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**Contextual Studies  
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**Examining the issues surrounding the fashion industry  
and considering the role of consumer and designer in  
supporting a more sustainable approach**

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## Introduction

For some time I have been curious about how and why we are now living in the midst of a disposable lifestyle in relation to material possessions. In my creative practice as a textile artist I enjoy working with recycled materials and am naturally very interested in fashion and the new sustainable materials that are now becoming available. Being aware of the current fast fashion culture and having grown up with a different experience has led me to investigate this trend in greater depth.

In my lifetime I have seen the shift from make do and mend; from repair to replacement; from value to insignificance; and from durability to built in obsolescence. There has been a generational shift towards consumerism, a growing tendency towards excess, and a loss of personal attachment to our belongings.

Consumerism is the ever increasing acquisition of material goods and has been steadily growing since the beginnings of a more affluent society in the early 20th century. Such high consumption of these now disposable goods comes at significant cost, as excessive purchases inevitably leads to excessive surpluses which need to be disposed of. In addition, intensive production and distribution methods have a significant impact on our environment.

Fast fashion is the term used to describe today's clothing collections that arrive at retail outlets within just a few weeks of design. With new products appearing on a weekly basis clothes have now become cheap, easily replaced, disposable items. 'Disposable' is a crucial word but is often used as a 'throwaway expression' with little thought behind it.

In this essay I will investigate what happens to our used and unwanted items when we discard them and how much the average consumer really knows or thinks about it. A very thought provoking quote comes from Annie Leonard in *The Story of Stuff*, (Leonard 2013): "There is no such thing as 'away'. When we throw something away it has to go somewhere".

I conducted a survey entitled 'Shopping for Fashion' to gain an insight into current buying habits and viewpoints from a non specific age group of modern consumers. Analysing 100 responses, unsurprisingly 100% said that they shop in high street fashion stores, and 58% reported that they would go shopping purely to relieve stress or cheer themselves up. A

huge majority of respondents admitted that they have bought clothes and never worn them, with only 9% saying that they had not.



Other questions and answers will be detailed in following sections and full survey questions and responses are appended.

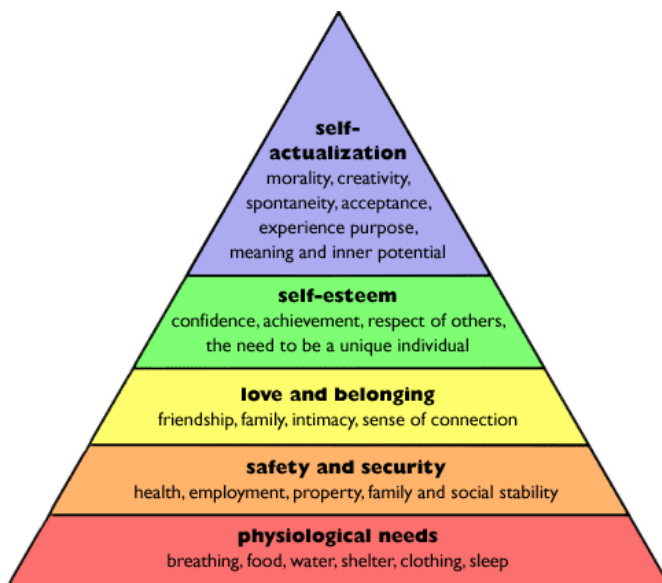
Another question that needs to be asked is how we got to this stage in relation to fashion garments. How and when did it begin, what caused this shift into a consumer driven world? I will demonstrate by in-depth investigations that there is clearly an essential need for change, and explore where the overall responsibility lies by examining the role of the industry, the designer, and the consumer in moving away from the fast fashion trend.

## The Rise of Fast Fashion

Spanish retail chain Zara opened their first shop in 1989 and was the first to introduce a value range of fast fashion. Since then they have expanded globally at a vast rate, closely followed by Gap, H&M and most other major retailers who were forced to keep up. Demand for fast fashion has increased rapidly over the last decade, and prices are ever cheaper. "Zara are now restocking their shops twice a week", reported Suzy Hansen in the New York Times. (Hansen 2012).

As a result items are deliberately in limited supply which encourages more shopping visits and purchases and the buyer knows that there will always be something different in store. Zara has completely changed consumer behaviour, people are now conditioned to buy on impulse and no longer value their clothes as they would had they saved up for them.

Fashion has always been important. Clothing is a functional necessity but once basic survival needs have been met there is a demand for garments to reflect the status and identity of



**Figure 1 Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs**

the individual. In Maslow's (1943) Hierarchy of Needs he categorised all human needs in a pyramid of five levels. At the lower level sits 'physiological' which is hunger, thirst, clothing, shelter, and warmth, all vital for survival. He stated that once these basic needs have been satisfied the desire to move up to the next level arises - next is safety. It is only at the third level that emotional needs emerge; feelings of acceptance and belonging, self-identification.

By comparison, Max-Neef (cited in Fletcher 2008) identifies existential and axiological needs and their relevant 'satisfiers'. People meet and satisfy these needs in different ways and at different times. He rejects the 'hierarchy' theory and proposes that human needs are circular and integrative. Some people may fulfil the need for identity with fashion whilst others may use religion or politics. Satisfiers can be products or services but psychological needs are much harder to satisfy with material goods. The Greek philosopher Socrates (B.C. 469 – 399) identified happiness as the ultimate goal of all human activity but although these days we have more material possessions than ever before, various studies have reported that we are no happier.

