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Fast fashion and disposable item culture

The drivers and the effects on end consumers and environment

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<p>The objective of this thesis was to find the connection between fast fashion industry and disposable item culture and evaluate its effects on consumers and environment. In today's world, textiles are being produced and bought at a very high volume but most of them are discarded shortly after purchase. Consumers keep on spending money on items that are unsustainable, leading to the problem of short product life cycles and large amounts of waste. This thesis was written with an aim at finding out why the phenomenon of disposable item culture has emerged, what are the drivers behind consumerism in this field and what are the unfortunate consequences to our environment. The major focuses were the business model of fast fashion and its result on consumers' behaviour and issues in waste handling.</p> <p>The study was conducted by analysing existing literature, research and reports on the business model and marketing strategy of fast fashion retailers, the development of consumer behaviour, disposable item culture, consumerism and sustainability.</p> <p>The results revealed a clear connection between the business model under which fast fashion retailers operate and the emergence of disposable item culture, resulting in consumerism, overconsumption and environmental issues. This is the outcome of affordable and attractive clothing, short-term decision making and impulse purchasing.</p>	
Keywords	Fast fashion, Disposable items, Consumerism, Consumer behaviour, Environmental, Waste

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1 Introduction

Fashion has been present for several decades, changing its form and business strategy over time. In the 2000s, fashion changed its format again, and this time it revolutionized the whole fashion and textile industry. After the emergence of the industry of fast fashion, consumers' purchasing patterns have experienced a big change. More clothes are being bought while shopping has become an integral part for the people in developed countries.

Big fast fashion retailers have created a business strategy which has enabled them to offer their customers frequently changing collections at a very affordable price. The styles of the clothes resemble high-end fashion, which appears attractive for consumers. People are drawn to the stores and rarely leaving them without buying something.

By offering clothes at a low-cost level and updating the merchandise according to latest trends, the product life cycle is shortened significantly. Due to the cheap materials used in production and quickly changing trends, fast fashion goods end up being thrown away soon after purchase. Even though people are aware of the lower quality in garments in fast fashion, they continue buying them due to the affordable price tag. Clothes have become so cheap that they are bought for short-term use.

Short life cycle in textile industry does not only mean a financial drawback for consumers but also significant influence on environment. When items are not meant to last long, people are encouraged to make purchases often and on a regular basis. Furthermore, it means that clothes are being discarded constantly, and as nowadays the volume of bought textiles in fashion is reaching very high, there are more and more clothes piling up in landfills. Thus, while consumers keep on spending on low cost fast fashion goods, the amount of textile waste continues to increase to the point where earth's capacity is put to a test.

The phenomenon of disposable item culture raised the interest of the author due to its thought-provoking concept and substantial consequences on consumers and environment.

1.1 Problem statement

In countries in the first world, shopping has developed into a way a life and turned into a weekly or daily activity, which has created an addiction for shopping for many

consumers. There are many distractions available, like Internet ads, huge shopping malls, fashion magazines and social media which foster to go to shopping while amplifying consumers' purchase intentions. Fuelling this excessive consumerism is the trend and industry of fast fashion, which manages to design its clothing based by the styles seen on catwalks, and move them as quickly as possible to the fast fashion retailing stores (Eco Watch, 2015).

Fast fashion retailers, such as Zara and H&M, acquire customers effortlessly with their unique business model. Brands provide new clothing collections on a weekly basis, inducing consumers' will to pay a visit to their stores on regular terms. Impulse purchasing is supported with low price tags, which enables consumers from every income level to spend money on the fast fashion goods. As these fashion retailers keep solely miniature stocks on their products, items' stock life is extremely short meaning that consumers are reinforced to make quick purchase decisions. The idea of "here today, gone tomorrow" comes from fast fashion, and consumers are well aware of it, which shows in retailers' great profits (Loeb, 2015).

Increasing amount of purchases in fast fashion industry has an integral effect at the end of apparels' life stage when looking at the environmental issues in terms of waste handling. Due to low pricing and low quality combined with quickly changing trends and collections and shortened seasons, items bought from fast fashion retailers are often used only once or a few times before they end up in a landfill, creating masses of textile waste and problems in its handling. Only a small margin of fast fashion is recycled due to the low resale value they hold (Wicker, 2016).

Furthermore, fast fashion has created a materialism phenomenon where people are blinded by the affordable pricing and intensive promoting, for which consumers end up spending more money on low quality products in the fast fashion sector than they would imagine or want to. It creates psychological issues among consumers, such as anxiety and unhappiness followed by money handling problems (Taylor, 2014).

Due to the business model under which fast fashion retailers operate, the problem of low quality clothes creates issues in consumer behaviour and waste handling, for which this particular topic is worth researching for.

1.2 Research questions

This thesis is going to focus on following questions (1) What are the drivers behind the disposable item culture in fast fashion? (2) Which role do trends and frequently changing collections play in fast fashion in terms of consumer behaviour and disposability? (3) What is the impact of fast fashion on end-consumers and environment, when focusing on the nature of the industry?

1.3 Structure

This thesis is consisted of nine chapters in total. Each chapter holds their own meaning and importance to the completion of this Bachelor Thesis. The second chapter goes through the basis of fast fashion; how it differs from other fashion forms, what are the key components of the business model of fast fashion, and how it has evolved throughout the history of fashion. Chapter three explains the drivers to consume fast fashion, covering the most significant influencers for consumers, which are the pricing, trends and frequent collections, and social media. In the fourth chapter, the basis of disposable item culture is discussed in general and then linked to fast fashion, keeping in mind the reasons which cause consumers to buy fast fashion, and connecting them to the concept of disposable item culture. Before moving on to consumption patterns of fast fashion, chapter six handles the Sustainable Development Goal 12 by United Nations, and discusses the means of what is required from sustainable consumption patterns. The sixth chapter concerns consumerism as a side effect of disposable item culture in fast fashion. The chapter discusses the changed attitudes towards consumption and fashion, and covers the consequences on consumers themselves, including psychological and financial issues. In chapter six, environmental issues caused by fast fashion and disposable item culture are covered. In the final chapters, the information covered in the previous chapters are evaluated and analysed, and the author gives her own thoughts on the subject.

1.4 Methodology

The research methodology focuses on existing studies and academic publishing relating to the subject. The research will be conducted through analysing information gathered from academic journals and books around the topic. Due to low number of academic publishing and about the subject, the main focus of the research will be on existing reports and published studies focusing on fast fashion clothing, their pricing and quality,

consumer behaviour and environmental issues concerning the waste of fast fashion items.

When analysing the existing studies about the subject, the aim is to make conclusion about why fast fashion items are seen disposable, and how consumerism and the disposable item culture negatively relates to end consumers' lives and environment.

The process will be literature based since the focus is to describe and research the current state of disposable item culture in fast fashion and identify the outcomes it brings.

1.5 Delimitations

The most notable limiting factor in this thesis is that it is based on literature. The information relies on the opinions and views of the original, initial author of the literature. Due to the limitations in length and time constraints, it is addressed that not all the information will be covered in this work. For this reason, the focus is on most compatible information found, according to the author of this thesis.

2 Fast fashion

The current fashion market consists of two major markets; haute couture and prêt-à-porter. Haute couture represents fashion which is custom-made and thereby exclusive. It is considered as 'high fashion' due to the high quality and price which stems from tailor-made handcraft design and work. Whereas prêt-à-porter refers to ready-to-wear garments, which are produced in standard clothing sizes by fashion houses and presented each season during the Fashion Week. The prêt-à-porter collections are so called boutique selections, which are produced more simply and from cheaper materials than haute couture garments (Lindfors, Paimela, 2004). Ready-to-wear fashion splits up to three categories; premium, high-street and supermarket. Fast fashion comes into high street sector in the prêt-à-porter segment (Hines, Bruce, 2007). In fast fashion, the typical features are low prices, up-to-date pieces and frequently changing collections. The inspiration to the fast fashion garments comes straight from runways in the Fashion week (Loeb, 2015).

2.1 Definition of fast fashion

Fast fashion is the new term in use to express clothing collections based on the newest fashion trends. In the context of fast fashion, the fashion cycle moves faster than ever before in the history of clothing. Powered by vast globalization, the Internet and technological innovations, the pace of fashion has become rapid and turned into newly formed market and field, which differentiates relatively from other conventional fashion markets. Consequently, the life cycle of fast fashion is much shorter than other forms of fashion as it consumes and grows faster, making the industry unique and different from others (Solomon Rabolt, 2009, p.14).

