

**Advocating for Sustainability in Fast Fashion: Efforts by Nonprofit Organizations**

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Advocating for Sustainability in Fast Fashion: Efforts by Nonprofit Organizations

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## **Advocating for Sustainability in Fast Fashion: Efforts by Nonprofit Organizations**

### ***Abstract***

The fashion industry, particularly Fast Fashion, contributes to negative impacts on the environment, society, and economy. The paper will explain what fast fashion is, who are the major polluters, and who is responsible for fast fashion consequences. In 2018, fashion contributed to 2.1 billion metric tons of Greenhouse Gases (GHG) emissions, and half of that was from Fast Fashion. If the Fast Fashion sector keeps growing, GHG emissions are expected to rise by 2.7 billion metric tons by 2030. The fast fashion industry goes through different stages such as extraction, production, distribution, consumption, and disposal (Leonard, 2010). Every stage produces negative impacts, which will be discussed in the explanation part of fast fashion. Different actors try to work on the issue including: governments, organizations, foundations, corporates, and individuals. However, this paper primarily focuses on analyzing the initiatives undertaken by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) regarding anti-fast fashion efforts and their advocacy for sustainable fashion awareness. Furthermore, it brings the concept of circular economy and its importance.

# **Advocating for Sustainability in Fast Fashion: Efforts by Nonprofit Organizations**

## ***CONTENTS***

- 1. Abstract*
- 2. Introduction*
- 3. Literature Review*
- 4. The Role of EU & States*
- 5. The Role of NGOs*
- 6. Conclusion*
- 7. Bibliography*

## ***Introduction***

One of the biggest contributors to global environmental pollution is Fast Fashion (FF). Environment pollution is either caused by too much energy consumption, carbon emissions, freshwater consumption, or waste buildup (Bartlett and Merino, 2024, pg: 84-85). Fast Fashion is when clothing is produced quickly at low-cost to align with current luxury fashion trends. Fast Fashion gives the opportunity for customers to purchase luxury look-alike apparel for low prices. However, Fast Fashion brings numerous negative externalities, including pollution, with its production exerting a significant influence on climate, water, energy resources, and the environment. In the last twenty years, the production and consumption of textiles worldwide have almost doubled (Centobelli et al., 2022). Unfortunately, fast fashion apparel companies do not prioritize creating sustainable clothing; instead, they focus on maximizing profits and following trends forecasted by fashion forecasters who observe high-end runways. Companies like Urban Outfitters and trend forecasting agencies such as World's Global Style Network set trends and provide analytics to help companies stay ahead of competitors in the industry (Lakshika, 2018, pp. 11-12). Unfortunately, in doing so, they neglect environmental concerns, contributing to pollution and generating substantial waste. This business approach puts pressure on water and land resources, as well as being one of the contributors to greenhouse gas emissions (Centobelli et al., 2022). It is important to emphasize that the fashion sector consumes double the energy of India's entire energy consumption, requiring 72.6 kilowatt-hours per pound of polyamide, primarily due to the intensive use of petroleum as the main ingredient (Bartlett and Merino, 2024, pg: 84). Moreover, the fast fashion sector consumes 2,000 gallons of water to

produce a single pair of jeans. Cotton production accounts for the highest water usage, requiring 186.8 gallons per pound of cotton, and cotton itself represents 25% of global fiber production (Bartlett and Merino, 2024, pg. 85). Another environmental impact happens due to waste. When polyester clothes are thrown away, they release harmful chemicals into the soil (Bartlett and Merino 2024, pg: 85). Additionally, the Fast Fashion industry is responsible for emitting 1.7 billion tons of CO<sub>2</sub> annually, constituting nearly 10% of the world's total CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, and generates a substantial 92 million tons of textile waste (Centobelli et al., 2022). These carbon emissions are a major contributor to global warming, leading to the frequent occurrence of natural disasters like floods, droughts, storms, and rising sea levels (Centobelli et al., 2022). Consequently, the Fast Fashion industry has a lot of negative externalities on the environment, and climate that needs immediate attention since the industry is growing more than ever.

Not only does fast fashion have major negative impacts on the environment, but it also affects people in various ways. These include poor labor conditions, low wages, health impacts, and cases of child labor. In terms of poor labor conditions, garment firms assign long working hours, close emergency exits, and create dangerous conditions by having unsafe buildings (Nazarali, pg: 16). The long working hours in garment factories, particularly for women, leave little time for breaks or meals, resulting in health issues. Furthermore, workers are exposed to toxic materials like particles from fibers, contributing to health concerns (Nazarali, pg: 22). Children, like women, are significantly affected by fast fashion production. Child labor remains a prevalent issue in many countries, resulting in inequalities between employees and employers, as employers often mistreat and abuse their power over children (Nazarali, pg: 23). Consequently, in order to understand the aim of a clothing company it should be evaluated considering all three dimensions of sustainability: economic, environmental, and social. Sustainability involves

fulfilling present needs while safeguarding future well-being (Thiele, 2013). Therefore, sustainability encompasses the overall well-being of society, the economy, and the environment. Thiele (2013) emphasizes the importance of sustaining these three pillars to ensure a sustainable future for generations to come.

The concept of negative externalities underscores the need for regulation to mitigate impacts on society and the environment. However, within the context of globalization and the race to the bottom, implementing effective regulatory measures presents significant challenges. Amidst these complexities, intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) emerge as crucial stakeholders in addressing the issues plaguing the fast fashion industry. According to Harvard Law School Website (2024), intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) are established through international treaties, which require the participation of two or more nations, with the purpose of collaborating in a spirit of goodwill to address matters of shared concern. One of the IGOs is the United Nations, which addresses issues related to sustainable development, labor rights, and environmental protection regarding the fast fashion industry. Other IGOs are the International Labour Organization (ILO), a specialized agency of the UN, focusing on environmental issues, labor rights, fair working conditions, etc., World Trade Organization (WTO) that deals with international trade regulations, and its decisions can indirectly impact the global fashion industry, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) that focuses on environmental sustainability, including reducing the environmental impact of industries, and lastly International Organization for Standardization (ISO) that develops and publishes international standards, including those related to sustainable and ethical practices in the fashion industry.

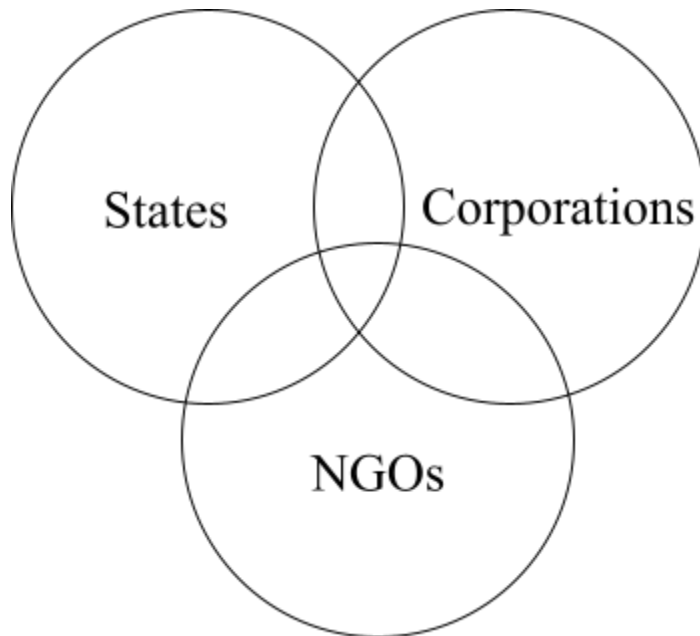
Furthermore, not only the IGOs, but Non Governmental organizations, foundations, campaigns, organizations, and other movements play an important role in addressing the fast

fashion industry issues. In *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded: Beyond the Nonprofit Industrial Complex*, edited by INCITE! various sectors serving as social and political catalysts are explored. The piece looks into their roles and examines how they navigate within the framework of the nonprofit industrial complex, shedding light on the complexities of contemporary activism and advocacy efforts. The first sector is considered a government, second is business, and the third is the nonprofit sector, some scholars also identify the fourth sector as communities or families (Casey, 2015, pg: 35). Moreover, each sector has its function and responsibilities. Typically, their interconnections are illustrated through a Venn diagram, depicting three overlapping circles representing their roles. Casey (2015) discusses the global sector, emphasizing that corporations gathered greater influence during the 19th century, followed by increased state interventions in the 20th century, and further expansion of the NGO sector in the 21st century. The extent to which these sectors are expanding and taking on societal responsibilities varies depending on the country and the era. The rise of the NGO sector happens due to lack of government actions (Casey, 2015, pg: 36).

Additionally, as mentioned above, multinational corporations (MNCs) operating both nationally and internationally have adverse effects on society, such as child labor, low wages, poor working conditions, health issues, and other related concerns (Shamir, 2004, pg: 672). In order to be accountable for their actions, legal frameworks need to be more effective; however, multinational corporations avoid regulations, by navigating between various legal jurisdictions to minimize regulatory constraints and maximize their profits (Shamir, 2004, pg: 672). As a consequence of inadequate government engagement, the third sector intervenes and encourages multinational organizations to embrace more socially responsible practices in their operations.

Additionally, it educates multinational corporations on how to develop these responsibilities (Shamir, 2004, pg: 678).

***Venn Diagram 1***



Furthermore, beyond the involvement of intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), campaigns, organizations, and movements, various countries are actively engaging in initiatives to promote sustainability and address the environmental and social concerns linked to the fast fashion sector. The paper will examine legislative efforts undertaken in the US and France, looking at their bills and policies aimed at addressing these pressing issues. Moreover, the paper examines the roles of the UK and Italy governments in promoting corporate sustainability. Both countries have implemented regional initiatives aimed at fostering sustainable practices within the fashion industry, including support for workers' rights and environmental efforts. In summary, the paper will expand on socio-environmental issues, including climate and water, and waste management. It will analyze the practice of greenwashing among fast fashion brands, including Zara, H&M, and Shein, as



well as the roles of IGOs and states in addressing these issues. Additionally, it will explore the contributions of NGOs to promoting sustainability in the fast fashion industry. Finally, the paper will conclude by proposing lasting solutions for environmental and social sustainability.

### ***Literature Review***

The fashion industry stands as one of the world's largest sectors, ranking fourth in Europe with a workforce of 3,384 million people employed, 46% of the global population, according to 2014 data (Thorisdottir and Johannsdottir, 2020, pg: 1). The number of individuals employed increased to 3.45 billion in 2021, as reported by World Bank Open Data in 2022 (Fashion United, 2024). Fast fashion clothing is made from cheap materials, quickly in developing countries. Textile production has been increasing with per capita fiber consumption tripling from 1950 to 2008, a major increase from 3.7 kg to 10.4 kg per person (Sanchis-Sebastiá 2021, pg: 248).

The Fast Fashion industry comes with many negative consequences not only for the environment, but for individuals, animals, and others. For example, The Fast Fashion industry is the second major polluting cause in the world. It generates 8% of all carbon emissions and 20% of all global wastewater (Bailey et. al, 2022). The industry causes more carbon emissions than international flights and all shipping. It uses almost 93 billion cubic meters of water per year (Bailey et. al, 2022). Not only water waste, but Fast Fashion causes additional significant consequences to individuals living in LMICs (low- to middle-income countries) because 90% of all fast fashion clothing production happens there, amplifying environmental degradation, exploitation of labor, and worsening of socio-economic inequalities. Some of the clothing is made of either cotton or polyester and their production processes release serious heavy metals that are deadly to nearby humans or animals. Cotton dust and synthetic air particles are released

due to bad air ventilation. All of the chemicals used in the production are linked to lung cancer, damage to endocrine function, death, and many more health problems (Bick et. al, 2018).

