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Module 2

Contemporary Issues in the Fashion Industry

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In the fashion industry the over usage of fabrics that ultimately kills the earth and the over abundance of consumerism drives people to buy new things often rather than buy things vintage. The textile manufacturing business is one of the largest businesses out there, it is a business that prioritizes the needs of consumers. When talking about fashion, people do not realize that there is a major waste problem. There are textile processes that do cause harm to the environment and it is up to us, the consumers and business to say something about it so we can make a change. We need sustainable alternatives because greenhouse gases, which are the gases that stick in our ozone that trap heat in the atmosphere and warm the planet. It is not sustainable for the earth and the more fabrics we need to make clothes which create more sweatshops. I think we will end up running out of raw materials at some point because the earth is dying and there is only a matter of time.

The processes that are most harmful to the environment are mainly dyeing, which ends up also affects the water usage and the chemical that goes into the water, which causes water pollution, and for humans once water is contaminated this causes a bunch of other issues like a domino effect. The synthetic dyes that are now being used can be composed of things like azo, anthraquinone, methine, nitro, and carbonyl along with plenty of other harmful chemicals. There has been research that has been conducted that has stated that there are sometimes over thousands of different types of dyes being used and these dyes are being produced all over the world. Back then, people who would make clothing would naturally dye their clothes with natural extracts from fruits, vegetables, spices like turmeric, sometimes even flowers or insects. As many know, depending on the season, having color in clothing is the main thing people care about in any piece. Using these natural types of dyes worked back then, but it was known that the color would fade easily and it was never as vibrant. With these synthetic dyes, you get more range of color, brighter clothing and overall a bigger variety. One article that talks about the importance of knowing what happens within this industry is *Textile Dyes: History, Toxicity & Pollution* states that “the dyes are soaked into the fabric and change it chemically, resulting in color that stays permanently through repeated use. Today, more than 10,000 substances are classified as textile dyes, and different kinds of dyes work better on specific kinds of fabric. Most of our clothing and home furnishings are colored with synthetic, or man-made, dyes.” This is significant because these dyes are used in almost everything we own and the dyeing process involves a lot of water and sometimes since that is the case there are not good ways of cleaning

this water which is horrible for our environment and creates wastewater. These wastewaters that are already toxic because they were used will be dumped into the rivers from these factories without being 100% treated. Farmers that are growing their own crops like cotton are using water and spraying their plants with harmful chemicals and when textile dyeing, printing, or finishing processes are being done these chemicals that have been sprayed are in them which can be harmful to everyone's health.

One sustainable fashion company that I personally wear is SKIMS. When this brand was originally announced, the company first was named Kimono, which offended some of the potential customers due to the name sounding too much like a Japanese type of clothing that is worn by Japanese women. The global implications of SKIMS products are very significant and help promote sticking to being sustainable and not wasting products. This is because when the brand had already imprinted the name on the garment and it was suggested that it could be an issue the brand had decided that instead of wasting all of the products; they had to find a way to re-print the name on the items. Being a brand that is not wasteful shows the clients how this brand thinks about the environment and wants to implement more sustainable ideas in today's society when selling clothing. This brand uses reusable bags that zip that are biodegradable, where you can receive your item and will have an option where you choose green when it comes to shipping the items. Skim's main goal is to create a better community of fashion while going green. This brand specifically focuses on being the most popular solution wear brand to help enhance a woman's body, as well as to be known as not only a solution brand and also a fashion wear brand where they can also sell lounge wear and shoes. It has all colors of the shapewear that will match every skin tone, and multiple sizes where a woman of any size can use shapewear. It also makes a woman feel confident and solves certain issues that women would see when wearing fitted clothing.

Another fashion brand that has stuck out to me that I typically wear often would be Levi's. This apparel company has been practicing sustainably produced garments and textiles. The brand has made a brand new collection that involves using 96% of less water. Called 'Water<Less,' they have been working to make this brand 100% sustainable and rely on people to recycle old jeans. In the article, *Thegoodtrade* discussing all the the sustainable fashion brands it mentions that Levi's the brand most known for their denim works on their "...sustainable practices & materials, gives back, has inclusive sizing, and secondhand shops. The brand touts

eco-friendly and sustainable practices like recyclable denim, ethically sourced cotton, and innovations to reduce water use, in addition to giving back to its workers and community organizations alike.” This shows that Levi’s is doing their best to be as eco-friendly as possible by using recycled materials.

One sustainable dye material that can help the fashion industry tremendously if used would be using nature from something that already has color, like an insect. Using synthetic biology you use less chemicals and energy. Synthetic Biology is a biology that can produce, deposit and fix dyes to the fabric. In a video, *The future of fashion: Colorifix* it talks about using crops/insects and replicate nature by recreating the pigment that us humans love from nature to create a bright color. It is a technology that works better when using this dyeing process which can change the industry and change the planet we are working on to make it better and more environmentally safe.