The general fashion cycle is composed of introduction, acceptance, climax and decline, demonstrated in Figure 1 (Solomon, Rabolt, 2009, p.14).

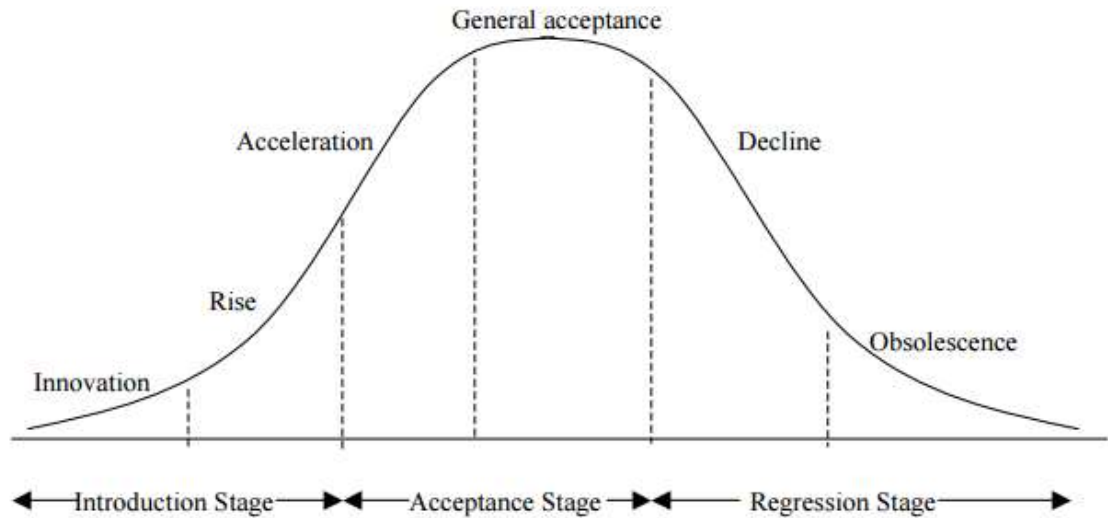


Figure 1 General Fashion Cycle Model (Solomon, Rabolt, 2009 p. 14)

The figure demonstrates the regular pattern of the life cycle in fashion. Generally, the cycle starts with innovation and rise, which are part of the Introduction Stage. After the first stage comes the acceleration of adoption, which is the climax of the entire fashion cycle and thereby called the acceptance stage. Thereafter regression stage takes place, where the adopters evenly decline until the item or fashion is obsolete (Solomon, Rabolt, 2009, p. 15).

Nonetheless, the fashion cycle's length and shape differ when taking account different forms of fashion. They vary from short-lived to longer-lived, and the trend of the fashion curve between different forms of fashion is variable. In line with the length of acceptance cycle, there are four types of "fashion" available, which are Classic, Moderate Fashion, Fast Fashion and Fads. In order to point out the position of Fast Fashion, the life cycle curves of all fashion forms are compared in the figure on page 6 (Figure 2).

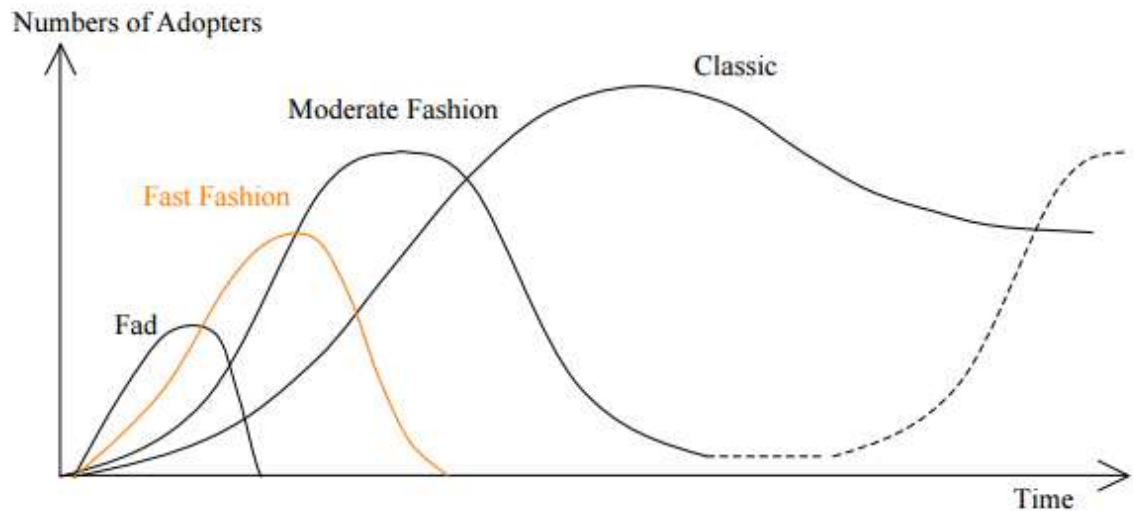


Figure 2 Comparison of the Acceptance Cycle of Fad, Fast Fashion, Moderate Fashion and Classic (Solomon, Rabolt ,2009, p.16)

As demonstrated in the Acceptance Cycle diagram, Fast Fashion is positioned in between Fad and Moderate fashion. A fad represents fashion that is short-lived with unmeaningful function. It emerges unexpectedly and vanishes away rapidly, and therefore fads are generally adopted by few people (Solomon, Rabolt 2009, p. 16). Moderate Fashion occurs for a reasonable time period and there is a great possibility for it to be cyclical. Unlike Fad and Moderate Fashion, Fast fashion is the form of fashion where processes in the supply chain are reduced resulting in a short lead time, which enables fast fashion brands to bring new items to their stores frequently and satisfy consumer demand right at its peak (Liz & Gaynor 2006). Classic differs from Fast Fashion by its extremely long acceptance period, stability and low risk for consumers, resulting almost in 'anti-fashion' (Solomon, Rabolt 2009, p.16).

2.2 What is fast fashion?

Fast fashion is a concept that reformed the fashion industry in the early 2000s with the fast-paced production model that meets the consumers' demand of ever-changing fashion trends (Chamberlain, 2013). Quoting John Thornbeck, the chairman of Change Capital, "fast fashion is the rapid translation of design trends into multi-channel volume" (Thornbeck cited in Loeb, 2015). In other words, fast fashion brands push on-trend merchandise into the supply chain pipeline at a relentlessly fast phase, which keeps their stores in stock on the latest trends at low cost prices. The styles seen on fashion shows,

in the fashion capitals New York, Paris and Milan, will be found soon after on fast fashion stores' racks (Loeb, 2015). The concept of moving merchandise quickly from designers' tables to retailing stores floor has affected the whole global retail industry and increased competition. Inditex group's leading brand Zara has been the pioneer and master in delivering new designs, fashions and ideas quickly to its stores. Soon after brands like H&M and Forever 21 became to take advantage of fast fashion and turned it into big revenue business in the same way as Zara (Loeb, 2015).

Fast fashion alludes to a business strategy where quick responsiveness to rising trends plays an integral part while providing product assortments effectively and quickly, in order to boost the product value and demand for short cycle fashion apparels (Sull, Turconi, 2008 p. 8; Choi, Liu, N., Liu, S., Mak, To, 2010, p. 475). The retailers in the fast fashion industry are able to meet the consumers' demand with the capability of providing low cost offerings on a weekly basis, which induces the purchase intention of consumers from all income levels (Siegle, 2011).

The consumers' addiction to visit fast fashion stores, like H&M and Zara, stems from their frequent collections the brands are providing weekly or even daily to their stores. Fast fashion retailers introduce new lines at a very fast phase with a low price, which maximizes their sales through impulse purchasing (McAfee, Dessain, Sjoman, 2004 p. 5). Thus, consumers are demanding a constant change in the stores meaning that new items must be offered on a frequent basis. Due to a very small stock, or not supply at all, together with quickly changing selection of merchandise, fast fashion brands are reinforcing consumers to visit their stores more often and dispose of their clothing more frequently, which follows the idea of "here today, gone tomorrow" (Bhardwaj, Fairhurst, 2010, p. 170).

