combined. And global clothes sales could increase by up to 65% by 2030, the World Bank suggests¹⁰.

Plastic fibres are polluting the oceans, the wastewater, toxic dyes, and the exploitation of underpaid workers. Fast fashion is big business, and while the environmental costs are rising, experts say there is another way: a circular economy for textiles. At this month’s UN Climate Conference (COP27) in Egypt, UNEP and the non-profit Global Fashion Agenda (GFA) held an event on ‘Circular Systems for a Net Positive Fashion Industry’, which drew industry leaders to discuss routes towards a circular economy for the industry, with less waste, less pollution, more reuse, and more recycling¹¹.

INGREDIENT	UTILITY	POLLUTION IMPACT
WATER	According to the Ellen MacArthur Foundation, textile production uses around 93 billion cubic metres of water annually — the equivalent to 37 million Olympic swimming pools ¹² .	Textile production is estimated to be responsible for about 20% of global clean water pollution from dyeing and finishing products ¹³ .
ENERGY	The textile industry retains a record of the lowest efficiency in energy utilization and is one of the major energy consuming industries. About 34% of energy is consumed in	the textile sector is responsible for 10% of global greenhouse gas emissions, more than international flights and shipping combined. According to the

⁸ RESEARCHGATE, environment impact on fast fashion, Kirsi Niinimäki, Greg Peters, Helena Dahlbo, Patsy Perry, Timo Rissanen and Alison Gwilt, (PDF) [The environmental price of fast fashion \(researchgate.net\)](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/354888888). (last visited on 8th aug, 2023),

⁹ United States Environmental Protection Agency. Environmental Justice. August 13, 2018; available at: <https://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice> (last visited on 8th aug, 2023),

¹⁰ BBC NEWS, Fast fashion: How clothes are linked to climate change, Esme Stallard, available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-60382624>. (last visted on 5th aug, 2023, at 6:30 p.m.),

¹¹ UN ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME, the environmental costs of fast fashion, available at: <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/story/environmental-costs-fast-fashion> (last visited on 7th aug, 2023).

¹² VOGUE INDIA, The fashion industry is using up too much water — here's how you can reduce your H2O footprint, Emily Chan, available at: <https://www.vogue.in/fashion/content/the-fashion-industry-is-using-up-too-much-water-heres-how-you-can-reduce-your-h2o-footprint> (last visited on 1st sep, 2023),

¹³ NEWS EUROPEAN PARLIAMNET, The impact of textile production and waste on the environment (infographics), available at: <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/headlines>, (last visited on 8th aug, 2023).

	spinning, 23% in weaving, 38% in chemical processing and another 5% for miscellaneous purposes ¹⁴ .	European Environment Agency, textile purchases made within the European Union alone in 2017 generated approximately 654 kg of CO2 emissions per person ¹⁵
MICROPLASTICS	The global fibre production (synthetic and natural) has increased from 57 million metric tons (MMT) in 2000 to 111 MMT in 2020 and it is estimated to reach 145 MMT in 2030. Since 1995, synthetic fibres have dominated the textile market, overtaking cotton as the most popular fibre type, with synthetic fibre alone accounting for nearly 65% of worldwide output by 2020 ¹⁶	Researchers estimate that 4.8 to 12.7 million tons of plastic waste are expected to enter the ocean every year, with current accumulation estimated at 50-150 million tons ¹⁷

5. ENVIRONMENT LAWS AT INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL LEVEL

While fair trade companies can attempt to compete with fast fashion retailers, markets for fair trade and eco-friendly textile manufacturing remain small, and ethically and environmentally sound supply chains are difficult and expensive to audit. High-income countries can promote occupational safety and environmental health through trade policy and regulations.¹⁸ Although occupational and environmental regulations are often only enforceable within a country's borders, there are several ways in which policymakers can mitigate the global environmental health hazards associated with fast fashion¹⁹. Greenhouse gas emissions by the global textile industry are greater than those from shipping and international air travel, combined²⁰.

5.1. INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENT-RELATED LAWS:

As environmental threats have become more obvious and their evaluation and management more complicated over the past 40 years, international ecological legislation has changed quickly. Most nations lacked environmental legislation in 1972, and there were very few global agreements. Numerous bilateral and international environmental agreements have been reached in 2011 amongst all nations. possess one or more laws and regulations about ecological issues. The formulation, execution, and adherence to laws are shaped by several entities other than governments. international law about the environment. Furthermore, ecological integration is growing. including commerce, national security, human rights, and economic growth. Evaluation Understanding the scope and constraints of legal remedies for environmental issues is made easier by the development of international environmental law both locally and regionally.

