

YRE Project - 2020

Fast Fashion



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Part 1: Introduction.

What is fast fashion anyway?

“Fast Fashion can be defined as cheap, trendy clothing, that samples ideas from the catwalk or celebrity culture and turns them into garments in high street stores at breakneck speed” (www.goodonyou.eco)

Once upon a time, clothes shopping used to be occasional and buying (or rather making) a new dress was a special event someone looked forward to. However, now the main streets of any city are flooded with people buying excessive amounts of clothes, desperately searching for the best bargains they can find.

This article will discuss the reason why fashion is so readily available to us in large amounts and the cheapest of prices. Why is this such a big deal? Isn't comfort a good thing? Where does the planet come into question?

Some facts about fast fashion

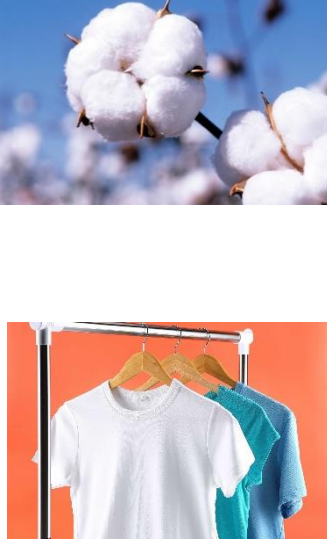
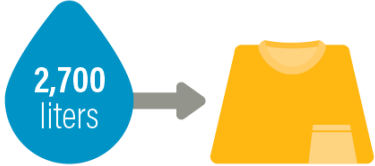
- 23kg of greenhouse gases released per kg of fabric
- 17-20% of water pollution is due to textile dyeing and treatment
- A textile worker in New York earns 40 times more money than one in Bangladesh working the same amount of hours
- We buy 400% more clothes today than what we purchased in the 1990s
- Only 15% of used clothing is collected in the United States
- 13.1 million tons of textiles are thrown away in landfills in the United States
- 34% of the clothing brought to the United States is made in China






Part 2: The Dangers of Fast Fashion



The Materials used

The production of clothing includes the usage of a number of chemicals used as dyes and softeners. These chemicals are eventually disposed in oceans, thus causing a great deal of pollution and posing a serious threat to the world.

The fabrics most commonly employed in clothes production include:

Fabric	Picture	Pollution Threat
Natural Substances		
Cotton		<p>The cotton plant requires large amounts of water for growth.</p> <p>It Takes 2,700 Liters of Water to Make One Cotton Shirt</p>  <p>https://www.google.com/search?q=fast+fashion+second+only+to+the+petrochemical+industry+pollution+graph&tbm=isch&ved=2ahUKEwiYnsXIwInpAhUywAIHHQxaC6sQ2-</p> <p>To ensure growth, fertilizers and pesticides are supplied to the plant. These contaminate the soil and ground water.</p>

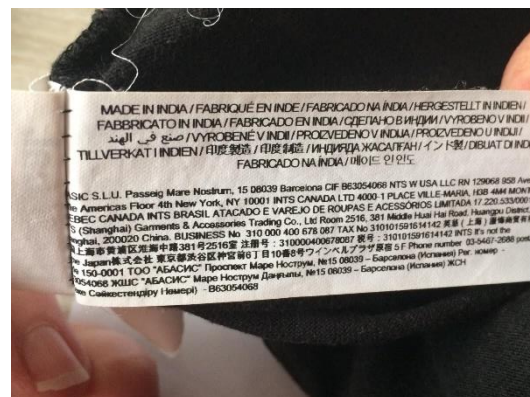
<p>Wool, Leather and Fur</p>	  	<p>Clothes made of wool, leather and fur are produced from animal hides. As a result, animals suffer pain and death.</p> <p>Water contamination, land destruction and climate change follow the production of these clothes.</p>
<p>Synthetic Fibres</p>		
<p>Nylon</p>		<p>The production of this fibre releases a great deal of pollutant gases including carbon dioxide and nitrous oxides.</p> <p>Nylon production has also been described as a ‘thirsty process’ (https://goodonyou.eco/material-guide-nylon/), in that large volumes of water are required in its production.</p>
<p>Rayon</p>		<p>Wood pulp is used in the production of rayon. This causes deforestation.</p> <p>Its production also releases air, ground and water pollutants.</p>

<p>Polyester</p>		<p>Polyester is actually a type of plastic. Plastic is non-biodegradable disrupting various ecosystems</p>
<p>Acrylic</p>		<p>Similar to polyester, acrylic is a type of plastic and as mentioned above, its non-biodegradability poses harm to the environment.</p>

The Process of it All

Where are our clothes produced?

We held an activity within our school where we encouraged students to bring their favourite fashion garments to school. Then we all looked at their labels to check where they're made.



Working Conditions

Many brands assure customers that their workers are paid the ‘minimum legal wage’; however, this does not mean that they are paid a living wage. A living wage is described as a wage “high enough to maintain a normal standard of living” which means that the worker should be able to afford food, clothing, housing, education, health services, and maintenance or help for any unforeseen events.

Textile workers, most of whom are under the age of 18, work for 14 to 16 hours daily without having any breaks.

The work places often have no ventilation and workers breathe in toxic substances, inhale fibre dust and sand. Buildings are unsafe buildings and accidents, fires and other injuries are common. These workers also face physical and verbal abuse on a regular basis.

Child Labour

Although general labour laws are in place all around Europe and America, a number of textile brands take advantage of the fact that many people are unemployed and willing to work for even small amounts of money. They take advantage of the lack of laws by building low-cost and unsafe buildings for the people to work in, having unsustainably low wages and even employing children. Although child labour is illegal around most of the world, it continues in the poorest parts of it.

The main challenge is that mainstream companies are not fully connected back to where the garments are produced, meaning that they do not have full control over who is employed and under what circumstances they are working.

It is easy to see that the fashion industry tends to take advantage of those workers most at risk and those most vulnerable, which is why a cry for sustainable fashion has become louder and louder, and a need yet more yearned for.

Looking Forward.

We may look at all this and feel like this problem is much bigger than us.

However, we all can do our part to change this system.

1. **Look out for brands who are promoting good practices.** A number of brands promote the clothes made of organic cotton, recycled polyester and sustainably sourced materials. Other brands have transformed their stores and facilities into eco-efficient establishments.
2. **Make good use of what you have.**
 - a. **Clothes Swap** → this is a new concept which has started taking place in Malta as well. People raid their wardrobes for unused, good quality, clothes and trade them for others! One of these social, environmentally friendly event, was hosted by FAA (Flimkien għal Ambjent Ahjar).
 - b. **2nd hand shopping** → There are plenty of charity shops around the island where one can shop.

3. What are we doing as an Eko-Skola community?

- a. **Educating and empowering** our friends at school through assemblies and activities.



- b. **Reaching out to the community** on how to facilitate this process of becoming eco-conscious – we have sent emails to local stores to express our opinion about excess packaging and offer eco-friendly solutions.

Conclusion.

This change is definitely not a simple one, and there are so many problems that need to be tackled. The road is not easy, however with appropriate education, environmental awareness and environmental consciousness, we can definitely start the process of living a more sustainable lifestyle.

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