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**Fast Fashion: A Testimony on Violation of**  
**Environmental and Human Rights**

**Neha Aggarwal<sup>1</sup> and Chinmay More<sup>2</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup> *B.A. Hons. Social Sciences and Humanities, Ambedkar University, Delhi, India*

<sup>2</sup> *Bsc. Hons. Physics, Ramnarain Ruia Autonomous College, Mumbai, India*

## **Abstract**

*The supply chain of fashion is diverse and complex, spanning four or more layers, including design, harvesting of raw materials, spinning, development of yarn, dyeing, weaving, cutting, stitching and rolling out the final garments. As a strong competitive force, fast fashion, which references apparel with short product life cycles, has arisen. At more regular intervals, fast fashion brands launch new models, concentrating less on robust construction, and more on low costs and up to the minute designs. A rise in consumption followed by increased waste has been one result of fast fashion. In the global media, reports from emerging economies such as China, Bangladesh and India about low wages, gender-based violence against women employees, and the relentless speed of workloads powered by deadlines set by fast-fashion retailers have proliferated. This paper will talk about the violation of the environment and the human rights of garment workers by fast fashion industries. It will take into account the increasing marketing and consumerism to reflect on SDG 12: Responsible production and consumption.*

**Keywords:** *fast fashion, garment workers, workload, consumerism*

## **1.0 Introduction**

Fast fashion is the massive production for mass-market retail of trendy, but ever-changing and affordable new apparel designs. Fast fashion companies are sprawling everywhere and two fast groups (Hengli Group and Shandong Weiqiao Pioneering Group) have found themselves a place in the top 100 manufacturing companies of the world (Wikipedia contributors, 2020). A rise in consumption and the resulting throwaway culture has resulted in increased textile waste in landfills and unregulated settings (Bick et al., 2018). It leaves a footprint of pollution, generating potential environmental and occupational dangers with each step of the clothing life cycle (Claudio, 2007). In response to this, sustainable or ethical fashion has emerged to rectify the environmental and social destruction brought in by techniques of production in fast fashion. The overconsumption of cheap clothes attracts great social (low wages, gender-based violence against women employees, and the relentless speed of workloads powered by deadlines) and environmental costs (water wastage, stressed agricultural lands).

In reaction to systemic labour violations and environmental scandals, activist groups such as the Clean Clothes Movement and Fashion Revolution have emerged.

In this paper, we will do a case study on Amancio Ortega Gaona's companies - Zara and Inditex (Industriade Diseno Textil) in Galicia, Spain, which pioneered fast fashion in the 1960s (O. Crofton & G. Dopico, 2007). In light of the same, we will then examine the plight of garment workers in developing countries like India and Bangladesh and the effects of consumerism on the environment and SDG 12. Through this case study, the authors postulate that negative externalities have generated a global environmental justice problem at every step of the fast-fashion supply chain. Although fast fashion provides buyers an opportunity to purchase more clothing for less, there is a disproportionate burden of environmental health hazards for those who work in or reside near textile manufacturing facilities along with a systematic oppression of the garment workers in these manufacturing facilities.

## **2.0 Risks and Violations**

There is that old saying, usually attributed to Yves Saint Laurent: "Fashion fades, style is eternal." (Schlossberg, 2019) According to experts, "fast fashion" is a term used to describe a new fashion business model developed in the 1980s. This includes the growth of new fashion collections each year, fast fulfilment of orders and often lower prices. (Fashion Repair: Apparel and Sustainability-Report Summary-Environmental Research Council, 2019). As cheap and widely available clothing, it has changed the way people buy and recycle clothing. Selling large quantities of clothing at low prices has quickly become the dominant business model, and the use of clothing has increased rapidly. While these changes are sometimes referred to as fashion "democratization", the latest styles are available to consumers of all walks of life, but the human and environmental health risks associated with cheap clothing are hidden throughout the life cycle of clothing. From moisture-intensive cotton cultivation to the release of untreated dyes to local water sources, to low wages for workers and poor working conditions; The environmental and social costs associated with textiles are high. (Bick et al., 2018)

## **2.1 Environmental Risk**

Fibre processing, the process of making natural and synthetic fibres, is the first step in the global textile supply chain. About 90% of clothing produced in the U.S. is made of cotton or polyester, which has a significant health effect during development. Polyester, a synthetic fibre that needs a lot of water and pesticides to develop, is made from oil and cotton. Fabric dyeing poses an additional risk as untreated paint wastewater is often discharged to local water systems and releases heavy metals and other toxic substances that can affect animal health. (Bick et al., 2018)

When natural fibres such as cotton, linen and silk, or semi-synthetic plant-based cellulose fibres such as rayon, Tencel and modal are landfilled, they serve as food waste, generating as they degrade the powerful greenhouse gas methane. However, even though they are made from natural materials, old garments will not be composted, unlike banana peels. Jason Kibby, CEO of the Sustainable Clothing Coalition, said that natural fabrics are bleached, dyed, printed, washed in a chemical bath, going through several unnatural processes in becoming a garment. These chemicals can be impregnated into fabrics and-mis-closed landfills-groundwater. Burning objects in incinerators can release these toxins into the air. At the same time, synthetic fibres such as polyester, nylon and acrylic have the same environmental disadvantages, and since they are essentially plastic-type petroleum, hundreds, if not thousands, are biodegradable. (Wicker, 2017) So how do you implement standardized regulation in an industry that is not going to decline anytime soon? (8.5 billion people are expected to need clothing by 2030)(Lauren,2019) How can you force regulation in one place such that to not release more toxins into another space? Instead of going downhill for cheaper labour and raw materials, let's move to the most important patterns of quality of life and environmental health.

