

FAST FASHION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract: Approximately half of the world's clothing production is made from cotton, the cultivation of which irreparably damages the planet. In today's hectic times, when business processes are gradually accelerating, the concept of fast fashion is increasingly appearing in the textile industry. The consequence of this trend is the above-average production and consumption of clothing. To find out the results, qualitative research was carried out, in-depth interviews as well as quantitative research. The questionnaire survey was performed. The quota feature for data collection was age in generations X, Y, Z according to current data from the Czech Statistical Office for 2019. Generations are defined according to Kotler. The questionnaire survey took place in the first quarter of 2020 using an electronic questionnaire in the Umbrella system. For Czech consumers, the most famous representatives mass retailers of fast fashion are H&M, New Yorker, Zara, C&A, Takko, and Pepco. Part of the quantitative research was also testing hypotheses depending on the generation, awareness of fast fashion, frequency of clothing purchases, and clothing recycling. Knowledge of the term fast fashion depends on the generation; this term is understandable especially to the youngest Z generation. The frequency of clothing purchases does not depend on the generation. Also clothing recycling is not generation dependent according respondents. Slow fashion has become a sustainable consumption movement that is the opposite of fast fashion. But the current lifestyle of most people does not lead to slow fashion. In fact, there is a big difference between the ideas of sustainable development and the actual shopping behaviour of the consumers. Based on the result, the attitude of customers and society to the purchase, recycling and disposal of clothes is discussed. The issue of waste over time is also described in the article. These topics are a great challenge for the future of economic entities, the efforts of political representation and, above all, the quality of our lives and the quality of lives of future generations.

Key words: consumer behaviour, fast fashion, sustainability, sustainable development, waste

JEL codes: L67, P28, Q01, Q59

Introduction

Fast fashion is a term that in many ways resembles fast food. Fast food as well as fast fashion is a low quality product. Quickly consumed food that consumes a large amount of resources. This brings quick and fleeting pleasure, which is harmful to humans in the long run. Unfortunately, it is also economically profitable in the short term and very addictive for individuals, so it is very difficult to eliminate this phenomenon. The waste that fast fashion represents is constantly increasing. Waste generally characterizes civilization, but society does not like to think about waste, and when it comes down to it, it pretends that waste does not exist. In more and more countries - and not just developed ones - according to many studies, up to 100 percent more waste is discarded than at the turn of the millennium. Many products - including textiles - have a limited lifespan just to speed up the turnover of goods.

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Changing fashion trends is becoming more common. In most stores, clothes are soon sold out or taken to a landfill. Their storage is more expensive than throw away as a garbage or their destruction. Purchased clothes are not repaired, but discarded. The topic of the article is to find out how fast fashion is perceived and whether it is at all possible to mitigate the negative effects that fast fashion causes. As has already been written, people living in a consumer society avoid the issue of waste. However, if humanity wants to live in a sustainable environment, it is necessary to pay more attention to this topic. Especially the younger generation born in times of prosperity is little aware of this problem internally. Although young people are proponents of a green and clean planet, their own consumer behaviour contradicts this, it does not respond.

Literature review

The term fast fashion is relatively new. If there is a topic of waste in the reports, it is most often a topic related to hazardous waste such as nuclear waste. In general, the term fast fashion represents inexpensive, very cheap clothing produced rapidly by mass-market retailers in response to the latest trends. Fast fashion is an easily accessible fashion that is produced in huge quantities regardless of the environment or working conditions of employees. It is a mass production of clothing, where quantity outweighs quality. It is therefore a matter of producing as many pieces as possible at the lowest possible cost, at low prices. Burianová (2016) defines fast fashion as fast-changing trends, not very high-quality products, fast profit generation and alarming working conditions during production. Therefore, production is very common in developing African and Asian countries, where working conditions are very poor - sweatshops. Textile production has shifted from Britain and the United States to countries with the lowest paid labour. At present, this country is Ethiopia, but in an ever-shrinking cycle and rising transport prices, poorer European countries with cheaper labour are also attractive to producers for European markets.

Byun and Sternquist (2008) define four features of fast fashion products: Fast response to consumer wishes and requirements, short product life cycle, fast supply chain operation and low product price. Fast fashion models are designed so that their quality satisfies consumers only temporarily, so according to Kotler (2007), the life cycle curve of fast fashion, even though it is longer and slower, approaches the life cycle curve of the fashion fad.