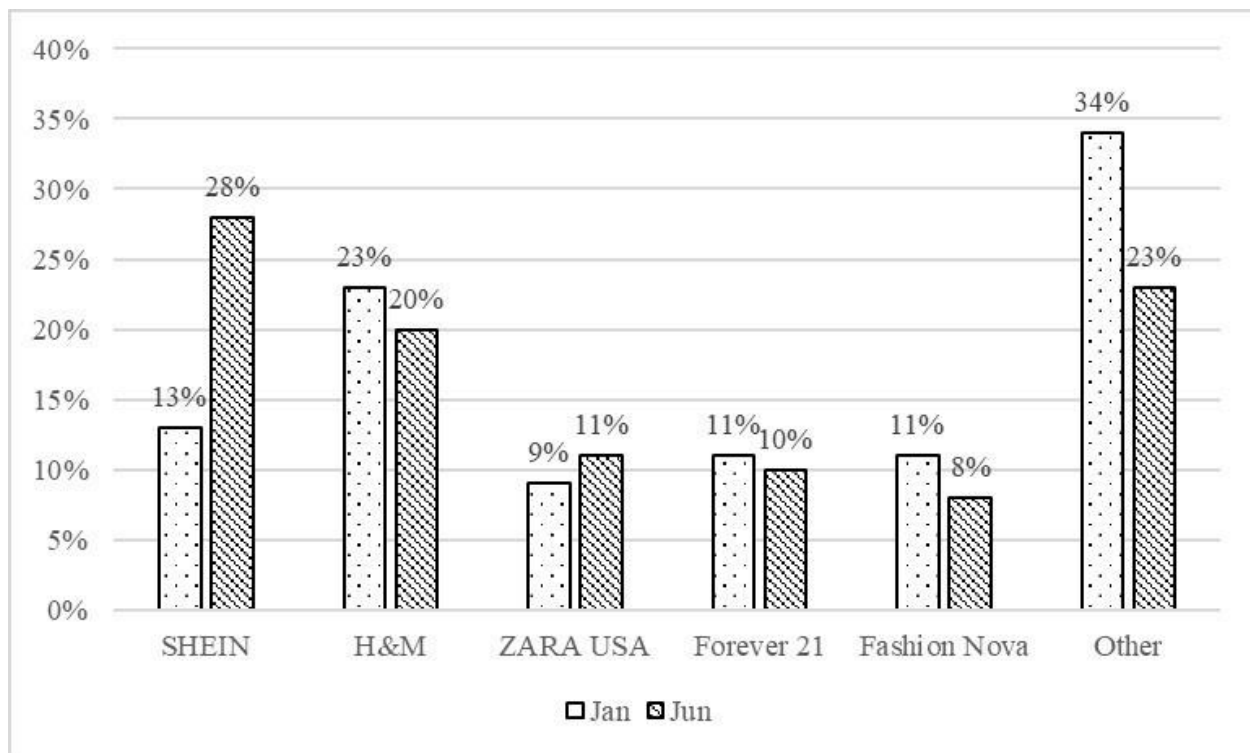
Furthermore, low- to middle-income countries. face more injustice in the way that extra waste of fast fashion clothing is dumped in their territories. Especially when around 500,000 tons of used clothing are exported from the United States annually, and some of them are resold, or abandoned in LMICs (Bick et. al, 2018). Some companies involved in the fashion industry engage in practices where they release harmful chemicals into rivers or burn expensive fossil fuels to generate energy (Rivoli, 2005, pg: 131). Moreover, companies dispose of pollutants into the air or water to avoid expenses associated with cleaning (Rivoli, 2005, p. 89). The remaining amount that is just dumped causes more environmental damage and health risks. Overall, FF not only poses risks to the whole globe but especially to LMICs, which raises questions of who contributes to it, who should be reacting to these issues, and what can be done to minimize waste and reduce it.

### ***Major Corporations Involved***

Multiple corporations contribute to Fast Fashion production, 3 major ones are Zara, H&M, and Shein. Zara and H&M have been in the FF business for many decades and both of their supply chains increase their production every year, Zara releases 24 new clothing collections yearly, and H&M between 12 and 16 (Cited by Centobelli et. al, 2022). Customers see that they can have cheap trendy clothing, so their consumption increases. Centobelli et. al, 2022 mention how Generation Y is the biggest group in fast fashion consumption, and that even though they are aware of the environmental impact that the FF industry has, they aren't willing to change their behavior and acknowledge the issue. Recently, another FF brand has been getting more customers and dominating the Fast Fashion Industry, Shein. Shein's market share was 15.7

billion dollars in revenue in 2021 (Jin et al., 2023). Looking at *Figure 1*, Shein dominated the market share in the U.S. Fast Fashion Market in the first half year of 2021, followed by H&M, and ZARA, Forever 21, and Fashion Nova having almost the same percentage shares (Jin et al., 2023). The FF industry tends to increase and the question that needs to be answered is how can it slow down and who are the major actors contributing to it.

*Figure 1*



Source: Jin et al., 2023

Furthermore, labeling sustainable clothing is questionable since sometimes the approval of it requires third-party authorization, therefore many brands just do greenwashing.

Greenwashing is defined as “the intersection of two firm behaviors: poor environmental performance and positive communication about environmental performance” (Cited by Netto et al., 2020, pg: 2). Brands try to show that they are producing sustainably and that they care about the environmental issues caused by the fashion industry; however, some of the companies,

including H&M aren't fully transparent and that raises a question whether or not they are actually contributing to sustainable practices (Alexa, 2022, pg: 267).

Furthermore, customers play a major role in the fast fashion industry. Nogueira et al. (2023) states that there are different types of consumer commitments. The first one is called an *affective brand commitment*, which depicts the emotional attachment to a brand and one is satisfied with that connection. The second one is *continuance commitment*, where customers don't want to switch to another brand due to high costs or the absence of alternatives (Cited by Nogueira et al., 2023, pg: 5). Therefore, fast fashion consumers either have strong brand trust and relationships or they just don't want to purchase more sustainable clothing with more costs. Oliveira et al. (2022) correspondingly write about how consumers do not wish to spend more on eco-friendly brands and have a harder time adapting to new behaviors. Based on global surveys conducted by Trend Watching, Zhexembayeva and Nadya (2018) observed that 40% of people said that they would like to contribute to the sustainable fashion industry, yet only 4% of them actually did (Oliveira et al., pg: 2). Furthermore, the article found that based on the 2017 Credit Protection Survey survey, Brazilians are trying to switch to sustainable fashion, but only 28% are considered conscious consumers (ibid.).

A National consumer survey conducted in the United States by Byrd and Su (2020) contained different questions to understand consumers' perspective towards apparel labels and sustainable clothing; Questions also included customers' demographics, age, gender, race, and income . The results showed that consumers had a positive attitude towards sustainability within the fashion industry; however, they didn't have enough knowledge about the brands' practices (Byrd and Su, 2020). Furthermore, differences were found between different age groups. The younger age group (18–34) prefers eco-labeling, which depicts the origins and production

approaches in the fashion industry, although they don't read it because it's hard for them to understand compared to consumers aged 35 and older (Byrd and Su, 2020).

Additionally, Oliveira et al. (2020) proposes how different people try to actually contribute to the sustainable fashion industry, it states that customers re-use their clothes, and do not purchase something unless really necessary. Furthermore, the authors mention the slow fashion segment which means clothing made with local and raw materials, where consumers have the incentive to purchase at a slower pace and consider different factors of fast fashion outcomes (Oliveira et al., pg.3). Slow fashion segment means that the production is small/medium scale, not massive with lots of waste like the fast fashion. Sustainable fashion and slow fashion are further explored later on.

Sahimaa et al., 2023, proposes to change the customers and their perception of the fashion industry. They aim to make sustainable second-hand clothing more fashionable and shift customers' minds to like them more. Moreover, Sahimaa et al. (2023) note that businesses should produce more durable products, so customers don't change or buy new ones quickly due to bad quality. Additionally, they propose to change the business model itself, representing the *Circular Economy* concept. The *Circular Economy* is one of the solutions that helps biodiversity, reduces waste, and pollution, and supports climate. It is a system in which products are reused, and recycled, and materials aren't wasted (Ellen MacArthur Foundation). Three essential parts that a circular economy is based on are 1. Eliminate waste and pollution, 2. Circulate products and materials (at their highest value), and 3. Regenerate nature (Ellen MacArthur Foundation). Furthermore, Sahimaa et al. (2023) writes about repairing options for brands; Patagonia, one of the clothing brands, offers repair services where people give the company damaged products and they repair them, reducing the production of more clothes. In terms of government involvement

or economic policies, they bring the EU's initiative for the textile industry. European Union, also known as the EU, is an international organization comprising 27 European countries that collaborate to support each other and create improved and safer environments for individuals (European Union, 2024).

### ***What is Fast Fashion?***

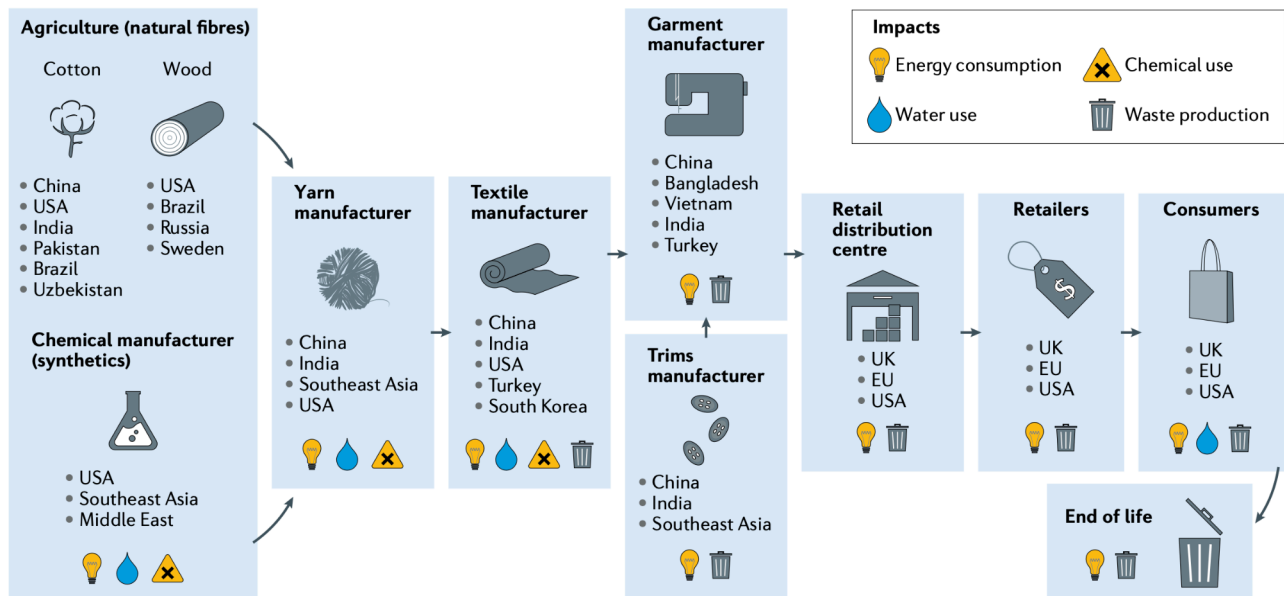
To understand the concept of Fast Fashion, it's essential to distinguish between traditional fashion and fast fashion. The traditional system typically offers clothing only seasonally, with opportunities for consumers to purchase items at reduced prices during sales seasons. In contrast, fast fashion production involves the rapid creation of limited clothing collections over short periods, offering trendy clothing while artificially creating shortages to encourage consumers to purchase more while items are in stock, often at extremely low prices (Backs et. al, 2020, pg: 488). The reason why the world is shifting towards fast fashion production is due to globalization, because companies compete for consumers' attention and high engagement (Thorisdottir and Johannsdottir, pg: 1). The production process occurs in multiple countries of the fashion industry, and that is what drives globalization. Mostly, developed countries have competitive advantage in manufacturing and lower labor costs. For instance, China for example dominates the industry, by exporting \$109.9 billion USD worth of textiles and \$158.4 billion worth of clothing annually due to high demand from Bangladesh, Cambodia, Vietnam, Pakistan and Indonesia (Niinimäki et al., 2020, pg: 191). Even though the manufacturing is done in the Global South, the design processes happen in the Global North, often in the EU or USA. Since the two steps occur far away from each other additional waste and damage occurs to products. After that, the clothing is shipped to UK, EU, and USA via boats

After manufacturing, garments are shipped in large quantities to central retail distribution centers, followed by smaller retailers where clothing is purchased, often in the UK, EU and USA. Garments are traditionally transported by container boats, but increasing amounts are shipped through air carriers to save time. However, air carriers have major environmental impact, and it could result in a 35% increase in carbon emissions (Niinimäki et al. , 2020, pg: 191). Additional transportation occurs during the process of creating a complete outfit, and at the end of their life cycle, many garments are burned or transported to landfills or developing countries, often by ship to Africa, with few being recycled (Niinimäki, 2020, pg: 191).