### **2.1.1 Current regulatory environment**

In 2017, global standards for enterprise supply chain criteria for child labour, forced labour, employee salaries and collective agreements were adopted by the OECD (established in 1961). Although the guidelines are not legally binding, they have been adopted by the member countries of the OECD and it is expected that companies in the sector will behave in compliance with this text.

The Sustainable Clothing Alliance (ACA) was founded in 2009 to create a basis for the worldwide sustainable production of clothing. They also developed the HIGG Index with more than 200 members worldwide, which enables businesses to independently evaluate and quantify environmental and social sustainability in their supply chain. Again, these are voluntary, for different organisations. Although these organizations are a good starting point for raising awareness of the impact of fashion, they hinder global participation as they have no serious legal implications (Lauren, 2019).

The United Nations Alliance for Sustainable Fashion was formally formed at the United Nations Environment Summit in March 2019, with the private sector, governments and non-governmental organizations creating industry-led momentum to address negative social impacts, both economically and environmentally. As a force to achieve sustainable development goals. Agencies across the United Nations system are working to make fashion more sustainable, from the Food and Agriculture Organization to protect arable land, to the International Trade Center Ethical Fashion Initiative, to the United Nations environmental initiatives promoting sustainable manufacturing methods (Putting the Brakes on Fast Fashion, n.d.).

In 2019, the Swedish Fashion Council stopped Stockholm Fashion Week to focus on achieving sustainable development goals. Sweden has always been a leader in sustainable development and has made it the most sustainable country in the world. In 2017, they introduced a tax on chemical products in electronics, and at the end of 2019, they announced a chemical tax on clothing. This tax not only protects workers and consumers from potential health risks but also protects the environment. In France, President Emmanuel Macron gave a mission to Chairman and CEO of Kering François-Henri Pinault to ‘bring together the leading players in fashion and textile’ to reduce the industry's environmental impact. The agreement covers three main issues: climate, biodiversity and the sea. The 32 fashion and textile companies that have signed this agreement are contributing themselves to making the industry more resilient. The cumulative effect will be much greater with the help of these three goals: preventing global warming (no greenhouse gas emissions by 2050), restoring natural ecosystems, protecting wildlife, removing disposable plastics from the ocean, and reducing the negative impact of industry. The 32 companies include ADIDAS, Armani, H&M, Nordstrom, Selfridges, and Stella McCartney. (The Fashion Pacts: New Laws and Pacts to Change the Future of Fashion, 2020)

It is essential that fashionable products are produced in an environmentally friendly manner, following sustainability guidelines such as ISO 14000. From a fashion consumer's point of view, consumer awareness regarding social and environmental aspects is increasing. Consumer attitudes toward the environment have a direct impact on sustainable fashion use. They understand that if the supply chains are going to be more sustainable, more natural resources are used, thus retail prices can rise as carbon dioxide emissions will also decrease. Previous studies have shown that fashion consumers are interested in green fashion products and are willing to pay a higher price if they are satisfied with the quality of products. (Shen, 2014, p.6245)

## **2.2 Labour Issues**

As Karl Marx has said, “Workers of the world unite; you have nothing to lose but your chains.”

From the beginning, the apparel industry has always been a capital-intensive and low-labour industry (Taplin 2014; 248). Additionally, the industry is characterized by low barriers to access and standardized production for mass markets (Taplin 2014; 248). From a climate point of view, it is not surprising that apparel companies are moving more and more production to developing countries with many low-skilled, low-cost workers. Globalization has increased over the past 20 years with production transfers to developing countries. Developing countries attract apparel companies with cheap labour, wide tax incentives, and light laws and regulations (Klein 1999). The fashion industry has one of the largest chains for production and consumption. Today, it is estimated that about 1 in 6 people work in part of the global fashion industry, which has become the industry most dependent on work (Ross & Morgan, 2015). Fashion rose rapidly as the cost of clothing fell sharply as clothing companies moved production abroad. Disclosure of unfair and non-regulatory treatment of garment workers in the global fashion industry continues to appear in the mainstream media. When the story of non-paying brands leaving factories in Bangladesh during the crisis came out, many initiatives were launched to help raise awareness and help apparel workers in their impact. However, it is difficult to determine how these initiatives will make lasting change for garment workers who continue to work hand in hand despite decades of poverty conflict and relief efforts (Annie Radner Linden, 2016).

An extensive network of national laws, international standards, and best industry practices regulate labour conditions. At the international level, the International Labor Organization provides a forum to promote appropriate standards, policies and programs to protect workers' rights. In addition, G7 has developed due diligence standards for the textile industry to improve working conditions and strengthen workers in the global textile supply chain. However, many harsh conditions still exist. The collapse of the eight-story Rana Plaza building in Savar Upazila, Greater Dhaka, Bangladesh on April 24, 2013, summarizes the devastating impact of poor working conditions in the apparel industry. The factory manager ignored the warning the day before the collapse and ordered the workers to work or their pay would be docked, although a bank and shops on the lower floors of the building were closed in response to the concerns over the building's integrity. The outbreak killed 1134 and injured about 2,500 (Brewer, NA). In response to concerns about the working conditions and labour standards in the supply chain, we are paying more attention to supply chain transparency and the traceability of raw materials used to make apparel. A number of legal provisions must be disclosed, including section 1502 of the Dodd-Frank Act on Wall Street Reform and US Consumer Protection, the California Supply Chain Transparency Act of 2010, and the Modern British Slavery Act of 2015, all requires to disclose supply chain details. The so-called "soft code" type also drives or encourages companies to adhere to higher standards in their supply chain. (Towards a Sustainable Fashion Retail Supply Chain in Europe: Organisation and Performance, 2008) shows that not only can companies meet legal requirements, they can also act more ethically by pursuing a competitive advantage or by pursuing corporate social responsibility. However, the authors also admit that businesses are facing great ambiguity in defining the needs of different stakeholders. Additionally, many soft legal guidelines are often limited because they rely on voluntary compliance or lack effective enforcement mechanisms. However, through initiatives that promote sustainability and corporate social responsibility, many companies adopt policies and practices that respect social, environmental, environmental and economic issues locally and globally (Brewer, nd).

