



Impact of Fast Fashion on Sustainability: An SLR

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Abstract : *The fashion industry is the second biggest polluter in the world that is experiencing global scrutiny because of its environmental impacts. Within fashion, fast fashion is a significant contributor to the increasing pollution. The phrase "fast fashion" refers to a low-cost clothing collection that tries to replicate current luxury fashion trends. It has changed how people buy and dispose of apparel by selling large quantities of clothing at low prices. Fast fashion is emerging has one of the dominant business models in the fashion industry, causing garments consumption to skyrocket. Fast fashion revolutionized the industry while generating a significant carbon footprint and social concerns. The volume of items produced, consumed, and wasted is a problem and places the fast fashion industry as an environmental threat.*

This Systematic Literature Review (SLR) is an effort to examine how fast fashion affects and impacts sustainability. The paper is responsible for shedding light on numerous findings in the context of fast fashion and sustainability, some of which are- as there is an increasing demand for inexpensive clothing, it has resulted in environmental and social degradation along each step of the supply chain. Fast fashion offers consumers to buy more clothes for less, but those who work in or live near textile facilities bear the burden of health hazards. Furthermore, an increase in consumption patterns created millions of tons of textile waste in landfills and unregulated settings.

Keywords- *Fast Fashion, Sustainability, Environment, Impact, Brand, Awareness, Consumption.*

1. INTRODUCTION:

Fast fashion is “a business model based on offering consumers frequent novelty in the form of low-priced, trend-led products” grows rapidly driven by rising wealth and consumption in developing nations 1. Advancements in textile factories in 3D printing (or additive manufacturing), and technological changes have revolutionized production methods, allowing manufacturers to create garments increasingly fast. With its rapid production times and ability to capture the latest, hottest trends, the fast fashion production, distribution, and marketing has thrived over the past decade. It is a phenomenon that has increased pressure on the fashion industry to produce in ways that jeopardize environmentally sustainable practices 2. With the rise in production and quick, efficient supply chains, companies such as Zara, H&M, Forever21, and Topshop have revolutionized the traditional fashion marketplace. Also, the construction of cheap and fragile garments makes clothing repair unnecessary, which results in discarding of garments that are usually later found to be accumulated in wardrobes in wealthy countries 3. With the increased prevalence of fast fashion in contemporary society, the impact on the environment of these trends has become increasingly apparent. Fast fashion has provided a reason for total fibre production to approximately double from 2000 to 2018 and thus also created a dramatic disconnection from the amount of fibre used to serve people in the previous century. The growth in demand for ethical clothing choices is supported by changes to the sourcing of raw materials in the industry (Minney, 2007 cites a growth rate of approximately 40% per year for organic cotton fashion products) 4. In the production of fibres and textiles, the industry produced about 1.2 billion tons of greenhouse emissions in 2015, exceeding the combined carbon footprint of international flights and maritime shipping 5. And, although large-scale pollution from the textile industry has been a problem throughout its history, the more recent use of persistent and hazardous chemicals poses a more significant and often an invisible, threat to ecosystems and human health. The dyes used in the textile industry release residue that poses a major problem to wastewater sources. They estimated that they discharge 5000 tons of dyeing materials into the



environment every year 6. The United Nations Environment Program estimated that industry worldwide is responsible for dumping 300–500 million tons of heavy metals, solvents, toxic sludge, and other waste into waters each year. This systematic literature review has positioned itself to examine relevant research papers about the impact of fast fashion on sustainability. Future researchers can reference this paper and study each of the findings in isolation.

2. METHOD:

This review is a systematic analysis of published research papers that are available on the databases: SCOPUS, Springer, Taylor and Francis, and Google Scholar. To maintain adequate relevance, the keywords used in the searches were "fast" AND/OR "fashion" AND/OR "impact" AND/OR "sustainability". Further investigation revealed that some additional keywords were also relevant to the study, which were "impact" AND/OR "luxury" AND/OR "brand" AND/OR "cost" AND/OR "awareness" AND/OR "environment" AND/OR "consumption" AND/OR "degradation" and was included thereafter. Only the papers that met the inclusion criteria were adopted which were as follows:

(1) the entire study is published in English, (2) The Availability of full text of the research, (3) the paper included the keywords and was relevant to the matter of the topic, (4) The publication date of the research paper was between 2000 and 2023,

The initial search resulted in 98 papers, which were narrowed down to 20 after the inclusion criteria had been applied. Adopting the final 20 papers eligible for analysis are depicted as a flowchart in figure no.1. The findings from the final 20 papers have been systematically categorized and presented in table 1.