*Figure 2* by Niinimäki et al. (2020) provides an overview of the entire process of the fashion industry, including the garment production, distribution, retail, and consumption by illustrating the countries involved in these different stages. It illustrates that natural fibers originate from various regions including China, USA, India, Pakistan, Brazil, Uzbekistan, Russia, and Sweden. Synthetic materials are manufactured in the USA, Southeast Asia, and the Middle East. Yarn and textile manufacturing take place in China, India, Southeast Asia, USA, Turkey, and South Korea. Additionally, trims manufacturing occurs in China, India, and Southeast Asia, while garment manufacturing is located in China, Bangladesh, Vietnam, India, and Turkey. Retail distribution is concentrated in the UK, EU, and the USA, with retailers and consumers primarily located in these regions. However, at each stage of production, the fashion industry experiences various environmental impacts. Therefore, in the 1960s and 1970s, environmentalists began advocating for production methods that were more environmentally friendly (Gwilt 2020, pg: 7).

During the 1980s-1990s the concept of eco-design and eco fashion were introduced, and several companies started to implement more sustainable methods. Eco or green design tries to eliminate environmental impacts that are caused by the garment industry, and eco design aims to lower the pollution and use of natural resources (Gwilt, 2020, pg: 7). After the 2000s different companies started to implement more sustainable processes, and introduce the circular economy due to different environmental, social, and economic impacts of the fashion industry (Gwilt 2020, pg: 8-9).

**Figure 2**



Source: Niinimäki et al. (2020)

### **Environmental Impact**

The environmental impact consists of different components such as water waste, chemical dyes, carbon footprint, etc. The fashion industry uses lots of water, around 200 tonnes of water was used for the production of one tonne of textile (Niinimäki et al., 2020, pg: 191). Most of that water usage is included in the cotton farming, and textile manufacturing processes



such as dyeing, printing, etc. To produce one T-shirt and pair of jeans, cotton farming causes 88% and 92% of the total water footprint (Niinimäki et al., 2020, pg: 191). Another issue is the carbon footprint, and 10% of global greenhouse gas emissions is caused by the textile industry (Niinimäki et al., 2020, pg: 191). The fashion industry uses high energy and carbon footprint is the consequence of it. For instance, in China, corporations use coal-based energy and it has 40% more of the carbon footprint compared to Turkey's or Europe's production (Niinimäki et al., 2020, pg: 192). Furthermore, high demand from customers for more clothing is what pushes the energy usage. The highest energy usage during synthetic fiber manufacturing originates from fossil fuels. The lowest usage of energy happens during the manufacturing of natural fibers. To produce a 250-g T-shirt, around 2.7 m<sup>3</sup> in the unweighted full-water footprint is caused or 26 m<sup>3</sup>, when weighted (Niinimäki et al., 2020, pg: 192). Furthermore, the **Box 1** represents the overall water and carbon footprint of producing one T-shirt and pair of jeans. It describes how much energy usage, water usage and carbon footprint they have during the manufacturing process.

### Box 1

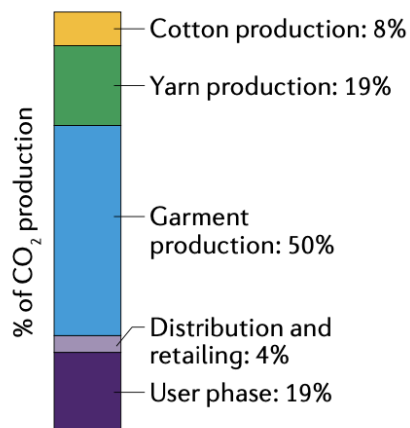
#### T-shirt

kg CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent: 2.6



12 m<sup>3</sup> equivalent water scarcity (92%)

54 MJ energy consumption



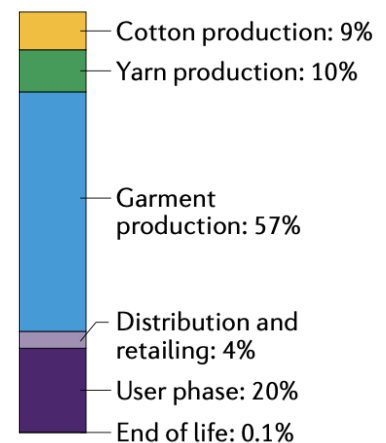
#### Jeans

kg CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent: 11.5



55 m<sup>3</sup> equivalent water scarcity (93%)

247 MJ energy consumption



Additionally, a large amount of disposed textiles are sent to landfills, often to third world countries. Only 3 to 10 % is reused in Europe, and 30-40% are exported for reuse (Long and Nasiry, 2019, pg: 11). Around \$400 billion worth of apparel is being wasted annually; global consumption of textiles increases and its per capita is 7–13 kg per person (Papamichael et al., 2023, pg: 251). Since many consumers like cheap, fashionable clothing, they frequently get rid of their old clothes and purchase more new ones, this causes the mindset of ‘the throwaway society’. The ‘throwaway society’ will cause more than 148 million tons in fashion waste before 2030 (Papamichael, et al., 2023, pg: 252). Therefore, the environmental impact is caused by different components of the fashion industry process.

### ***Labor Impacts***

The fashion industry negatively affects garment workers through exposure to toxic materials, low wages, and poor and unsafe working conditions. In terms of low wages and poor working conditions, which in turn have health impacts. In order to maintain competitiveness within the industry, fast fashion corporations minimize production costs and engage in unethical practices. These firms prioritize profits over labor welfare, disregarding the well-being of workers (Nazarali, pg: 10). Some garment workers receive wages below the minimum wage (Nazarali, pg: 10). Additionally, there is a distinction between the minimum wage, set by the government as a wage floor, and the living wage, which represents the minimum amount necessary for a person to live and support themselves (Nazarali, pg: 12). Despite this, 93% of retail companies fail to pay garment workers a living wage (Cited by Nazarali, pg: 12).

Furthermore, the companies don't offer safe working conditions, including dangerous working conditions, long hours of work, with no to little amount of sick days off since the fast fashion industry is fast paced, therefore, workers risk their health everyday when they go to

work. In Bangladesh, garment factories have experienced collapses or fires, resulting in the deaths and injuries of hundreds of workers due to poor electrical systems and the practice of locking emergency exits, which worsens the situation (Nazarali, pg: 19). One major event took place on April 24, 2013, when around 1,135 garment workers died and 2,500 suffered injuries across five local factories (Chowdhury, 2017). Furthermore, the absence of adequate professional assistance in these factories resulted in physical and psychological harm to workers.

In addition to low wages, and poor and dangerous working conditions, labor is exposed to toxic chemicals that are used during the production process (Chang 2020, pg:2). Based on a survey conducted in Bangladesh, 38% of women reported different symptoms after working in garment factories, symptoms were cold, cough, and fever due to low food intake, long working hours, few sick days off, and poor working conditions (Nazarali, pg: 20-21). Women are affected by the fast fashion industry more than men, because they are much more likely to be employed in these factories, which is in turn linked to social gender roles and stereotypes (Chang 2020, pg: 3).

Furthermore, child labor remains a significant issue in fast fashion factories, with children being paid less than adults, and subject to abuse and mistreatment by supervisors. This leads to physical and psychological harm to children both in the present and in their future, limiting their opportunities for proper education and employment (Chang 2020, pg: 23). Children are sometimes forced to work underground since in some countries, child labor is illegal, and workers prefer to have children as their labor due to their perceived obedience, affordability, and efficiency (Williams 2022 pg: 5). To sum up, women and children are most affected by the negative impacts of the fast fashion industry, causing inequality and injustice.

### ***Economic Impact***

The last impact that I want to discuss is the economic effect of the fast fashion industry. Some individuals support fast fashion because it offers different types of jobs, including in apparel manufacturing, in apparel wholesalers, and in physical stores (Maloney 2019, pg: 2). Furthermore, consumers are able to purchase clothing with lower costs, and firms can experience profit growth (Williams 2022, pg: 6). In 2019, global apparel and footwear sales were estimated at 1.7 trillion USD, with projections indicating a growth to approximately 2.9 trillion USD by 2030 (Goel and Michaelides, 2022, pg: 572). Additionally, the annual economic impact from New York Fashion Week was \$600 million, much greater than the Super Bowl with \$347 million (Maloney 2019, pg: 1).

In developed countries, the jobs in the fast fashion industry have decreased, since the clothes sold are cheap and they need low cost labor. The production is outsourced in developing countries, which caused the decrease of 1.2 million jobs in the United States textile and garment industry during 1990 and 2012 (Williams, 2022, pg: 7). Furthermore, 1 million people worked in the United Kingdom textile industry, and it has decreased to around 100,000 in the 2010's (Williams, 2022, pg: 7).

### ***Sustainable Fashion***

Due to different negative impacts of the fast fashion industry, sustainable fashion was introduced. It was eco, green or ethical fashion during the 1960s. Sustainable fashion considers environmental, social, and economic prices paid in the fashion industry (Henninger et al., 2016, pg: 2). Similarly, the negative effects of the fast fashion industry are categorized into three: environmental, social, and economic. Slow fashion or sustainable fashion encourages lower garment and textile productions, more quality clothing, and better working situations for fashion industry workers. Moreover, sustainable fashion focuses on the supply chain, upcycling,

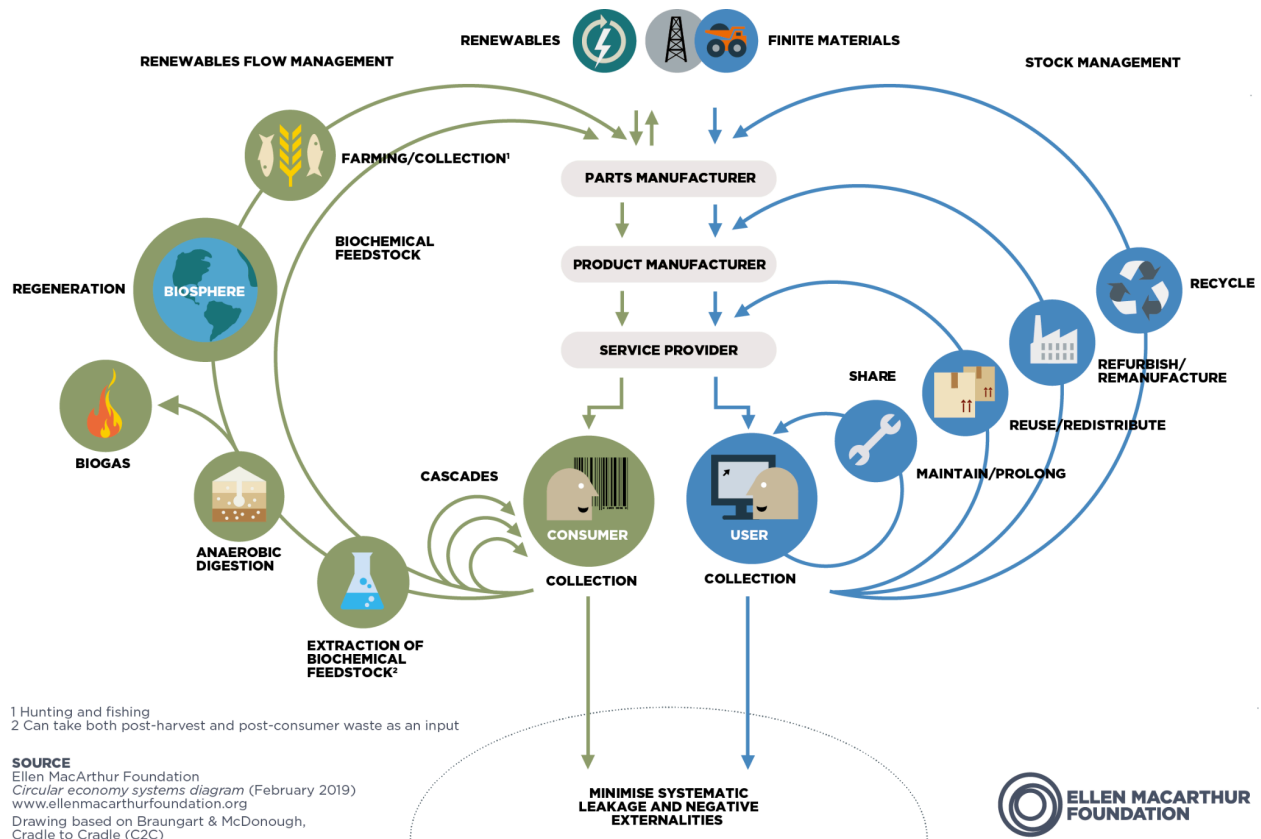
recycling and using more sustainable materials within the production of clothing (Henninger et al., 2016, pg: 3). The original meaning of sustainable fashion was thought to be “less fast”. Sustainability within the fashion industry is essential due to the many negative impacts that it brings to the environment and the society as well.