Ready-Made-Garment (RMG) is one of Bangladesh's most important export-oriented business sectors and has made significant progress since Rana Plaza's collapse in occupational safety compliance with three action plans, including initiatives related to: Structural evaluation of the factory building. RMG is very important. There are still about 1,000 factories to evaluate. Also, building evaluation is not the end in itself, so you need to make fragile industrial buildings sustainable by solving structural problems according to evaluation recommendations. (Compliance with industrial safety regulations of RMG industry in Bangladesh: structural evaluation of RMG factory. Building, 2015)

### **3.0 Case Study: Inditex Zara**

In comparison to sustainability, the case study of Inditex, specifically the Zara group, will be used to illustrate the business model of fast fashion models, using the world's second-largest fashion company as an example. Inditex's exponential growth and unique business model, including vertical integration coinage, proves to be a simple case study to refer to the issue of whether fast fashion companies will become profitable as they can be broadly applied to other fashion companies around the world. (Fast Fashion and Sustainability - The Case of Inditex-Zara, 2020). Inditex, founded by Amancio Ortega, is one of Spain's and the world's most popular businesses. Today, the company is home to the following brands: Zara, Pull & Bear, Bershka, Stradivarius, Massimo Dutti and Oysho (Marcuello et al.). By the end of 2001, Zara was the biggest and the most internationalised of all the chains. In 32 countries other than Spain, Zara had 2,982 stores, accounting for 55 per cent of Inditex's foreign market. Zara has shifted from a local discount store to the second-largest apparel business in less than fifty years, with approximately 2,700 stores located in sixty countries around the world. The business once privately owned and run by Amancio Ortega was now a public corporation accounting for annual sales of more than \$8 billion and profitable to me for 24 billion, as they can be widely applied to other apparel businesses around the world. (Fast Fashion and Sustainability - The Case of Inditex-Zara, 2020).

### **3.1 Inditex Zara: Speed & Flexibility**

Inditex's six retail chains are organised as independent business units under an overarching framework that also includes six fields of business support (raw materials, production facilities, distribution, real estate, expansion, and international) and nine divisions or areas of responsibility (Ghemawat et al.). In other words, each of the chains worked separately, and their own policy, product, design, procurement and production, distribution, image, employees, and financial results were the responsibility of the chains (Fast Fashion and Sustainability - The Case of Inditex-Zara, 2020). Corporate management of the Group developed the Group's strategic vision, organised the activities of the concepts and provided them with administrative and other resources. Together with a swift response to consumer demands and the democratisation of fashion, Inditex defines its business model as innovation and quality design (qtd. in Crofton et al.). Inditex moved away from the conventional model of seasonal lines and couture designers to introduce fast responses to the demands of their customers and at reasonable prices, concentrating instead on vertically integrating just-in-time production, distribution, and sales. Many leading fashion firms handle design and sales, mostly to low-wage subcontractors based in East Asia, but outsource production. Companies use subcontractor networks that can each purchase, dye, embroider, and stitch fabric in a separate country in the search for cheap labour. This model of the method of design-to-retail, however, can take up to eight months. Inditex has coined the vertical integration model in order to speed up the manufacturing cycle, where they manufacture a significant percentage of their goods in their own factories. Usually, to reiterate, Inditex performs the more capital-intensive and value-added-intensive stages of manufacturing, such as raw materials, design, cutting, dyeing, quality control, ironing, packaging, marking, distribution, and logistics, and outsources the more labour-intensive and less value-added-intensive stages of manufacturing, such as sewing (Fast Fashion and Sustainability - The Case of Inditex-Zara, 2020). Inditex has developed an elaborate network of suppliers, distributors, and factories in order to ensure that their produced goods arrive in stores as soon as possible. Pablo Isla, the new CEO, identifies Inditex's structure as a very flat step away from structured meetings and formal management committees. He defines employees as motivated individuals who make choices and prioritise teamwork on their own (McGinn).

In addition, the use of business technology has a major effect on the structure, as Inditex uses technology and algorithms that propose what clothes to stock, but the store manager will alter the order because they want the store manager to feel like the product's owner (McGinn). Inditex puts a heavy focus on its ability to respond to customer requirements quickly. In developing countries, this can be seen as slowing the decline in manufacturing jobs. For example, according to John Thorbeck from the Supply Chain: Zara has proven that speed and flexibility matter more than pure price (Crofton et al.) On the flip side, John Quelch, professor of marketing at Harvard Business School, states that in emerging markets, Nike, Levi's and others face reprisals for exploiting low-cost labour. Hence Zara is less open to criticism (Fast Fashion and Sustainability -

