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THE STUDY OF CONSUMPTION PRACTICES AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSCIOUSNESS AMONG THE STUDENTS UNDER THE EFFECT OF THE FAST FASHION TRENDS

Marharyta RADOMSKA¹, Nikita KLYMENKO²

¹State university "Kyiv Aviation Institute"
Lyubomira Guzara Ave., 1, Kiev, 03058, Ukraine

²Faculty of Environmental Protection
Trg mladosti 7, 3320, Velenje, Slovenia
e-mail: m.m.radomskaya@gmail.com

Abstract

The work describes the environmental impacts of fast fashion, growing under the pressure of social media and popular culture. The survey among the students of the university showed a considerable effect of the fast fashion trends on young students, but the economic factors and traditions of rational use of personal items are still able to limit the practices of over-consumption. The recommendations for individual life style supporting sustainability in clothing purchasing and using were given.

Key words: fast fashion, sustainable fashion, environmental impacts, consumption practices.

Fast fashion is an economic strategy that involves the design, production, and marketing of clothing that is designed to quickly produce large quantities of clothing. The rise of social media and online shopping has fueled the demand for low-cost branded clothing, since consumers try to avoid repeating looks. They are driven by the desire to be on trend under the influence of constantly changing social media. At the same time, consumers expect clothing to be cheap, which leads to a disregard for the hard work that goes into making clothes. As consumer expectations continue to shape the industry landscape, more and more brands are forced to adopt the fast fashion model. However, this path leads to intensive environmental degradation and human exploitation.

The aim of this study was to investigate the practices of purchasing and using clothing among the students of Environmental Sciences Department as a prerequisite for the formation of their ecological footprint and to formulate a strategy for reducing their ecological footprint in this regard. An important peculiarity of the given research is that it was conducted among the students, which have taken the courses in Sustainable Development, Natural Resources Management and Environmental Performance assessment as a part of their professional education.

Most modern fashion companies use the fast fashion business model, which is characterized by speed, novelty, cost-effectiveness, and one-off trends that are constantly changing. This is possible thanks to lean and just-in-time approaches, and production is very often located in countries with cheap labor. Fast fashion regularly introduces new products for purchase. As a result, consumers increasingly perceive inexpensive clothing as fleeting, "almost disposable", which increases impulse

purchases and, as a result, leads to waste. In addition, by outsourcing production to underdeveloped countries, fashion companies benefit from a significant lack of strict laws and procedures governing the safety and health of workers. The quality of produced clothes gradually becomes not important, since it is not intended for a prolonged use. Sources and types of textiles are also diverting from safety and sustainability practices, because the main requirements are being appealing, cheap and quickly produced, which has nothing to do to environmental considerations.

Since fast fashion involves a constant increase in production volumes, there are many environmental problems that arise within its life cycle due to the excessive use of natural resources and the lack of effective practices for handling unsold goods.

Much of fashion's environmental impact is related to raw materials: cotton takes up about 2.5% of the world's agricultural land and requires significant amounts of water [1]. In contrast, synthetic materials such as polyester require an estimated 342 million barrels of oil each year and contribute to microplastic pollution [2], additionally clothing production processes need 43 million tons of chemicals per year for dyeing and textile treatment to repel oil and water from clothing [3]. These chemicals often include such hazardous components as heavy metals, ammonia, phthalates, and formaldehyde.

Carbon footprint of fast fashion is also incredibly high: it contributes 4-10% of all carbon emissions and this is expected to grow by 50% by 2030 [5].

The industry also uses a lot of water and generates huge amounts of waste: over 92 million tonnes of waste produced per year and 79 trillion liters of water consumed [4]. The fast fashion industry produces 100 billion garments and 92 million tons of waste each year, placing an additional burden on the environment, with 85% of textile waste ending up in landfills in the United States alone [7].

The fashion industry is also among the top polluters of the environment and produces 20% of all global wastewater [4]. Due to the lack of quality control and the need for rapid production in fast fashion [6], many factories lack the resources and time to effectively manage their wastewater, so these toxins end up in waterways.

A significant problem that exacerbates the environmental impacts is that fashion brands do not fully acknowledge their environmental impact, and therefore do not try to limit it, and even hide or mislead consumers with false and unfounded claims about their environmental friendliness in the form of greenwashing practices. And with the increasing pace of production in the pursuit of "fast fashion", all trends are only deepening. Under such conditions, it is extremely important to work with consumers to form sustainable consumption practices and, in particular, a commitment to "slow" fashion to push producers to more sustainable practices from the demand side.