Perhaps it is an inherent human condition to want more, as Socrates famously said "He who is not contented with what he has, would not be contented with what he would like to have".

Max-Neef was of the belief that “the more you have the more greedy you become”. Fletcher discusses in depth that after warmth and protection are achieved, people all over the world have desired to dress in fashionable and stylish ways.

Traditionally fashion designers showed their collections twice a year, in seasons, and the turnaround from catwalk show to consumer took around 6 months. I have seen this change emerging and growing in the course of my lifetime as up until the late 1970's people had few fashion items and these were purchased and worn according to the season. Shopping for outfits was a rare occasion and something to look forward to, a real treat. The clothes were relatively expensive but would last well because of the quality of the manufacture; almost always 'made in Britain'.

The shift started with the growth of globalisation in the 80's and 90's when manufacture of goods could be outsourced to developing countries at vastly reduced costs. By the late 1990's this, along with new technologies streamlining the production processes, enabled leading brands to hugely increase profits by producing low cost high fashion clothing. Emerging trends are now instantly identified and copied and seasons no longer apply. The consumer is able to enjoy readily available cheap clothing and the industry becomes ever more profit driven.

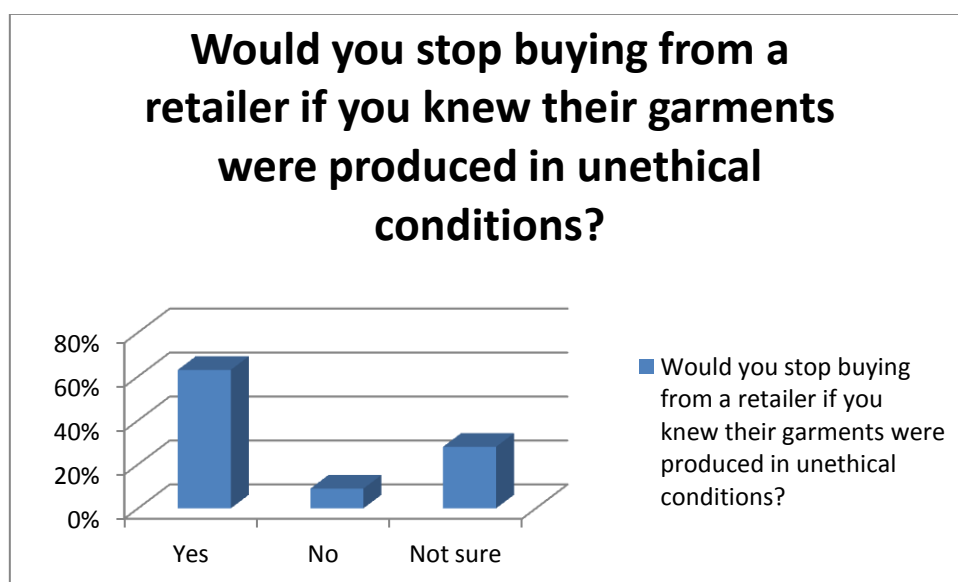
According to a Cambridge University study fashion houses now offer up to 18 collections a year and the turnaround from sketch to retail outlet can be as little as two weeks. (Designweek 2006). This has serious consequences for workers and the environment and is completely unsustainable. The wonderfully expressive term 'McFashion' was coined by Michelle Lee in her interesting and informative book 'Fashion Victim'. She declares that 'fast fashion is like fast food -it's cheap, addictive and unsustainable;' and goes on to describe how both, although readily accessible and very affordable, are bland and downmarket, and ultimately unhealthy (Lee 2003).

## Environmental and Social Issues

Most people these days have some awareness that fashion garments are often made abroad in appalling conditions. Newspapers are reporting shocking stories of low pay, health risks, and tragically, even factory buildings collapsing.

Those who look beyond the human rights issues will also uncover the serious effects that these methods of fashion production have on the environment. Problems directly caused by the forever growing trend for fast fashion are myriad but people generally are not very aware, or perhaps care little; happy to indulge in frequent shopping trips without thinking about how their item arrived in the shop or what happens to it after they tire of it. As Kate Fletcher says "Fast fashion is largely disconnected from reality, with little recognition of poverty wages, forced overtime and climate change." (Fletcher 2008).

My survey suggests that people do seem to be able to separate these concerns from their actual shopping behaviour:



Below is a sample of respondents comments:

*" When i shop for clothes, I'm on quite a strict budget so I'm likely to use the cheaper high street shops regardless of their ethics."*



*" I have a very tight/low budget, so although I know how awful the conditions are, I just don't have the funds to pay more on clothing"*

*" They are still going to be made in those conditions regardless. People can't afford really expensive clothes anymore".*

*"The price has a massive impact on decisions. I know it is harsh but sometimes you can't afford to make this choice".*

Substantial amounts of complex chemicals are used in the textile industry for the preparation, dyeing and printing and finishing processes involved in garment production. Many of these have been proven to be toxic, or to cause cancers and genetic mutations. Here are just a few of these chemical substances:

Alkylphenolethoxylates (APEOs) - environmental hormone disruptors

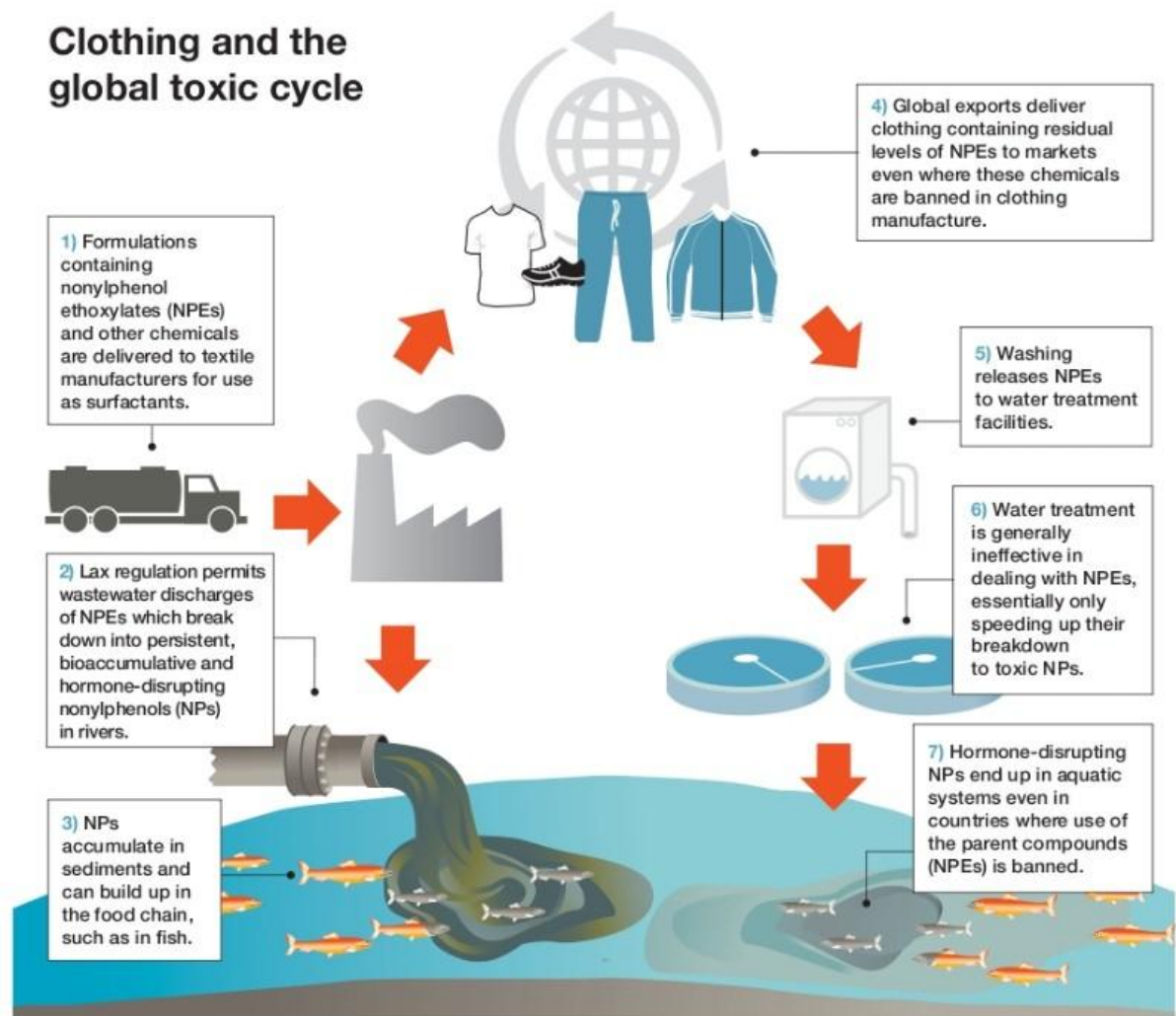
Pentachlorophenols (PCP) and Dichloromethane (DCM), Formaldehyde, Phthalates, Polybrominated diphenyl ethers ( PBDE's), and Perfluorooctane sulfonates (PFOS) - these are some of the most toxic chemicals known and can cause cancers or genetic mutations

Heavy metals – copper, cadmium, lead, antimony, mercury among others - highly toxic and dangerous to all species and to the environment.

Currently there are no requirements that manufacturers disclose the chemicals used in processing or chemicals which remain in the finished fabrics and garments. (Greenpeace 2015).

Waste water containing these chemicals is released by the factories into public waterways which are toxic to fish and other wildlife and build up in the food chain. This is in addition to the harmful pesticides that are destroying our environment in the cotton farming process.

There are many other serious issues associated with these hazardous chemicals. They are especially harmful to the production workers as during manufacture the workers are constantly exposed to toxic fumes being released into poorly ventilated and badly maintained factories. Subsequent health issues range from dermatitis and asthma to Alzheimer's disease and cancer.



**Figure 2 Clothing and the global toxic cycle**

Many of these chemicals are also hormone destructors which then lead to birth defects into the next and future generations. Some chemicals even remain in the finished garments (including children's wear) when they reach the consumer and these substances can be absorbed into the skin and released into the air. The consumer then becomes part of the cycle of water pollution by washing the garments and releasing the toxins into their waste water system.

Before proceeding it is useful to consider the work of William McDonough and Michael Braungart in their 2002 book, *Cradle to Cradle: Remaking the Way We Make Things*. They propose that recognising the need to address the recycling problems and to move towards a more sustainable approach to manufacture begins with design: "To eliminate the concept of waste means to design things -products, packaging, and systems - from the very beginning on the understanding that waste does not exist." (McDonough and Braungart 2002).