The Case of Inditex-Zara, 2020). The response of Inditex to this is that this approach to vertical integration and design-to-retail cycle reduction is simply a business decision. Inditex's international expansion is often described as an 'oil stain'. First, the branch opens a flagship store in a major city and after learning about and testing the local market, introduces more stores in the country (Ghemawat et al.). The company looked for new country markets that were similar to the Spanish market and were relatively easy to enter. According to former executive José María Castellano: for Zara, delivery to 67 stores is cheaper than delivery to one store. Another interpretation, from the point of view of the customer consciousness of Inditex or Zara, is that if they have one store in Paris, opposed to having 30 stores in Paris, it is not the same. And the third reason is that when they open a country, they don't have ads or local warehouse costs, but they do have headquarters costs (Ghemawat et al.). The revenue growth of Inditex has risen increasingly and through multiple measures. Sales rose to \$0.8 billion in 1990, \$1.2 billion in 1995, \$2.4 billion in 2000, and \$8.2 billion in 2005, from \$0.086 billion in 1985. Inditex workers jumped from 1,100 in 1985 to 5,018 in 1995, 24,004 in 2000 and 58,190 in 2005, respectively. Approximately half of the jobs that make up Inditex are based in Spain (Fast Fashion and Sustainability - The Case of Inditex-Zara, 2020). Other employees, including sewing cooperatives and workshops, compose an additional 11,000 jobs (Crofton et al.). Inditex's rapid growth raises many questions and concerns for the future and its business model (Fast Fashion and Sustainability - The Case of Inditex-Zara, 2020).

### **3.2 Zara's Business Model**

Zara's Inditex's biggest, and most foreign, brand. At the end of 2001, with 488,400 square metres of sales area (74 per cent of the total) and hiring 1,050 million of the company's capital (72 per cent of the total), Zara had over 507 stores worldwide, of which the retail network accounted for around 80 per cent (Ghemawat et al.). In a 2017 interview with Inditex CEO Pablo Isla, Isla defines the company's business model as a particular model that only they have that is focused on the ability to adapt flexibly within a fashion season. The business utilises what they call proximity sourcing, manufacturing most of their products in Spain, Portugal and Morocco, allowing them to produce at the very last minute. The brand pays a lot of attention to the design of every single product. This isn't just a problem of being fast. It is the philosophy of trying to understand what their customers want and then supplying them with a very integrated supply chain of manufacturing, distribution, and design to deliver it (Fast Fashion and Sustainability - The Case of Inditex-Zara, 2020).

Zara completed its integration into the Spanish market around 1990 and started to make investments in logistics and IT manufacturing. They designed a 130,000 square metre warehouse near the corporate headquarters outside La Coruña, supplemented by an advanced telecommunications infrastructure, in order to fulfil the company's objective of just-in-time production (Fast Fashion and Sustainability - The Case of Inditex-Zara, 2020). The whole system encouraged contact between the headquarters, supply, manufacturing, and sales locations of Inditex. The business structure of Zara was unique because the most avant-garde pieces were made, or newly in style pieces, internally because they appeared to be the riskiest in terms of sales. The developers kept track of client desires and put orders with the manufacturers (Ghemawat et al.). Vertical integration has helped to reduce the 'bottlenecks' that can be defined as the propensity to intensify changes in final demand as they are moved back up the supply chain (Fast Fashion and Sustainability - The Case of Inditex-Zara, 2020).

As a consequence of Zara's vertical integration, in the case of completely new designs or two weeks for changes to existing products, they were able to develop a new concept and have the finished product in shops within four to five weeks.

In contrast, manufacturing cycles that take up to six months for design and concept and up to three months for full production may be included in a typical business model. The very short cycle time of Zara allowed the non-stop development of new products, enabling the company to commit to the majority of its product line much later than competitors in the season. As a result, Zara committed to 35% of product design and raw material purchases, 40%-50% of external suppliers' purchases of finished products, and 85% of in-house production after the season began, compared to just 0% -20% for conventional retailers (Ghemawat et al.).

### **3.3 Sourcing the Raw Material**

The product offering of Zara can be described as wide, rapidly changing product lines, relatively high fashion material, and fair but not unreasonable physical quality: clothes to be worn 10 times (Ghemawat et al.). In the form of the fall/winter and spring/summer seasons, Zara produces two simple collections each year. The designers, over three hundred of them, actively look for details about the tastes and desires of consumers. They visit all the world's big fashion shows, including Paris, New York, and Milan, and study what individuals wear in their everyday lives and routines. These efforts help designers understand consumers better and, thus, predict patterns better. For Zara's designers, though, the primary source of knowledge comes from the stores themselves and their base of loyal customers who shop there. Twice a week, the stores send regular sales totals and comprehensive information to the headquarters on all the items bought during that time span, detailed by colour and size (Crofton et al.). This allows the designers, store managers, and customers to be linked, viewing customers as the company's accomplices according to José Toledo, an executive at Zara (Fast Fashion and Sustainability - The Case of Inditex-Zara, 2020).

With the assistance of their purchasing offices based in Barcelona and Hong Kong, Zara sources their fabric from suppliers. Additional purchasing assistance is also provided at the La Coruña headquarters from sourcing workers. Zara had previously imported their fabrics only from Europe, but the opening of three companies in Hong Kong allowed them to source and spot trends from Asia, greatly expanding the manufacturing process.

In reality, in order to streamline in-season changes to the product line and optimise versatility, about half of the fabric purchased by Zara was grey or unstained (Fast Fashion and Sustainability - The Case of Inditex-Zara, 2020). The vast majority of fabrics were treated and processed in 2006 through Comditel, Inditex's subsidiary, which collaborated with more than 200 suppliers of fabrics and other raw materials (Ghemawat et al.). For all Inditex chains, not just Zara, Comditel handled the dyeing, patterning, and finishing of grey fabric and supplied finished fabric to both external and in-house producers. This method meant that, on average, it took the company just one week to finish the fabric. The intensity and appeal of Zara to customers is focused on the constant novelty of its clothing, which in turn creates a sense of scarcity and an exclusive environment around the supply of the brand. With new designs coming in each twice-weekly shipment, the company's freshness was rooted in rapid product turnover (Ghemawat et al.). According to the same source, nearly three-quarters of the items on sale were altered every three to four weeks, referring to the average time between visits, according to estimates of the average number of Zara shoppers visiting the chain 17 times a year, compared with an average of three to four times a year for rival chains and customers (Ghemawat et al.). This amount of rapid turnover created a sense of buy now out of fear that the product would not be there the next time a customer visited a store.