### ***Circular Economy & Supply Chain Change***

Circular Economy is one of the main topics that nonprofit organizations advocate about. According to the Ellen MacArthur Foundation, a circular economy where there is no waste, and materials are just being reused/recycled. It is based on three principles, Eliminate waste and pollution, Circulate products and materials (at their value), and Regenerate nature (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2024). The fashion industry has the most waste and pollution compared to other industries. The reason is that food and other biological materials are safe to go back to nature, however, clothing will just pollute the environment. Based on the first principle: Eliminate waste and pollution, NGO suggests to shift from linear to circular fashion. Linear fashion is a take-make-waste system, while in circular economy products are maintained, shared, reused, repaired, refurbished, remanufactured, and, as a last resort, recycled (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2024). The second principle: Circulate products and materials include two types of ways that products or raw materials can be circulated. The Technical cycle happens when products can be used until their full capacity, and then when the product can't be used, its parts will be remanufactured. The other type is through a biological cycle, where materials can't be rescued, they need to go back in a biological cycle. For example, some materials, or nutrients such as nitrogen, potassium, etc. can help regenerate the land to get more food or cotton and wood (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2024). Furthermore, it's important to design products that can either be recycled, or reused using the technical cycle or the biological cycle. The third

principle: regenerate nature underlines the importance of regeneration, meaning that instead of degrading nature, we should help nature to rebuild soils and contribute to biodiversity (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2024). Additionally, if the circular economy evolves, productions will use less land, natural resources, and materials, since sourcing will be in a regenerative way. Another important positive impact of the circular economy will be addressing climate change, because less energy will be used and around 55 global greenhouse gas emissions will be reduced (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2024). Therefore, a circular economy will benefit biodiversity, climate, and individuals if the pollution from production is reduced. See ***The Butterfly Diagram: Visualizing the Circular Economy***, for the illustration of flow of materials in a circular economy. The Ellen MacArthur Foundation is one of the biggest foundations that focuses on the circular economy, and offers further information about each topic including: biodiversity, built environment, business, cities, climate, design, education, fashion, finance, food, plastics, and policy. The NGO believes that using policies as tools to shift to the circular economy is essential to change customer preferences (Liverani, Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 0:26).

***The Butterfly Diagram: Visualizing the Circular Economy***

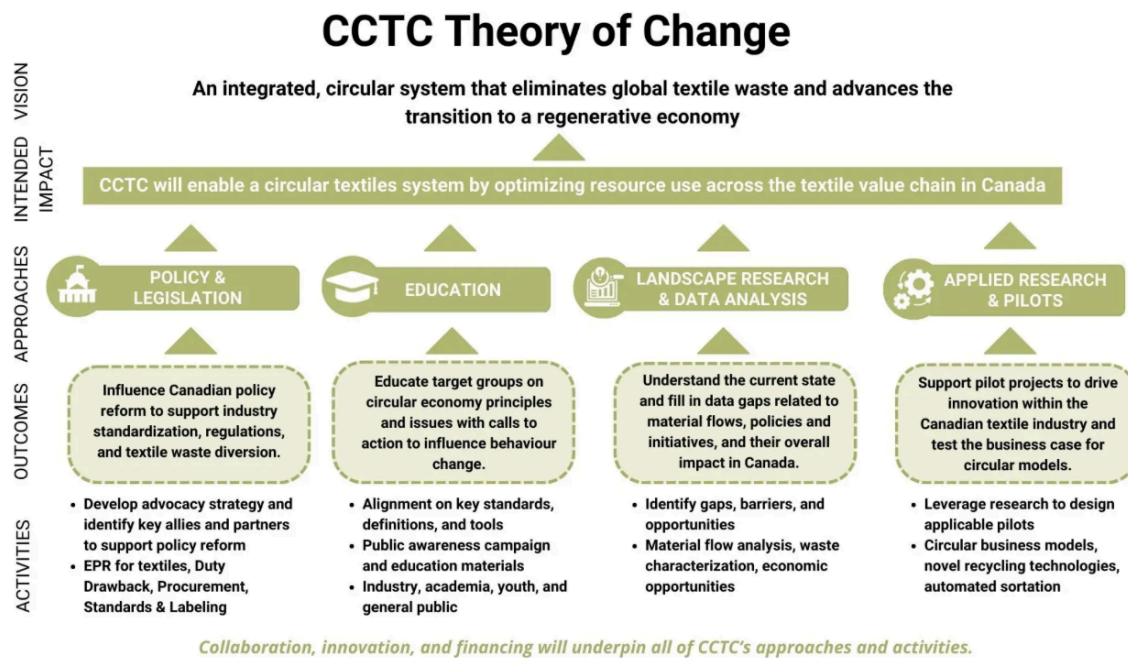


Source: Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2023

Other nonprofits that I found advocate for the significance of the circular economy are Fashion Takes Action, Back to Eco, and Global Fashion Agenda. Fashion Takes Action (FTA) focuses on sharing all of their resources, and information to aid circular procedures in the textile industry. It provides the CCTC Theory of Change, and **Figure 3** illustrates the summary of the circulatory system that FTA is trying to implement to eliminate global textile waste in Canada. FTA indicates some approaches and activities that need to be done in order to achieve its vision and greater impact. For example, it declares policy and legislation development, educating groups, research and analysis, and supports that research by developing models (Fashion Takes Action, 2024). Furthermore, FTA has partnerships within Canada and internationally, and financial support from Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC), where they protect

nature, predict weather and environmental conditions, prevent pollution, and more<sup>1</sup>. The ngo raises awareness about the damage of textile waste, and asks other stakeholders within the fashion industry to help implement the system.

**Figure 3**



Additionally, Back To Eco works with different partners to manage textile waste, overseeing its processing until the creation of a new product. The organization handles material management, eco-design, and the production of the final product (Back To Eco, 2024). It holds workshops specifically for cutting and reusing the material, and its environmental impact is almost close to zero; It's also funded by the European Union (Back To Eco, 2024). Comparing Fashion Takes action to Back To Eco, Back To Eco is actually already contributing to the circular economy, by these actions. Furthermore, Global Fashion Agenda (GFA) aims to change the supply chain through promoting the SWITCH to Circular Economy Value Chains

<sup>1</sup> Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC): Environment and Climate Change Canada, "Government of Canada," accessed on May 5, 2024. <https://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change.html>.



(SWITCH2CE) initiative under the European Union with the collaboration of the Government of Finland, UNIDO, Chatham House, Circle Economy, and the European Investment Bank, that seeks to integrate circular practices in: Plastic Packaging, Textile & Garments, and ICT and Electronics. The initiative targets sustainable growth, climate development, low carbon emissions, healthier and safer working conditions (GFA, 2024).

Likewise, GFA highlights the importance of the Circular Fashion Partnership, which is a cross-sectoral initiative that contains the implementation of circular fashion systems in textile, garment, and footwear industries (Global Fashion Agenda, 2024). The initiative is essential in order to diminish the waste that is generated from the fashion industry, which is active in Bangladesh and Cambodia. The initiative had successes including registering 8,500 tons of waste on the Reserve Resources, platform that provides different roles within the supply chain<sup>2</sup>, and its 40% has already passed to recycling companies (GFA, 2024). The initiative actively works with the Bangladesh government to authorize the waste management sector (Global Fashion Agenda, 2024). Bangladesh also has the cheapest garment workers in the world, with bad working conditions and long working hours (Cited by Chang 2020, pg: 3). Additionally, Circular Fashion Partnership holds events, and forums to further bring awareness to circular fashion, and work with different stakeholders to contribute to elimination of the waste. The pattern that I observed in the circular economy initiatives is that they mostly collaborate with different actors in the fashion industry; transforming the whole system requires additional help from others, especially the government and customers.

### ***Actors in the Fast Fashion Industry***

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<sup>2</sup> Reserve Resources: Reverse Resources (RR) Platform. "How Does It Work?" Accessed on May 5, 2024. <https://reverseresources.net/how-does-it-work/>.

Due to the negative effects of fast fashion, various stakeholders including corporations, intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), states, and individuals are actively engaged in raising awareness and advocating for sustainable fashion practices. This involves implementing regulations on clothing production, promoting ethical sourcing of materials, and supporting initiatives that encourage recycling and upcycling of garments.

### ***Fashion Corporations***

Fashion brands are the ones who actually contribute to raising greenhouse gasses and landfill waste. The brands that contribute the most to fast fashion production are H&M, Zara, and Forever 21, in a way that they offer new styles every week with low prices (Wren, 2022). SHEIN uses Artificial Intelligence (AI) to identify customers' wants and needs. Furthermore, SHEIN offers 2,000 new clothes every day, and delivers products in 3 days, while Zara takes 3 weeks (Gómara 2023, pg:19). SHEIN got its attention mostly during Covid, when people were spending their time mostly on laptops and social media. One of their biggest social media platforms is TikTok, where the brand showcases its products through engaging content and unboxing experiences (Gómara 2023, pg:19).

With increasing awareness of the negative impacts of the fast fashion industry, brands are shifting towards sustainability and adopting more ethical practices (Wren 2022, pg: 1). Consequently, corporations are integrating Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) into their business models. CSR involves companies voluntarily addressing social and environmental concerns in their operations and interactions with stakeholders (Cited by Gómara, 2023, pg: 22). Social responsibility within CSR encompasses labor rights, fair wages, and working conditions, while environmental responsibility focuses on the industry's ecological footprint, including

pollution, waste, and materials (Chan, 2020, pg: 6). Companies implement CSR for various reasons, including enhancing brand trust among customers, leading to improved reputation and ultimately higher profits (Cited by Bross, 2020, pg. 16). However, brands like SHEIN fail to contribute to CSR implementation; instead, they promote excessive clothing consumption through discount codes and influencer endorsements, resulting in increased landfill waste (Cited by Cómara, 2023, pg: 25). Additionally, SHEIN lacks transparency and has faced allegations of exploiting workers, subjecting them to long hours in poor conditions (Cómara, 2023, pg: 25).

Corporations also mislead customers by greenwashing. Greenwashing is when brands do poorly with environmental practices and sustainability, but displaying positive information about it (Alexa, 2022, pg: 264). Brands may do green marketing, where they advertise how they contribute to environmentally friendly practices to just attract the customer. One of such brands is H&M; even though it launched a sustainable fashion collection called H&M Conscious, it still isn't fully transparent (Alexa, 2022, pg: 264). For example, it doesn't describe what organic materials they use, or how they do recycling. In addition, H&M provides a recycling technology called Loop in its stores, which transforms old clothing into new fibers. However, it doesn't provide information about the types of materials suitable for this technology (Alexa 2022, pg: 266). To conclude, while some brands are making efforts towards corporate social responsibility and sustainability, many still fall short in terms of transparency. This lack of openness about their practices and supply chains undermines trust and accountability within the industry. The need for greater transparency is essential, particularly in addressing issues such as worker exploitation and environmental impact. This will be explored further in the following section, which looks into the interventions of non-governmental organizations aiming to foster transparency and accountability in the fashion industry.

### ***NGOs***

Casey (2015) outlines nonprofit sector, and the evolution of NGOs. He articulates the role of volunteering, where one devotes their "time and effort to contribute to the common good, without expectation of material reward" (Casey, 2015, pg: 68). Casey (2015) discusses the role of religious and philanthropic institutions in providing aid and support to society, which contributed to the development of the nonprofit sector (p. 15). He explores various movements and civil societies and their influence on shaping this sector. Furthermore, Casey (2015) highlights the importance of the government. He underlines that the non-profit sector and the government work together mutually. However, he calls states monopsonies, in terms of the state being an only buyer, meaning there is inequality between the nonprofits and the government (Casey, 2015, pg: 59). Moreover, the government can either help the nonprofit sector, fund it, or interfere and limit its activity, and I will look at government and NGOs collaboration later in the paper as well.