Currently we have a cradle to grave system, or in other words production to landfill. The basis of the cradle to cradle concept is that production techniques need to be more efficient and essentially waste free. In order to produce we take from the earth and at the end of the items' life we return it to the earth. But the production methods we use have damaging consequences in the way we take, and in what gets returned.

This regenerative design approach is that each part of a product is made with its entire life cycle in mind. The materials are either biodegradable and can be returned to the earth, or the components can be reused in a new production cycle. McDonough and Braungart believe that manufacturers must take responsibility for the disposal of the goods that they have produced, so that in salvage the items become raw materials for another cycle. Disposal of unwanted manufactured goods should not be the end of the line, and this applies to all merchandise. Thus this theory also applies to fashion garments and other textiles.

Following a massive Greenpeace campaign in Germany, retail giants Aldi, Lidl, Rewe/Penny, and Tchibo have pledged to ban all hazardous chemicals from their textile and shoe production by 2020. As well as this 31 leading international fashion companies including six Italian suppliers have also pledged to Greenpeace to clean up their production by 2020. (Greenpeace 2015)

According to Greenpeace 65% of worldwide textile production takes place in China and two-thirds of all waters are contaminated with hazardous chemicals, mainly from the textile industry. Another risk to the health of textile workers is sandblasting, a technique used to treat denim for a worn look, which releases dust particles which causes silicosis in the lungs and may eventually lead to death.

Retailers these days predetermine the price they are prepared to pay for the manufacture of goods based on their required profit margins. Manufacturers bid for the work and the lowest bidder wins the contract. It follows that when production prices are at rock bottom the workers are subject to dangerous and exploitative conditions. The shocking story of the collapse of the Rana Plaza garment factory building in Bangladesh two years ago was widely reported but despite the publicity little has changed in reality.

Within the industry the drive towards more and more fast profit is seriously compromising the safety of employees. It has been claimed (Lamson-Hall 2013) that “price pressure is already driving some companies to turn a blind eye when subcontractors choose unsafe factories, putting reputations on the line and risking the lives of workers. Now, that’s an unsustainable model. It’s bad for business — and it’s bad for humanity”.

Katharine Hamnett said that “retailer’s conscience has gone out of the window and they will do anything to ensure their profits.” (Hamnett 2015)

Perhaps one of the most serious disadvantages of this is that, in relation to Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs theories, as we move higher up the chain the production workers fall lower. The ready availability of cheap, trendy fast fashion means that consumers in the UK and USA receive massive emotional rewards. But the perpetuation of this cycle means that the factory employees’ needs are barely being met even at basic level. Consumers are protected from reality as they do not see what is really happening in the factories and this is both unfair and unethical.

## **The Problem of Recycling Textiles**

The fast fashion culture is directly responsible for the huge amount of clothing that has to be disposed of nowadays. The consumer enjoys frequent shopping excursions, buying at low prices, and will often hardly wear a garment before donating it to a charity shop. No longer is this recycling route sufficient to cope with the vast amount of unwanted clothing disposed of every day.

Although aware of the fast fashion trend I was surprised to discover the extent of the real issues related to textile recycling and the major effects on the environment. Like many people, I had thought that the charity shop route of recycling our unwanted clothing was a satisfactory solution. Only after watching a BBC documentary ‘*The Secret Life of Your Clothes*’ (2014) did I begin to fully realise the magnitude of the problems.

Charity shops are unable to cope with the sheer volume they receive and only the better quality items are accepted for resale. Some are sold or shipped abroad, some are recycled,

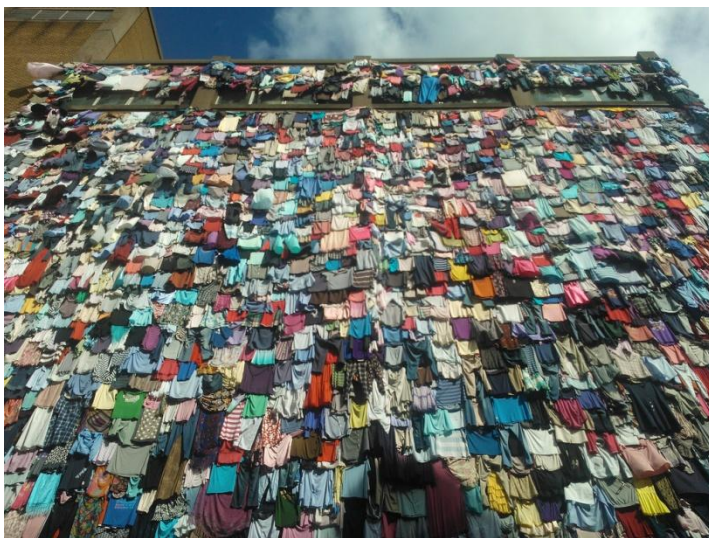
but a hugely significant amount of unwanted garments need to be disposed of. So what is really happening to our discarded clothing?

One of the current solutions is to ship the items abroad, which has resulted in a prodigious textile resale market in developing countries. Whilst this has provided income for the many workers involved in the long chain, and people are clamouring to buy the clothes, it has a negative impact on the environment. The real question is how much longer we can justify the carbon footprint of the round the world journey involved from the cotton field to the final destination?