An experimental artistic process would be looking for vegan alternatives to use for materials. In the article *Is Faux Leather Even Better Than the Real Thing? These 3 Designers Say Yes* it states “We think all [accessories] brands should consider dedicating a part of their collection to sustainable and vegan options,” they wrote to *Vogue*. “We’re trying to choose as many sustainable suppliers as possible, and we just started working with a new factory that doesn’t use plastic.” showing that there are ways to have the same artistic vision but with better materials. Another great example would be to design garments that have photosynthetic or pollution-filtering properties. This will allow the fashion industry to have an output for carbon negativity (climate positivity) rather than reducing or offsetting the footprint. We embarked on the research of developing the Post Carbon Fashion coating. The dyeing and finishing industry has only created a huge pollution problem. Imagine all the once clean water just being used for textiles processing and dyeing, how damaging and horrible it is for the earth and humans themselves. Dealing with these types of synthetic dyes can also harm the people using it, workers that are in these factories are exposed to these dyes. In an article *Asian rivers are turning black. And our colorful closets are to blame* on CNN it mentions what textile dyes do they mention that because more color dye is acting killing the environment because of the use of more bigger wash houses and bigger factories that lead to more greenhouse gases.

Some sustainable alternatives would be choosing organic fabrics. Using organic cotton is known to use 71% less water so the water is not affected as much. Organic linen, organic silk and

hemp all are helpful alternatives that help humans wear more comfortable clothing, help the body breathe and help body temperature way more. Wearing organic silk pajamas or clothing in general is healthier for the body, it is known to regulate your body temperature especially when sleeping. Another alternative would be choosing clothes that have either been done naturally, or that is missing the chemical azo. Using organic hemp can be very helpful as well, it is a breathable fabric and known to carry a lot of benefits. These natural dyes after a while are not as useful, when washed or in the sun for too long the color would easily fade, and the only solution was these synthetic dyes to solve the problem. Which leads to us having to still find more way to dye clothing without using harsh chemicals that end up hurting our environment.

When talking about the manufacturer, they should focus less on fast fashion because that is only temporary and making a bunch of something that is only temporary is a waste in itself. They should start using recycled cotton, organic linen, organic silk for all their clothing and overall just organic natural fibers. Lastly for individuals to contribute to a more eco-friendly fashion industry they need to start buying less clothing and making sure it is a sustainable type of quality and buy from sustainable brands. People should start donating clothes and recycling them to thrift stores, or sending them to people less fortunate with no clothes instead of just throwing them out. People should even start remaking clothes using the same fabric by redesigning. In order to create a more sustainable textile process, it overall just needs to be more eco-friendly by reusing and recycling. These chemical issues in production are too toxic for people's health and our earth. We should all practice being environmentally friendly and all work together for a better world. As a consumer I can help create a more sustainable fashion industry, for one to buy less clothes and work with what I have. I also think thrifting has been a good idea for forever, and it is so smart to get clothes that are still in style for less and for you it is still considered new because you've never had it before.

To conclude the topic about sustainable alternatives I think consumers can help create a more sustainable fashion industry by trying to shop more at thrift stores than these fast fashion stores online. These new sites are considered fast fashion mainly because if a celebrity is caught wearing something expensive like a specific dress, these brands for example like Fashion Nova will automatically steal the style of the dress and design, put it up on their website and put a cheaper price on it. These types of clothing are the type of clothes that is popular only for the time being, after a couple months the style of the type of shirt or dress won't be used anymore.

Another way consumers can help create a more sustainable fashion industry is also reusing the clothing piece we originally buy and using it to create something else that can be worn. I will definitely participate in this, for a couple years now I have been thrifting more and more, and it has been something that I love to do rather than going to any other store, or shop online because I find the best type of clothing, for the best prices. It is a bit time consuming because most likely the thrift stores are very large, but it is something that I do as a hobby and enjoy. I have recently been participating in using my clothes I already have and remaking it. Right now I have noticed a trend on tie dye clothing. These types of sweatpants and shirts are being sold for \$75-200 for a set of sweatpants and hoodies. After I saw that this trend was getting more and more popular I decided I wanted to join it but instead I have been using the skills of tie dying, to avoid me having to pay those types of prices. During this time especially it is very soothing and can be a hobby you do indoors easily. Once people realize that you don't have to spend a ton of money on clothes, and continue to go to places like thrift stores where you can find pieces you can incorporate to your style, the fashion industry will for sure be more sustainable. Once the fashion industry notices that the consumers are taking steps to make a change, I think the industry will pick up on that and change as well for the better. I am more conscious of things that I buy making sure that my hoodies are made with organic cotton, now I am buying all my jeans from Levi's which makes me happy because I wear Levi's anyways. I am now more focused on the material of my clothing, and telling people around me to instead of throwing out clothes, to recycle it, donate it, give it to thrift stores even if there is no money exchange for it. This changes my perspective on apparel as a consumer and future industry professional because as a consumer I never paid attention to these things or had a second thought when I would throw out my old clothing that I did not want anymore. I was so addicted to fast fashion brands that anytime a new trend would come up I would hop on the trend and throw out my older clothes. As a consumer now, I am glad that I am more conscious and as an industry professional, when I do have my future clothing line and even skincare line I will take all these lessons with me and focus on all my brands being eco-friendly and healthy for us, to live in a better environment and own better quality products.



Figure 1: People in the sweatshop making jeans.



Figure 2: The textile industry is a very large business, manufacturing is done with these huge machines.



Figure 3: Levi's helping to protect our planet knowing that Denim will always be part of fashion.

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