### ***Consumers***

Consumers play a crucial role in the fast fashion industry. With their purchasing power, they influence both the growth of fast fashion and the promotion of sustainable fashion. However, what motivates individuals to consume so much fast fashion remains a relevant question. One of the reasons is that some individuals want to feel they are part of some groups, and they seek approval from others (Denisova 2021, pg: 11). Others are compulsive shoppers, meaning that they are emotional buyers and they get easily attracted by the shops due to music, smells, posters and overall environment within stores (Denisova 2021, pg: 11). Furthermore, brands push opinions on customers through influencers, by social media. The online opinion leaders are those who can influence others within their environment whether online or offline,

but they are the ones who can give reviews and advertise clothing and influence consumers (Shaozhi 2020, pg: 40).

The question of whether consumers know the truth depends on whether they are actually aware of fast fashion and the brands that contribute to it. According to research conducted by Zekri (2021) in Morocco and Turkey, the majority of respondents lacked knowledge about fast fashion. People tend to purchase clothes whenever they feel the need to update their wardrobes or when trends change. Even if they buy clothing based on affordability and trend, they are aware of labor conditions and the negative impact of fast fashion on the environment, and say that they support slow fashion phenomena (Zekri 2021, pg: 658). Furthermore, when consumers were informed about Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives by certain brands, 31.6% doubted the companies' commitment to CSR due to greenwashing practices (Jiang 2022, pg: 108). Moreover, although 59.83% of respondents expressed willingness to purchase sustainable clothing, 86% refrained from doing so due to high costs (Jiang 2022, pg: 108).

To sum up consumers' role in the fast fashion industry, they are the ones with the purchasing power. They can either do more research on the brand's practices, shop less and mindfully, or change consumption habits. However, the problem is that fast fashion industry is tempting to many, and due to lack of information “a person chooses what to see and what not to see”, meaning that some either contribute to sustainable fashion fully or not at all, or if they know about it they stress too much which does not aid the sustainable fashion (Denisova 2021, pg: 14). To stimulate a more ethical fashion industry, Denisova (2021) proposes the need for greater consumer engagement in sustainability initiatives and the popularization of slow fashion trends (Denisova, 2021, pg: 15). Therefore, if it's not a collective decision towards more sustainable fashion, it will be challenging to eliminate fast fashion.

### ***State Interventions***

Some governments have acted in favor of sustainable production. Different states in the USA have proposed 14 bills for sustainable development in the fashion industry, 7 of them were adopted and 7 are under review. One of the adopted reforms is The California Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006. The act requires transparency from corporations regarding greenhouse gas emissions in California. It pushes big brands in California with revenues exceeding \$1 billion to provide information publicly about Greenhouse Gas Emissions for more awareness (Hey Fashion, 2024). The bill also aims to provide public access to data via online, helping individuals make conscious choices. The financial help that this reform provides is that they are willing to fund corporations for any implementation costs that might arise for any requirements (Hey Fashion, 2024).

Hey Fashion! is one of the organizations that advocate sustainability in the fashion industry. It provides a policy tracker for different bills that states have passed. A bill adopted in December 2023 by The New York Department of State bans per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in the fashion industry production (Hey Fashion, 2024). PFAS are synthetic chemicals used in the textile manufacturing that have negative impacts on people's health and the environment (Hey Fashion, 2024). Every type of clothing apparel is taken into consideration by the bill including shirts, dresses, pants, leggings, tops, and many more, except for professional clothes that require the material for individuals' safety (Hey Fashion, 2024). In conclusion, certain states in the US continue to pass bills toward more sustainable fashion; however, many other acts either aren't adopted or are under review.

Unfortunately, one of the important bills toward a more sustainable fashion industry, didn't pass. The New York State Senate introduced Bill S7428A in 2021, which stated that

companies and factories would take responsibility for any fast fashion post-production consequence whether it involves individuals or the environment (Lupo et al., Arent Fox Schiff, 2022). The act would take into consideration the supply chain and its actions, although the bill didn't pass. It was introduced in the Committee Senate, but due to no help from other actors and no further efforts, it didn't go far into the government. If the bill passed, apparel and footwear brands in New York would be required to disclose information about their supply chain and every aspect of their operations. Furthermore, the brands would have to pay 2% fines of their annual revenue and report any impacts or issues in their business exercises (Lupo et al., Arent Fox Schiff, 2022). The bill would be one of the important factors and the next step in the sustainability fashion industry; although it didn't go too far.

Different EU countries such as France, and Italy also made some contributions to supporting sustainable fashion. The French government enacted a bill on April 29, 2022, aimed at educating consumers about products that generate waste and advocating for environmental well-being. The bill takes into consideration different actors in the fashion industry, including corporations, importers, distributors, consumers, and others (Hey Fashion, 2024). Its goal is to push these actors to be more transparent and provide information to consumers about toxic materials, reusability, and inputs (Hey Fashion, 2024). The reform forbids statements such as “biodegradable” or “environmentally friendly” on products, and mandates that corporations provide consumers with digital access to further information about sustainability (Hey Fashion, 2024). Overall, the bill gives opportunity to consumers to get informed about companies’ actual contribution to sustainable clothing, and help them make better choices.

Furthermore, Italy engages in European debates concerning corporate responsibility public policies, adopting various approaches. Firstly, it assures citizens of the validity of

corporations' claims regarding corporate responsibility. Secondly, it actively works to establish performance indicators that companies can integrate (Albareda et al., 2006, pg: 390).

Additionally, Italy encourages collaboration with small and medium-sized enterprises to formulate corporate responsibility policies.

Italian regional governments also play a major role in implementing public policies on corporate responsibility. For instance, the Tuscany region has a corporate social responsibility office where they have introduced the Fabrica Ethica Project (Albareda et al., 2006, pg: 391). Fabrica Ethica Project is an initiative that supports social responsibility for companies (Italy Magazine, 2007). The Emilia-Romagna region in Italy also implemented a program "Chiaro, Sicuro, Regolare", that advocates for safe, and fair labor working conditions (Albareda et al., 2006, pg: 391). There are also other initiatives that the Umbria region, the Marches region, Sicily region, Provinces of Chieti, Lecce and Novara, and the city of Rome contributed to increase the promotion of sustainability within corporations. Furthermore, the Italian government has established a Corporate Social Responsibility Multi-Stakeholder Forum, including 50 representatives from employers, unions, and civil society, to further advance these efforts (Albareda et al., 2006, pg. 391). Not only does the Italian government provide initiatives and policies towards corporate sustainability, but it also takes into consideration the civil society's and non-profit's demands.

Another state that is active in helping sustainability, is the British government. Its contribution to corporate responsibility is shown in many ways, including working with companies, different unions, and consumers. It advocates for economic, social, and environmental practices within corporations, and brings awareness through policy making that causes more ethical activities by firms (Albareda et al., 2006, pg. 393). The government



appointed a political figure, a Minister for Corporate Social Responsibility to pass more policies that promote sustainability. Moreover, the UK government has been funding corporate responsibility practices and organizations, supporting small businesses and strengthening policies to bring awareness with the help of civil society (Albareda et al., 2006, pg. 395).

In conclusion, I have observed that the different states within the US are actively pushing for more policy changes. Similarly, Italian regions are participating in helping sustainability within the fashion industry, and France and the British government try to aid sustainable fashion on a country level.

### **EU Interventions**

Not only the EU states, but the EU itself, plays a major role in leading the shift towards a more sustainable garment and textile industry. The European Green Deal, aims to address climate change and promote sustainability<sup>3</sup>, and The Circular Economy Action Plan, (CEAP) came up with the EU Strategy on textiles where they set a framework to address the environmental and social impacts caused by the textile industry. Their goal is to use a recovery plan to its maximum capacity, invest in sustainability, use innovative textiles, and recycling processes, and try to eliminate the release of microplastics (European Commission, 2024). To activate the initiative, the EU plans to set a target to reach the textile recycling goal, suitable for a circular economy, and work with companies, member states, and civil society (European Commission, 2024). The EU will collaborate with other actors through events, conferences, and workshops to better regulate it.

Furthermore, the initiative looks at specific problems within the fast fashion industry including dangerous chemicals, and aims to work for more sustainable production using raw

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<sup>3</sup> The European Green Deal: European Commission. "European Green Deal." Retrieved from [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en).

materials. Additionally, it will take into consideration workers' rights, sustainable consumption, land and water use, and transparency within the textile industries (European Commission). The Commission provided several actions that it would take to implement the strategy. First, the framework will establish requirements for textiles, including quality, repairability, reusability, transparency from suppliers, and so on. It would also target greenwashing to bring awareness to real sustainability and give customers more accurate information (European Commission). Furthermore, the framework will intervene with the globalization of waste, meaning the export and import of extra waste globally. The framework implementation process includes different elements such as The Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation, Empowering Consumers in the Green Transition Directive and Green Claims Directive, The "Reset the Trend" campaign, The Waste Shipment Regulation, Transition Pathway for the Textiles Ecosystem, and the European Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform; furthermore, Horizon Europe engaged in the circular economy, as well as, Waste Framework Directive, and Textile Labeling Regulation. All of them contribute to sustainable fashion. Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation sets sustainable/ecodesign requirements for textiles and other goods (European Commission).

Other regulations also focus on waste issues, including the Waste Shipment Regulation. Moreover, the European Commission revised the textile labeling regulation. The regulation has a lot of details that could potentially aid sustainability within the textile industry. Several key components are: disclosing the complete fiber composition of textile items, technical requirements for introducing new fiber names, and specifying any non-textile components of animal origin, and more. Furthermore, the products need to be already labeled before being made available on the market (The Textile Labeling Regulation (EU) 1007/2011). Consequently, this

regulation is essential in terms of monitoring and ensuring transparency in the textile industry, thereby contributing to consumer awareness and environmental protection.

The European Commission developed the circular economy action plan in March 2020. It's an essential part of the European Green Deal, which brings awareness to the circular economy through less use of natural resources and sustainable activities (European Commission). The action's goal is to promote the widespread adoption of sustainable products as the standard in the EU, concentrating efforts on sectors with high resource consumption and significant potential for circularity, including packaging, textiles, construction, plastics, food, water, buildings, and nutrients (European Commission). Document 52020DC0098: A New Circular Economy Action Plan For a Cleaner and More Competitive Europe by the European Commission talks about how important circularity is, and how it can save materials throughout the production, and value chains. It would bring awareness to a circular economy by finding out ways in which they could encourage industry to practice more circular and sustainable procedures, making sure companies acquire green technologies. To understand the significance of a circular economy, it's crucial to comprehend its principles and benefits. *Circular Economy* concept emerged in the 1990s, inspired by Kenneth Boulding's (1966) (Kovacic et al., 2020, pg: 15). The fundamental idea behind a circular economy is to transition the economic system towards circularity, wherein waste is repurposed and transformed into valuable inputs (Kovacic et al., 2020, pg: 18). Therefore, the significance of the *circular economy* lies in addressing the increasing clothing consumption, resulting in an additional 148 million tons of waste by 2023 (Papamichael et al., 2023, pg. 252). With the fashion industry already contributing 20% to global waste, implementing circular practices is crucial (Papamichael et al., 2023, pg. 252).

However, transitioning to a *circular economy* is not without its challenges. Linear economies, opposite of *circular economy*, always contributed to continuous competition, resource extraction, and expansion within the economy, therefore, Kovacic et al. (2020) argue that circular economy will challenge the economic growth due to some industries dependence of imported materials and fossil fuels (Kovacic et al., 2020, pg: 61). Another significant barrier lies in policies. Kovacic et al. (2020) argue that achieving a full transition to a circular economy requires increased government intervention and economic incentives to drive policy implementation (Kovacic et al., 2020, p. 127). Consequently, let us analyze the state interventions, where governmental policies and initiatives play an important role in guiding the path toward a circular economy. By examining these interventions, we can find ways to make policies better for promoting the circular economy.