2.3 Overview of history in fashion: how fast fashion came into place?

The overall production methods in the apparel industry and consumer buying habits towards clothing has changed and evolved significantly throughout the last ten decades. During the industrial revolution, which took place from the 18th to 19th centuries, the production of fabric was merchandized with waterwheels and steam-engines which shifted the production from the cottage based production model to mass production based manufacturing on assembly lines. At this time, clothing production was still continued to be made by hand by tailors and seamstresses who made individual items of apparel for customers (Bellis, 2014).

When sewing machines emerged in the 19th century, the ready-to-wear clothes became a possibility for consumers, resulting in an increase in clothing sales and eventually decrease in prices. The whole textile industry was revolutionized by technological innovations which changed the entire process of apparel production (Noagi, 2010).

Looking at the early 20th century before the World Wars, the evolvement and innovation in fashion industry slowed down which lasted over the World Wars till mid-20th century. In 1975, the apparel industry became to flourish again and continued its growth through the end of 20th century when the industry started to gain remarkable profits (Siegle, 2011). From the time of 1980s, the usual life cycle in fashion included four stages; introduction by fashion leaders, increase in public acknowledgment, maturity and decline and outdate of fashion. In addition, during that time fashion consisted mainly of trade fairs, fashion shows and fabric exhibitions, where Spring/Summer and Autumn/Winter collections were presented (Hines, 2001, p. 125). Nevertheless, when coming to the beginning of 1990s, fashion retailer's focus point changed from cost efficiency on manufacturing to a direction of expanded product ranges with up-to-date items and faster responsiveness to the new trends (Hines, 2001 p. 126; Hoffman, 2007 p.15; Barnes and Lea-Greenwood, 2006, p.265). In order to provide variation in the product range, fashion retailers started to bring more phases to the existing four seasons, e.g. mid-seasons, which resulted in extensive pressure on suppliers to deliver in a reduced lead time (Heeley, Tyler, Bhamra, 2006).

Before the late 1990s, fashion shows were predominantly restricted to buyers, designers and other fashion professionals until they become public for media. Because of public fashion shows, fashion minded consumers were disclosed to the latest, exclusive trends and styles inspired by catwalks, which increased consumers' demand towards designs that differed from mass production. The era of fast fashion industry started when retailers, such as Top Shop, H&M, Zara and Mango emerged and became to adopt such styles at a rapid phase to the stores to attract consumers (Barnes and Lea Greenwood, 2006, p. 268). Fashion retailers started to compete with their ability to present and provide rapidly the latest trends seen on fashion shows and catwalks to the stores. In other words, the fashion industry had developed towards quick fashion and responsiveness by reducing the time gap between designing and consumption on a seasonal basis (Taplin, 2006, p. 175).

As the fashion apparel industry became more competitive than ever before, some brands decided to move from product-driven chains to buyer-driven ones, which enabled partnering with suppliers located in different markets and eventually compete with their distinctive brands. As a consequence, profits increased in the industry due to wisely used components of business, such as marketing, design, research and sales. With the developed infrastructure, fast fashion brands were able to perform successfully through quick response method where the main components consisted of reduced lead times, extensive product range and low maintenance costs. Furthermore, outsourcing became a trend among the fast fashion brands, especially in terms of labour and production, making significant cost advantages possible (Barnes & Lea-Greenwood, 2006, p. 27; Fairhurst & Bhardwaj, 2010, p.167).

The shift from slow fashion to fast fashion has been quick and drastic, as well as consumers' attitudes towards fashion and buying habits. In today's clothing industry, the unwritten rule is that all apparels, even the basics in everyone's wardrobe, are expected to be infused and inspired by the runways and big designers. As a result, the distinction between 'fashion' and 'garment' has become looser than ever before. Until now, consumers have used to call those terms interchangeably, but today even basic garments have become fashion, such as gym wear, knickers and nighties, and expected to be up-to-the minute and associated with famous designer (Siegle, 2011).

3 Drivers to consume fast fashion

Unlike in the past, fast fashion has brought fashionable clothing available and accessible for everyone. Before the emergence of fast fashion, the most up-to-date pieces of clothing were reserved for the elite, which is far from the case at the moment. The way how people consume, and companies produce fashion have changed dramatically over the last 50 years, which has had a strong influence on people's attitudes towards fashion, shopping and consuming. With fast fashion, consumers from every income level can afford the latest trends and access them effortlessly. The pleasure of buying something new is so favoured in today's world that weekly or even daily shopping is not considered rare (Lejeune, 2016).

In several product categories, consumption is influenced by the desire to express oneself and to create an identity, which applies especially to fashion items. As clothing dominates our appearance to certain extent, consumers tend to show their personality through their way of clothing and share their meanings to others while reinforcing them to oneself (Berger and Heath, 2007).

Nonetheless, for many consumers the major aim is at being 'fashionable' which often overrides the drivers to be sustainable or ethical. Thus, there is seen a huge contradiction between the crave for consuming and pursuing limited consumption (Murray, 2002, p. 431). Research conducted by Birtwistle and Moore (2007) focusing on disposal of fashion items, conclusively argues this phenomenon to be due to low amount of knowledge about the negative side effects fashion industry leaves on environment. Whereas Carrigan and Attalla (2001) discuss the relation between behaviour and beliefs, and claim other factors to play a more integral role when it comes to decision making and purchase behaviour. Most relevant factors relevant to clothing consumption are value, price, brand image and trends (Solomon, Rabolt, 2004).

When it comes to the marketing strategy of fast fashion, it relies on wise pricing policy and constant style acceleration. Together they form up a very appealing concept, which consumers cannot resist. When the prices are low enough that consumers do not hesitate to buy because of the price, and when retailers introduce new pieces at a frequent phase, consumers are encouraged to make quick decisions through impulse purchasing. With this business model, fast fashion retailers have not had to wait for customers to visit the stores and spend money on goods. Thus, the major drivers to consume fast fashion

are considered to be the effective pricing policy and quickly changing collections (Taylor, 2014) together with active presence and promotion on social media by companies and consumers themselves (Bain, 2016a).

3.1 Price

In fast fashion, one of the keys to success for the brands and drivers for consumers to purchase is the low price. With 100 euros, consumers can purchase either one unique item from a designer store, or shop for multiple stylish items from fast fashion retailing stores (Rosenblum, 2015). After the emerge of the first fast fashion business model in the 1980s, the arrival of even more aggressively priced fast fashion discounters 5-10 years later undertook the industry by offering items for 50 per cent lower price than traditional clothing retailers, expressed in Figure 3 on page 20 (Wyman, 2015). As a result, several multilabel retailers, which operate on a traditional two season business, have been ejected from the market place. Furthermore, verticalized fashion retailers, which have not yet been able to adopt the principles of fast fashion supply chain, are suffering of low sales, at least on some of their products (Wyman, 2015).

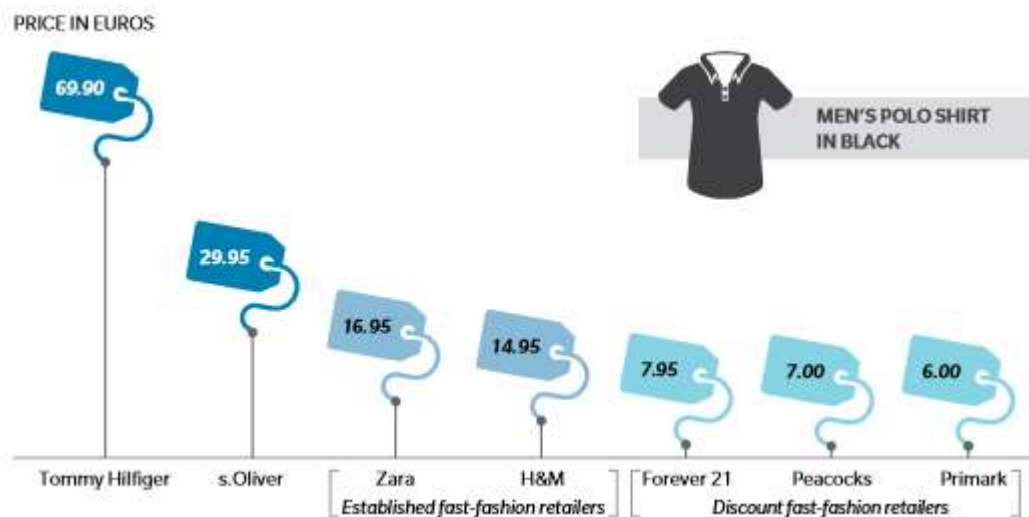


Figure 3 A comparison of price points across fashion retailers (Wyman, 2015)

As demonstrated in the price points comparison figure, discount fast fashion retailers, such as Primark and Forever 21, offer unbeatable prices when comparing to established fast fashion retailers, like Zara and H&M, and traditional fashion retailers, like Tommy Hilfiger. Discount fast fashion retailers are able to sell their items with such low prices

due to a higher level of standardization when it comes to material purchasing and product development. In addition, they hold extremely lean marketing and personnel cost structures, which contributes to the maintenance of low price level. As a result, Primark and Forever 21 cover their fixed costs only by selling high volumes (Wyman,2015).