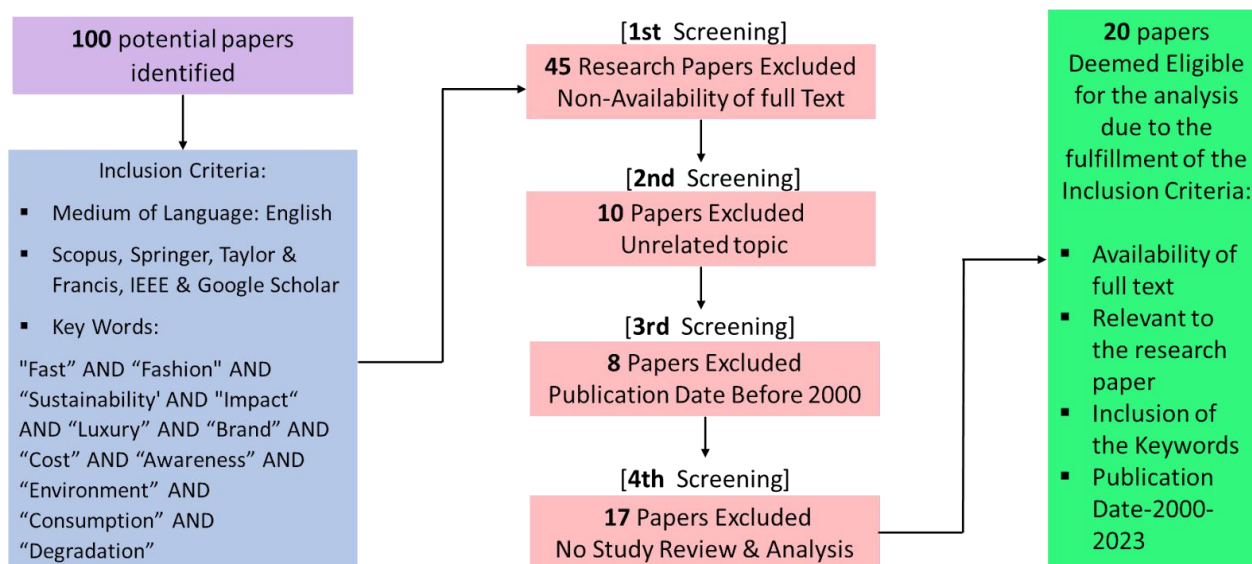


Figure 1

3. FINDINGS :

No.	Cite	Statement
1	7.	According to a literature review by Kim, et al. (2020), it has been observed that brands in the fast fashion industry aim to be more sustainable as consumers are becoming more aware of issues that follow the fast fashion industry-which include: consumer demand for sustainable fashion, free of resource depletion, environmental degradation, and ethical problems.
2	8.	A literature review by Birtwistle and Moore (2007) reported that fast fashion retailers, namely H&M, Topshop and Zara, sell garments at very competitive price points and are expected to be used less than ten times. An increase in fashion purchasing has been observed by the author, even while these clothes are only expected to be worn a few times.
3	9.	According to a literature review by Bruce, et al. (2006), consumers have been observed to be provided with fewer fashion options as the range of sustainable clothing provided is less.