In addition, the sense of “buy now or regret later” was reinforced by small, frequent shipments and a company-mandated limit of how long items could be displayed and sold in the stores. Moreover, the company requested the in-store displays to appear barely stocked, as well as limiting the amount of each product sent in the shipments, decreasing the availability of stocked products. In a piece written by Otto Pohl, he interviews Maria Naranjo, a Spanish teenager and Zara aficionado, who spends her time tracking Zara’s delivery schedule. As an avid customer, Maria knows the truck arrives twice a week and she states, shopping in Zara has always been special for her as Zara always had something new to offer as she remembers and strongly states this point as she has been shopping along with her mom for a quite a long time. This type of customer devotion is what drives Zara’s commitment to fast fashion.

### **3.4 Zara's Sustainability Measures**

It is possible to describe sustainability in several ways. The term used in this paper is specified by Stephanie Brodish, taken from the description of the Brundtland Commission. Sustainable growth, according to this source, is development that meets the needs of current generations without undermining future generations' ability to meet their own needs (Fast Fashion and Sustainability - The Case of Inditex-Zara, 2020). Three pillars that are one of the most common approaches to sustainability are recognition and evaluation of people, the environment and profit. In this part of the paper, we will focus on a direct relationship between Zara's sustainability measures and the company's profits. Sustainability measures undertaken by any company in their business models not only help in maintaining a user-friendly face but also helps in increasing profits. This is due to increased investment of the revenue in the research and development sector in order to create a sustainable product reducing production costs and wastage. As a result, more money can be saved which again can be invested in the expansion manoeuvres as well as aid in creating more effective marketing strategies for the company. In addition, as per the observation of recent consumer trends, customers are willing to pay the premium price for sustainable goods to do their bit for a better environment. Consequently, sustainability has become a feature of the fast fashion industry, such industries have never had features other than unique designs and quality. Hence, big fast fashion brands and companies are pushing towards sustainability as a value addition.

Some noteworthy "ambitiously" sustainable initiatives are listed below:

#### **3.4.1 Clean Clothes Campaign**

In May 2001, Inditex began selling shares on the Spanish stock exchange. This was a significant accomplishment that called for celebration for the company, as being a public company came with a new set of rules and regulations. One of the biggest surprises for Inditex was the acquisition of shares by CCC Network. In the 1990s, the Clean Clothes Campaign (CCC) was set up as a response to the harassment of textile workers. Only later did Inditex take steps after the CCC's purchase of shares towards integrating a corporate social responsibility policy.

The so-called triple-bottom-line of economical, social, and environmental performance was embraced by Inditex management (Fast Fashion and Sustainability - The Case of Inditex-Zara, 2020).

After their stock purchase, Setem, the Spanish chapter of the Clean Clothes Campaign, filed a discrimination complaint against the group. Setem, an NGO, serves as a poster child to illustrate how NGOs and corporations connect and how NGOs can have the power to influence multi-million-dollar businesses. In other words, the social effect of their actions must be measured and accountable to both companies and NGOs (Marcuello).

### **3.4.2 Social Accountability**

As the issue of sustainability continues to gain momentum, there is an increasing need for social-accountability instruments to assess the effect on the social system of businesses, such as Inditex. Pablo Isla, CEO, when discussing the question of how sustainability affects his leadership at Inditex in 2009, replied that it considers sustainability in any decision the organisation takes. The nature of their goods, what they are made from, working conditions for the people who produce them, and the opportunity to recycle them are part of sustainability (Fast Fashion and Sustainability - The Case of Inditex-Zara, 2020). This message of Isla's commitment to sustainability was reiterated during his speech given in July 2019, at the Annual General Meeting.

### **3.4.3 Going Natural**

For the coming years, during this case, Isla identified Inditex's ambitious global sustainability priorities. 100 per cent of the company's cotton, linen, and polyester will be either more natural, sustainable, or recycled by 2025, according to the plan. Currently, these three fabrics constitute 90% of all raw materials used by Inditex's brands. Inditex plans to completely eradicate the use of plastic bags by 2020, which they say, Zara, Zara Home, Massimo Dutti and Uterque have already accomplished. In addition, in 2018, just 18 per cent of bags used by all Inditex brands were made from plastic, according to the speech. In addition, in general, by 2023, the organisation plans to remove all single-use plastic (Fast Fashion and Sustainability - The Case of Inditex-Zara, 2020).

At present, 88 per cent of waste accumulated as a result of single-use plastics is recycled or reused by the company.

#### **3.4.4 Green to Pack Recycling Programme**

Isla indicated that collection and recycling programmes will continue to be implemented for all the products used in the delivery of packages and packaging of clothing, including cardboard boxes, recycled plastic, alarms, and hangers for reuse within the supply chain or to be submitted to the Green to Pack recycling programme. During his Annual General Meeting Speech, Isla announced, continuing with his sustainability objectives, that by 2020, over 25 per cent of all clothing will make up the amount of clothing with the Enter Life environmental excellence label.