Over one year, consumers tend to spend more on affordable pieces rather than investing in more exclusive garments. If an item has a higher price tag, it is more likely to be seen as a big change in our bank accounts as a cash outflow, for which consumers are appealed to purchase more often low-cost goods. Furthermore, when spending a lot of money on ourselves, many consumers become to feel guilty about indulging. Hence, a “bargain boast” culture has developed where consumers brag how great deals they have found and how little they paid. Due to bargains, it feels more acceptable to purchase new items every week (Lejeune, 2016).

3.1.1 Quality vs price

Despite the limited lifespan of the fast fashion items, consumers continue to purchase fast fashion mainly due to the relatively low cost combined with up-to-minute fashion appeal (Morgan, Birtwistle, 2009, p. 196). According to the research conducted by Bhardwaj and Fairhurst (2010, p.170), “Generation Y would prefer a higher number of low-quality, cheap and fashionable clothes”. Generally, the price is the focal point of the product and used as a criterion, which determines the success in the market (Ievtushenko, Hodge, 2012). The search for lower priced items has become a trend among consumers, which is a straight counter to the basic premise of sustainability (Niinimäki, 2006, p. 70).

Overall, consumers have become more price conscious when it comes to clothing, primarily due to ever changing trends which affect consumers’ willingness to update their closets more frequently than before. With fast fashion offering the latest trends for extremely affordable prices on a continual basis, consumers have dismissed the quality of clothing. As consumers are aware of quickly altering movements in fashion, investing in pricier, higher-quality clothing has decreased, whereas spending money on low priced and lower quality clothing offered by fast fashion brands has increased (Zerbo, 2016).

3.2 Trends and frequent collections

Continuously changing inventory and shortened life cycles in fashion are the core business strategy of fast fashion industry (Barnes and Lea-Greenwood, 2010, p.267).

Regular item drops to store instead of seasonal collections have become typical in fast fashion, and the focus of the industry has shifted from fast production towards how quickly and how much clothes can be delivered (Lejeune, 2016). With the support of developed technological systems and integrated supply chains, 'just-in-time' manufacturing came into place, which has enabled fast fashion retailers to turn a clothing around all the way from designer's sketch to the racks of stores as quick as a few weeks. As consumers responded positively to this trend, fashion has been speeding up and spread widely due to high consumerism in the sector (Ethical Fashion Forum, 2009).

Due to the effective use of supply chains, technology development and globalization, fast fashion brands are able to reduce the time between production and consumption, enabling to offer apparels in stores in the fastest possible time. Traditionally most fashion brands in the ready-to-wear sector present two main collections a year; spring/summer and autumn/winter. Whereas in the fast fashion industry, it is the total opposite. When it comes to the strategy of fast fashion retailers, it includes updating their collections often and maintaining small stocks. The most extreme retailer in the industry is Zara, which brings new items to their stores two times per week. Thus, new collections are brought to the stores at a very fast phase which make the industry unique and different from other fashion fields (Ethical Fashion Forum, 2009).

As a consequence of quickly changing product lines, Doeringer and Crean (2006) argue the life cycle of fast fashion to be a month or even less. The outcome of continuously changing product offering is lucrative as significantly short shelf life brings consumers to visit fast fashion stores often (Siegle, 2011).

3.2.1 Example: ZARA

In general, all the fast fashion brands share the same business ideology of quick-ly changing collections and affordable prices but the pioneer of the whole industry is Zara which is part of the Inditex group (Loeb, 2015). The whole fashion retail changed radically after the emergence of Spanish based clothing retailer Zara due to its effective supply chain combined with unique business strategy (Siegle, 2011).

The number one characteristics of Zara is that they manufacture only relatively small quantities of each style, meaning extremely quick selling product lines and miniature

stocks (Siegle, 2011). In practise, clothes are known to move rapidly from the store, for which Zara's customers are familiar with the fact that if they do not buy the item right away, it will be gone the next day (Loeb, 2015). The former Chairman of Inditex José Maria Castellano describes fast fashion as "blink-and-you-miss-it fashion" (Siegle, 2011 cited Castellano, p. 39). Thereby, consumers are not able to hesitate about the actual purchase decision while shopping, which creates extreme hunger among consumers which stems from small and fast-changing product lines. The holistic fear of missing the chance to get the wanted item leads consumers to purchase right away, which often results in poor buying decisions and garments' disposal (Siegle, 2011).

Especially in the case of Zara, customers visit the store on average 17 visits per year, whereas a typical retailer foresees its customers to visit about only about four times a year. The reason why consumers are appealed to visit Zara as often is that each piece of clothing and collection are given extremely short time to prove themselves, which is unquestionably no longer than four weeks per each style. For this reason, the consumers who have a strong will to be on style continuously, pop in the store as often as they can manage, and less often exit the store without the blue paper bag (Siegle, 2011).

According to the former Chairman of Inditex group, José Maria Castellano, stock in fashion is seen as the same as food – because "it goes bad quick" (Siegle, 2011 cited Castellano, p.39). For this reason, the major emphasis is on reducing the response time by taking the risk out of the retailer and pushing them down onto the supply chain to the very first stages of production. In other words, there is not risk involved in the actual selling as items move as soon as they are introduced in the store, for which Zara is not obliged to run huge discount sales, which is unusual for clothing retailer. A typical discounting for fashion retailers are between 35 to 40 per cent, whereas Zara discounts only about 18 per cent of its products (Siegle, 2011).

Another factor which makes Zara unique is the ability to bring the hot pieces of clothing from catwalks in the Fashion Weeks to their stores within weeks, which has been the key to their success. Consumers are attracted by the up-to-minute product lines, which are as fresh as they could be (Siegle, 2011). Approximately, Zara creates 40 000 designs each year, from which only 10 000 will be selected for production. A great amount of the selected styles resembles the most recent couture creations, which explains Zara's ability to beat the higher-end fashion houses when it comes to creating expensive looking

pieces with less money. As many of the pieces come in about five colours and seven sizes, Zara deals roughly 300 000 units on average per year (Taylor, 2014).

Zara is able to offer the latest trends by their own system of interpreting. Instead of working hard on deciding a style for nine to twelve months, Zara takes advantage of analysts and forecasters a year in advance, focusing on upcoming trends. The risk the company takes is rolled over to ordering and choosing the right fabrics and colours. The whole process is monitored at the Inditex's headquarters located in La Coruna in Spain, where a large production team works on consumer-led and highly reactive collections. As a result, the production team can act very quickly to changing and forthcoming trends and provide them as fast as possible for their customers (Siegle, 2011).

The production team uses trend spotters on the ground, with whom they are in a constant connection by emailing and phoning, with an aim at finding suggestions what is hot and what is not at the moment. Furthermore, Zara includes some un-usual technical processes to the production stage, which assist on creating the right items at the right time. For instance, Zara purchases uncoloured and semi-processed fabric, known by the term 'greige', which allows to be dyed and finished at short notice (Siegle, 2011). Also, Zara has segmented its supply chain, by having the basic items manufactured in the Far East and the higher fashion items closer to the headquarters (Ethical Fashion Forum, 2009). They are producing about 50 to 80 per cent of their lines in Europe, the purpose of which is to identify trends in the European area and in the Fashion Weeks, and thereby allow to make decisions about the styles of the items close to the actual production. This way of operating the production permits to deliver the final products to the stores within 30 days (Siegle, 2011). In other words, by producing most of the items closer to their headquarters, Zara is able to react to the market quickly and deliver the most up-to-minute clothes and accessories to their stores (Ethical Fashion Forum, 2009). In order to act rapidly, Zara benefits of quick deliveries by the heavy use of air freight, which they use for their twice a week shipments to stores, and for shipping raw materials and half-finished clothes (Siegle, 2011).