### ***Methods***

To identify why these states' contributions aren't enough without NGOs' involvement, I put together a dataset focused on nonprofit organizations working against the fast fashion industry. Since my research was conducted in English, I only found information through websites in English. While doing the research, I found The United Nations Fashion and Lifestyle Network website, where different organizations register their organizations and provide information including which SDGs they contribute to. Furthermore, I have observed that translation in English isn't available for one organization, which is the Fashion Revolution Germany, its parent organization Fashion Revolution does provide a website in English. Also, the website can't be accessed for the Sustainable Fashion Innovation Society.

Based on my web search, I created a Google sheet with different categories for every NGO that I observed during my research. The data set includes not only the organization's

name, and website link, but also various categories that I identified as important. These include if the organization is an NGO or another type of entity (shown in 4th column through this [link](#)) by displaying non-profits with '1' and others with '0'. I also color coded entities, NGOs are default color- in black, civil organizations are in blue, and philanthropic organizations are in red.

Furthermore, the 5th column displays the foundation year, 6th column is for the NGO's location, 6th is an official address of the organization, 7th column is for the country code of the home office, 8th column shows in how many countries the entity exists, 9th column is for any additional information for number of countries, since some NGOs don't provide the exact information, and the 10th column displays entity's mission or vision statement. I then developed a set of specific categories related to the manner in which various organizations address the issues within the fast fashion industry. I categorized the NGOs based on their primary focus areas. The first category is Post-Work Environment, followed by Work Environment, Labor, Inputs, Textiles, Apparel, Industry/Supply Chain, Social Impact, Women Empowerment, Education, Artisans/Designers, Consumers, and Animal Rights. These categories were derived from the common themes found among the NGOs' objectives. Additionally, I provide information on what other specific things these organizations focus on in my 27th column. Starting with the 28th column I provide information on which Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) these nonprofits contribute to. Some of the NGOs that I found outside the United Nations Fashion and Lifestyle Network, do not display their SDGs information. If the organization supports the specific SDG, I wrote '1' or otherwise '0' for them.

***The Columns are shown in this spreadsheet:*** [📄 NGOs Against Fast Fashion](#)

***NGO Interventions***

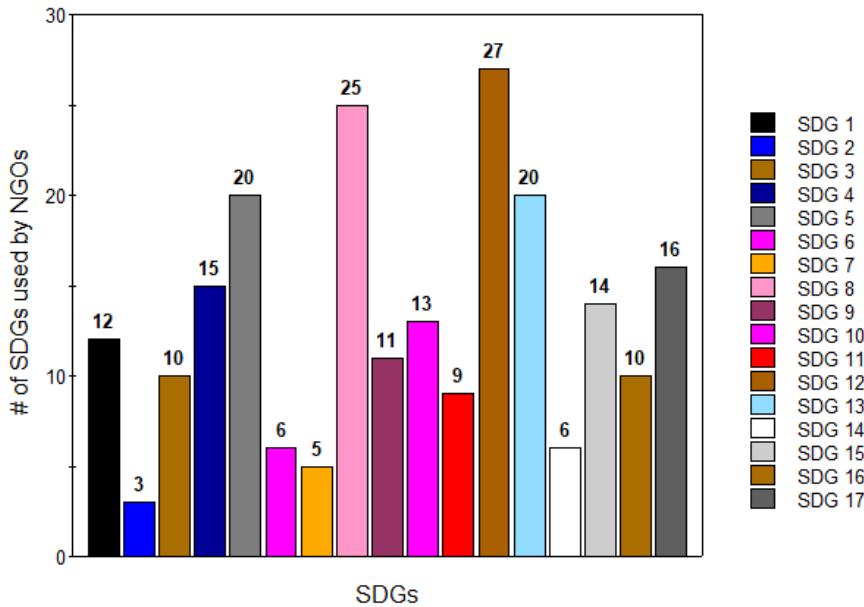
In total I identified 60 NGOs with on-line platforms, (*See Appendix 1 for more*) 30 by just searching on different platforms, and 30 through The United Nations Fashion and Lifestyle Network. The United Nations Fashion and Lifestyle Network is an online platform provided by the UN. Its main goal is to contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). SDGs are goals developed by the United Nations in 2015 "to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that by 2030 all people enjoy peace and prosperity" (UNDP, 2024). SDGs look at all perspectives including, social, economic, and environmental sustainability. Through the United Nations Fashion and Lifestyle Network, different organizations bring awareness to the fashion industry issue while being transparent, and inclusive (UN, 2024).

There are 17 SDGs; 1) No Poverty, 2) Zero Hunger, 3) Good Health & Well-Being, 4) Quality Education, 5) Gender Equality, 6) Clean Water & Sanitation, 7) Affordable & Clean Energy, 8) Decent Work & Economic Growth, 9) Industry, Innovation & Infrastructure, 10) Reduced Inequalities, 11) Sustainable Cities & Communities, 12) Responsible Consumption & Production, 13) Climate Action, 14) Life Below Water, 15) Life On Land, 16) Peace, Justice & Strong Institutions, and the last one 17) Partnerships For The Goals (United Nations Development Programme). All of these goals need to be implemented by governments, international communities, companies and UN state members (The Sustainable Development Goals Report, 2023, pg: 5). The UN provides information after each year for the SDG Progress. Looking at the 2023 edition, the 12th SDG about sustainable consumption and production depicts that fossil fuel usage has increased in 2014, despite the actions taken against it.

Some companies started to publish sustainability reports more, but in terms of SDGs, only 10 percent report on all 17 Goals (The Sustainable Development Goals Report, 2023, pg: 36). Awareness about sustainability by companies is crucial, making reporting essential. Looking

at the **Bar Graph 1**, I found out that NGOs mostly engaged with the 12th SDG, which is Responsible Consumption and Production; 27 of them stated that they contributed to that SDG. Furthermore, second place was the 8th SDG (Decent Work & Economic Growth), with 25 NGOs, and third and fourth places were the 5th SDG (Gender Equality) and the 13th SDG (Climate Action) respectively with 20 NGOs. It's logical for NGOs to contribute to these SDGs since the most significant issues I observed within the fast fashion industry include excessive consumption and production, poor working conditions, inequality, and negative climate impacts.

**Bar Graph 1**

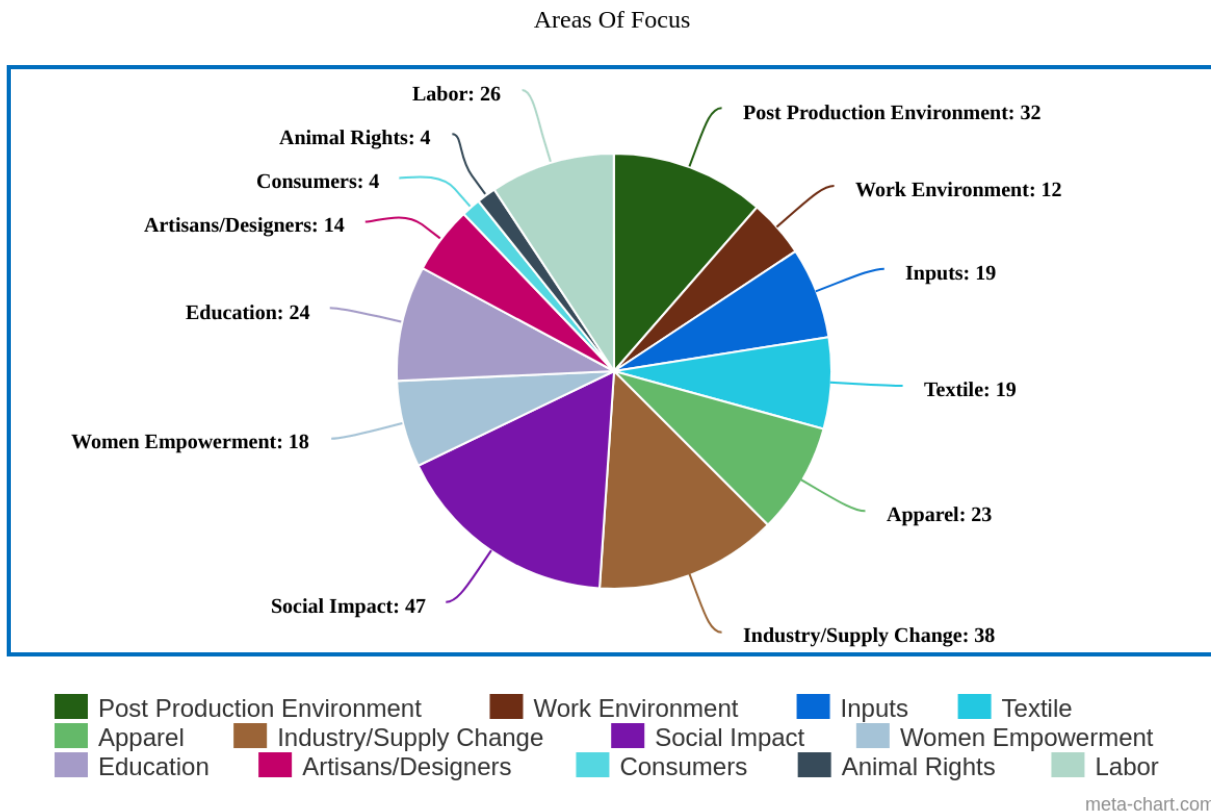


**Pie Chart 1** illustrates the primary areas of focus for these NGOs within the fast fashion industry. 32 of them focus on the post-production environment, 12 of them look at the work environment, 26 on labor, 19 on inputs, 19 on textiles, 23 on apparel, 38 on changing the industry/supply chain of the fast fashion production, 47 on the social impact, 18 on women

empowerment within the sustainable fashion industry, 24 providing education, 14 on supporting artisans/designers, 4 of specifically on customers, and 4 on animal rights.

The comparison between the SDGs supported by NGOs and the categories of focus areas I outlined reveals significant connections. Climate change, a critical issue addressed by NGOs, underscores the importance of the post-production environment. Moreover, categories such as work environment and labor are vital, aligning with SDG 8, which emphasizes decent work. Additionally, given the gender inequalities widespread in the fast fashion industry, NGOs prioritize initiatives aimed at empowering women, highlighting the significance of the "women empowerment" focus area.

***Pie Chart 1: Areas of Focus***



Geographically speaking, the USA has the most NGOs by far, being on top with 20 NGOs, following the UK, and Netherlands with 8 NGOs respectively, Italy with 3, Germany,



Australia, and Ghana with 2 individually, and Scotland, Pakistan, India, France, Columbia, Mali, Argentina, Grenada, Canada, and Denmark with 1 NGOs respectively. Other remaining 2 NGOs do not specify their location. Refer to *Map 1* for a more illustrative representation. However, only 58 of the NGOs provide exact locations, Ethical Fashion Institute (EFI), and Better Cotton Institute (BCI) aren't shown on the map.

**Map 1: NGOs Against Fast Fashion by Location**



Source: Google My Maps (59 NGOs detected on the map due to Availability of Location information| 1 for NGO, 0 for Other)

**NGOs Against Fast Fashion**

-  0
-  1

[See this map at this [link](#)]

To analyze more initiatives by the NGOs that I observed, I sub-categorized their activities. First sub-category that I will be focusing on is Awareness & Advocacy, then Lobbying & Policy Change, Research & Education, Artisanal Craft Production, Transparency, and Collaboration.

### *Awareness & Advocacy*

Collective Fashion Justice (CFJ) based on its 2023 impact report talks about advocacy campaigns, webinars, workshops, presentations, and special events. CFJ participated at the Milan Fashion Film Festival, talked about ethical fashion, and brought awareness to sustainability within the fashion industry. Furthermore, the founder of CFJ spoke on panels at Fashion Declares' (one of the NGOs) Regenerative Fashion Conference, where they were advocating for regenerative fashion, clothing crafted to support circularity, achieved through upcycling discarded materials or via regenerative agriculture's soil-to-soil cycle.<sup>4</sup> The event was essential in terms of bringing awareness to regenerative fashion, and learning about the connection between fashion, climate, carbon emissions, materials, and nature (Fashion Declares, 2024). The forum brought together different organizations, who advocated for regenerative, organic cotton, and alternative materials. The forum was a great opportunity for individuals to also learn about other NGOs that focus on similar issues and contribute to sustainability (Fashion Declares, 2024). Furthermore, the event brought awareness to the labor issues within the fast fashion industry. Speakers spoke about the fair wages, working conditions, artisans in the fashion industry, supply chain, etc. Furthermore, they mentioned corporations, customers, investors, regulators, and their role; how they can start contributing to shifting to the circular economy (Fashion Declares, 2024).