**Figure 3 Bales of clothes from the UK ready to ship to Africa**

Many garments end up in landfill but this is clearly not the definitive solution as most synthetic fabrics do not decompose, and although natural fibres do, they produce methane which contributes to global warming.



**Figure 4 M&S 'shwopping' Wall of Clothes**

Marks & Spencer covered buildings with used, donated clothing as part of their “shwopping” campaign to encourage clothing recycling. Shwopping is an initiative launched with Oxfam to help reduce unwanted clothing items going to landfill. Unwanted items can be donated in special bins in M&S stores.

Other retailers have followed suit and are providing recycling bins inside their shops. H&M started 'Comeback Clothes' which encourages young people to recycle their old clothes by offering a 15% discount on their next purchase. Whilst this is a move in the right direction, in my view it does not address the issues that are at the root of the problem, in fact it is actually perpetuating (encouraging?) the endless cycle of fashion addiction.

Garments for recycling into new yarn are still shipped abroad thus continuing the endless journeys around the world. 'Unravel' is a multiple award winning short documentary film produced and directed by Meghna Gupta which follows the journey of our unwanted clothes into a Northern India recycling factory. Apart from illustrating exactly what happens to these textiles, the film gives voice to the thoughts of the workers who have no experience of western lifestyles. They wonder why there are so many clothes arriving and their perspectives are both humorous and thought provoking. One worker speculates that water must be more expensive than clothes, which is why they are only worn once and then thrown away. (Gupta 2012).

My survey revealed that most people are unaware of what really happens to their discarded clothes:



Respondents that answered 'other' were asked to comment and the majority of these thought that the goods were shipped abroad but seemed to think they were donated rather than sold.



## New Advances in Technology

Our clothes are one of the world's biggest contributors to environmental pollution but new advances in technology coupled with ethical farming of resources mean that a shift towards a more sustainable future is now starting to happen. New methods are being developed for production of fabrics that don't require toxins and large amounts of water.

Organic cotton is grown without chemical pesticides and fertilizers and these require less water to manufacture than conventional cotton textiles. This can also be blended with other ethically produced natural fibres such as linen, hemp, silk, cashmere and wool.

An increasing number of highly innovative new materials are being developed which could well be the key for fashion of the future. These fabrics are made from natural substances such as wood pulp, cork, milk protein, corn and others.

Ingeo® biopolymer or POLY acid is an innovative new material created by Natureworks LLC. It is made in the USA from sugar and is mainly sourced from corn crops already grown for industry. There is no impact on food prices or supplies as they use only 0.05% of the annual global corn crop, the sugar can also be sourced from beets and cane.



**Figure 5 Ingeo® dress from Natureworks LLC**



**Figure 6 dress made from QMilch**

Natureworks claim that production produces 60% less greenhouse gases and 50% less non-renewable energy than other polymers. (Natureworks 2015).

QMilch is a yarn made from the protein fibres of milk and can be used alone or blended with a variety of other materials such as cashmere, silk, wool and cotton. It is the first man-made fibre to be produced without chemicals.

The company claims that "1.9million tonnes of raw milk is discarded in Germany alone every year. Qmilch reuses this waste, generally milk that has been deemed unfit for food

purposes, by turning it into this silk-like fabric.” The milk fibre has the benefit of also being fully compostable. (QMilk 2015).

MODAL® and TENCEL® are both made from the wood pulp of trees and are easily blended with other fibres as well as being grown in natural environments. Corkshell was developed by Swiss technologists Schoeller and is made from the by-product of wine corks. (Innovation in Textiles 2013)

POLARTEC® are a USA textile production company who specialise in performance textiles. They make a range of over 20 different fabrics using recycled wool and polyester along with corn-based fleece and fibres made from 100% post-consumer recycled plastic bottles (PCR). (Polartec 2015).

## **The Role of the Consumer**

Consumers have been convinced by the cheap fashion industry that they can't afford better clothes. But as sustainable fashion expert Elizabeth Cline says "for the most part, consumers are throwing away their money on low-quality, trendy clothes that have no shelf life and that they don't get a lot of use out of ". (Cline 2012).

Fashion by its very name has always had a limited lifespan, but Tokatli (cited in Joy 2012) says "fast fashion replaces exclusivity, glamour, originality, and luxury with 'massclusivity' and planned spontaneity". People are buying more, perhaps because of enjoying more disposable income, and now expect to be able to buy more for less money. These demands are fulfilled by cheap prices and ready availability.

Retail chains encourage impulsive shopping by stocking ready matched coordinates at irresistible prices, thus providing instant gratification for the consumer. Any shop in any country will stock exactly the same items, which takes away any effort on the buyer's part to make considered choices to develop their own personal style.

As fast fashion production directly compares to the effect that McDonalds has had on the fast food industry, Lee (ibid) claims that "we are all consumers of McFashion; it's bland and downmarket, but affordable and abundant; unsatisfying, commonplace and utterly forgettable".



Shopping today has become an entertainment, a national pastime, a compulsive habit even. When people indulge their shopping habits how aware are they of the origin of their purchases and the environmental cost?

International Labor Rights Forum is a US based human rights organization that advocates for workers globally. "The head-in-the-sand approach doesn't cut it", worker advocates say. Director of Communications Liana Foxvog believes that "Consumers have an important role to play in urging for change in the global garment industry. On the one hand, we can watch where we shop. On the other hand, we should very vocally be pressuring corporations to improve conditions in supply chains and accept their responsibility for their workers that sew the clothing these companies sell." (Washington Post 2013).

