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SUSTAINABILITY AND ETHICAL CONSUMERISM IN THE FASHION INDUSTRY

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Abstract: Sustainable fashion is a major issue for consideration worldwide. Fashion-conscious people and organizations have come forward in support of the campaign for a good environment for the future generation. Fashion for morality or ethical issues is one of the key concerns for humanity and sustainability point of view. The main objective of this study is to justify the concern of sustainability by fashion companies and their policy. The focus is on concerned brands based on their present activities related to fashion right from the manufacturing to the marketing process. Many celebrities have come forward in support of sustainability in fashion. For the conservation of the environment, sustainable fashion is the need of the hour in this growing world. Nowadays, fashion is considered an important issue for ecological concern. The research is based on the study of secondary data. The data have been gathered from various sources, mainly academic literature, research articles, conference articles, Ph.D. thesis, and undergraduate & postgraduate dissertations, and a qualitative research method approach has been adopted for this research. For the convenience of the reader and future researchers, Analysis and Findings have been done at the same time.

Index Terms - Sustainability, Fashion industry, Sustainable clothing, Ethical consumerism, Slow fashion, Fast fashion, Ethical Consumer, Environmental Consciousness

I. INTRODUCTION

Sustainability in fashion is a topic for much discussion worldwide. People are becoming conscious of the day-to-day use of clothing and fashion. When one thinks about fashion, words like glamour, style, trend, etc. immediately strike the mind rather than words like sustainable, eco-friendly or ethical. However, in the coming ten to fifty years the most important question the fashion industry needs to ask is how sustainable it is? Ethical and sustainable fashion has been gathering momentum globally in the past decade.

From 1987 the much-talked issues about fashion is eco fashion or sustainable fashion as a term in the fashion world. People are becoming socially responsible about design philosophy and trend of sustainability by using environmentally friendly products. Sustainable fashion is the part of larger trend of sustainable design where a product is created or produced with the consideration of environment, social and even moral impact throughout the total life span including its 'carbon footprint'. According to the fashion magazine, Vogue (May 2007); sustainable fashion is not merely a short term trend but one which could last many seasons. Fashion designers are becoming eco-conscious and re-introducing environment friendly methods through using eco-friendly material and socially accountable production process. Designers are making efforts to incorporate sustainable practices into modern clothing. But sustainable fashion is typically more expensive than clothing made by conventional methods. Today, sustainability is a way of doing business rather than just a concept. Brands like Stella McCartney and NOIR are the pioneers of ethical and sustainable fashion. Now many companies have embraced the concept of sustainability and have implemented it in the business. These companies have understood that integrating social and environmental issues with business will yield long term benefits to the company. Donation of a percentage of sales of a product to a charitable cause can also aid environmentalism in the fashion world.

An increasing number of Hollywood celebrities have been associated with sustainable Fashion like Natalie Portman, Cameron Diaz, Alicia Silverstone, Jennifer Aniston, Selma Hayek, Jade and Jess.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Ethical and sustainable fashion is an approach towards sourcing, manufacturing and designing clothes which maximizes the benefits to industry and society at large, at the same time minimizes the impacts on the environment. Ethical means something that is morally right and acceptable. Therefore, ethical and sustainable fashion does not start from manufacturing clothes. It starts from the cotton fields and ends in consumer's wardrobe.