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<sup>4</sup> "What is Regenerative Fashion?" Made Trade Magazine. Retrieved from <https://www.madetrade.com/blogs/magazine/what-is-regenerative-fashion>.

Additionally, NGOs raise awareness about sustainability during fashion weeks by showcasing sustainable clothing through runway shows, organizing fundraisers, or hosting events featuring special guests. One of the sustainable fashion weeks is St Andrews Charity Fashion Show. It offers F4TE (Fashion 4 the Earth) week, which brings awareness to sustainable fashion and responsible shopping. Another Fashion Week is held by the Fashion Revolution. Fashion Revolution Week is hosted every year where different fashion activists come together and bring awareness to sustainable fashion for seven days. Everyone can join the fashion revolution week, attend workshops, tell others to join, donate, or advertise on social media with using a #WeAreFashionRevolution (Fashion Revolution. Get Involved, pg: 3). The Revival studio also conducts workshops to engage customers. The organization hosts pop ups and activities that include music, talking, and more (The Revival, 2024). Sustainable Fashion Innovation Society held a Phygital Sustainability Expo, which is a forum in Rome, that brings awareness of fashion's connection to different factors such as, biodiversity, nature, climate, customer involvement in sustainable fashion, etc. In addition to forums, the organization collaborates with Italian National TV, Italian newspapers, various media outlets, and other partners to raise awareness about their work and global issues.

While the Impact NYFC Inc helps different designers present their sustainable apparel during their runway shows. It also brings guest speakers, holds fundraisers, and live performances (Impact NYFC Inc., 2024). Labour Behind the Label engages in labor advocacy through various actions, including office-based activities such as phone calls and meetings, as well as public demonstrations on the streets to attract attention and acquire public support (Labour Behind The Label, 2024). In terms of advocacy, The Fashion Connection offers advocacy groups: ATEST, DRESSEMBER, and POLARIS. ATEST (The Alliance to End

Slavery and Trafficking) is a US-based coalition, Dressember is a collaborative movement, and Polaris is a nonprofit that works on preventing human trafficking, and helping the victims including the fashion industry too (The Fashion Connection 2024).

In conclusion, various NGOs play a crucial role in raising awareness about sustainability within the fashion industry. While their strategies may vary, they share a common goal of driving change within the fast fashion sector. Through advocacy, and direct action, these organizations strive to promote ethical and environmentally responsible practices, ultimately aiming to reshape the industry towards a more sustainable future.

### ***Lobbying & Policy Change***

Some nonprofits also lobby governments and advocate for policy changes. Labour Behind The Label actively promotes labor rights in the garment industry and engages in lobbying efforts targeting the UK government through their advocacy campaigns. For instance, it advocates for the implementation of living wages, as opposed to just minimum wages, and urges governments to address the gender pay gap within the industry (Labour Behind Labor, 2024).

Based on Fashion Revolution's (FR) 2022 Impact Report, it had multiple policy advocacy partnerships and lobbying experiences including, lobbying leaders of the G7<sup>5</sup> to push for stable measures to eliminate forced labor in Uyghur. FR also pushed the British government to ban the sales of washing machines without microfibre filters. Moreover, FR highlights its accomplishments through its policy initiatives. Important successes include renewing the International Accord on Health and Safety in the Textile and Garment Industry agreement, which ensures worker safety by preventing fires and accidental collapses, through collaboration between unions and brands (Fashion Revolution Impact Report - 2021/2022, pgs: 44-45). More

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<sup>5</sup>"What Does the G7 Do?" Council on Foreign Relations. Retrieved from <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/what-does-g7-do>.

generally, FR engaged in lobbying efforts with 49 major fashion brands to encourage their participation in signing the Accord related to their Fashion Transparency Index scoring. This initiative aimed to disclose their transparency and practices within the fashion industry. The Fashion Revolution played a role in incorporating SB62 into California Law; a US Senator introduced the FABRIC Act, which aims to enhance working conditions, improve wages, and support domestic apparel production if enacted (Fashion Revolution Impact Report - 2021/2022, pg: 45). The Fashion Revolution aims to influence legislation, put pressure on corporations and governments, and further cultural and industry change.

Another NGO advocating for policy changes is Global Fashion Agenda (GFA), which strives to promote circularity and sustainability within the fashion industry through the framework of the Policy Hub- Circularity For Apparel and Footwear.

Three additional organizations that provide information on legislative contributions and policy changes are Hey Fashion!, The Fashion Connection, and Zero Waste Washington. Hey Fashion! offers a legislation tracker, which displays the status of bills, whether they have been passed or are under review. The tracker currently includes 50 bills, with 24 already adopted, 26 under review. Notably, 37 bills originate from the EU, 14 from the US, and 1 from France (Hey Fashion!, 2024). The website is an important source for everyone interested in policy changing within the fashion industry. The Fashion Connection also offers information on State and Federal Legislation in the textile and apparel industry. However, it suggests redirecting to Hey Fashion! for additional details, as it only covers information on 5 bills (The Fashion Connection, 2024). To conclude, individuals interested in researching bills related to the fashion industry can always refer back to these organizations for updates or further information.

### ***Research & Education***

Several NGOs partner with universities to show support to animal rights in fashion education. Collective Fashion Justice (CFJ) for example collaborates with fashion institutions to integrate ethical fashion principles, advocate for its ethical fashion manifesto, raise awareness through film screenings on the negative impacts of fur, leather, and wool in fashion, and contribute to shifting future fashion designers' attitudes toward ethical practices within the industry. Institutions that CFJ is working with include: Glasgow Caledonian New York College (GCNYC), UAL's London College of Fashion, Accademia Costume e Moda, The New School: Parsons, LCI, Marist College, Institut Français de la Mode, ESEDS, Birmingham City University, MSKPU, Western Washington University, University of Economics and Human Sciences in Warsaw, and Università di Bologna. These organizations hold screenings of the documentary film, SLAY, where they portray the reality and harmful effects of fur, leather, and wool fashion. After screening, 93% of students thought that it was unacceptable to use animal skins for the fashion industry (Collective Fashion Justice, 2024).

Additionally, Fashion Takes Action provides a school program called, My Clothes, My World (MCMW), which offers in-person and online workshops, classes, and resources focused on the socio-environmental impacts of the fashion industry (Fashion Takes Action, 2024). Several of their workshops include, "How to spot Greenwashing?", "Who Makes Our Clothes?", "Life Cycle of a T-Shirt", and many more. Furthermore, the program teaches about the circular economy, and generally the global phenomenon of the fashion industry (Fashion Takes Action, 2024). The program gives opportunities for kids from grades 4-12 to get more information about sustainability, one's contribution to fashion, etc.

Other NGOs either provide research tools for ethical, sustainable, and circular fashion, or provide courses with which they educate people with either farming skills, sustainable fashion

design, workshops, webinars, online and in-person courses, and lectures about the fashion industry. Organizations providing research tools are The Fashion Connection (FC) and Labour Behind the Label.

FC offers TFC's Sustainable Fashion Resource Library, which briefly breaks down the steps that an individual starting a business within the fashion industry needs to understand. It explains what ethical and sustainable fashion is, provides a list of resources including books, things to watch, different organizations that are involved in advocating for the fast fashion, and the resource library describes the supply chain of the apparel industry (TFC Sustainable Fashion Resource Library Tools for Creating a Sustainable Business, Finding Resources, and Avoiding Pitfalls, pgs: 1-28). The resource library tool is essential because it provides information about more organizations working towards ethical fashion and textiles. Additionally, it educates users about Sustainable Fabric Suppliers and Factories, certifications, and standards in the industry, as well as entrepreneurship strategies for founding an ethical fashion business.

Labor Behind the Label demonstrates another type of research, which is connected to pushing corporations and governments and advocating for policy changes. Through its investigations into various brands and supply chains, it uncovers unethical practices. One of the examples that the NGO revealed was that in India, homeworkers who work on stitching shoes, do not get any social security or benefits. The organization educates and provides information about the truth of the fashion and textile industry, while pushing for policy changes.

In addition, the nonprofit organization Custom Collaborative in NYC provides opportunities for low to no-income and immigrant women to achieve financial success in the sustainable fashion industry. It offers different training programs and consulting services (Custom Collaborative, 2024). One of the programs is the Training Institute, which enables

women to learn about art, fashion design, and accessory creation through a series of classes. These classes cover topics including ethical manufacturing, marketing, sustainability, ethical sourcing, and personal finance (Custom Collaborative, 2024). Furthermore, providing technical assistance, professional equipment, and advocating for sustainability in fashion are additional measures that contribute to the success of women in the ethical fashion industry.

Nonprofits that offer lectures, or in-person and online courses are The University Hecho x Nosotros, The Revival, and Sustainable Fashion Innovation Society. The University Hecho x Nosotros focuses on sustainable value chain and advocating for sustainable fashion by offering different programs, such as the HxN University. The program offers seminars, webinars, courses, training, workshops, etc. for artisans, and fiber producers in Latin America. Materials covered are fashion design and sustainable practices within the fashion industry, focusing on handmade arts and crafts (HxN University, 2024). The Revival, in collaboration with The Hopenclass and Future Learn, offers a self-paced course called "Upcycling and the Circular Economy: Ghanaian Creative Solutions to Global Textile Waste." This two-week course explores the concept of the circular economy, its significance, and the unique perspective of Ghana in this matter during the first week. In the second week, it explores upcycling culture, textile waste, and its community impacts (Future Learn, 2024). Sustainable Fashion Innovation Society in Rome, Italy, provides Green Confidential® lectures where different organizations, governments, and companies teach students how they address sustainability, and reducing co2 emissions. Its conferences bring different actors, and address climate and fashion related issues (Sustainable Fashion Innovation Society, 2024). All of these organizations help individuals, policy makers, businesses, innovators, startups, and other organizations to understand why the fashion industry needs to shift towards sustainable fashion, with more ethical practices. Furthermore, these nonprofits help



individuals gain not only the education, but resource tools, and different sustainable equipment to contribute to sustainable art, and fashion design.

### ***Artisanal Craft Production***

Another emerging pattern I've noticed among nonprofits is their support for artisans within the fashion industry. These organizations supply designers with sustainable materials, offer mentorship, and provide training. One of the examples is the Ethical Fashion Institute (EFI), which offers a Designer Accelerator program aimed at helping African fashion brands in moving towards the global marketplace. The program contains a business development plan to move brands into establishing sustainable supply chains, implementing ethical manufacturing practices, managing shipping and production planning, and addressing financial aspects of the business (Ethical Fashion Institute, 2024). The organization collaborates with various social enterprises, such as Artisan Fashion, Commerce, Artisanat pour le Bien Etre Social (CABES), Ozara, and Marikat, to offer artisans employment opportunities. These collaborations often involve partnerships with luxury brands like Loewe and Vivienne Westwood. Artisans are encouraged to align their practices with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) criteria. For example, Marikat, implements ethical practices such as using natural dyeing techniques in their production processes and educating artisans on sustainable practices (Ethical Fashion Institute, 2024).

Artisan Global is another NGO that also supports artisans, that operates in Gulu, Uganda. The organization offers different programs about fashion design, Batik Design, Tailoring & Sewing, Product Design, Basketry, and many more to support artisans financially and help them to engage in sustainable jobs (Artisan Global, 2024). In addition, The New Cotton Route (NRC): From Mali, with love contributes in assisting women artisans and designers in Mali to help them

financially, and give them work opportunities. The NGO advocates ethical and sustainable cotton value chain, and offers training to those women in marketing, production, business strategies, and management; NRC contributes to achieving Sustainable Development Goals through their practices (The New Cotton Route, 2024). Similarly, SAWA SAWA, a non-profit in Austin, Texas, displays sustainable, and ethical handmade work by artisan women from Kenya. The organization helps artisans sell their creations both online and through retail stores, including Macy's (SAWA SAWA, 2024). The organization provides materials to women and gives them opportunities to showcase their culture through sustainable fashion. Lastly, I want to mention AGAATI Foundation since it gives a platform to artisans and small designers, by holding a Global Eco Artisan Awards. Artisans submit their creations, and then present in front of judges. Judges are fashion designers, sustainability activists, and people from the fashion industry. The awards give a chance to artisans to present their creations and compete for prizes in categories such as textile, jewelry, decor, and endangered craft. Prizes are awarded to semi-finalists, finalists, and winners. Prizes include marketing consultancy, collaborations with retailers, designers, training, potential sales, cash prize, and many more (AGAATI Foundation, 2024). The foundation is bringing awareness to sustainable fashion design, and art by empowering artisans.