Fast fashion can also be defined as a business model that clothing chains apply to their strategies. In the early 1980s, this model was adopted by Benetton and Zara, in the late 1990s it grew with advancing globalization, and today it is beginning to become a global problem. According to Lee (2007), the basic characteristics of this business model are a quick response to consumer behaviour, the satisfaction of his needs as quickly as possible and the resulting excessive consumption. New clothes are delivered to stores almost every day and changes in the interior of stores are also very common. According to Frey (2011), merchandising, the presentation of goods, also plays an important role here. Traditional textile shops are in decline; the

popularity of shopping centres is growing. The change in consumer behaviour was also reflected in the value-creating processes of individual companies.

As reported by Henninger et al. (2016) there is no longer a traditional two-season approach and companies have started to produce up to 20 collections a year and also to constantly change vendors. According to Cobbing and Vicaire (2016), new clothing is rarely used, while other consumers are aware of the importance of sustainability in the products, as Muthu states, 2017. The world is beginning to use the term low fashion. This term is defined, for example, by Štefko, Steffek (2018) as a movement that emphasizes respect for both people and nature in the production of clothing, while achieving this through the use of natural materials, local producers and processors, who are paid a proper reward for their work. According study of Chi (2021) female consumers show a more positive attitude toward slow fashion apparel. Rosenbloom (2010) and Gwilt (2012) then write about the phenomenon of zero waste fashion, which tries to approach the minimum volume of textile waste that is generated during the production and use of fast fashion.

Methodology

The research was focused on the X, Y and Z generations. These generations tend to be defined only approximately, so the division given by Kotler (2007) was chosen. Thus Generation X, born 1964-1978, Generation Y, born 1979-1994 and Generation Z, born 1995-2010. For qualitative research, which took place in the form of hourly in-depth interviews, a proportional number of respondents according to the Czech Statistical Office according to age and gender was determined. There were 8 respondents (4 men, 4 women) in the interviews in each group, a total of 24 people. Also on the basis of their answers, a questionnaire was compiled, which was distributed by the Umbrella system and the data were processed in the Statistica program. A total of 200 questionnaires were completed and processed. The results of the qualitative research and the quantitative survey were very similar. The research took place at the Institute of Marketing and Trade, which focuses on consumer behaviour. Data collection for questionnaires also took place within the project, Ježková (2020). Personal in-depth interviews took place in January 2020, and a non-contact questionnaire survey in January to April 2020, so the results may have been affected by the covid pandemic. Dependence testing was performed using Pearson's Chi-square test, hypotheses were tested at a significance level of 0.05. Processed on the basis of calculations of the Statistica 12 software. The author's own experience from charitable events is also important for the work.

According to the CZ NACE classification, the manufacture of clothing falls into section C, ie the manufacturing industry, division 14. Division 14 "Manufacture of wearing apparel" is further divided into three groups: 14.1 Manufacture of wearing apparel, except fur apparel, 14.2 Manufacture of articles of fur, 14.3 Manufacture of knitted and crocheted apparel. Typical features of this industry are the rapid response of production to seasonal influences in an effort to meet the wishes and requirements of customers. It is a sector with fast-moving production and consumption. Factors influencing the clothing industry include, in particular, cost, quality, fashion and

innovation. The most important is the CZ-NACE 14.1 group, which includes the manufacture of outerwear, leather clothing, underwear, other garments and clothing accessories. The author's own experience from charitable events is also important for the work.

Results and Discussion

During the in-depth interviews, it was surprising that although the respondents were aware of environmental problems and environmental pollution, according to them, the waste of the textile industry represented a completely negligible part of the pollution. Today, on the contrary, the textile industry is one of the biggest polluters of the environment. The concept of cotton acts as something natural for the respondents, friendly to the environment and also to help developing countries. At the same time, cotton is the most chemically treated crop in the world and accounts for at least half of textile production. Cotton is grown on only 2.4% of arable land in the world, yet 24% of the world's consumption of insecticides and 11% of pesticides that cause cancer and other serious diseases are used to treat it.

Toxic substances enter the soil and water and from there into the entire ecosystem. Cotton is demanding on heat and humidity and is grown especially in developing countries, where poor farmers use the cheapest and most toxic substances to be able to survive. A lot of water is also used to make clothes. Cotton is often grown even in areas where it is not raining enough and must be intensively irrigated. Although organic cotton brings significant economic and environmental benefits, it accounts for less than 1% of the total annual harvest worldwide. However, other materials are also environmentally demanding. Artificial materials have brought with them a new problem of long-term decomposition of waste.

