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BOYCOTTING FAST FASHION WILL BE EFFECTIVE (PRO)

Boycotts are Effective

PRO: Preventing Child Labor

The Guardian, January 6, 2015

<https://www.theguardian.com/vital-signs/2015/jan/06/boycotts-shopping-protests-activists-consumers>

In addition, companies that have been the subject of boycotts and protests often become far more sensitive to public perception, King says. “After an action, companies often engage in pro-social behaviors that are completely unrelated to the campaign that brought them negative attention in the first place,” he says. An example, again, is Nike, which has spearheaded initiatives that have extended beyond child labor to a wide range of environmental and societal issues.

PRO: Promoting Better Leadership Practices

The Guardian, January 6, 2015

<https://www.theguardian.com/vital-signs/2015/jan/06/boycotts-shopping-protests-activists-consumers>

In addition to preserving the long-term value of their brands, companies facing consumer boycotts have another pressing concern: preserving the short-term value of their stocks. Brayden King, a professor at Northwestern University’s Kellogg school of management, says that, in addition to sending a message about a company to consumers, a boycott can send a message about a company’s leadership to its shareholders. “Investors may perceive that a CEO’s inability to resolve a conflict may be indicative of a bigger leadership problem at the company,” King says. For example, in the case of BP’s Deepwater Horizon oil spill catastrophe, the resultant debacle demonstrated a lack of leadership. “The company handled the PR so poorly that stockholders lost confidence in its executives,” King says..

PRO: Collective Consumer Effort Promotes Positive Change (ex. Reducing Plastic Straws)

Vox News, September 12, 2019

<https://www.vox.com/2019/9/12/20860620/fast-fashion-zara-hm-forever-21-boohoo-environment-cost>

So for shifts to happen, it has to be really strong-minded changemakers like Stella McCartney poking people with a stick, it has to be economically viable, or it has to be put down in law. But it’s on the brands. And the poking can come from consumers; it can be something as simple as a boycott — “We’re not going to buy this stuff anymore, this stuff is terrible, change it up.” Look how quickly we got rid of plastic straws. It shows that consumers can push brand new companies & businesses to change very fast if we put our minds to it.

PRO: Promoting Better Working Conditions

University of Birmingham, September 25, 2019

<https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/48614342.pdf>

There are many examples of consumers engaging on social and environmental issues and making a difference. Classic examples include Ghandhi leading a boycott on British cloth as part of his campaign for Indian independence, the California grape boycott in the 1960s and 1970s which enabled the organization of farm workers, and the boycott of firms associated with South Africa during apartheid. More recent examples include the #DeleteUber campaign, which resulted in hundreds of thousands of consumers deleting the Uber app following Uber’s expression of support for President Trump’s immigration policies, and the boycott of Amazon over working conditions in its warehouses.

PRO: Resisting Practices that Harm the Climate

Leaders for Climate Action, November 9, 2020

<https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/48614342.pdf>

Just like politicians, private companies also tend to take stock of their consumers’ behavior. Thus, if a substantial amount of people boycott companies that are known to disregard the new normative climate concerns, chances are that this company will revise their modus operandi hastily. Boycotting and petitioning are excellent companions to striking, the former two as passive forms of collective actions, and the latter as an active way to engage in civil disobedience and make climate demands heard.



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Effectiveness of Boycotts (Continued...)

PRO: Resisting Environmentally Harmful Business Practices

Leaders for Climate Action, November 9, 2020

<https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/48614342.pdf>

Another tool in the climate activist's toolbox is the boycott of companies, political parties, and any institution judged to be unlawful, immoral, and/or environmentally-unfriendly. Boycotting has proven to be very effective; two examples: in 2018 The Body Shop had to declare itself animal cruelty-free after a massive boycott campaign, and in 2010 Nestlé was forced to commit to a zero deforestation policy in its palm oil supply chain after only eight weeks of an intense boycott campaign. Boycotts get the attention of big companies because they hit them where it hurts: their market share and reputation. The website ethicalconsumer.org provides a comprehensible list of corporations to be boycotted, the reasons for it, and who is calling for the boycott.