### ***Transparency***

I have observed that 2 major NGOs work on promoting transparency. One of them is the Labour Behind the Label, which advocates for workers rights, labor environment, and fair pay. The fashion industry often lacks transparency, leaving people unaware of the unsafe working conditions and unfair pay that laborers endure (Labour Behind the Label, 2024). Label Behind the Label advocates for transparency within the fashion industry, and claims that transparency will help workers to have better rights, and hold brands accountable for their actions.

Corporations being more transparent, will make unions and organizations act for the workers' favor, and use collective bargaining to improve working conditions (Labour Behind the Label, 2024). With transparency, individuals, consumers, unions, and organizations will have information about the brand and might pressure corporations to be more ethical and advocate for garment workers. Furthermore, Labour Behind the Label demand that the brands sign the transparency pledge, so that they put all of their information including where the products are made, equipments used, gender breakdown of role, since women are more vulnerable to low-paid employment, and include wages during only the full-time working period (Labour Behind the Label). If corporations do not practice transparency, different actors in the fashion industry may remain unaware of issues within corporations, leading to unfair treatment of workers.

Another non-profit that pushes for transparency, is the Fashion Revolution (FR). Fashion Revolution provides the Fashion Transparency Index annually, that sheds light on world's largest fashion brands' practices and impacts. FR states several issues that fashion brands engage in including forced labor, unfair wages, gender and racial inequality, unethical sourcing or exposing workers to toxic materials, and using toxic inputs, waste, and more. In order to minimize and eliminate these practices, demanding transparency from corporations is essential. FR mostly focus on bigger and most profitable brands, since they hire more workers and have the most impact on the environment. The Fashion Transparency Index contains 250 brands; according to FR's findings, two brands scored 80% or higher for the first time in 2023, the first brand is an Italian brand OVS with 83%, followed by Gucci at 80%. FR states that the progress on transparency isn't growing fast, including 18 brands scoring 0% with transparency (Fashion Transparency Index 2023, pg: 8). With transparency, achieving a more sustainable fashion industry is possible, with more systematic change (Fashion Transparency Index 2023, pgs: 4-5).

If corporations hide their practices, the sustainable change within the industry will be challenging, since the actions are unknown. Fashion Revolution recommends that individuals, customers, brands, policymakers, investors, civil society, and others to support transparency policies and laws, and bring awareness to transparency issues, and push for policy changes that push brands to disclose their practices (Fashion Transparency Index 2023, pg: 143). This concept brings up the collaboration matter within the fashion industry, which is essential for better change.

### ***Collaboration***

According to Fashion Revolution, different stakeholders within the fashion industry need to work together to achieve goals. One of the biggest campaigns is “Good Clothes, Fair Pay” by Fashion Revolution with the collaboration of World Fair Trade Organization, Clean Clothes Campaign, Fairtrade, Solidaridad, asn bank, and Fair Wear. The campaign unfortunately is over, but it was demanding EU living wages from textile and footwear industries. It was asking for 1 million signatures from EU citizens to push for the legislation that would require corporations to pass living wages in their supply chains, and also asked students to become ambassadors to look for additional signatures (Good Clothes, Fair Pay, 2024). The campaign only received 240,000 signatures, however if interested, anyone can leave their information on the campaign’s website and get informed with future updates (Good Clothes, Fair Pay, 2024). The European Union (EU) also contributes with funding campaigns and NGO initiatives. The Clean Clothes Campaign with financial support from The EU founded the Fashion Checker tool, where they provide the information about which apparel and footwear brands pay living wages to their workers. This tool is also a transparency measure. While Fashion Checker displays multiple brands, and gives scores based on their transparency and practices, it also provides information about the

importance of the living wage. According to the Fashion Checker, humans need to afford nutritious food, proper housing, healthcare, education, clothing, transportation, and have savings just in case someone has a debt or loans. However, 93% of surveyed corporations aren't paying living wages to garment workers (Fashion Checker, 2024).

Clean Clothes Campaign believes in collaborative work, and asks individuals to join the campaign #LivingWageNow to push brands to take action. Most of the NGOs that I discovered have a page on their website where they ask for society's participation. They either provide their social media and ask to get involved with their campaigns, or directly contact brands and demand sustainable practices. One of the examples is Fashion Revolution, it provides a campaign called #WhoMadeMyFabric, asking brands how, where, and with what materials were the products made. FR tries to engage customers, if there will be more people involved in these campaigns, brands might give attention to the matter.

In addition, several nonprofits display other organizations that they collaborated with, one of the examples being the Collective Fashion Justice (CFJ). As mentioned above, in the Research and Education section, CFJ works with different educational institutions to bring awareness to new sustainable fashion and help fashion students get informed about ethical fashion (Collective Fashion Justice, 2024). Furthermore, one of the NGOs, Saheli Women that empowers women in Rajasthan, India by providing opportunities in sustainable fashion, works under another NGO, Conscious Fashion Campaign, in collaboration with the United Nations. Another collaboration is between the Common Objective and Small But Perfect. They provide a network where they promote doing fashion better. Anyone interested in the circular economy, and sustainable fashion industry can join the network without any cost. I also joined it and discovered more about

circular fashion, different sourcing materials, sustainable businesses, etc. Moreover, the network gives you an opportunity to connect with sustainable brands, and other organizations.

### ***Additional Observations***

In addition to my observations, I found out that most of the NGOs highlight the empowerment of women within the fashion industry. Organizations include: Sustainable Fashion Innovation Society, A Queens Closet, Artisan Center Fashion & Design Course, Custom Collaborative Training Institute, Design and Arts Hub, SAWA SAWA, Fashion Impact Fund, Saheli Women (Civil society organization), ZUKA, Gifting Gifts, and The Fashion Connection. Women empowerment is essential in the industry, because women are the most affected negatively by the fashion industry, they are the most employed in clothing sweatshops, get low wages, work in poor working conditions, and work unacceptable longest hours (Chang 2020, pg: 2). Another interesting observation that is important to highlight is that most of the NGOs didn't mention greenwashing or if they did, they did on a surface level. However, Changing Markets Foundation offers a GREENWASH.COM platform that documents the measures and practices corporations undertake. It reveals corporate secrets by analyzing their products, or initiatives.

Furthermore, I observed some limitations during my research. One of the main limitations was that some of the NGOs don't offer a website, either they are working on them, or only provide in their native language, so I was unable to learn more about them if that was the case. Additionally, I was researching in English, so if any organizations offered information only in their native languages, I wouldn't be able to find them.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, fast fashion is one of the biggest contributors to climate change, pollution, increased gas emissions, waste, water loss, and many more negative consequences. Different

actors try to fight the fast fashion industry, but the problem is the system itself. EU, nonprofits and governments try to shift the industry into a circular economy. However, doing so requires careful implementation, monitoring, and practicing. Moreover, even though the EU contributes to advocating sustainability with different initiatives, and some NGOs try to either push governments, help workers, educate consumers, and bring awareness to sustainability in the fashion industry, countries that contribute the most to the production of clothing need to start addressing issues and limit the production. Such countries are: China, USA, India, Pakistan, Brazil, Uzbekistan, Russia, Sweden, Turkey, South Korea, Bangladesh, and Vietnam. They play a major role in exporting natural fibers, or in manufacturing of either synthetic fibers and other materials (Niinimäki et al. (2020)). These countries need to address environmental, social, and economic impacts of fast fashion production.

Additionally, I have observed that NGO participation is low in these countries, except for the USA, which has around 20 organizations working against fast fashion. Given that my research was conducted in English, there may be additional organizations operating in other languages. Therefore, further investigation is necessary to create a comprehensive global map of NGOs addressing fast fashion issues for a more thorough understanding and approach to tackling the challenges posed by the fast fashion industry. Furthermore, I have signed up for calls to action that some of the NGOs I observed provided. One of the recent ones is called the #NoNewClothes challenge by Remake. It offers an opportunity to pause and reflect on the values we want to represent through our clothing choices while also contributing to positive change within the fashion industry. By stopping from purchasing new clothing items for 90 days, participants can significantly reduce their carbon footprint, minimize the volume of waste for landfills, and redirect their spending away from companies known for exploitative practices that

harm both people and the environment. For example, one could potentially save up to 3,900 liters of water, prevent the emission of 307 kilograms of carbon dioxide equivalents, reduce waste by 9 kilograms, and save approximately \$286 USD that would otherwise have supported unsustainable practices in the fashion industry (Remake, 2024). Through collective action and conscious consumption, initiatives like these by NGOs could foster a more ethical and environmentally responsible approach to fashion consumption.



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***Footnotes:***

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<sup>2</sup> For further information, see Reserve Resources: Reverse Resources (RR) Platform. "How Does It Work?" Retrieved from <https://reverseresources.net/how-does-it-work/>.

<sup>3</sup> For more information on the European Green Deal, see European Commission. "European Green Deal." Retrieved from [https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en)

<sup>4</sup> For more information about a Regenerative Fashion, please visit "What is Regenerative Fashion?" Made Trade Magazine. Retrieved from <https://www.madetrade.com/blogs/magazine/what-is-regenerative-fashion>.

<sup>5</sup> For more information about "What Does the G7 Do?" visit, Council on Foreign Relations. Retrieved from <https://www.cfr.org/background/what-does-g7-do>.



*Appendix 1:***61 NGOs that I have observed:**

1. A Queens Closet
2. AGAATI Foundation (Philanthropic organization)
3. ARM (Alliance for Responsible Mining)
4. Artisan Center Fashion & Design Course
5. Back to Eco
6. BBCP Rainwater Foundation Initiative (BBCP Rainwater Foundation. Inc)
7. Better Cotton Institute (BCI)
8. Chicago Responsible Jewelry Conference (Responsible Jewelry Transformative)
9. Clean Clothes Campaign
10. Collective Fashion Justice (Philanthropic organization)
11. Conscious Fashion Campaign (Fashion Impact Fund)
12. CSFDG+
13. Custom Collaborative Training Institute
14. Design and Arts Hub
15. Ellen MacArthur Foundation
16. Environmental Justice Foundation
17. Ethical Fashion Institute (EFI)
18. Fair Wear Foundation
19. Fashion 4 The Earth (F4TE)
20. Fashion Act Now
21. Fashion Declares (Civil society organization)
22. Fashion For Good
23. Fashion Impact Fund
24. Fashion Revolution
25. Fashion Revolution Germany
26. Fashion Takes Action
27. Garment Worker Center
28. Gifting Brands (Philanthropic organization)
29. Global Fashion Agenda
30. Greenpeace (Detox My Fashion)
31. GSA SAWA
32. Hecho por Nosotros
33. Impact NYFW Inc (Philanthropic organization)
34. INFINITI Impact Fund (Philanthropic organization)
35. Labour Behind The Label
36. Leather Working Group (LWG)
37. Phygital Sustainability Expo®
38. Remake
39. Responsibility in Fashion
40. SAHARA (Civil society organization)

41. Saheli Women (Civil society organization)
42. SCRAP
43. Sew Valley
44. Slow Factory Foundation
45. Solidaridad
46. St Andrews Charity Fashion Show (Philanthropic organization)
47. Style Lounge Platform
48. Sustainable Apparel Coalition (SAC)
49. Sustainable Fashion Innovation Society
50. Textile Exchange
51. The Changing Markets Foundation
52. The Fashion Connection
53. The New Cotton Route (NRC): From Mali with Love
54. The Revival: Upcycling and Circular Economy Ghanaian Creative solutions to Global Textile Waste
55. TRAIID
56. Vegan Fashion Week (Philanthropic organization)
57. Waste & Resource Action Programme
58. ZUKA (Civil society organization)
59. Zero Discharge of Hazardous Chemicals (ZDHC)
60. Zero Waste Washington