Three distinct periods can be identified in the evolution of international environmental law: 1900-1972, 1972-1992, and 1992-2012. These correspond roughly to the periods of early glimpses of international environmental law, the development of the basic framework, and the maturation and linkage with other areas of international law. The periods are marked by two international conferences: the 1992 Rio de Janeiro Conference on Environment and Development (Rio Conference) and the 1972 United Nations Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment (Stockholm Conference). The Rio+20 Conference will be held in Rio de Janeiro again in June 2012. Both the preceding Stockholm and

¹⁴ FIBER2FASHION, Energy conservation in textile industries & savings, available at: <https://www.fibre2fashion.com/industry-article>, (last visited on 5th aug, 2023).

¹⁵ VESTILANATURA, Environmental Pollution Textile Industry, Christian Perinelli, available at: <https://www.vestilaturanatura.it/en/inquinamento-ambientale-industria-tessile>. (last visted on 16th aug,2023).

¹⁶ SCIENCEDIRECT, A review on microplastic emission from textile materials and its reduction techniques, Aravin Prince Periyasamy, Ali Tehrani-Bagha, available at: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0141391022000878>. (last visited on 8th aug, 2023 at 2:30 p.m.).

¹⁷ TEXTILE WORLD, Microplastics & The Textile Industry, Jambeck, J., et al. Plastic waste inputs from land into the ocean. Science, 347. 6223:768-771 (2015), available at: <https://www.textileworld.com/textile-world/features/2020/09/microplastics-the-textile-industry>.

¹⁸ THE PHARMA INNOVATION, Sustainable approach to counter the environmental impact of fast fashion, Shalini Rukhaya, Saroj Yadav, Neelam M Rose, Arpita Grover and Diksha Bisht, available at: <https://www.thepharmajournal.com/archives/2021/vol10issue8S/PartH/S-10-7-243-699.pdf>, (last visited on 7th aug, 2023),

¹⁹ Niinimäki K, Eco-Friendly and Fair: Fast Fashion and Consumer Behaviour, Routledge 2018,49-57, available at: <https://www.thepharmajournal.com/archives/2021/vol10issue8S/PartH/S-10-7-243-699.pdf>.

²⁰ By Flavia Lopes, Climate Change: How Fast Fashion Hurts the Environment available at: <https://www.indiaspend.com/earthcheck/climate-change-how-fast-fashion-hurts-the-environment-793662> (last visited on 6th march 2024).

Rio Conferences were groundbreaking events, and their work products and the events surrounding them laid the groundwork for significant advancements in the development and implementation of international environmental law.

5.2. NATIONAL LAWS:

India has a vivid history. From Aryans to now India regards its environment as some sacred place to worship. The term environment in Sanskrit means Pasyaran, literally meaning, “pariaavarana” means external covering or a thing enriching or encompassing human existence. Indian viewpoint on Hindu philosophy viewed man and environment as part and whole of same thing. During Islamic law lack of environmental laws can be seen as are well known for the heritage sites, and architecture. Although British passed so many environmental laws, it was not very powerful. They exploited the natural resources of India for profit motive.

The Constitution of India Appreciating the danger to the environment, Article 48A came to be inserted in the Constitution of India casting a duty on the State to secure the health of people, improve public health and protect and improve the environment. Article 51A came to be inserted casting a duty on every citizen of India to protect and improve the natural environment including forests, lakes, rivers and wild life and to have compassion for living creatures.

6. OTHER STATUTES

The Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 The Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981 The Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974 The National Environment Tribunal Act, 1995 The National Environment Appellate Authority Act, 1997 The Indian Forest Act, 1927 The Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 The Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1980 The Public Liability Insurance Act, 1991 Factories Act and various other enactments and rules framed thereunder.

Code of Civil Procedure

Section 91 CPC provides remedy for institution of civil suit on the ground of public nuisance. Or.1, R 8 CPC provides for institution of representative suit. To seek legal remedies concerning maintenance of environment, at district court level, both these provisions under the Code are of much significance.

Code of Criminal Procedure

Sections 133-143 Cr.PC are the relevant provisions available in the Code to deal with environment degradation. Under these provisions, Sub Divisional Magistrates have been empowered to deal with suchlike matters.

The Indian Penal Code

Sections 268, 277, 278, 288, 290 and 291 are the penal provisions on the point of environment, stipulated under this Code.

Besides all these provisions, there is no particular legislation that controls and provides remedies for the pollution caused by fast fashion indirectly. The loophole here lies not in the legislation but in the people's internet-oriented approach, which leads them to buy more than they need and require.