4	10.	According to the analysis made by Li, Y., et al. (2014) factors like the strategic behaviour of CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) and the sustainable strategic objective will contribute to the sustainability of the fast fashion supply chain.
5	11.	It was found by the author Peters, et al. (2021) that fast fashion makes clothing repair unnecessary as the garments are thrown away before they get damaged, and the new clothes are designed and produced quickly out of cheap and fragile materials.
6	12.	According to the literature review done by the author on slow fashion compared to fast fashion, they observed that slow fashion stands for high-quality and long-lasting products, craftsmanship, and a sense of care. Moreover, a few independent brands have made a corner in the fashion industry while following sustainable practices.
7	13.	This scoping review done by the author has identified that a whole-system change is required in the fashion industry for any meaningful impact toward the reduction of carbon emissions. Injecting a principle of a circular fashion economy will not enable a pathway to carbon reductions, implementation of all circular principles must be the framework for such companies to align with and thus reduce emissions.
8	14.	According to the literature review and study conducted by the author, he has established that luxury fashion is an industry leader, drawing high revenues worldwide, whereas fast fashion is rapidly growing in the global market. Fast-fashion brand strategies call for rapid response to fashion trends by enhancing designs and product assortments, effectively increasing product demand and value for short-cycle fashion products. In contrast, luxury-brand strategies stress memorable sensory experiences through social mystique and aura. The luxury market is a high-value-added industry based on high-brand assets offering excellent quality, high transaction value, distinctiveness, exclusivity, and craftsmanship. However, both luxury and fast-fashion brands significantly contribute to global environmental and social degradation by providing poor labour conditions, polluting the environment with toxic dyes, and dumping waste into landfills. Consequently, the fashion industry has been criticized for lacking social and environmental responsibility. In response, fashion companies are trying to enhance their images by adopting and advertising green marketing activities.
9	15.	The author, after a thorough literature review, asserts that in everyday workings, the democratic potential of fashion is preserved only for the rich or those with social status. The top strata of the society need fashion the least for social mobility or a sense of control over their lives. Populations on the lower rungs of social hierarchies are blamed for their unsustainable consumption; their behavior is seen as a problem to be fixed while their values and cultures must become “aware” and rectified.
10	16.	According to the ethnographic research done by the author, he has asserted that fast fashion is not really about speed, but greed, selling more, and making more money. Time is just one factor of production, along with labour, capital, and natural resources that are used to a comprehensive extent in the pursuit of maximum profits.
11	17.	In a review of definitions pertaining to terminologies connected to fast fashion conducted by the author, it was found that customers wanted to feel good & happy in their clothes, and that includes feeling great about how the clothes were made with a concern of social responsibility.
12	18.	In a literature review done by the author, it was reported that fast fashion companies thrive on fast cycles: rapid prototyping, small batches combined with a wide variety, more efficient transportation and delivery, and merchandise that is presented “floor ready” on hangers with price tags already attached.
13	19.	As per the author, it has been discussed that the fast fashion model has undermined the value of intellectual property belonging to the designers, dramatically expanding the industry’s carbon footprint, and promoting a culture of wastage.



14	20.	The authors concluded that the fast fashion business model became the norm for big-name fashion brands. The increased demand for inexpensive clothing has resulted in environmental and social degradation along each step of the supply chain. The environmental and human health consequences of fast fashion have primarily needed to be included in the scientific literature, research, and discussions surrounding environmental justice.
15	21.	As described by the author in his literature review, fast fashion leaves a carbon footprint and other negative environmental impacts, with each step of the clothing life cycle generating potential environmental and occupational hazards.
16	22.	According to a literature review by Muthu (2018), disposable fast fashion can motivate academic and business-oriented research to explore effective managerial implications and practices around sustainable fashion supply chain management.
17	23.	According to the literature review by Nayak, R (2020), the availability of cheap fashion with fast fashion brands has led to increased consumer purchasing with higher rates of clothing disposal.
18	20.	From the Literature review of the book by Bick, R. (2018), Increased consumption patterns of fast fashion create tons of textile waste in landfills and unregulated settings, particularly in low and middle-income countries (LMICs) and much of this waste ends up in second-hand clothing markets.
19	24.	In the Literature review done by Niinimäki, K, 2020, they have observed that fast fashion has increased the material throughput in the system where fashion brands are now producing almost twice the amount of clothing today compared with before the year 2000.
20	25.	According to the review done by Nayak, R (2019), Sustainable fashion and textile production by fast fashion brands involves the use of eco-friendly and biodegradable materials; environmentally friendly manufacturing processes; green supply chain, distribution, and retailing; and ethical consumers.

4. CONCLUSION:

This research is responsible for analysing the impact of fast fashion on sustainability. Fast fashion has been largely criticized for its increasingly negative impact on sustainability. Similarly, knowledge regarding recycling and sustainability is lacking the side of consumers. As consumers' awareness increases, so do the attempt of brands to make efforts to introduce more sustainable fashion products. It has also been observed that brands mobilize themselves to adopt a range of practices to improve their image when it comes to sustainability. This Systematic literature review (SLR) is an attempt to observe the impact of fast fashion on sustainability. 20 research papers that reported on this subject were deemed eligible for analysis out of the 100 research papers that were initially reviewed. Specific papers were excluded if they did not follow the inclusion criteria. The findings of this Systematic literature review (SLR) showcased the following findings but were not limited to:

- Consumers are more likely to change their clothing consumption patterns if they were more aware of the social and environmental effects.
- Clothing retailers would have to operate differently in the market if the negative impact of clothes is made more well known.
- Fast fashion is responsible for leaving a massive carbon footprint and certain negative environmental impacts like polluting rivers and streams, large amounts of resources being extracted, and others.
- Fast fashion has been found to not be about speed, but about greed, selling more, and making more money (time is one of the pertinent factors).
- Fast fashion was reported to make clothing repair unnecessary, as the garments are thrown away before they get damaged.

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