PRO: Boycotts Reduce Sales (Ex. Forcing Companies to Act)

The Market for Virtue, Brookings Institute Press, 2005

<http://www.untag->

[smd.ac.id/files/Perpustakaan_Digital_1/CORPORATE%20SOCIAL%20RESPONSIBILITY%20The Market for Virtue The Potential and Limits of Corporate Social.pdf](http://www.untag-smd.ac.id/files/Perpustakaan_Digital_1/CORPORATE%20SOCIAL%20RESPONSIBILITY%20The_Market_for_Virtue_The_Potential_and_Limits_of_Corporate_Social.pdf)

They have been particularly popular in Europe, where consumers have boycotted rugs and soccer balls because child labor was used to produce them, and many have refused to buy wood products made from tropical forests, environmentally harmful washing machine detergents, batteries made with mercury, paper produced with chlorine, and food products grown from genetically modified seeds. Some of these boycotts have had a measurable impact on sales: consumers forced manufacturers to eliminate mercury from batteries; soccer ball producers and rug importers were forced to restrict the use of child labor; tropical wood imports measurably declined in much of Europe; and consumer pressures have virtually eliminated sales of genetically modified foods in Europe, causing significant financial injury to Monsanto. The consumer boycott of Shell in Europe had a measurable impact on its sales.

PRO: Boycotts Facilitate Dialogue on Grievances

Emerald Insight, October 7, 2020

<https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/JCMS-10-2020-0040/full/pdf>

Boycotts are a classic tactic for social change movements (Manheim, 2001) and are widely used by activists trying to persuade corporate targets to adopt some change in practice or policy (King, 2008; Manheim, 2001). Targeting corporations through this means give activists a medium to directly address their grievances as well as influence a company to amend an undesirable policy or practice (King and Soule, 2007; Lenox and Eesley, 2009; King and McDonnell, 2012). By making negative claims about the corporation, activists' attack not only tarnishes the image and reputation but also threatens the corporation's legitimacy (Whetten and Mackey, 2002; King, 2008; McDonnell and King, 2013; Ding et al., 2020). As a result, firms are increasingly recognizing the importance of communicating positive information about their social change advocacy efforts as a way of gaining legitimacy from diverse stakeholder groups, including activist organizations (Coombs and Holladay, 2018; Rim et al., 2020).



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Environmental Concerns

PRO: Raising Awareness of Environmental Issues

Time Magazine, October 3, 2019

<https://time.com/5691340/forever-21-bankruptcy-explained/>

Additionally, the rapid production of cheap, easily disposable clothes has called into question the negative environmental impact of fast fashion. These concerns were less at the forefront of consumers' minds in the '00s when the chain was at its peak success, a time that points to the over-confidence that led Forever 21 to later expand from having stores in seven to 47 countries in less than six years, all while technology — and with it, online shopping — was gaining momentum. Not everyone is swayed by ultra-cheap prices for fresh-off-the-runway trends, however. As climate change has become a more widely shared concern, sustainability has become a focal — and selling — point for many fashion brands, both high and low. And while the attention to sustainability might be profit-motivated, more conscience shoppers, even if newly “woke,” is ultimately a good thing.

PRO: Promoting Environmental Responsibility

Biomed Center, December 27, 2018

<https://ehjournal.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12940-018-0433-7>

Trade policies and regulations will be the most effective solutions in bringing about large-scale change to the fast fashion industry. However, consumers in high income countries have a role to play in supporting companies and practices that minimize their negative impact on humans and the environment. While certifications attempt to raise industry standards, consumers must be aware of greenwashing and be critical in assessing which companies actually ensure a high level of standards versus those that make broad, sweeping claims about their social and sustainable practices [14]. The fast fashion model thrives on the idea of more for less, but the age-old adage “less in more” must be adopted by consumers if environmental justice issues in the fashion industry are to be addressed. The United Nation's SDG 12, “Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns,” seeks to redress the injustices caused by unfettered materialism. Consumers in high income countries can do their part to promote global environmental justice by buying high-quality clothing that lasts longer, shopping at second-hand stores, repairing clothing they already own, and purchasing from retailers with transparent supply chains.

