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Stop Fast Fashion

With the growth of fast fashion led by giants such as Zara's parent company Inditex, the clothing industry has roughly doubled since 2000. Fast fashion is low-cost and trendy clothing that is produced in large quantities and as quickly as possible to make a profit. In this essay, I am going to explain the main reasons why fast fashion is a growing global problem. In addition, I will be sharing my solution to this problem. I chose this problem because it has been disturbing me since eighth grade when I first saw a documentary about the negative side of fast fashion. I am now in eleventh grade and it has stuck with me all these years. It makes me feel hopeless and scared about the future. I want to be able to live a long happy life on this planet.

The fast fashion model has a tremendous impact on our environment throughout the entire lifecycle of the garments. The clothing industry is one of the biggest consumers of water with 79 trillion litres each year. Unfortunately, it does not end with consumption alone. Most of the 79 trillion litres goes to growing cotton and various wet processes, such as bleaching and dyeing. It is estimated that the dyeing of textiles is responsible for 20% of global water pollution. The fashion industry is also responsible for approximately 10% of our carbon emissions. This happens during the production of textiles that are derived from petrochemicals, transportation from factories to stores, and when the consumer discards the product.

Another problem with this unsustainable model is that all those trendy clothes become trash very quickly. Studies have shown that people throw clothes away after wearing them an average of 7-10 times. According to a new report from the Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 92 million tons of clothes end up in landfills. That equals almost one garbage truck full of garments each second. This is mostly due to the poor quality of the clothes coupled with the rapid change of trends. Most of the clothes are made from nonrenewable materials such as polyester and acrylic. A huge problem is that washing these synthetic fibres releases 190,000 tons of microfibers into the oceans. Sadly, all of the issues I have mentioned already are not the only ones. This confirms that fast fashion is indeed a global problem.

In addition to the terrible environmental effects, there are many social impacts. As I previously mentioned, the clothing industry uses huge amounts of water for various wet processes, such as bleaching and dyeing. The saddest part is that the wastewater is dumped

back into nearby bodies of water polluting agricultural and drinking water supplies for many people and animals. This often results in various health risks and problems. For example, the Citarum river in Indonesia is one of the dirtiest rivers in the world. The textile factories dump roughly 20 000 tons of waste and 340 000 tons of wastewater into the river on a daily basis. The consumption of this toxic water causes many health problems such as cancer, organ failure and even death. This affects babies and children more severely.

On top of that, there are numerous ethical issues concerning the workers' conditions. Their health and safety are at risk as they are exposed to toxic chemicals and other dangers without any protective equipment. For instance, in 2013 eight-story commercial building named Rana Plaza collapsed in Bangladesh killing 1134 people and leaving more than 2500 injured. Many big fast fashion brands such as Primark and Walmart had their clothes manufactured there during the accident. In order to keep the prices as low as possible and still make profits, the manufacturers need to make cutbacks. This means that the workers are also seriously underpaid. For example, a PrettyLittleThing nude mesh ruched midi skirt used to cost 18£ but was made by a worker who got paid 3£ per hour. Therefore, exploitation is a substantial part of the fast fashion model. From my point of view, it is very disappointing that in the 21st century child labour is still used, and basic human rights are violated.

I would resolve this problem by making the clothing industry transparent and changing consumer behaviour. Many of us already know that in order to avoid fake news one should double-check the facts. This also applies to my problem. It means that every consumer must be able to easily find out and check where, how, and by who their clothing is made. This is because people need to be aware of the social and environmental consequences of their choices. As for changing consumer behaviour, if people knew how harmful and unethical their wardrobe is then perhaps they would not buy so much. Furthermore, if the demand decreases then the amount of production decreases as well.

On a personal level, everyone can do many things to be more sustainable and environment-friendly. First, we need to reduce the amount of consumption. If you need to buy something, think it through and prefer high-quality and timeless clothes that can be worn for a long time. Another possibility is to buy from second-hand stores. Eventually, the clothes do become unwearable. This is why repairing clothes is a very important skill that should be taught in schools to all genders. Clothes should not be thrown away because of a few small holes. Even if the item has more flaws than a few holes, it still can be upcycled, which is something that I have been practising for my eleventh-grade practical work. In my opinion,

schools are the best places to share awareness and teach about this and any other global problem because young people are most receptive and resourceful.

In conclusion, fast fashion is a growing global problem that requires attention from everybody, because of many environmental and social issues. It has a short lifespan during which it pollutes huge amounts of water, produces tons of waste, and harms the environment including many people. My solutions to this problem are to make the fashion industry candid for the consumers, reduce overproduction by reducing the demand, and individually minimise consumption. I would like to emphasise that the problems I discussed in this essay are not nearly all there is. I hope that my generation and all future generations will have the opportunity to live long and happy lives. By the way, if you are an average reader then it took you approximately 5 minutes to read this essay, and during that time almost 300 garbage trucks full of clothing were landfilled or incinerated.