7. FINDING AND SUGGESTIONS

Approximately 53 million tonnes of fibre are produced annually by the fashion industry; 70 per cent of this fibre is burned or dumped in landfills. The Ellen MacArthur Foundation, a UK-based nonprofit organisation that supports circular economies—which aim to balance production and consumption by reusing products—projects that global fibre output will reach 160 million tonnes by 2050. According to the foundation, less than 1% of fibre is recycled to create new clothing, which represents the loss of billions of dollars' worth of clothing that is thrown away as trash and negatively impacts the environment.

Currently, there are no legally binding environmental standards enacted through government regulation. Left unregulated, the industry will be responsible for more than 25% of the world's global carbon budget by 2050²¹. Driving fast fashion out of fashion: To tackle overproduction and the overconsumption of clothes and footwear, the Committee

²¹ EARTHDAY, FAST FASHION: WHY GOVERNMENTS NEED TO TAKE ACTION, available at: <https://www.earthday.org/fast-fashion-why-governments-need-to-take-action>, (last visited on 24th Aug., 2023).

calls on the Commission and EU countries to adopt measures that put an end to “fast fashion”, starting with a clear definition of the term based on “high volumes of lower quality garments at low price levels”. Not only internationally national level legislation is also needed in action.

Consumers should be better informed to help them make responsible and sustainable choices, including through the introduction of a “digital product passport” in the upcoming revision of the eco-design regulation. But the industry's shift to creating a healthy ecology won't happen quickly. For several years, the business models have followed a straight route of “take, make, wear, and throw,” resulting in an astounding 13 million tonnes of textile waste that are burnt or land in landfills worldwide.

Some brands do not allow resale. India lacks a strong mechanism for collecting textile waste. Nonetheless, India is one of the top buyers of worn clothing and has long been a centre for textile recycling. Although the latter has merely made India's already heavy textile waste problem worse, the recycling plants have provided raw materials for a number of eco-friendly firms. Among them is the Delhi-based fashion brand Doodlage, which started producing limited edition collections in 2012 from recycled manufacturing trash. As part of a new project, they are gathering post-consumer garbage for sorting in order to assist Indian consumers in disposing of their unwanted clothing in an ethical manner.

Reducing emissions, water and energy use, increasing collection and reuse: MEPs want ambitious science-based targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the entire lifecycle of the textiles sector. They request the Commission and member states to ensure that production processes become less energy- and water-intensive, avoid the use and release of harmful substances, and reduce material and consumption footprints. Eco-design requirements on all textile and footwear products should be adopted as a priority.

Other recommendations include:

- The inclusion of an explicit ban on the destruction of unsold and returned textile goods in the eco-design rules;
- Clear rules to put an end to greenwashing practices, through the ongoing legislative work on empowering consumers in the green transition and regulating green claims;
- Ensure fair and ethical trade practices through enforcing trade agreements;
- The launch without further delay of the Commission initiative to prevent and minimise the release of microplastics and microfibers into the environment²².

8. CONCLUSION

Fashion itself is a reflection of social, economic, political and cultural changes. It expresses modernity, symbolising the spirit of the times. The product itself is not in the spotlight anymore: it is the brand that speaks. To cope with the existing fast fashion cycle is to bring the slow fashion in fashion. In 2007, the term “slow fashion” was actually coined by accident. Following the slow food movement, it was invented by Kate Fletcher of the Centre for Sustainable Fashion. Fletcher identified a need for a slower pace in the fashion sector, similar to the slow food trend. And that's how this movement came into play. It led to a wave of change across the fashion industry in the last decade or two. A growing number of firms are rejecting the ideals of rapid fashion in favour of a more environmentally friendly approach to clothing production²³. Fast fashion can not only sound expensive it also burns down the environment a lot. To bring sustainability in fashion besides legislative efforts awareness regarding this issue must also be taken by the current government. In short, to reduce environmental pollution by fibre, the motto should be “reduce, reuse and return” the clothes, it can bring some change in action not on paper only.

²² NEWS EUROPEON MARKET, Ending fast fashion: tougher rules to fight excessive production and consumption, *available at:* <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20230424IPR82040/ending-fast-fashion-tougher-rules-to-fight-excessive-production-and-consumption>, (last visited on 7th Aug., 2023).

²³ *available at:* <https://www.iiad.edu.in/the-circle/what-is-slow-fashion-and-indian-brands-that-stand-for-it/> (last visited on 6th may 2024).