3.3 Social media

Social media is one of the drivers that urges to consume fast fashion, as it plays an integral part when it comes to spreading information about the current trends and "it" pieces. Nowadays, when people are surfing in the internet and social media, they are vulnerable to different forms of promoting, which induces consumerism. Through social

media, consumers get the knowledge what our culture tells and requires them to spend their money on. Different social media channels are bursting of information what is in right now and which products consumers need to achieve the look (Angyal, 2010).

The growth of fast fashion industry and the outbreak of social media obsessed culture have contributed together to consumers' lavish spending patterns on fast fashion goods. Thus, the influence of different social media channels on consumers' decision making regarding further purchases is notable. Social media affects consumers in a downright way; when people notice something new online, on a celebrity on Instagram for instance, they go right after to buy it (Butler-Young, 2017). Consumers have become adjusted to be able to act quickly when it comes to new items seen online, which stems from the crave for instant gratification from shopping. The presence of social media permits consumers to act that way (Bain, 2016a).

The most influential makers in social media marketing for fast fashion goods are the companies themselves, brand ambassadors, bloggers, vloggers and celebrities. Fast fashion is present on all the social media channels but the most notable ones are Instagram and Youtube where consumers get inspired and the urge to go shopping for themselves. The phenomenon of 'haul' videos has been up almost since the emergence of Youtube. The basic idea behind haul videos is to show off the latest purchases, which usually do not contain a lot of criticism as people buy things they like with the money they earn. Overall, haul videos are observed as one form of overconsumption, which encourage other people to do the same. Many 'youtubers', such as vloggers, beauty and fashion gurus, have millions of subscribers on Youtube, which explains how much influence they hold in their hands when it comes to showing off products on video, either as a cooperation with a brand or individually. The reason why people keep on watching these videos is that nowadays videos on Youtube are made more and more professionally and thereby they are appealing for consumers' eyes. As a result of the active social media, consumers receive suggestions on a daily and hourly basis on what to buy next and what they need to look good (Jay, 2011).

The impact of social media concerns mainly young consumers, who are the most active there by posting daily or even hourly basis. For this group of consumers, it is of highly importance to be able to wear the moment's "it" items in order to maintain or improve their social status. For this reason, they tackle to the popular garments right after they surface. Furthermore, the "rule" among young consumers of not wearing the same outfit

twice, especially not on social media, is getting widely spread while urging to consume more. The social media is the key for them to maintain the chic and up-to-minute look (Butler-Young, 2017).

If retailers have the knowhow of taking advantage of different social media channels, they have full potential to influence their customers to either visit the shop or 'click and buy' online (Bowman, 2015). The most successful fashion retailers use social media not just for promoting new products but also for entertainment purposes in order to keep the audience engaged. The more companies act like a media company, the more their customers show interest and loyalty towards the company (Bain, 2016a).

4 Disposable item culture

We are living in an era where everything is thrown away. There are a variety of products on the market, all the way from disposable cameras to disposable diapers. Nowadays only few products are marketed as durable, made-to-last. This phenomenon applies to many industries at the moment, including for instance video gaming, computer software industries, and textile industries. However, often consumers do not apprehend the throw-away society was deliberately planned to accelerate sales and cash flow. The trend of “planned obsolescence” has been current for decades and continues to influence consumers’ buying habits and environment (Smith, 2007). Thus, the fact is that single-use items are not anything new, nor is the planned obsolescence. For a long time, there has been the issue of how to recycle and handle the items when they are at the point of discarding (Chau, 2012).

Whether a business strategy includes producing items that are not meant to last, most likely the business is excessively profitable as consumers need to purchase replacement products often and regularly. Furthermore, manufacturers which produce low quality items also generate higher profit margins. When they are using throw-away materials in their products, it does not only guarantee a repurchase of the same product but it also results in pure profit through cost savings (Smith, 2007).

Often consumers have become so adjusted to the process that they do not think about the fact that the product they are aiming at buy will not last long or recognize that they are solely spending more and more money to unsustainable products. This phenomenon is primarily due to the wide spread ideology through advertising that everything new is preferred to anything old, for which the so-called “out with the old, in with the new” lifestyle has emerged. The result is excessive spending and splurging, which ends up taking more money from consumers that they would imagine (Smith, 2007).

The cost of disposable item culture is tremendous. Consumers are required to spend money more often on disposable items, which often leads to financial issues, such as shopping on credit. Furthermore, the price for environment is also included when it comes to disposable item culture. When businesses are manufacturing new and often unnecessary items on a continual basis, raw materials are used up and pollution is unavoidable. It also influences the air we breathe and the quality of water we drink. At the

end of products' life cycles, disposable products end up in landfills, taking up significant amount of space due to the increased disposable item behaviour (Smith, 2007).

4.1 Linkage between fast fashion and throwaway society

In today's world, where instant gratification is part of consumers' lives, fast fashion, also known by the term 'disposable' fashion, is increasing and expanding with H&M, Zara and Topshop paving the way. These fast fashion brands are the emporiums which take up 20 times bigger floor place when compared to an average fashion specialty retailer, explaining the large volume of textiles fast fashion produces (Walker, 2014).

Overall, fast fashion creates so great deals that customers cannot resist on buying more and more. Clothes with trendy vibe and affordable price tag combined with quickly changing item range encourages consumers to visit the stores often, buy loads of garments and then discard them after a few wears. And, the same cycle repeats where consumers come back to the stores for another set of new clothes to replace the old ones, which have gone out of style or lost its shape or colour due to cheap materials (The Economist, 2015).

In fast fashion, it is common for consumers to throw away their items after one or two wears, and it is rarely considered odd for a few reasons. Often, the choice of discarding items bought from fast fashion sector solely stems from the poor quality the garments are produced from (Chau, 2012). The nature of fast fashion industry allows consumers to purchase a load of garments on a repetitive mode while creating the need of revamping their wardrobes which is often a necessity due to dispersed clothes (Zerbo, 2016). The other reason relies on the quickly changing trends which consumers follow constantly. The movement of fashion cycles is faster than ever before, which has resulted in immoderate shopping and purchasing items for short-term use only (Tan, 2016).

More often, clothes produced for a certain time period are tied to the season, which means they are outdated right after the new season collections emerge in stores. Thus, collections which will be launched in Autumn/Winter 2017 are not appealing anymore when Spring/Summer 2018 collections arrive. Trends keep on changing on continual basis and clothes get outdated sooner than ever before, which make up fast fashion very closely linked to disposable item behaviour (Zerbo, 2016). Furthermore, also because clothes are more often produced through mass-production, the price level in fast fashion remains low which attracts consumers to visit the store regularly (Tan, 2016). As a result,

fast fashion has led its way into substantial disposable clothing, and it is exceptionally worrying as it creates demand on a continual basis while feeding consumerism, resulting in enormous amounts of cheap clothes production and discarding (Chau, 2012).

5 Fast fashion and Sustainable Development Goals

Goal 12, Responsible Production and Consumption, of the Sustainable Development Goals introduced by The Open Working Group of the General Assembly of the United Nations targets at ensuring sustainable consumption and production patterns (Hoballah, 2015), which applies directly to fast fashion industry and disposable item culture and connects it to the sustainable development goals.

All what we produce and consume has either a positive or negative impact on the environment, the economy and social development. The importance of goal 12 stems from the fact that the better we achieve sustainable consumption and production; the better efficiency and productivity gains are secured while respecting the rights of the future generations (Hoballah, 2015).

The major aim of sustainable consumption and production is at “doing more and better with less”, which is achieved by increasing “net welfare gains from economic activities by reducing resource use, degradation and pollution along the whole lifecycle, while increasing quality of life” (United Nations, 2016). The stakeholders of this goal consist of businesses, consumers, researchers, policy makers, scientists, retailers, development cooperation agencies and media, among others (United Nations, 2016).