Until 100 years ago, in most Western countries, there were children and adults who made a living collecting old rags, bottles and fats - then sold them for processing in factories, especially for paper mills. Today, however, paper is made from cellulose. Carpets were woven from the remains of the textile. Clothes were expensive, hand-sewn, so they were managed many times. There was also almost no packaging. In the USA, even after World War II, clothing was sewn from packaging - bags of flour and bags of animal feed. Also, baby diapers and all sanitary napkins were made of textile and were used repeatedly. The more we consume, the more waste we produce. The ethical qualities of a company are beginning to be assessed according to the method of waste treatment.

There is a certain paradox in the issue of fast fashion. People buy new and new stuff to be different, but at the same time they follow the same fashion trends, the same influencers, to resemble their heroes, their important icons and reference groups. People need to buy new and new clothes to prove their worth in today's stressful world and fill a place in their soul. Especially the younger generation needs to anchor in today's ever-changing world - and fashion can help. Attracting attention through clothing is also a faster way to target the opposite sex. Utilizing the attractiveness of fast fashion is then an easier way than slow fashion. Social networks bombard us every second with new creations that we are unable to prosecute, and

the frustration then manifests itself in the increasingly identified shopholism. Unfortunately, buying new and new clothes evokes only short-term satisfaction, and we get into an endless spiral of buying other and other things. With the onset of the pandemic a year ago, textile stores were repeatedly closed. However, the purchase of clothing on the Internet accelerated, and online marketing campaigns intensified, replacing the traditional shopping channels even for older customers. In the Czech Republic, there are the most e-shops in Europe per capita. In total, there are over 40,000 e-shops. However, this increase has further polluted the environment - through more environmentally demanding logistics and distribution channels and an enormous increase in packaging.

Until 150 years ago, the company lived almost without waste. Things have been used repeatedly around the world. Food, clothes and other goods thrown away by rich people were used by poor people. The family's waste was only ash, urine and excrement. In the last century, with the growth of population and prosperity, there is a change. Mass production from the end of the 19th century, the emergence of packaging technology leads to an unprecedented situation. Waste is something that disrupts order for humans - it is unwanted and disruptive. The transformation of an object into waste is a reminder of the transience of things and life, so we do not like to think of waste. However, the boundary between waste and a usable object is blurred. It all depends on the context. What may be unusable clothing for waste for one person may be attractive and wearable clothing for another person. Waste is the downside of consumption. People who dealt with waste in the past were considered unclean. Waste was and is a concretization of the collective unconscious of a given culture. Today, however, working with waste is a highly valued, professional, technical, technologically advanced activity, increasingly associated with the development of information technology. Due to the amount of waste - without regular waste disposal, civilization would fall into chaos and would not be able to exist.

In the survey, only a third of respondents out of 200 respondents knew the concept of fast fashion. After explaining this concept, respondents were asked about clothing chains that use fast fashion. Most respondents 16% described H&M as a fast fashion chain, followed by New Yorker (10%), Zara (8%), C&A (6%), Takko (5%) and Pepco (4%). In the literature and professional press, it is most often mentioned outside the above, as an example of mass-market retailers is also Primark, which opened in the Czech Republic at the end of June 2021. In connection with the term fast fashion, respondents were asked about GOTS (Global Organic Textile Standard) and WFTO (World Fair Trade Organization) certificates. Knowledge of these certificates was very low. Almost 11% for GOTS and 19% for WFTO. As part of consumers' shopping behaviour, factors influencing purchasing decisions were identified in a questionnaire survey of 200 respondents. Here, respondents stated quality (72%), price (25%), origin of goods (2%), certification of goods (1%) as decisive. A total of 64% stated that they spend less than CZK 1,000 per month on clothing, 2% more than CZK 5,000 per month. According to data from the Czech Statistical Office (2017), the average expenditure per citizen for clothing and footwear is CZK 7,444 per year. For the frequency of clothing purchases, the

answers were very often/weekly 2%. Occasionally, 58% of respondents' shop monthly and 40% say they buy clothes once a year. This did not completely coincide with the question of the last purchase, which will probably be a more accurate depiction of reality, with 13% buying clothes in the last week and 52% in the last month. Results of research are similar to Chi (2021) women show a more positive attitude toward slow fashion apparel.