PRO: Tremendous Environmental Impact

World Fashion Exchange (WFX), June 23, 2022

<https://www.worldfashionexchange.com/blog/the-fast-fashion-cheat-sheet-everything-you-need-to-know/>

Environmental Impact – The rising customer demand to stay updated with the latest trends and the rate at which people want them increases the waste generated from discarded clothing. It is estimated that 1 garbage truck full of clothes is burned or dumped every second. What's more, garment production contributes to around 10% of the total carbon emissions, depletes natural water resources and pollutes our rivers and streams. This makes the fashion industry the second most polluted after the oil industry.

PRO: Promoting Environmental Sustainability

Earth Organization, February 21, 2022

<https://earth.org/fast-fashion-pollution-and-climate-change/>

'Fast Fashion' is a term used to define a highly profitable and exploitative business model that is “based on copying and replicating high end fashion designs”. The clothes are mass-produced, with workers often working in inhumane conditions, and are purposefully designed to be frail with a limited lifespan as designs change quickly and are cheap to produce. They are also consumed at a higher rate and so the expectations for the clothes' lifespan decrease, leading to multiple ethical and sustainable issues. Fast fashion pollution creates not only long-term and potentially irreversible environmental damage, but exacerbate the effects of climate change.

Environmental Concerns (Continued...)

PRO: Reduces Greenhouse Gases (Ex. Regulate Climate Change)



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Earth Organization, February 21, 2022

<https://earth.org/fast-fashion-pollution-and-climate-change/>

Fashion and its supply chain is the third largest polluting industry, after food and construction. It emitted 10% of global greenhouse gas emissions, releasing 1.2 billion tons of carbon dioxide per year, more than the shipping and the aviation industry combined. If it continues at the same pace, the industry's greenhouse gas emissions are predicted to increase by more than 50% by the year 2030. These emissions come from the processes along the industry's supply chain, from the raw materials to production and processing to transport and shipping.

Social Concerns

PRO: Preventing Human Rights Violation

World Fashion Exchange (WFX), June 23, 2022

<https://www.worldfashionexchange.com/blog/the-fast-fashion-cheat-sheet-everything-you-need-to-know/>

Human Rights Violation – Apart from the environmental effects, fast fashion also affects the labor force working in its factories to produce the garments. The 2013 Rana Plaza Accident in Bangladesh is an example how unsafe it is to work in garment factories. Apart from big accidents, some of the common problems faced by laborers are skin disease due to harsh chemicals, lung infection due to poor ventilation, physical and mental trauma due to poor treatment, low wages and inhumane working hours.

PRO: Improving Workplace Conditions

Journal for Global Business and Community, July 6, 2022

<https://jgbc.scholasticahq.com/article/36873-appalling-or-advantageous-exploring-the-impacts-of-fast-fashion-from-environmental-social-and-economic-perspectives>

Those who are concerned about the quality of life of the sweatshop workers often cite the collapse of the Rana Plaza factory in 2013 where “more than 1,100 garment workers were killed and at least 2,000 injured” (Drennan, 2015). This event brought to light many contributing factors to the poor working conditions of these sweatshop workers, such as “lack of credible safety audits, extremely low wages for workers and the increasing pressure on manufacturers to reduce costs of garments” (Drennan, 2015). Along with this, The Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh, factory hazards are not uncommon with more than 80,000 safety issues found in just 1,106 factories in Bangladesh (Oldenziel, 2014).