In order to achieve this goal, it requires a systematic approach combined with cooperation among actors which operate in the supply chain all the way from producer to final consumer. Integral part included in this sustainable development goal is to engage consumers through raising awareness and education about sustainable consumption and lifestyles and providing adequate information through labels and standards for consumers (United Nations, 2016). Thereby one of the targets of this goal regarding consumption patterns is to ensure by 2030 the spread of relevant information of connecting sustainable development and consumers’ lifestyles, so that consumers’ consumption patterns would be in harmony with nature. Furthermore, the goal 12 encourages especially large and transnational companies to integrate sustainability information to their reporting cycle and adopt sustainable practises. Also, it aims at supporting developing countries in order to improve their consumption patterns and production to a more sustainable direction by strengthening their scientific and technological capacity (United Nations, 2016).

When it comes to analysing the consumption habits and overall behaviour and attitudes towards fast fashion, it is important to look at the sustainable development goal 12 by United Nations. The consumption patterns and consumers' behaviour towards consumption is analysed in the next chapter, with regard to the consequences of consumers and environment.

6 Consumerism

Consumerism and overconsumption are one of the outcomes of fast fashion. Consumerism has two discretely contrasting meanings; the first one's emphasis is on protecting the rights of consumers, whereas the second one sees consumerism as a steady growth in consumption of goods and services, feeding the capitalist economy. When looking at the effects of fast fashion buying behaviour, the focus is on the latter one in this study. Trentmann (2004) defines consumerism as "the lure of material goods for individuals", while for Stearns "consumerism describes a society in which many people formulate their goals in life partly through acquiring goods that they clearly do not need for subsistence or traditional display" (Stearns, 1997). According to Trentmann (2004), consumerism stems from 18th century Western Europe from where it was exported to the rest of the world, where as Stearns (1997) argues the origin of consumerism is from 17th century after which it started to grow due to the spread of shops, establishment of innovations regarding credit arrangements and the expansion of promotional activities and advertising.

Consumerism is often associated with contradictory repercussions. On the one hand, consumerism is seen as positive in terms of economic growth and market expansion due to increasing consumption of goods and services. While, on the other hand, consumerism is considered to be the act of consuming beyond the human needs and embracing materialism in a form of overconsumption (Doran, 2009, p. 555). Furthermore, consumerism is related to chronic purchasing of new items with little courtesy to their actual need, the origin of the item, durability or the consequences the purchasing of a new item has on environment in terms of manufacturing and disposal (Belk, Devinney, Eckhardt, 2005).

6.1 Consumerism and fast fashion

Extremely affordable prices on clothing in the fast fashion sector has led to a phenomenon of overconsumption of unsustainable clothing. Because fast fashion goods hold such a low price, consumers get blinded by the affordable pricing resulting in excessive purchasing. As a result, consumers have a belief of saving money by purchasing cheap clothing and finding the best deals, which however is rarely the case at the end. The overall amount of money spent on fast fashion is often more than consumers would imagine. Hence, a typical scenario for consumer is to plan to buy one item when entering

a fast fashion store but more often than consumers end up exiting the store with multiple items, meaning a much higher total amount than originally planned (Moccerro, O'Keefe, 2014).

In addition, as clothing is offered today for such a low price, consumers have started to buy clothing only for one time wear. A situation where clothes have become so cheap, consumers are able to afford new items every week, for every happening, has been current in fast fashion for over two decades. Especially among young women, a trend of buying a special piece of clothing for each event has become very common. And, even if clothing is not purchased for one time wear, it often ends up being worn once before its disposal due to issues concerning the quality or major trends changes (Moccerro, O'Keefe, 2014).

As fast fashion pieces are generally produced from cheap materials, they are more likely to fall apart, shrink, become misshapen and lose the original colours of the garment, which shortens the item's lifecycle significantly. As a result, consumers must replace them, which doubles the amount of money spent on clothes. Furthermore, styles and trends take a different form on a continual basis in fast fashion, for which garments purchased from fast fashion brands, like H&M and Forever 21, do not hold value for a long time. As the inventory and collections change continuously, it is very effortless for consumers from every income level to keep up with the latest trends. Consequently, frequent shopping for up-to-minute garments means also shorter times for items to be in style. When consumers feel like their closets need an update, they just go to buy more. As long as the price level remains as microscopic as it is today, and inventory keeps changing rapidly, consumers on a budget persist on fast fashion shopping. This repetitive cycle is very common in fast fashion, which preclude the opportunity to invest in more sustainable clothing with longer life cycles (Moccerro, O'Keefe, 2014).

6.1.1 Changed perceptions towards shopping

The change in consumers' shopping habits in fashion and attitudes towards garments started in the mid-1980s. The major change has been the shift in the way how consumers perceive clothing nowadays (Siegle, 2011), found in a research, conducted by Morgan and Birtwistle, focusing on 'young fashion consumers' purchasing habits in the UK. After interviewing 18 to 25-year-old consumers, the researchers found out nearly all of them confessing to spending more money than they used to before. On an average, the focus group spent from £20 to £200 a month, which is not actually the most surprising factor.

The most notable issue discovered in the research was that increasingly consumers do not have plans regarding how long they planned to keep any of their purchases for. Furthermore, when a garment become stained, marked or rent, most likely the destination was the rubbish bin and not the wash basket. The old way of how people wore clothes, washed them carefully and repaired when needed, and the way of purchasing clothes according to one's income and nature's changing seasons, have nothing in common with how people consume today (Birtwistle, Moore, 2007). As a consequence of changed buying habits and attitudes towards consumption, consumers have built up massive wardrobes, and there are no signs yet whether there is going to be a change towards a more sustainable and ethical shopping (Siegle, 2011).

Even though the global interest in sustainability and ethics has been present and increasing for reasonable time in several industries, consumers in the fast fashion industry have been reluctant to embrace sustainable changes to their buying behaviour. In general, many brands in the fashion industry are pursuing to change its unsustainable nature. However, the change towards more sustainable industry is only achievable in the long term, giving that consumers would change their ideology on fashion by supporting sustainable fashion items and more sustainable buying patterns. Consumers are said to progressively pay attention to unethical processes, manufacturing and behaviour in general, although it does not always translate to behaviour, especially regarding to items in fashion industry (Bray, Johns, Kilburn, 2011, p. 601; Joergens, 2006, p. 366).

6.2 Psychological issues

To an increasing extent, consumerism in fast fashion has evoked psychological issues among consumers. In today's world, even though consumers' wardrobes are bursting with clothing and accessories, they are not contented with what they have got. In order to be on style, consumers are intended to shop according to the trends which are chic during the time, and as styles and trends keep on changing rapidly in fast fashion, consumers end up shopping for items for extremely short-term use, on a continual basis. People own more clothes than ever before in history but they have become less secure and less fulfilled in their purchases, specifically due to a more passive behaviour in consuming. Overall, consumers have become more insecure about themselves, which they try to fix by continuous shopping. Consumers watch and follow each other consciously or unconsciously until they find themselves in a shop hands full of garments and accessories on the way to checkout (Siegle, 2011).

In fast fashion, excessive advertising plays an integral part on how consumers perceive themselves and their lives, and specifically how they should look like. According to studies conducted by Siegle (2011), fast fashion advertising has had negative influence on consumers' confidence. Furthermore, it has created a feeling among consumers that purchasing new, fashionable clothing make their lives better. Massive promoting is achievable since fast fashion brands make high margins as a result from shifting their items fast from designer's table to the floors of stores, for which there is more capital available for investing in advertising. Thus, being present in all forms of marketing and media channels is particularly common for fast fashion retailers, and more often consumers are compelled to spot advertisements of fast fashion giants, like H&M, on print, TV, billboard and online (Siegle, 2011).

The two significant messages in the advertisement of fast fashion brands are the look which consumers should aim at and what they need to create the look, and also bring the cheap prices up in order to have consumers understand they can all afford it, from every income level. The result of effective and persuasive advertising urges consumers to go shopping. Often, fast fashion brands use size zero catwalk models as mannequins for their collections, which has had negative impact on consumers' self-confidence. Especially among young girls, the effects of promoting high-street clothes on perfect looking models are seen on consumers' poor body image. Thereby, as a consequence of effective ads, consumers have started to think what they could and should wear, instead of what they would want to wear. Furthermore, the urge for looking for new items on a continual basis to achieve the glossy image the ads are presenting is very much typical. Consumers are trying to fix their appearance by shopping for items that are accepted in the society during the time, with a faith that new clothes will make them feel better (Lejeune, 2016).