To assess the depth of the problem, a survey was conducted among KAI students, which aimed to assess the following components of the problem:

1. Buying habits – the general patterns of buying clothes: where, how much, how often, and what factors drive the choice. This is a direct reflection of adherence to fast fashion trends.
2. Clothing management – how rationally purchased clothing is used (how often worn etc).
3. Origin of clothing – this block aims not to assess the level of awareness of students, but to establish whether this parameter is important for respondents in general and whether they are ready to implement circular principles in their personal lives.

60 people took part in the survey, representing students for the Bachelor program in Environmental Sciences in Kyiv Aviation Institute, Kyiv Aviation College and Faculty of Environmental Protection in Velenje, Slovenia. They were mainly young people aged 14 to 20, but there were also about 13 people over 40. The size of the sample was limited by the number of students taking courses, related to sustainability and sustainable consumption in all institutions. Accounting

the total number of students at the specialty Environmental Protection or Environmental Sciences in the institutions involved (202 students), the sampling error is within the 10% range.

The survey consisted of 12 multiple-choice questions.

According to the survey, most people shop in stores when they have money, but they only buy what they need. They hardly read fashion magazines and don't know where or how their clothes are made. Half of their clothes are second-hand. They know how to mend their clothes, but they don't do it. Unnecessary clothes are usually donated to charity or reused, very rarely thrown away. More than half have bought clothes and never worn them, and also have clothes that were used only once. The total number of items is a standard wardrobe. There were no significant differences between students from Ukrainian and Slovenian institution.

That is, we can conclude that fast fashion trends are present among students even after taking courses related to sustainability and responsible use of resources, but due to economic constraints, they have not gained such a scale as in Western countries. Low level of consciousness in relation to fast fashion was demonstrated in similar researches among secondary school students of Spain [8] and US college students [9]. Nevertheless, efforts should be directed at preventing the development of such consumer practices among young people, since with age they will have greater financial opportunities and they should be directed in a way that does not contribute to environmental degradation.

We can suggest a number of effective steps that everyone can implement in their lives to avoid participating in environmental destruction under the influence of the fashion industry:

- Stop buying fast fashion brands: this is the hardest, but most efficient action, since it calls for reforming their living practices. Instead, support sustainable fashion brands that uphold the principles of slow fashion. While these items may be more expensive, their higher quality ensures durability.
- Shopping at charity shops or second-hand stores has become an alternative to fast fashion. It is also a healthy practice to exchange clothes with friends or by arrangement through online platforms.
- Repair clothing items, which not only saves money, but also reduces dependence on fast fashion and minimizes waste.
- Recycling and finding ways to use old clothes to reduce the environmental impact of turning clothing into waste.
- Following your own views on clothing and style in general.

Thus, the survey of students demonstrated their commitment to "fast fashion", but at the same time they are rational about the things they have already purchased and are ready to give them a second life.

Given the active development and implementation of sustainable consumption strategies in the EU and, in particular, the adoption of regulations on eco-design of products, a broader survey and information campaign should be initiated in Ukraine to avoid environmental problems in the future.

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ДОСЛІДЖЕННЯ СПОЖИВАЦЬКИХ ПРАКТИК ТА ЕКОЛОГІЧНОЇ СВІДОМОСТІ СЕРЕД СТУДЕНТІВ ПІД ВПЛИВОМ ТРЕНДІВ ШВИДКОЇ МОДИ

Маргарита РАДОМСЬКА

Державний університет «Київський авіаційний інститут»
пр. Любомира Гузара, 1, м. Київ, 02000, Україна
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8096-0313>

Нікіта КЛИМЕНКО

Екологічний факультет Велене
Trg mladosti 7, 3320, Velenje, Словенія
<https://orcid.org/0009-0004-9983-1804>

Анотація

У роботі описано вплив швидкої моди на навколишнє середовище, що розвивається під тиском соціальних мереж та популярної культури. Опитування серед студентів університету показало значний вплив тенденцій швидкої моди на молодь, але економічні чинники та традиції раціонального використання особистих речей все ще здатні обмежувати практику надмірного споживання. Надано рекомендації щодо індивідуального способу життя, що підтримує сталий розвиток у купівлі та використанні одягу.

Ключові слова: швидка мода, стала модна індустрія, вплив на навколишнє середовище, споживчі практики.