PRO: Provides a Voice for Marginalized Groups

Journal for Global Business and Community, July 6, 2022

<https://jgbc.scholasticahq.com/article/36873-appalling-or-advantageous-exploring-the-impacts-of-fast-fashion-from-environmental-social-and-economic-perspectives>

“Fast fashion is highly dependent on female work. Women compose most of the Asian garment producers’ workforce – around 80% - with men generally occupying managerial positions” (Colnago, 2019). The use of female workers in garment production is appealing because, in the manufacturing host countries where the apparel is made, women “are viewed as secondary earners who are easier to discipline, and less likely to negotiate and unionize” (Vijayarasa & Liu, 2022). This female majority lends itself to many experiences of inequality, such as gender pay gaps, sexual harassment, and a lack of human rights protection. One way this inequality can be seen is through the lack of bathroom breaks, increasing the risk of urinary tract infections, which is exacerbated by the lack of soap, water, and menstrual supplies. These experiences are commonplace in countries where fast fashion manufacturers represent the majority of employers, such as India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh (Vijayarasa & Liu, 2022).



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Social Concerns (Continued...)

PRO: Preventing Child Labor

Journal for Global Business and Community, July 6, 2022

<https://jgbc.scholasticahq.com/article/36873-appalling-or-advantageous-exploring-the-impacts-of-fast-fashion-from-environmental-social-and-economic-perspectives>

The working conditions already mentioned are not just imposed on adults who have some choice in where they work and the conditions therein, but also children. Child labor is still at large within the apparel industry in developing countries. Bangladesh, alongside Pakistan, Egypt, and countries in Central Asia employ children to work the same long hours in the same unsafe factories as their parents (Drennan, 2015). Some children are even forced to work in worse conditions in “underground” factories as child labor is illegal in most countries, though the U.S. Department of Labor found 77 countries in violation of international standards as of June 23, 2021 (Bureau of International Labor Affairs, 2021). Child labor is attractive to these apparel manufacturing employers because “children are small, quick, cheap, and obedient” and are usually “paid significantly less than the already low minimum wages” (Lambert, 2014).

Health Concerns

PRO: Preventing Human and Animal Health Risks

Biomed Center, December 27, 2018

<https://ehjournal.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12940-018-0433-7>

The first step in the global textile supply chain is textile production, the process by which both natural and synthetic fibers are made. Approximately 90 % of clothing sold in the United States is made with cotton or polyester, both associated with significant health impacts from the manufacturing and production processes [6]. Polyester, a synthetic textile, is derived from oil, while cotton requires large amounts of water and pesticides to grow. Textile dyeing results in additional hazards as untreated wastewater from dyes are often discharged into local water systems, releasing heavy metals and other toxicants that can adversely impact the health of animals in addition to nearby residents [6].

PRO: Fighting Against Occupational Health Hazards

European Parliament, July, 2020

[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2020/652025/EPRS_BRI\(2020\)652025_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2020/652025/EPRS_BRI(2020)652025_EN.pdf)

Inadequate safety procedures mean that toxic chemicals such as textile dyes pose risks to workers' health. Bangladeshi tannery workers often work without basic protective equipment such as masks, gloves and boots, exposing them to harmful substances, such as chrome and mercury, used to cure leather. Partly as a result of this, they have only a one in two chance of living beyond the age of fifty— over 20 years less than the country's average life expectancy; similar problems have been reported from India, another major leather producer. In both countries, tanneries pollute huge quantities of water, poisoning local rivers, groundwater and fields.

PRO: Promoting Better Public Health Policies

Biomed Center, December 27, 2018

<https://ehjournal.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12940-018-0433-7>

Environmental health scientists play a key role in supporting evidence-based public health. Similar to historical cases of environmental injustice in the United States, the unequal distribution of environmental exposures disproportionately impact communities in LMICs. There is an emerging need for research that examines the adverse health outcomes associated with fast fashion at each stage of the supply chain and post-consumer process, particularly in LMICs. Advancing work in this area will inform the translation of research findings to public health policies and practices that lead to sustainable production and ethical consumption.