In addition, overconsumption in fast fashion has been considered as a reason for increasing anxiety when it comes to post-purchase behaviour. Progressively, people have been making poor decisions while shopping, which end up negative feelings after purchase. More often, there are overwhelmingly a great number of pieces to choose from in the stores of fast fashion, which is not necessarily better for consumer. The variety of choices to choose from and the lack of time to for decision making leads consumers to stressful situations, where they end up consuming something what they do not really

need. When consumers make wrong decisions, and realize them later on after purchase, the feelings of anxiety and depression might occur (Taylor, 2014).

6.3 Financial issues

Through strong consumerism, people are spending their money to the point when their wallet has emptied while chasing for the never-ending reserve of new and updated items. Nonetheless, many consumers end up falling victim to shop on credit once being run out of available capital (Smith, 2007).

As a result of increasing shopping, consumers tend to forget what they bought last month, in the same way as trying to remember what they ate the other day. Shopping has become a daily or weekly routine for many consumers, for which they might overlook and deny buying anything even though they picked up something when walking past a high-street store (Siegle, 2011).

7 Environmental damage

When considering pollution and other environmental damages, most likely people conceive strip-mined mountain tops, coal power plants and raw sewage piped into the waterways. Thus, the impact which apparel industry has on environment is often overlooked. Nevertheless, there are several issues in fashion retail when it comes to harming the environment and sustainability. The trend of creating significant demand for cheap and quick garments is a tremendous issue for environment, as clothes continue on influencing the nature after the purchase when being washed and finally at the moment of disposal. The consequence of disposed textiles results in more damage to the planet than consumers realize while shopping (Eco Watch, 2015).

Each piece of clothing has their own environmental footprint at every stage of the production process. That is the reason why there is a such a deep-rooted inconsistency between the fast fashion business model, which stands for selling large amounts of items fast, and the concept of sustainability in terms of environment. The more consumers purchase fast fashion goods, the more there is negative influence on environment (Lejeune, 2016).

With fast fashion, trends are speeding up on a fast phase and seasons are shortened, which make the clothing quite likely dated in one year time. Furthermore, the quality of fast fashion garments is not very durable, for which they are disposed after a few wears. Getting rid of clothes bought from chains like Zara, H&M and Topshop is challenging as there are not plenty of choices available in terms of recycling, which leads to unsustainable solutions. The unwanted clothes from fast fashion are usually thrown in the trash which eventually end up piling up in a landfill (Wicker, 2016). The increased amount of disposed clothing is one of the factors which make up the fast fashion industry the second largest polluter in the world after the oil industry (Eco Watch, 2015).

In the United States, the amount of thrown clothes has been doubled in less than 20 years from seven million to 14 million tons. The volume of clothing tossed each year would be the equivalent of taking both 7.3 million cars and their carbon dioxide emissions off the highway (Wicker, 2016). When it comes to Europe, the amount of thrown textiles goes up to six million tonnes per year, of which only less than third is shipped to developing countries through charities (FoEE, 2013). Therefore, about 4.3 million tonnes of

textiles either wind up to landfills or get burnt in incinerators, resulting in issues in waste handling and increasing amount of unwanted emissions (Wicker, 2016).

7.1 Recycling options

When it comes to recycling garments purchased from fast fashion brands, most likely consumers are not able to get money out of them after the purchase from store. The chances of recycling any clothing are not extensive as clothes can be taken to a consignment or thrift store or sell them via online equivalent. Nonetheless, fast fashion pieces are often rejected by second hand stores even though their original price was high to the extent what fast fashion goods can be. The major reasons for rejection are either clothes being out-of-style or poor quality, or the both of them. Due to shortened seasons and rapidly changing trends, clothing gets outdated sooner than ever before in the history of apparel industry; pieces of clothing purchased from fast fashion are dated at the latest one year after purchase. Furthermore, the poor quality and cheap materials used in fast fashion garments is common knowledge, for which consumers are unwilling to buy second hand clothes bought, for example, from H&M or Forever 21. Consequently, reselling goods from fast fashion is complicated and unsupported, which is the reason why clothes keep piling up in landfills (Wicker, 2016).

What is more, recycling centres and charities have started to reject fast fashion clothing, which proves the ultimately low resell and recycling value. However, a great extent of textiles is still recycled to developing countries but charities operating the processes are drowning by the large amount of donated clothes. The emergence of fast fashion has forced charities to process a large number of textiles in less time than before in order to get the revenue needed; charity organisations are required to go through large numbers of garments to find the great pieces as the preliminary concept behind recycling industry is to prefer quality over quantity (Wicker, 2016). As a result, for the past fifteen years, charities have not been able to bring in great amount of money as the resell value has dropped by 71 per cent during the time (Siegle, 2011). A great number of garments will not be sold by charities, for which recyclers buy and forward them to sorting plants where textiles are organised to bales with a final destination in developing countries (Frazer, 2008). Nonetheless, the quality of the clothing is not guaranteed as it is solely relying on the sorting operation. Furthermore, buying a bale is costly, for which it is sort of an investment for the people buying it (Siegle, 2011).

As a consequence of shipping clothes to 'third world countries', the economies and especially clothing industries of these countries are suffering and have shrunk noticeably through the presence of fast fashion industry combined with increasing number of textiles purchased. Specifically, Africa has been influenced by this phenomenon after the first bales were shipped there in 1980s. Second hand clothing has been considered better quality and also cheaper than domestically produced garments, for which used clothes have become to dominate the clothing market in the African continent. As a result, the flow and domination of second hand textiles dropped the protectionist economic policies in Africa, which has had a negative influence on the domestic producers. For example, by 2004, 81 per cent of the clothing purchased in Uganda was second hand, causing difficulties for the domestic apparel businesses (Wicker, 2016). As a result of increasing number of textiles shipped from Western countries, African textile industries have shrunk and some even vanished; after the year 1980 till 2000, the clothing industry in Africa fall five per cent a year on average (Siegle,2011).

7.2 Influence of materials used on environment

When natural fibres, such as linen, silk or cotton, or semi-synthetic fibres get buried in a landfill, in a sense they act like food waste as they degrade while producing the strong greenhouse gas methane. Nonetheless, old clothes cannot be composted in a similar way as banana peels, despite them being produced from natural fibres. According to the CEO of the Sustainable Apparel Coalition, Jason Kibbey, natural fibres are being processed in an unnatural way on their way to becoming an actual garment. Due to bleaching, dyeing, printing and scouring in chemical ingredients, clothes are not suitable for landfills for a few reasons. The chemicals in the textiles can leach and rinse which improperly sealed in landfills end up into groundwater. If the items are burned in incinerators, they may release the toxins included in the garments into the air (Wicker, 2016).

Synthetic fibres, like nylon, polyester and acrylic, are very commonly used in fast fashion clothing as materials due to their low cost, and they carry more negative impacts for environment than any other material used in clothing production (Wicker, 2016). Polyester, one of the cheapest materials used in garments' production, is included about in 60 per cent of the clothing of today (Cheeseman, 2016). The problem of the usage of synthetic fibres primarily relies on the fact that these materials are made from petroleum, meaning that they are essentially a type of plastic resulting in hundreds of years biodegrading, if not even a thousand (Wicker, 2016).

When clothes are being trashed, it also has a huge financial impact in addition to negative environmental effects. Shipping the textiles to landfills and incinerators is a very costly process, especially during the last two decades when the amount of trashed clothes has been increasing on a continual basis (Wicker,2016).

7.3 Closed loop technology

The future of fast fashion could be changed towards more sustainable direction whether the closed loop technology, known also as the “circular production model”, would come through to an active use in the coming years. It is a very innovative concept, where the end product is wholly recycled and transformed back to the original components, such as fibres, in order to recreate the item again. The benefit of the circular production model is that it would generate almost zero waste, which would reduce massively the environmental footprint when it comes to mass production (Lejeune, 2016).

Whether the quality and price of clothing continues to decrease, and the consumption of textiles keep on increasing in the coming years, the result might be a second-hand clothing crisis if nothing changes in our consumption patterns or in the way how clothes are produced (Wicker, 2016). There is no evidence available whether closed-loop technology would revolutionize the whole textile industry and fix the environmental issues with fast fashion but to some extent it would direct fast fashion into a more sustainable industry. The technology would not act as an antidote as it would only cover the symptoms of the problems regarding waste and increasing energy consumption, and not the cause for the fast fashion disposal phenomenon, which is the consumers’ addiction to buy and retailers’ will to sell low cost items in large quantities (Lejeune, 2016).