#### **3.4.5 Clothing Collection Scheme**

He also found that the volume of clothing with the Enter Life mark grew by 85 per cent in 2018, amounting to about 136 million garments. Furthermore, in 2020, Isla promised that all Inditex stores will have bins installed for the sale of used clothing to be donated for charitable purposes or recycled to the 'Clothing Collection' scheme (Fast Fashion and Sustainability - The Case of Inditex-Zara, 2020). The Clothing Collection service partners in collaboration with various non-profit organisations and has grown its range to twenty-four markets.

#### **3.4.6 Eco-Efficient Store Network**

According to Inditex's website, 1,382 containers are currently located in Inditex's network of stores and are complemented by 2,000 street containers placed across Spain in collaboration with Caritas, an at-home pick-up service that operates nationwide in Spain. Moreover, over 34,000 tonnes of clothes, footwear and accessories have been collected via the containers located in Inditex's warehouses, offices, and logistics networks (Fast Fashion and Sustainability - The Case of Inditex-Zara, 2020). The most ambitious project carried out by Isla is the completion of the entire eco-efficient store network, to be completed by 2020. In other words, whether in shops, fulfilment centres or corporate offices, 80 per cent of the energy used by Inditex will be renewable.

He said that in 2019, Zara will reach this target and the rest of the company's brands will follow suit ("Pablo Isla sets out the global sustainability commitments of Inditex").

### **3.5 Expansion & Sustainability**

As per Crofton et al., the accomplishment of Inditex is generally noteworthy because of the explanation that, regardless of the development of producers from rising economies, for example, China and the liberalisation of foreign trade in Spain, this advancement still proceeds. Indeed, in 2018, the business impression of Inditex expanded by 5 per cent followed by the organization's obligation to opening bigger stores outfitted with improved innovation, considering on the web combination and eco-proficient tasks. Be that as it may, exactly how might an organization guarantee to advance maintainability, when over the most recent six years alone they have opened 3,364 new stores, finished redesigns in 2,374 stores, extended 1,019 customer facing facades, and ingested more than 1,401 more seasoned and more modest estimated spaces? ("Pablo Isla sets out Inditex's worldwide manageability responsibilities") Pablo Isla's present reaction to Inditex's quick extension is that because of this activity, Zara currently offers its clients an incorporated and restrictive involvement with which they can exchange the store for an online stage, and the other way around, to all the more likely, address their issues anytime simultaneously (Fast Fashion and Sustainability - The Case of Inditex-Zara, 2020). Corresponding to supportability and benefit utilized for good, this worldwide development doesn't work. Moreover, as indicated by Ghemawat et al., who published their article in 2006, Spaniards were outstanding in purchasing clothing just seven times each year, contrasted to a European normal of nine times each year, and higher-than-normal levels for the Italians and French, among others (Ghemawat et al.). However, as of now, Inditex's most grounded presence is in Spain, representing 16.2 per cent of Zara's net deals, demonstrating the expansion of Spanish customers, and possibly the diminishing of cognizant customers (Fast Fashion and Sustainability - The Case of Inditex-Zara, 2020). Inside the most recent six years, Inditex has put more than 2 billion dollars in innovation advancement, trying to coordinate stores and online to smooth out the shopping cycle and make it a more adaptable encounter for the purchaser.

As indicated by the report, clients will have the option to join advances while being in an actual store, for instance, taking a stab at a piece of clothing they requested on the web or getting an online request in-store as opposed to having it dispatched to their home ("Annual Report 2018"). The venture that Inditex has made in innovation could be one of the main factors in clarifying Zara's net deals of 18,021 million euros. Sustainability encourages profit since it perceives that without profit, an organization couldn't remain in business for long. However, revenue and profit ought to be utilized to upgrade the organization by decreasing the negative effect they make on the climate and individuals, not to additionally grow the organization and its stores.

### **3.6 Zara & Environment**

Interestingly, in the list of chapters of Inditex's 2018 Annual Report they list under the segment "Our Priorities" sub-classifications, for example, our clients, our people, integrated supply chain management, excellence of our products, circularity and effective utilization of assets however don't expressly list the Environment. Likewise, in similar chapter by chapter guide, under the heading "Economical Strategy" the accompanying segments are recorded: materiality examination, partner relations, Inditex's commitment to practical turn of events, promotion and regard for basic human rights; yet, indeed, there is no notice of the Environment-one of the three principal pillars of sustainability ("Annual Report 2018"). In the 2009 information investigation from Brodish et al., Inditex scored a 0.57 out of 1 in the environmental segment, in contrast with Mango's, another Spanish fast-fashion brand, score of 0.61. While the creators believe this score to be solid, Inditex's score is still lower than their rival's score, showing that there is more the organization can, and apparently ought to do in the domain of sustainability and the environmental pillar. The 2018 Annual Report, under the subheading 'circularity and efficient use of resources' states that at Inditex, they are focused on limiting the effect of their activities on the environment. They fuse the most imaginative innovations to lessen their utilization and outflow and they choose utilizing renewable energies (Fast Fashion and Sustainability - The Case of Inditex-Zara, 2020). In any case, very little is recorded compared with the impact the organization has on the environment.

As indicated by Popescu, in 2014 Inditex drafted their fourth sequential materiality framework where they focused on the most important issues for the organization. These issues include green plan, waste management, energy utilization, and reusing frameworks and the management of the product end life, assisting the organization with assessing their monetary, social, and natural effects. In this year, in excess of 60% of the Inditex providers respected the creation standard, guaranteeing a sustainable environment for all wet processes for the Green to Wear product line (Fast Fashion and Sustainability - The Case of Inditex-Zara, 2020).