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Economic Concerns

PRO: Protecting Local Industries and Jobs

Journal for Global Business and Community, July 6, 2022

<https://jgbc.scholasticahq.com/article/36873-appalling-or-advantageous-exploring-the-impacts-of-fast-fashion-from-environmental-social-and-economic-perspectives>

According to Dana Thomas, in her book *Fashionopolis: Why What We Wear Matters*, the United States produced approximately 70% of the clothing that Americans purchased. However, this quickly changed with the emergence of fast fashion. Because fast fashion retailers strove to sell their products at the lowest prices possible, many companies outsourced their manufacturing to developing countries, thus eliminating jobs in the United States. The percentage of American-made clothing decreased from 56.2% in 1991 to 2.5% in 2012. This decrease was in tandem with the loss of 1.2 million jobs in the United States textile and garment industry between 1990 and 2012, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (Thomas, 2019).

PRO: Correcting Trade Deficits

Journal for Global Business and Community, July 6, 2022

<https://jgbc.scholasticahq.com/article/36873-appalling-or-advantageous-exploring-the-impacts-of-fast-fashion-from-environmental-social-and-economic-perspectives>

The offshoring of domestic garment manufacturing jobs from developed countries created detrimental trade deficits. “In 2017, US apparel exports totaled roughly \$5.7 billion, while imports were about \$82.6 billion” while “Britain imported 92.4 percent of its clothing” (Thomas, 2019). The only country in the European Union that managed to remain unscathed was Italy due to its association with luxury and quality products (Thomas, 2019).

PRO: Ending Wage Exploitation of Workers

Journal for Global Business and Community, July 6, 2022

<https://jgbc.scholasticahq.com/article/36873-appalling-or-advantageous-exploring-the-impacts-of-fast-fashion-from-environmental-social-and-economic-perspectives>

According to the Clean Clothes Campaign, a very small number of workers, if any, make a living wage working in sweatshops, and, sometimes, workers do not even make minimum wage. A Romanian worker stated “I barely get the minimum salary, and one month I did not manage to reach the legal minimum wage after working even on Saturdays. I tell my boss that sometimes I don’t make the minimum if I don’t come on Saturdays and he says: ‘Then come on Saturdays’” (Clean Clothes Campaign, 2014). Even if these workers do make the minimum wage, it only covers 70% of their monthly expenses on food because in these developing countries “legal minimum wages are poverty wages” (Clean Clothes Campaign, 2014).

Ethical Concerns

PRO: Promoting Ethical Consumption

The Harvard Crimson, March 9, 2021

<https://www.thecrimson.com/column/granola-advocacy/article/2021/3/9/silverman-harvard-fast-fashion/>

One potential solution to Harvard’s fast-fashion problem is to buy environmentally friendly and responsibly produced products. There are now a plethora of cheap clothing brands using responsible methods. The College can do its part by purchasing 100 percent organic cotton t-shirts for Orientation week and Housing Day. Organic cotton, while undoubtedly more expensive, uses 91 percent less water than non-organic cotton and is pesticide-free. The University can also set up year-round donation bins or recycling stations for torn clothes to limit waste. Unfortunately, purchasing from responsible brands is not enough. Switching suppliers does not force us to reexamine our unsustainable practices and hollow devotion to overconsumption. In addition, I have yet to come across a company that can produce mass quantities of customizable t-shirts using socially and environmentally responsible practices at a price low enough to satisfy college organizations’ slim budgets. Given the lack of sustainable, customizable, and cheap clothing manufacturers out there, the most reasonable alternative is to reduce consumption.



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Ethical Concerns (Continued...)

PRO: Raising Awareness of Ethical Issues

The Guardian Magazine, July 29, 2021

<https://www.theguardian.com/fashion/2021/jul/29/the-truth-about-fast-fashion-can-you-tell-how-ethical-your-clothing-is-by-its-price>

On the high street, many who proudly opt out of shopping at Primark or Boohoo for ethical reasons may be unaware that most reassuringly mid-priced brands don't guarantee workers living wages or produce clothing without using environmentally harmful materials. A garment's price is often more about aspiration and customer expectation than the cost of production. Hachfeld points out that the Zara hoodie was priced higher in Switzerland (CHF 45.90; €39.57), where Zara is positioned as a mid-range brand, than in Spain (€25.95), where it is perceived as more mainstream and affordable.