## **Sustainable Fashion and the Role of the Designer**

It seems that there is little incentive for the retail chains to move to a more ethical approach to fashion - slow fashion. According to Sull and Turconi (cited in Joy 2012) fast fashion has a much higher profit margin at 16% compared to only 7% for traditional apparel.

Fast fashion retailers are at the top of a very lucrative industry but to what extent are designers responsible, or are they simply victims of industry's greed for profit and consumer greed for cheap clothes?

As far back as 1972 in 'Design for the Real World', Victor Papanek wrote "There are professions more harmful than design, but only a few". Papanek accused designers of "creating useless, unnecessary and unsafe products; of wastefully propagating product obsolescence; of creating "stuff-lust" that promoted materialistic lifestyles". (Papanek 2005).

These wise words have been largely ignored by the fashion industry and fast fashion has continued to escalate in unethical and unsustainable methods. Katharine Hamnett CBE is a British designer who has campaigned for ethically produced and environmentally safe fashion since 1989. After investigating the impact of the clothing and textile industry on the environment she was shocked to discover the true facts.

As a response she launched the 'CLEAN UP OR DIE' collection to highlight the untenable situation and has been campaigning for the fashion industry to clean up its act ever since. Katharine Hamnett's mission statement is "to change the world through fashion, make products as ethically and as environmentally as possible, with the best supply chain, the best social, environmental and cultural impact, alleviating poverty, and preserving traditional skills".



**Figure 7 Katharine Hamnett T shirt design**

In March Design in Action and Zero Waste Scotland hosted a lecture at Dundee University with Katharine Hamnett as the main speaker which I attended. As a leading spokesperson for ethical design and sustainability her message was clear, interesting and direct, delivered with a very energetic and inspirational approach. She spoke passionately about the shocking and appalling fact that 365,000 cotton farmers die every year from accidental pesticide poisoning but "nobody seems to know or care." (Hamnett 2015).

Farming organically changes this, is more profitable and uses far less water in the production. Organic farming methods return to traditional methods using the crop rotation system to maintain soil fertility.

Katharine Hamnett believes that teachers should be at the forefront of promoting sustainability and that this topic should be mandatory at the start of any textile/fashion education. More technical knowledge should be given and students should be encouraged to make things at home and to experiment more. As a designer/maker in textiles I was particularly interested in this aspect as I strongly believe that we should be teaching people to how to sew, how to make clothes, and how to repair or revamp them. If the fashion industry employed outworkers to make garments from home a return to community involvement and family connections could be achieved.

Referring again to Max Neef's definition of human needs, Fletcher (ibid) proposes that this theory is important today when moving towards a more sustainable future without compromising value for money. By analysing the concept and identifying how people are motivated, consumer individuality can still be maintained within a more socially responsible design approach.

During the rise of fast fashion there has been no middle market, only cheap clothing at one end and highly priced exclusivity at the other. Slow fashion is now starting to emerge and offers an alternative to mass produced clothing. This movement takes a more ethical approach to production methods and promotes consumer awareness of the whole process, starting with design. It encourages people to have more of a connection with their clothes instead of viewing them as quickly disposable items.

There are a number of emerging ethical designers and I think this trend will gain momentum alongside public awareness of the real issues behind fast fashion and its hidden price tag.

Some designers approach to sustainable fashion is to use only ethically sourced natural and organic materials, others use local labour and recycled fabrics. Orsola de Castro founded 'From Somewhere' which uses recycled factory offcuts (pre-consumer surplus) of luxury materials, saving these from disposal. Another approach by some designers is to make new items out of discarded clothing by altering and embellishing them into fresh and fashionable garments.

## **Conclusions**

Clearly the current methods of textile production and consumer shopping habits is unsustainable. In reflection I am of the conclusion that everyone, from design to manufacture, to retail to consumer, has a part to play in changing how fashion is produced, how we shop for it, and how we keep clothing out of landfill. My survey showed that most people think the retailer has the biggest responsibility:



But many people commented that there is a collective responsibility and this reflects my own views.

*"Shoppers could boycott to help initiate change but effective change has to come from the companies"*

*"We all have equal responsibility, the shoppers need to protest, retailers need to listen and tell the designers and designers need to source sustainable ways of designing and producing clothes. Also governments need to close loopholes in the law for what our stores are allowed to sell".*

*"Retailers have too much power. They dictate to both designers & buyers about what they think they want their shoppers want".*

*"The designers should know what's sustainable and what isn't. They have the power to change that".*

Human rights issues have been key to raising public awareness of the true cost of fast fashion. Negative publicity shamed McDonalds when the true ingredients were made public. Consumers can and should influence the fashion industry to take a more responsible and ethical approach. Instead of 'forgetting' about or feeling disconnected from news stories of building collapses, exploitation and other unethical practices, consumers must retain awareness of the wider issues when embarking on shopping trips.

A boycott of 'named and shamed' retailers would soon hit their profits. Collectively, shoppers do have a powerful voice and this can be used very effectively to influence change. People can also have an effect by buying fewer new clothes, by mending and repurposing, by recycling, and by buying second-hand clothes. Consumers now have more options and in a comparatively short time there could be a huge shift in power from the seller to the buyer.