Additionally, their 2020 target was 0 release of risky substances (Popescu). However, in the 2018 Annual Report, it expresses that the survey, extension and steady finetuning of their product health and safety standards has encouraged advancement towards the objective of "Zero Discharge of Hazardous Chemical". This shows that the organization's objective of zero synthetic release, set in 2014, was not met four years later. Besides, while Isla in his discourse to the General Assembly in July 2019, referenced the increment in reusing programs, there was no notice of Inditex's alleged obligation to take out perilous substances. Popescu specifies that Inditex works in participation with the University of A Coruña to examine 280 water tests to distinguish the five most significant classes of released synthetic compounds and their source of origin for wastewater management suppliers (Fast Fashion and Sustainability - The Case of Inditex-Zara, 2020). This cooperation among Inditex and the university improves the nature of Inditex's spillover water and improves the providers' wastewater filtration offices. Because of Inditex being a water-exceptional organization, the impact they have on the climate is squeezing. While Inditex keeps on releasing goals and taking steps towards progress, it isn't sure that change is really being made.

### **3.6 Zara & Labour**

Inditex is an organization that was started on and keeps on being established in the misuse of its labourers. As indicated by Juan Fernandez, the head of the local textile union in Galicia which addresses a portion of the organization's labourers, Inditex just pays per piece of clothing sewn. Not only that, a significant number of the production factories, or for the absence of a superior word, sweatshops, workers procured around \$500 every month in 2001, which was about half the industrial wage (Pohl).

In 2011, Zara was blamed for tolerating slave-labour working conditions in Brazil. In the workshop, one worker disclosed to the correspondent that a pair of Zara-jeans which in Brazil are sold for generally R\$ 200 (\$126)- has a working expense of R\$ 1,80 (\$1.14) (Fast Fashion and Sustainability - The Case of Inditex-Zara, 2020). Such a whole is separated similarly between all the individuals associated with the creation framework, which on account of the pair of jeans takes around seven people" (Antunes). In a similar source, the labourers normal month to month pay was recorded as roughly 569 dollars, for a working shift of no under twelve hours. Returning to the definition of sustainability, explicitly the social and monetary mainstays of supportability as indicated by Brodish et al., human rights, set up organization guidelines, and a code of morals are generally parts of an organization that add to its degree of sustainability. As expressed in Inditex's 2018 Annual report, on December 12, 2016, the Board of Directors affirmed Inditex Group's Policy on Human Rights which underlines the organization's obligation to human rights. In particular, concerning Inditex's plan of action and work common liberties, the report records needs in dismissing constrained labour, dismissing child labour, promoting diversity, regarding opportunity of affiliation and collective bargaining, ensuring labourer's wellbeing and security, and giving just, reasonable and good working conditions (Annual Report 2018). The circumstance of Inditex's labourers is an interesting one. There is no rejecting that Inditex continually misuses their labourers, and has since the start; However, even Fernandez accepts the organization to be generally valuable adding that Inditex is probably the biggest manager in the region and it is essential to have them (Fast Fashion and Sustainability - The Case of Inditex-Zara, 2020). However, Fernandez's remark is especially worried since fast fashion and clothing organizations, when all is said in done, utilize a huge number of labourers, a high rate being young women There should be an urgent push for creating and utilizing the force of neighbourhood makers, networks, and conditions, as well as to turn around the negative effects of this development. All in all, while Inditex may guarantee they care profoundly for their labourers, and the actual labourers may recognize they need the work, this isn't sufficient. A definitive objective is to make economical incentive inside and past organization limits (Garcia-Torres et al.), which isn't at present the situation for Inditex. Juan Fernandez further adds that Inditex couldn't care less about the conditions inside the industrial facilities, which regularly adversely affect labourers.

This is affirmed in the Brazil source, where the columnist records the revelation of a fire extinguisher with an expiration date of 1998 (Antunes). However, as indicated by the actual organization, they constantly demand that they regularly assess the manufacturing plants. Raul Estradera, a delegate for Inditex expressed that Inditex has a close relationship with its providers and ensures that, regarding business, social security, health care coverage and working conditions, they follow the legal minimum. In the examination done by Garcia-Torres et al. (2017) on Inditex's yearly report, they found: Of the 198 activities under examination, just 1% managed Responsible Consumption and End of Life, 5.5% tended to Raw Materials Sustainability. The investigation likewise indicated that the most noteworthy extent of activities (35%) identified with human rights (Compensations and Benefits, Social Equality, Bargaining Power, etc). The emphasis on actions related to human rights in Inditex's annual support is likely because of the earnestness of these points, contemplating the claims the organization has looked before, yet additionally because of social and media pressure (Garcia-Torres et al.). The worry here spins around these themes being glimpses of something larger issues identified with sustainability. Tending to these subjects won't really set economical practices in action.

#### **4.0 Zara & Fast Fashion: Analysis**

It is difficult to imagine life in a world without fabrics. Everyone is almost constantly in contact with it and everywhere. This is especially true for clothing, which provides comfort and protection and is an important expression of personality for many. The textile industry is also an important sector of the global economy and employs hundreds of millions of people worldwide. Transforming the industry into a new textile economy requires system-level change through unmatched dedication, collaboration and innovation. The current system of producing, distributing and using clothing works almost entirely linearly. Many non-renewable resources are mined to produce clothing, often used only for a short period of time, after which most of the material is lost by landfill or incineration. It is estimated that more than half of the fast fashion produced is recycled within a year. The big impact of the industry goes beyond the use of raw materials. Greenhouse gas emissions from textiles in 2015 amounted to 1.2 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide, 21 years more than all international cruises and shipping. This industry also has a direct regional impact. (2012)

The use of hazardous substances in textile production has a negative impact on farmers, factory workers and the environment. Clothing workers are paid. It is a new business model in which the dynamics of force between brands and manufacturers are the same and the limits of openness are met. When manufacturers and supply chain participants fail to come up with a decent scheme to compensate for losses caused by the wrong decisions of retailers and brands. Existing sustainability activities or partial aspects of the circular economy must be supported by a global approach tailored to the scale of the opportunity. This approach will bring key industry players and other stakeholders together to achieve the goals of the new textile economy, establish ambitious joint commitments, execute value chain demonstration projects, and organize and strengthen complementary initiatives. To maximize your chances of success, you need to build a coordination mechanism that ensures consistency and the required speed of delivery.