In the year 2011, Kathryn Reiley and Marilyn DeLong showed that sustainability in fashion is going to require a radical change in the practices of all together: designers, manufacturers, marketers, and consumers. But customers especially need an apparition for sustainable fashion practice. However, in their research they wanted to examine fashion practices related to a consumer's craving for a unique exterior and sources of clothing attainment. For the study they have taken as sample from female university students and the number was Ninety-seven of a Midwestern university in the USA and has completed the Desire for Unique Consumer Products (DUCP) Scale developed by Lynn and Harris. The result of the research is if we are inspired, such individuals could become a guilt-free model for sustainable practices in the future. (DeLong, 2011) In the article, 'A Study of a Social Content Model for Sustainable Development in the Fast Fashion Industry', the authors said, due to the increase of clothing demand and for lowering trend rotation the middle-class customers generally prefer clothes that are cheap and fashionable. The split of global SPA (Specialty store retailer of Private label Apparel) brands in the world fashion market is progressively increasing. On the other hand, SPA clothes highlight trends, ensuing in disposal after a season regardless of the quality. Nowadays, the growth of fashion waste raises serious environmental apprehension. Their findings are firstly, five sub-themes, including fair-trade storytelling, independent designers, an eco-friendly identity, understanding differences in reform and redesign. And changes in consumer perception are investigated through in-depth interviews. Secondly, based on a customer study about the intent to contribute to different programs, such as 1:1 funding, ecological design sourcing, a improvement style contest, redesign consulting, and an eco-fashion gallery, eco-friendly design sourcing programs have the highest intent to participate of all the studied sustainable social programs. (Junghyun Jang, 2012) Angela L. Finn, in her Research Dissertation (2008), showed that New Zealand has a sole chance to reconstruct this connection between designer and maker to create characteristic design and a sustainable fashion industry. The truthfulness of the design of a fashion garment gives it worth, makes it more attractive, and distinguishes it from the everyday of conventional fashion that has been manufactured offshore (Finn, 2008). In 2012, Holly Pui-Yan Ho and Tsan-Ming Choi are explaining why fashion companies would 'go green' and to evaluate business models and sustainable supply chains. By using the Five-R framework, the authors further evaluate the initiation, implementation and institutionalization journey of a local fashion company and generate important insights and findings. In their result, they showed evident that fashion companies can seize competitive advantage through strategic management of environmental challenges. In their greening initiatives, fashion companies should strongly consider the product development process and extend stewardship across the multiple life cycles of products. (Choi, 2012) In the study, Maarit Aakko and Ritva Koskennurmi-Sivonen in their article titled, 'Designing Sustainable Fashion: Possibilities and Challenges', show a theoretical model, which illustrates together the elements of sustainability and fashion design. The aim of the model is to serve fashion designers, who wish to take sustainability into consideration. The analysis and the model answer the question of which principles and practices should be considered in sustainable fashion design. (Koskennurmi-Sivonen, 2013) The research in 2005, 'Philosophy and ethical consumption', authors initiated some basic philosophical approaches that are practical in understanding and evaluating ethical consumption issues and ethical consumer behavior. They have argued that such formalistic philosophical positions can be too demanding and abstract for application in everyday consumption. Acceptability would presuppose the individual's capacity to make demanding and overly disinterested calculations about what action would produce the most desired aggregate outcomes. Deontology attracts the consumer into a set of universal obligations whose development he or she need not be party to. These approaches are also too demanding in the sense that they imply severe accounts of that is required to act decently. Being forced to act within dictates or calculations also implies that something important about one's own moral motivations would be lost. (Clive Barnett, 2005) In the research paper, 'The sustainable clothing market: an evaluation of potential strategies for UK retailers', authors investigated consumers' perspectives on sustainable clothing consumption and to examine ways in which this information could pressure retailers' policies. In this research they used Qualitative research method using focus groups, home tasks and workshops with 99 members. The result of this research is that vendors can develop and implement more sustainable policies and practices in relation to clothing production and consumption. There is a wider inference for society and the environment in that retailer's practices can crash greatly on the sustainability of the planet's resources. (Helen Goworek, 2012) In the year 2006, Catrin Joergens conducted a study on 'Ethical fashion'. In this research he wants to have a better understanding of ethical fashion consumption. Even though consumers demand more ethical responsibility from companies, it is debatable if consumers would sacrifice their own personal needs to support morally produced clothing. The findings from his research demonstrate little evidence that ethical issues have any effect on consumers' fashion purchase behavior. This research paper gives insight into ethical fashion purchasing behavior among UK and German consumers and provides information to improve the potential of ethical fashion. (Joergens, 2006) In the article, 'Sustainable Fashion Supply Chain: Lessons from H&M', Bin Shen shows the structure of sustainable fashion supply chain including eco-material preparation, sustainable manufacturing, green distribution, green retailing, and ethical consumers based on the extant literature. In this study the case of the Swedish fast fashion company, H&M, which has constructed its sustainable supply chain in developing ecomaterials, provides safety training, monitoring sustainable manufacturing, reducing carbon emission in distribution, and promoting eco-fashion. Moreover, based on the secondary data and analysis, the researcher learns the lessons of H&M's sustainable fashion supply chain from the country viewpoint: I. H&M's sourcing managers want to select suppliers in the countries with lower degrees of human well beings; II. The H&M's supply chain manager may set a higher level of inventory in a country with a higher human wellbeing; and III. H&M's CEO may consider the degrees of human wellbeing and economic wellbeing, instead of environmental welfare when initiating the online shopping channel in a particular country. (Shen, 2014) In the year 2010, Eleonor Johansson said that the fashion industry is today a global industry and has a huge effect on our environment as well as on people. It is dominated by fast fashion and just-in-time production that has led to increased seasons and mini-collections in season, which generate new low-price items in store every week and even every day. This in turn has led to an escalation in fashion trends that spurs our desires for new experiences and leads to overconsumption where consumers buy more than they need, which in the end results in fashion waste. However, the industry has problems with worker exploitation, such as low wages, unpaid overtime as well as toxic chemical use and environmental pollution.' In his thesis, he made the study on the concept of slow fashion to see if this could be the answer for a sustainable fashion industry. Nowadays, there is no direct explanation of what the concept of slow fashion is or

