

Fad Fashion:
Overconsumption of the Fashion Industry
Through Interdisciplinary Thought
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Melanie Sepulveda-Rosado

Ithaca College

953 Danny Road Ithaca, NY 14850

msepulvedarosado@ithaca.edu

Abstract

Background

The fashion industry has been one of the biggest industries for decades with a rampant increase in popularity within the past few years. The fashion industry is known to be the second most polluting industry in the world with 10% of global emissions producing over 92 million tonnes of waste each year. There is little conversation about the industry's modern system of manufacturing which promotes fast disposable fashion resulting in overconsumption by consumers. The rise of social media, specifically TikTok in recent years, has glamorized overconsumption increasing fast fashion.

Traditional trend cycles contain the introduction, rise, peak, decline, and Obsolescence lasting twenty to thirty years. In comparison, the fast fashion cycle condenses the cycle into the peak, decline, and obsolescence lasting an average of three months; this is condensed cycle is what is often referred to as fast fashion. The cheap fast-fashion cycle has not only caused overconsumption due to low prices but has fed into the devaluation of labor.

Increasing overconsumption habits fall in line with a societal obsession with social media and aesthetics. Given the increasing popularity of social media platforms, there has been a rise in influencer advertising. Influencer advertising is a form of marketing through social media that involves endorsements and product placements from notable people on the Internet. One company will often have hundreds of influencers at their disposal marketing their products. Often companies will send out hundreds of PR packages to influencers which then post the products to their social media pages making the product seem saturated and in-demand causing individuals to consume the product. This marketing strategy often erases the introduction and rise of the trend cycle resulting in a shorter trend cycle and more consumption.

“Eco-fashion” a trend that aims to promote ethical, sustainable, and environmentally friendly products are facing barriers of accessibility and regulation. Greenwashing has been a major by-product of ethical consumption. Big-name brands, such as Nike and Amazon, have taken advantage of non-regulated terms such as ethical, sustainable, and eco-friendly, to turn a profit. While “sustainable” brands also face large price point barriers and lack inclusivity in their size ranges.

This examination of literature pulls together multiple research points to understand the habit of overconsumption in the fashion industry. Furthermore, highlight the intersectionality of overconsumption, aesthetics, pollution, politics, and fashion.

Method

The methodology used was a bibliographic study of literature from the fields of fashion, legislation, sustainability, social media/aesthetics, and consumption habits to create an intersectional method of viewing the overconsumption crisis in the fashion industry. The methodology also consisted of the analysis of companies such as Nike and Amazon’s marketing strategies as case studies. Ithaca College Library resources were used to complete this project during the Fall 2021-Spring 2022 semesters.

Results

This study shows the interdisciplinary links of the fields of environmental science, communications, marketing, and legislation in regards to a major sustainability problem the world is facing. The results show that without the work of members from multiple disciplines, it is inevitable to continuously lack the resources needed to solve the overconsumption problem in the fashion industry. Results also clearly highlight the consequences and potential ramifications of overconsumption.

Discussion & Conclusion

The discussion of sustainability in context to the fashion industry as this study highlights is increasingly important in a time where the climate crisis is at a tipping point. A switch to thoughtful and sustainable consumption and production would cut Carbon emissions, stop the overuse of resources, and slow climate change. This bibliographic study of overconsumption provides valuable information on the interdisciplinary links within the fashion industry. The study provides a thoughtful way of thinking about consumption and advertising habits within the fashion industry. This study is an original contribution to the field of Environmental Studies as it uses an environmental studies approach to navigate the issue of overconsumption in the fashion industry. However, the study does not limit itself to this single lens of thought and or approach.

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