#### **4.1 Potential Sustainable Measures: For Designers**

What designers should consider during the design process. These considerations apply to all stages of the garment life cycle.

Design considerations	Solutions
<b>Waste reduction (pre-and post-consumer)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Durable, versatile clothing at an affordable cost. Designed for more than one season.</li> <li>• Design for repair, maintenance, recycling or return consumer service program</li> <li>• Waste design/template to improve efficiency It leads to cost savings (increase in income per meter). We work with factories to optimize materials. (2012)</li> </ul>

<p><b>Reduce energy and water consumption:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of organic matter to Redesign to maximize production use</li> <li>• Technology coating to reduce consumer laundry. Consider the strength of environmental regulation and infrastructure where suppliers and factories are located and opportunities to work with them to meet directives (2012).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Reduced chemical intake and exposure:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Selection of appropriate materials that utilise fewer chemicals from raw materials phase to apparel production or release substances of concern during incineration/in landfills</li> <li>• Adopt policies for Restricted Substance List (RSL) that considers health impacts to workers and consumers while working with suppliers/factories to support compliance</li> <li>• Use machine technology instead of Chemical, e.g., non-chemical surface patterns (2012)</li> </ul>
<p><b>To Increase ethical production:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrate traditional, regional and global crafts and technologies that protect workers' rights</li> <li>• Collaborate with other organizations that promote Environmental protection and workers' rights</li> <li>• Designing and implementing supplier policies or programs to Increase transparency Supply chain responsibility. (2012)</li> </ul>

## **4.2 Potential Sustainable Measures: For Common People**

### **4.2.1 Upcycle**

The practice of taking old, worn out or damaged fabrics and converting them into brand new items is upcycled clothing. Upcycled clothing, also known as repurposed clothing, reused clothing and recycled clothing, is becoming more and more common in the contemporary fashion industry. While upcycled clothing brands use whole parts of existing clothing to make something new, with recycling, fabrics must be broken down before they can be reused, the main distinction between upcycled clothing and recycled clothing. The wearing of upcycled parts provides many environmental benefits. Upcycled apparel uses considerably less raw materials, reducing the adverse consequences of the manufacture of fashion. Upcycled clothes exist in stark contrast to the likes of one-season items from quick fashion brands, with less water consumption, less additives and carbon emissions and avoiding contributing to landfill.

### **4.2.2 Donate**

Help those in need while saving the environment. There are a lot of NGOs where one can donate their clothes which can then be used by those in need.

### **4.2.3 Thrift Fashion**

In simplest terms, thrifting involves going shopping at a thrift store, garage sale, or flea market, where at bargain rates you can find gently used items. A previous owner loved thrifted objects, but they are generally in good condition with enough life left to be useful to a new owner. Investing in sustainable fashion is much cheaper than shopping from fast fashion brands. They are also more fashionable and of better quality. This may eliminate the possibility of shopping from the usual stores you would go to at the mall, but some extra effort goes a long way when the tremendous rewards make up for it.

Sustainability can be defined across three main pillars: people, planet, and profit. Sustainability and how it deals with firms and businesses are different myths. According to Brodish et al., one myth is that capitalism is responsible for the drive for sustainability, as the principles of sustainability imply that companies should not make profits or make too much profit. The reality is that sustainability promotes the reverse.

While sustainability aims to keep firms responsible for their social and environmental effects, social and environmental efforts are not substitutes for customary revenue and profit measures but instead improve firm evaluation by reducing a company's negative impact. Moreover, the European Union notes that in order to fully meet their corporate social responsibility, enterprises should have in effect a mechanism to incorporate social, environmental, ethical, human rights, and consumer concerns into their business operations and core strategy (Fast Fashion and Sustainability - The Case of Inditex-Zara, 2020).

## **5.0 Conclusion**

In terms of sustainability and social responsibility, the global fashion industry faces a range of challenges. The fast-fashion model creates a substantial carbon footprint in particular and poses a variety of social and environmental issues. As the legislation currently offers only minimal protection of rights in the fashion industry and is frequently unsuccessful in changing corporate conduct, corporate social responsibility and sustainability programmes can contribute to addressing inequality in the fashion industry as well as improving standards and behaviour. In order to reorient the fashion industry and customers away from the fast fashion model towards more sustainable, it is necessary to have increased support for companies adopting more sustainable practises like manufacturing, production, distribution, marketing, and consumption practices. In order to develop a set of criteria as a measuring method, existing sustainability targets have been incorporated into organisations. Although these norms can serve as agents of change, the promises corporations make are often hollow. Specifically, 'sustainability reporting as' greenwashing 'has been broadly attacked. Overall, the disparity between reporting on sustainability and actual practices of sustainability is troubling. In the case of Inditex, instead of concentrating on reporting, there needs to be a major shift towards movement in order to promote their image. While a fast fashion business can become more sustainable, it is not feasible for them to become one hundred per cent sustainable at present. Yet the Inditex-Zara case study shows that a company whose business model seems to be entirely at odds with a sustainable business model can take steps in the right direction for all of us towards a more sustainable social and environmental future.

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