Hypothesis results for the above mentioned generations X, Y and Z:

Hypothesis A: Awareness of the term fast fashion

H₀: Knowledge of the term fast fashion does not depend on the generation

H₁: Knowledge of the term fast fashion depends on the generation

Hypothesis H₀ is rejected because the p-value is 0.003714, the calculated p-value is less than 0.05. The older the generation, the less aware of the term fast fashion,

Hypothesis B: Frequency of clothing purchases

H₀: The frequency of clothing purchases does not depend on the generation.

H₁: The frequency of clothing purchases depends on the generation.

Hypothesis H₀ is not rejected, because the p-value is 0.110305. The frequency of clothing purchases does not depend on the generation. The qualitative research showed that the youngest generation Z buys clothes most often for themselves. The older generation then also buys clothes for children and grandchildren.

Hypothesis C: Clothing recycling

H₀: Clothing recycling is not generation dependent.

H₁: Clothing recycling is generation dependent.

Hypothesis H₀ is not rejected, because the p-value is 0.649893. Thus, clothing recycling is not dependent on generation.

The historical development of mankind has led to the gathering of things that were never enough. However, the limited space of our dwellings and the desire for order forces us to throw things away. Convenience chooses the easiest way. However, donating clothes does not mean that no waste was generated. From the research of dozens of events in Brno over the last 8 years, a maximum of 20% of donated clothing will be recycled. Due to the costs of transport and especially storage, most of the clothes that we donate to organizations or provide to charity after the event, bazaar, etc. are immediately taken to the bins. Very often it even ends up in unsorted, municipal waste. Even 50 or 30 years ago, we could not imagine the amount of current waste. The world is shrinking, there is a global village, there is nowhere to move waste, to which empty places, waste is still coming back to us. Recycling is a common term for politicians, especially when elections are approaching, and also for organizations applying for subsidies. But the current state of recycling cannot help us save the world. Rich countries buy space in poor countries to store not only nuclear but also municipal waste. The sea is polluted even in the most remote parts. We don't have any free space anymore. According to Siegle (2019) and Zeynep (2017), in 2014 we exceeded the worrying limit and since then we have been producing 100 billion pieces of new clothing a year. Without rapid reforms, the fashion industry, whose main player is fast fashion, could be responsible for a quarter of the Earth's carbon budget by 2050. There are a large number of certificates for recycled clothing and a certain target group is affected by this. But

this again applies to richer countries and only for small group of customers. More and more pieces are marked as a PET bottle product, but these are again just marketing messages, as the efficiency of this recycling is minimal. At the same time, there are recycling programs that are more economically motivated than driven by a real effort to protect the environment.

Conclusion

The term ecology comes from the Greek word *oikos*, which means home. And the name of economics comes from the same word base. Ecology seeks to determine the optimal principles of the economy in nature by examining the relationships between the environment and the organism. These laws must be respected, because we do not yet have another environment. Fast fashion contributes very quickly to the pollution of the planet. Growing crops, but also textile processing is very environmentally demanding. From the very beginning of industrialization, it was said that chemicalization was the blood of the economy. The development of the economy depends on the development of chemistry so far. But this has devastating consequences in today's rich society, which lives instantly with instant disposable goods. Despite the fact that the importance of sustainable development is currently being declared, few can voluntarily give up the achievements of civilization and be different-less comfortable in buying and thinking. We are all aware of the importance of recycling, but until waste overwhelms us, these problems are only theoretical for most of the population. Research has shown that the ideas of slow fashion and recycling are attractive to some individuals of the younger generation, but will not change their actual behaviour. For all their waste, people underestimate its size - which also resulted from in-depth interviews, not only in fast fashion. The current reckless huge environmental demands on virtual currency mining resources are proof of this. Fast fashion is very attractive for consumers and a change in human thinking is not realistic in the near future. The ecological efforts of companies in their current form are mostly just a marketing tool to increase turnover and profits. The current waste restrictions set by the European Union are not able to regulate the growth of waste. The questioning of constant growth is only a discussion of philosophers, but not yet of economists or politicians. The question is whether only a catastrophe can save us from real and moral waste in connection with the subsequent strict regulation of state authorities. But so far we can only imagine such a world in movies, but not in reality.

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