

Module 1: Sweatshop Analysis

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Global outsourcing and the concept of sweatshops are prominent facets of the fashion industry that hold great pros and cons. To take a solid position in regards to outsourcing and sweatshops, it is required to know the history of both and how they affect not just the fashion industry but the world as a whole. Although there is no right or wrong answer, ethics and morality pose as determining factors as to whether or not both are attributing to the progression of the fashion industry. After analyzing the readings, sweatshops hold heavier cons while global outsourcing holds great promise for the industry if utilized properly.

Concepts such as fair trade promote many pros for global outsourcing and allow the parties engaged to thrive capital-wise. United States business woman Edna Byler exercised this concept in 1946 which later promoted life-changing opportunities for many individuals. She paid Puerto-Rican needle crafters fair wages in exchange for their product to export to industrial powerhouse countries. “ Today, Ten Thousand Villages maintains long-term relationships with artisans in 38 countries that provide stable opportunities for income (Jimenez & Pulos, 2016, p.4)”. Implementing this same practice in the fashion industry, not only will both parties be satisfied with the fair trade but opportunities are being created as resources and capital growth. Global outsourcing is unique because the practices associated with it can be applied to any form of the product. From grains to textiles, global outsourcing in conjunction with fair trade guarantees the growth of all parties involved.

Global outsourcing also gives underdeveloped countries the opportunity to safely do business with other countries that possess more capital and resources than them. This is significant to account because there may be circumstances where the underdeveloped country can be taken advantage of as the developed country has up-to-date technology and advancements. Cases of this were most common in the ages of imperialism. An example would be how Britain perceived

India in the likes of trade. Britain would source India for their natural resources such as coal and in return give them little to no capital. Drawing on nearly two centuries of detailed data on tax and trade, Patnaik calculated that Britain drained a total of nearly \$45 trillion from India during the period 1765 to 1938 (Hickel, 2018)”. However, organizations such as IFAT and FINE have placed regulations and conditions that neutralize anything of the sort. In 1988, a handful of European fair trade organizations came together to practice these conditions in addition to setting the standard of fair trade.

A trading partnership, based on dialogue, transparency, and respect, that seeks greater equity in international trade. It contributes to sustainable development by offering better trading conditions to and securing the rights of, disadvantaged producers and workers—especially in the South (Jiminez & Pulos, 2016, p.8)”.

It is important to acknowledge fair trade is merely a concept and does not represent the entirety of global outsourcing.

The cons of global outsourcing mainly revolve around the lack of control and supervision. To further elaborate, it is not possible for both parties to hover over one another to make sure the quality of the said product is up to par. Quality control is a recurring concern the involved parties have when outsourcing. As businesses have deadlines and targets to meet each quarter, there is no room for error in regards to quality control and inconsistencies at that.

“Despite all the benefits of outsourcing, it is only a good thing if you’re receiving the quality you expect. Anything less than this will be a disappointment (Patel, 2017)”. Being left with an end product that does not meet standards can delay many factors of the fashion industry. In the

retailer's perspective, if the product fails to sustain or excel in quality the consumer will notice and shop somewhere else. In regards to the business as a whole, major recalls may have to be put in place in order to prevent the defective product from reaching the hands of the consumer. This situation can go as far as involving public relations explaining to the consumer as to why the products fail to meet standards or are not available to purchase at the designated date. In addition to this, this can all be traced back to sweatshop conditions which are usually horrid.

Sweatshops possess a negative connotation due to the hazardous and dehumanizing conditions employees have to work through. Understanding the history of sweatshops and their intended purpose is key when identifying not only the pros and cons but the ethics associated with it. The history of sweatshops dates back to the origin of manufacturing factories, also known as the industrial revolution. Manufacturers found it quite difficult to establish a final product with machines alone. Therefore, employees were put in place to oversee the production of these products and alter them to assure quality control amongst other things were not an issue. "The manual dexterity of a human being has always been needed in addition to a simple sewing machine. Consequently, the manufacturing of clothing has remained labor intensive relative to other industries (Jimenez & Pulos, 2016, p.6)". Due to the fashion industry being one of the most demand driven sectors of the business world, companies have to find ways to cut costs and produce the expected quantity of pieces in due time. This is where sweatshops come into play, as wages are below minimum wage and breaks are hardly sufficient for the employees working there. This particular issue in the fashion world has come to light and advances have been made on its behalf.

Employees of sweatshops have come together to unionize and exploit the practices these factories conduct. Because these employers have realized breaking the law will not be costly as increasing wages, this route is usually taken. These types of things are brought forth to the public and usually catches legislative eyes (Kelly, 2008)". This prompts manufactures to take up their responsibility if anything were to go wrong in the factory. In retrospect, sweatshops have housed a majority of terrible accidents and events. Despite some accidents being out of one's control, there are some that could have been easily avoided if the proper procedures were followed and enforced. Countries like Taiwan have seen drastic improvement when it comes to their sweatshops as incomes have increased 10% in just one generation (Zitzmann, 2017)". This is an astonishing pro because people who have little to no skill can still partake in this industry and gradually generate income.

Certain aspects of global sourcing and sweatshops may overshadow their agendas. It is significant to look at the bigger picture and acknowledge what efforts are being made to either neutralize and improve certain things. Global sourcing has provided fruitful results for many businesses and corporations and can see immense growth in the future. As opposed to sweatshops, there is still work to be done as demand for certain clothing are higher than ever, tempting business to break labor laws all in the name of fashion. There is no doubt that there will be change in the industry. The only thing that hinders this progression are the people who choose to turn a blind eye in hopes that consequences will not give major pushback.

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