7.3.1 Retailers’ environment programs

Since the closed loop technology is not yet in an active use, fast fashion retailers have responded to the threat of environmental damage due to textile disposal. Recently the Swedish apparel retailer H&M run a recycling campaign, also named by the take-back program, where they collected unwanted, second hand clothing from their customers (Tan, 2016). The World Recycle Week was to collect 1000 tons of used garments by encouraging recycling (Bain, 2016b). The idea behind it was to remake them into other clothing by transforming the recycled textile fibres to new products. The major aim was to have zero clothed going in to a landfill, which however was not the case at the end

(Tan, 2016). Overall, only 1 per cent of the fabrics was recycled, which does not go hand in hand with the preliminary aim at decreasing the amount of disposed clothes and making new ones from the old, used clothes (Bain, 2016b).

The goal of these environment programs is to reduce the amount of thrown away clothes and thereby diminish the number of textiles piled up in landfills. Nevertheless, the customers who gave their old clothes for H&M under the program, were given a discount code or vouchers to be used at H&M. Basically, the completion of the project did not support the original aim of the program, as the vouchers and discount codes solely encourage to shop for more clothes and thereby induce consumerism (Tan, 2016). Some criticize the program being only green washing and illusions presented for customers, which does not support the basic idea of sustainability and recycling (Bain, 2016b).

8 Analysis

Our current economy encourages people to consume over the limits of earth's capacity when it comes to the amount we consume and the waste we produce through our consuming habits, influencing negatively our planet to the point where significant changes are required in order to provide decent lives for the further generations. Capital-driven economy is fed with excessive consumerism which has become more of a normality in today's world, which we can identify in number of different industries already.

The way how people are consuming these days is not comparable to previous decades before 21st century. Items are not perceived to have a long-life cycle, unlike in the past. More and more products are made not to last, for which consumers end up consuming often and on a continual basis. As a result, shopping has become a way of life.

In fast fashion, the impact of market-driven and rapidly responsive business model can be seen in continuous demand from consumers' side. The ability to react rapidly to changes in the fashion world and move items from designer's sketch to store's racks within a few weeks is something what has not been seen before the emergence of fast fashion. Being able to copy and create styles seen on catwalks and Fashion Weeks from higher-end brands is seen an integral part when it comes to the appeal of the industry among consumers.

The concept of quick response method is high-yielding for fast fashion retailers. Due to low producing costs, reduced lead times and extensive product ranges, a constant demand creation among consumers is effortless. With the affordable prices and constantly changing collections, consumers are drawn to the stores to consume. Keeping in mind the low-cost level and short stock life of the garments, consumers are aware them being gone tomorrow if not picked today. The business model urges consumers to make quick decisions when it comes to shopping, leading to impulse purchasing and thereby to poor purchase decisions. Thus, too often clothes are purchased for short-time use only.

Excessive consumerism in fast fashion stems from effective pricing strategy. Clothes being offered with such an affordable price tag today, textiles are bought often bought merely for single-use. If a dress costs 9,99 € at H&M, consumers nowadays perceive it normal to purchase it for the upcoming event and then forget it to wardrobe until it gets outdated, which has then no value anymore.

Affordable prices on fast fashion goods does not only lead to unsustainable consumption and unwanted waste as it influences consumers' mind as well. When everything is so cheap priced, consumers tend to spend much more on fast fashion than they would imagine, leading to issues in money handling. After spending a great amount of money to items that do not last, the feelings of anxiety are not rare among customers of fast fashion. Furthermore, the promoting of fast fashion has been considered as a degrading factor when it comes to people's self-confidence.

The second most polluting industry, fast fashion, is not referred to disposable item culture pointlessly. The way how fast fashion businesses are run has a tremendous influence on consumption patterns and how consumers perceive clothing in general, leading to clothes' disposal too soon after purchase. When a clothing is discarded after a few wears or brought to a second-hand store with the price tag still on, the linkage between fast fashion and throw away behaviour is becoming very clear. Progressively increasing amounts of discarded clothes in landfills reflect the issue of over consumption and culture of disposable items.

Most often the discarded items are mass-produced, cheaper garments. Aiming at cost-efficiency, fast fashion retailers rarely put emphasis on the quality of the garments. The cheap quality plays an integral part when it comes to disposing clothes. Because of cheap materials used in the production of garments, consumers get to enjoy their garments bought from fast fashion retailers a few times until they realize the colours have faded, the shape is loosened, or the item has stained or got holes. Because of the low price, most likely people are unwilling to make the effort to get them repaired. The low standard in production phase evokes to significantly short product life cycle and enables consumers to benefit from their purchases for a limited time.

Low quality is not solely the only factor why garments end up at landfills so soon after purchase. Fast fashion being very subjective to trends, consumers tend to follow them according to the latest assortments stores are offering during the time. As consumers get to see multiple seasons instead of the regular four seasons per year, there is always something new coming to the stores, meaning always the end for some trends. This is a continuous cycle, which runs at a very fast phase. Trends are changing quickly while consumers follow them strictly. As a result, clothes get out-dated sooner than ever before, which gives consumers a reason to toss them.

The problems arising from disposable item culture concern the ability to handle the waste created from unwanted textiles. Fast fashion producing a load of different styles and then consumers buying them, the overall effect can be seen in a great amount of waste piling up in landfills. The waste from textiles is progressively increasing and there are even more limited spaces to place to discard old garments. As fast fashion garments do not sell on second-hand markets due to low resell and recycling value, the problem of waste handling is headed over to landfills and incinerators. Because most fast fashion textiles are produced from synthetic materials including petroleum, it evokes a grand environmental issue as the garments take hundreds of years to biodegrade after disposal.

The possible solution to the issue of disposed textiles would be solved with the closed loop technology but there is still a long way to go in order to have the program in an active use. The change towards a more sustainable direction in the industry is in the hands of big retailers and consumers themselves. Fast fashion is nowadays a very buyer-driven business where consumers hold a strong power. Whether consumers would manage to change their consumption habits and prefer more sustainable options over the cheap ones, while big fashion retailers would start to focus on producing items in a more sustainable way, the issue of throwaway society in fast fashion would be at least diminished. However, being able to make such drastic changes to the current consumption patterns, there should be more measures available aiming at more regulated consumption, and also binding regulations by European Union, for instance, targeting at sustainable production and consumption.

Based on these findings, more research is required to be conducted in order to have a deeper knowledge of the current state of disposed textiles. It needs emphasis on each factor influencing the issue, all the way from producing the goods to the point of disposal. Involving environmental and governmental enforcement is needed in order to control consumption of not only textiles but also other Industries goods' which influence negatively to the environment though overconsumption.

9 Conclusion – Fast fashion and disposable item culture

The main goal of this thesis was to find the connection between fast fashion industry and disposable item culture and discover both the reasons behind it and the consequences on consumers and environment.

Fast fashion and the culture of disposable items is a true match. The business model of fast fashion is predominantly aiming at offering the current “it” items of the moment with decent price tag, enabling every consumer to shop fashionable pieces. Nonetheless, low quality and quickly changing trends play an integral part when it comes to discarded textiles. When clothes are not meant to last, but are attractive enough for consumers to buy, the unfortunate cycle of consumerism and over consumption is guaranteed, leading to vast amounts of textiles thrown away.

Major issues concerning disposable item culture can be seen in strong consumerism and environmental damages. Discarded textiles evoke problems in waste handling as recycling options for second hand fast fashion goods are limited. Thus, due to excessive overconsumption, our environment is at stake; landfills keep on piling up while the materials used in fast fashion textiles result in hundreds of years of biodegrading time. Disposable items are not beneficial for consumers either since materialism becomes a central point to our lives while requiring considerable amount of money for replacement purposes.

Solving the issue of throwaway society in the context of fast fashion requires a lot of time, active involvement from global fast fashion retailers and a drastic change in consumers' buying habits, combined with governmental acts. The issues in fast fashion are so big at the moment but still yet invisible for many. The strong attire which fast fashion manages to create among consumers is so notable that the issues behind the scenes are easily dismissed. Substantial change towards more sustainable direction is needed for better tomorrow.

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