how a slow fashion company runs its business. This objective of the study was to research and analyse on what the concept for slow fashion entails, for sustainable fashion (Johansson, 2010) In their article, Anika Kozlowski, Michal Bardecki and Cory Searcy offer a conceptual and analytical framework by conflating life cycle and stakeholder analyses to develop responses for the fashion industry. They exemplify that identification of stakeholders and their interests, responsibilities and accountability that can provide a basis for the development and implementation of appropriate policies and programs to respond to environmental and social concerns within the circumstance of corporate social responsibility (CSR of the Company). (Anika Kozlowski, 2012) In the AUTEX 2011 Conference, 8th – 10th June, 2011, Mulhouse, France, titled '150 Years of Innovation and Research in Textile Science', C. Morais, C. Carvalho, C. Broega found that there is a strong involvement of individuals in fashion, when the environmental concern has been evolving and the strong need for action in the field of clothing sustainability, especially through the services of Designing or Redesigning, where the collection of textile waste should be incorporated into all stages of product life cycle to better maximize reuse and recycling. (C. Morais, 2011) In the research paper, 'Discursive Confusion over Sustainable Consumption: A Discursive Perspective on the Perplexity of Marketplace Knowledge', the aim has been to conceptually elaborate and practically exemplify the nature and insinuation of the diversified polyphony and the bewilderment of information and knowledge that consumers face when striving for ecologically sustainable lifestyles and consumption practices. This study proposes that the discursive (not succinct) confusion that arises from these struggles over suitable approaches to continuous development that sustainable consumption may significantly limit and constrain consumers possibilities to engage in more sustainable consumption practices. The analysis also illustrates how amid these discursive struggles consumers simultaneously mobilize alternative strategies for sustainable consumption, in their search for more positive self-identities as 'responsible consumers'. (Moisander, 2012) In Paris (2011), Angela L Finn presented an article titled 'Luxury Fashion: Innovation as a key role for contributing the factor in the progress of luxury fashion goods and sustainable fashion design'. In the paper the researcher wrote that contemporary fashion researchers interested in exploring ways in which to realize a more continuously developed fashion industry are faced with a major problem, consumer behavior. He has notified, the 'unsustainability' of these practices is now considered to be common knowledge in the field of fashion design and in the wider academic community. This paper discovers the theory that essential characteristics of luxury goods contribute to a link between the maker and the user of a product and directly contribute to the when and how of its disposal. In this research paper, a different connection has been made between luxury, craftsmanship and innovation. The connection between maker and consumer is evidenced in the signifiers that remain as a result of the production of the garment: in this case the evidence of hand sewing emphasizes the human maker as opposed to the mechanization of mass production methods. These indicators are also involved in making judgments about the quality of a garment. That highlights Sustainability which has been for companies to continue to make a profit, considering the environment and the people. In governance this means that businesses have borne a large part of the responsibility for ensuring that they have policies that promote sustainable practices. If anybody replaces the ideas of profit with those of prosperity, it could follow that consumers might be inclined to take on a more active, participatory role. However, luxury branded goods, whether high quality or perceived to be high quality, are more valuable than goods purchased in the mainstream market. A move away from large scale manufacturing to a more traditional workshop environment may result in fashion garments having more imperfections when the result from being 'handmade' and in turn have more perceived value with the consumers who buy them. In case of the existing 'luxury goods tax' in Australia perhaps we can consider a 'non-luxury goods tax' be introduced for goods that are of a lesser quality in terms of manufacture, materials or design. A qualitative multi-method approach has been adopted for this research. A literature and related review of works relating to iconic fashion design associated with luxury brands, in conjunction with the analysis of individual luxury fashion objects (object analysis) have been used to explore untried method of identifying key factors that settle on luxury in designer fashion. (Finn A. L., 2011).

III. ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN AND ETHICAL ISSUES

Many growing factors are considered which have distinguished ethical from traditional fashion including use of sweatshop-free labor, energy-efficient processes, alternative energy and low impact dyes in manufacturing. Nevertheless, fashion consumers nowadays are trying to choose an ethical wardrobe to pick up eco-friendly clothing or fabrics. There maybe three criteria for selecting eco-friendly fabrics: (i) The use of fewer toxic chemicals, (ii) The use of less land and water, (iii) The reduction of greenhouse gases. In fact, some of the fabrics may perform better than others based on the above criteria. In many cases, one fabric maybe preferable according to one of the criteria but less preferable according to another, complicating the choice in fabric qualities, cost, labor conditions or carbon footprint of product transportation. Now, many cotton firms or industries have a vibrant campaign promoting their products as sustainable due to new technologies and farming methods. Industry has greatly reduced its use of energy, water and toxic chemicals. But very few farming techniques has the significant success of reducing soil erosion, improved irrigation methods to reduce water use, improve methods of pest management, have reduced pesticides and most significantly, the use of genetically modified (GMO) cotton has reduced the use of land and toxic chemicals. Despite this change, conventional method of cotton cultivation, still being used, is not eco-friendly worldwide. Therefore, conventional cotton farming cannot be termed as ethical and sustainable as harmful pesticides are used. Biologically produced cotton with low –impact dye is good for the environment friendly of clothing.