Designers have a responsibility to make ethical and sustainable designs and this should be taught from the beginning at schools. They need to be educated in how to be innovative in sourcing materials, and how to factor in manufacturing costs. If 80 per cent of a product's environmental impact is fixed at the point of design, then clearly the designers' role is crucial in these early stages.

Katharine Hamnett says that "sustainable design involves more creativity and can be far more interesting". By their very nature designers are innovative and this observation leads me to think that this is an exciting challenge asking to be taken up.

Organisations such as registered charities WRAP and SCAP are very active in raising awareness of the value of the clothes. I believe that consumer behaviour can be influenced through effective messaging of the importance of ethical and sustainable fashion.

Finally, governments need to adopt policies in relation to discharge of hazardous chemicals and fair working conditions and force industry to comply. The industry needs to be more transparent and full disclosure of provenance and ethics should be mandatory in garment labelling.

In my own creative practice I will continue to explore new ways of utilising recycled textiles and promote traditional sewing skills.

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## Images:

**Figure 1** Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs - Published in Psychological Review, 50, 370-396

**Figure 2** Clothing and the global toxic cycle, source

<http://www.greenpeace.org/international/en/campaigns/detox/fashion/about/eleven-flagship-hazardous-chemicals/>

**Figure 3** Bales of clothes from the UK ready to ship to Africa, source:

<http://www.fashioneditoratlarge.com/2014/07/five-thoughts-secret-life-clothes-obroni-wawu/>

**Figure 4** M&S Shwopping – wall of clothes, source <http://www.treehugger.com/corporate-responsibility/marks-spencer-shwopping-camapign.html> Image by Su-May

**Figure 5** Ingeo© dress from Natureworks LLC, source <http://www.classecohub.org/class-ingeo-at-gattinoni-haute-couture-show-altaroma-2010/>

**Figure 6** Dress made from QMilch, source

<http://www.wabisabi.com.es/blog/ecofriendlyfashion/wear-it-or-eat-it-beautiful-and-eco-friendly-fashion-is-being-made-from-things-like-milk-coconut-and-cork/>

**Figure 7** Katharine Hamnett T-shirt design, source <http://www.katharinehamnett.com/>.

Image by Alex Sturrock

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# Shopping for Fashion Survey by Linda McKeen

My survey results from [www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com)

- **Started:** Friday, April 24, 2015 14:23:29 PM
- **Closed:** Monday, May 11, 2015 12:08:09 PM

**!MAXIMUM RESPONSE LIMIT:** You have reached your limit of 100 survey responses. To see all 117 responses, upgrade to any pro plan.  
Showing RESPONDENTS: 100 of 117

## Do you frequently shop for clothes in High Street fashion outlets?

- Answered: 99
- Skipped: 1

Answer Choices—	Responses—
— Yes, I'm addicted	<b>12.12%</b> 12
— Quite often	<b>49.49%</b> 49
— Sometimes	<b>38.38%</b> 38
— Never - I only buy designer outfits	<b>0.00%</b> 0
Total	99

## Do you go on a shopping trip to relieve stress or cheer yourself up?

- Answered: 100
- Skipped: 0

Answer Choices—	Responses—
— definitely!	<b>49.00%</b> 49
— sometimes	<b>18.00%</b> 18
— I only shop when I need new clothes	<b>33.00%</b> 33
Total	100

## Do you ever buy clothes and never wear them?

- Answered: 100
- Skipped: 0

Answer Choices--	Responses--
– oh dear, yes.	<b>24.00%</b> 24
– I have occasionally	<b>67.00%</b> 67
– Never!	<b>9.00%</b> 9
Total	100

## What do you think happens to the clothes you donate to charity shops?

- Answered: 100
- Skipped: 0

Answer Choices--	Responses--
– someone will buy them	<b>73.00%</b> 73
– I have no idea	<b>12.00%</b> 12
– Other (please specify)	<b>15.00%</b> 15
Total	100

### 15 responses

Remake as something useful

5/2/2015 1:24 PM

hopefully they are sold or get sent overseas

5/1/2015 5:04 PM

Sent to third world countries

5/1/2015 3:49 PM

Sent overseas

5/1/2015 2:21 PM

some are sold in shop some sold to agents who sell them in 3Rd world countries

5/1/2015 10:23 AM

Sold in shop or sold on for textile recycling

4/26/2015 8:28 PM

Sent to other sites in different areas to sell on

4/25/2015 11:04 PM

If they don't get bought within a few weeks they get sent to other stores or can be send overseas to people in need.

4/25/2015 3:11 PM

Some sold, some maybe given to people who can't afford clothes.

4/25/2015 1:24 PM

Some are bought and those that are not are recycled.

4/25/2015 11:28 AM

Some will b bought, the rest collected up by organisations like Nathan's to b taken to a cloth bank for recycling

4/25/2015 11:22 AM

Some sold, some sold as material by weight?

4/25/2015 10:54 AM

Bought or send abroad to charities

4/25/2015 10:39 AM

some one buys them or if they are not sellable they can get rag money for them. (insider knowledge)

4/25/2015 10:37 AM

A number of them get shipped off to foreign countries, I believe.