IV. ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The famous Brands which are involved for the ethical product designed, production and marketing are - Fat Face, Minna, Mirabelle, Monsoon, New Balance, Osborn Shoes, Pachacuti, People Tree, Polly Wales, Sea salt, Stella McCartney, H&M, Patagonia, Made,

Edun, Beaumont Organic, ASOS Africa, Beyond Skin, Matt & Nut, Chinti & Parker, Huit Minha makes wedding dresses which describes it as 'Eco Luxe' Brand. The veils and the bride made dresses are made from sustainable, organic and locally produced textile, by which one can dress whole, the party without feeling at fault. Mirabelle makes hand made products for her highness Kate Middleton which were fair trade Jeweler and dresses in the collection. She has worn the dresses in a British royal party recently. This is somehow for the inspiration and campaign which was welcomed by the press media and the environmentalists, critics, etc. Monsoon is committed to ethical compliance and checks the Code of Conduct regularly to set out the minimum requirements on working conditions, for pay and employees other rights. 'Osborn shoes' is a Brooklyn based Brand. Aaron and Carla Osborn, the design-duo use Latin American sources of fabrics and materials from special store as well as working collaboratively for making handmade shoes. Pachacuti means 'world upside down' which works in the Andean region to improve the livelihoods of those areas to help and preserve the rich cultural heritage of Latin America. For producing sustainable fashion goods, People Tree is famous in the developing countries. It works with the artisans and the farmers to produce look good and feel-good clothing. Polly Wales is famous for creating flawed jewelers. Its products are unique by using vintage and rough jewels. It works to revive or reuse the fashion items to save the environment. Sea salt makes cloth locally in the Southwest, Guernsey and across the UK with used garments and jewelers. Stella McCartney is set by a lifelong vegetarian Stella who doesn't use any leather or fur in her design. She promotes the campaign to save the wildlife and environment. She prefers ethical fashion for the ecological balance. Mainly H& M works for the High Street sustainable fashion and for the exclusive collection made from hemp, organic linen and organic leather. It makes the campaign to save nature, to save the world. It has its own water management policy and recycle plan. It sells about 550 million products every year around the world. It uses organic cotton and hundred percent renewable resources in fashion. Its goal is to minimize the wastages and run the business economically, socially and environmentally sustainable. Made mainly works with artisans and jewelers, and it has collaboration with Lois Vuitton, Tommy Hilfiger, Edun, ASOS, Topshop and many more. It teaches local new skills and provides long term employment and environmentally sound materials. Beaumont Organic makes sure that no harmful material is used in the production process of fabric or garment or even in its raw materials collection. Beyond Skin is dedicated to lowering its carbon footprint through sourcing fabrics locally in its factories in Spain. It produces high quality faux leather shoes in a wide range. Matt & Nat uses hundred percent vegan and sustainable materials. It creates most of the stylish and ethical accessories known to man. Chitni & Parker work for 'buy better' philosophy. It produces its clothing in carefully selected factories which actively compensate their carbon emission through the Carbon Neutral Company guidelines.

V. CONCLUSION

This is the time for the rapid change of Fashion in the global environment. There is a competition among all Fashion related people, celebrities, and brands who are working with the fashion related organizations. The term 'Sustainability' is not merely for the consideration in fashion but also for the continuation and further development of the new concept amongst all the people for the sustainability of the environment to check global warming, ecological balance, reduce natural calamities, conservation of vegetation, conservation of wildlife, etc. Most of the world-famous brands that have been discussed here are famous for the sustainability of fashion by its environmental and ecological conservation policies. Fashion concerned consumers are searching for sweat free labor, energy efficient process in fashion, in a sustainable, ethical ground whereas, all the brands are very much conscious for the same in the western world. For the recycle of fashion items, using less water and land, releasing less emission of toxic materials in the environment, minimum use of gases that produce greenhouse gases are policy of the sustainability in the fashion arena. On the other hand, for ethical aspect, fashion brands are very much conscious about the compliance issues of the labor law, against child labor and for the congenial environment of work for the workers.

The brands which respond to the consumers unending demands can combine sustainable principles with fashion and flourish in this green business. The time has come when the relationship of consumer and clothing must be changed. Sustainability is not limited to environment but the entire fashion business, from production to the retail stores.

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