4/24/2015 9:58 AM

**Have you ever sold clothes to a textile recycling centre? (often they are vans in retail car parks )**

- Answered: 99
- Skipped: 1

Answer Choices—	Responses—
— Yes	<b>14.14%</b> 14
— No, but I've seen them around	<b>57.58%</b> 57
— I've never seen or heard of them	<b>28.28%</b> 28

Answer Choices–	Responses–
Total	99

**Did you know that that around 75% of the world's clothing is manufactured in developing countries, sometimes in unsafe factory conditions for the workers who receive very low wages and often work long hours?**

- Answered: 98
- Skipped: 2

Answer Choices–	Responses–
– Yes	<b>83.67%</b> 82
– No	<b>16.33%</b> 16
Total	98

**Would you stop buying from a retailer if you knew their garments were produced in unethical conditions?**

- Answered: 100
- Skipped: 0

Answer Choices–	Responses–
– Yes	<b>63.00%</b> 63
– No	<b>9.00%</b> 9
– I'm not sure	<b>28.00%</b> 28
Total	100

### **12 responses**

I have no choice do I?

5/5/2015 5:09 PM

I think we all have an idea of what is going on, but at the end of the day there isn't really another option if you don't have the money to buy expensive clothes. But even then who's to say that they weren't made in the same way?

5/2/2015 10:40 AM

I don't think people think too much about where their clothes come from.

5/1/2015 2:21 PM

It's often hard to know and the more upmarket outlets seem better or more efficient at covering tracks. Cheapness would immediately alert me to possible unsustainable practices.

5/1/2015 12:34 PM

If it meant no income for the people as opposed to some income possibly not

5/1/2015 10:23

I'd like to say yes but sometimes the prices are so cheap that if it's just for a holiday or not something I would get lots of wear out of I would still buy it

4/25/2015 11:04 PM

I think shoppers have to be given the right information to make an informed decision. For me personally if it was a choice between 2 garments where 1 is ethically sourced and I like it but the other isn't & I love it. I'd buy the garment I loved every time regardless of how it was produced.

4/25/2015 1:09 PM

The price has a massive impact on decisions. I know it is harsh but sometimes you can't afford to make this choice.

4/25/2015 12:35 PM

It's a very difficult point. I shop in next and M & S mainly for myself but do buy occasionally from the likes of Asda and Tesco for my grandchildren. I guess from the prices I pay at all of these shops that the makers of these garments aren't highly paid but I also think that some of the designer fashions come from poorly paid workers too although they charge high prices.

4/25/2015 12:21 PM

When i shop for clothes, I'm on quite a strict budget so I'm likely to use the cheaper high street shops regardless of their ethics.

4/25/2015 10:53 AM

I have a very tight/low budget, so although I know how awful the conditions are, I just don't have the funds to pay more on clothing

4/25/2015 10:40 AM

They are still going to be made in those conditions regardless. People can't afford really expensive clothes anymore.

4/24/2015 12:48 PM

**Do you shop in ethically sourced/sustainable fashion clothing shops either online or in the High Street?**

- Answered: 99
- Skipped: 1

Answer Choices–	Responses–
– yes	<b>6.06%</b> 6
– I would but I don't know much about them	<b>43.43%</b> 43
– no, I've never heard about them	<b>43.43%</b> 43
– no, they are too expensive	<b>7.07%</b> 7
Total	99

Currently there is no requirement for labelling to cover the whole garment production process from start to finish, including the social standards (how workers are treated in the supply chain) and the carbon footprint. Do you think it's important that this information is made public to help with buying decisions?

- Answered: 100
- Skipped: 0

Answer Choices–	Responses–
– Yes	<b>85.00%</b> 85
– No	<b>15.00%</b> 15
Total	100

Current fashion production methods are unsustainable for many reasons. Who do you think has the most responsibility in changing the way we shop for our clothes?

- Answered: 98
- Skipped: 2

Answer Choices–	Responses–
– Designers - they are there at the very beginning	<b>7.14%</b> 7
– Retailers - they are the biggest part of the chain	<b>68.37%</b> 67



Answer Choices–	Responses–
–	<b>24.49%</b>
<b>Shoppers - we have the buying power</b>	<b>24</b>
Total	98

12 responses

Shoppers could boycott to help initiate change but effective change has to come from the companies

5/1/2015 2:03 PM

We all have our part to play.

5/1/2015 12:34 PM

And shoppers. Retailers could look at the pricing, we are responsible for our own choices

4/25/2015 11:04 PM

Everything is made for tall people I would have buy clothes and then pay for them to be shorten so do not bother

4/25/2015 6:21 PM

We all have equal responsibility, the shoppers need to protest, retailers need to listen and tell the designers and designers need to source sustainable ways of designing and producing clothes. Also governments need to close loopholes in the law for what our stores are allowed to sell.

4/25/2015 3:11

All three

4/25/2015 2:09 PM

Retailers have too much power. They dictate to both designers & buyers about what they think they want their shoppers want. They do this all across their product ranges so not just in fashion. Despite what I've said above. Where I can afford too with food I will always source food which has been ethically produced.

4/25/2015 1:09 PM

I don't rarely read the label. The only part I read is the washing instructions.

Answer Choices–	Responses–
4/25/2015 12:35 PM	
in reality probably all three 4/25/2015 11:24 AM	
I think it's everyone's responsibility- but as a consumer would need to know much more information 4/25/2015 10:39 AM	
It should be pushed by shoppers, but so many people is looking for something cheap, and worrying about whats going to happen in eastenders later. 4/25/2015 10:37 AM	
The designers should know what's sustainable and what isn't. They have the power to change that. Yes we buy them, but we don't know how long they will last, they do! 4/24/2015 12:48 PM	

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