PRO: Promoting Ethical Employer Practices

Journal of Business and Economics, August 2018

<http://www.academicstar.us/UploadFile/Picture/2019-9/2019927114853773.pdf>

As we know that the common working hours is 5 days a week, 8 hours per day whatever extra time that we work will be consider overtime and we shall receive overtime payment. Unfortunately, this overtime payment system is not happening in developing country garment factory. Most of the time, employee will take advantage of the worker. They will set a relatively high target or quotas to the garment workers and they need to reach the targets/quota in order to get paid. If they are not able to reach their target, they will be forced to stay longer to work in order to fulfill the target (Maxwell, 2014). No overtime payment will be paid to them. Moreover, women workers that are working in garment factory have been denied for paid maternity leave which is an unethical way of doing business. Also, the employers sometimes will not pay the wages and promised bonuses to the workers. Workers are not able to voice this out because whoever that voice this out will suffer more (Watch, 2015).

Additional Benefits/Concerns

PRO: Builds Solidarity and Community

The Good Trade, September 21, 2020

<https://www.thegoodtrade.com/features/garment-workers-fashion-boycott/>

"A boycott cannot be silent," explains Annie Shaw, the Outreach Coordinator for the Garment Worker Center in Downtown Los Angeles. "I think the common mistake that consumers make is [saying] 'I'm going to boycott a brand, but not tell [anyone].' A boycott is more active than not shopping."

Shaw suggests letting garment workers take the lead, as they are the only ones who know the true cost and their needs. A boycott must be about vocalizing opposition to exploitative practices while having an end goal in mind—what are we fighting for?

Akter encourages consumers to hold brands accountable by asking for transparency throughout their supply chain. By supporting campaigns like Remake's #PayUp or bills similar to the Garment Worker Center's SB 1339 (which was sadly rejected), we can stand in solidarity with workers near and far.

PRO: Supports Grassroots Activism

The National News, February 1, 2023

<https://www.thenationalnews.com/lifestyle/fashion/the-great-debate-should-we-boycott-fast-fashion-brands-1.969305>

SM: I agree boycotts will affect the most vulnerable in this situation. However, consumers have the power to push for change. The key to making the boycotts work is not only to cease buying fast fashion, but to also put our money into slow fashion instead. It might cost more, but it is higher quality and garments are made by people in better working conditions. If factory owners see this is where the money is, they will cater to it. There might be a short period of hardship for workers, but as the factories switch to making better-quality products, most workers will probably be rehired to meet that demand. As consumers, we have to accept responsibility that we all helped create this mess, but that we can all help solve it. Consumers have real power. It's about time we used it.



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Additional Benefits/Concerns (continued...)

PRO: Fosters Civic Engagement For Societal Benefit

The National News, February 1, 2023

<https://www.thenationalnews.com/lifestyle/fashion/the-great-debate-should-we-boycott-fast-fashion-brands-1.969305>

SM: No one can deny the fast fashion industry is rife with poor practices, with workers having to endure appalling conditions, but continuing to pay for it is not the solution. These terrible factories exist because we as consumers demand an ever-new supply of cheap clothes, which allows unscrupulous factory owners to cut corners to turn a profit. By buying the clothes we are rewarding bad practice. Instead, if we stop funding it, we deliver a message that this behavior is no longer acceptable.

PRO: Fosters Accountability

The Good Trade, September 21, 2020

<https://www.thegoodtrade.com/features/garment-workers-fashion-boycott/>

Akter encourages consumers to hold brands accountable by asking for transparency throughout their supply chain. By supporting campaigns like Remake's #PayUp or bills similar to the Garment Worker Center's SB 1339 (which was sadly rejected), we can stand in solidarity with workers near and far.



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BOYCOTTING FAST FASHION WILL NOT BE EFFECTIVE (CON)

Boycotts are Ineffective

CON: Boycotts Unsuccessful in Changing Policies

The Guardian, January 6, 2015

<https://www.theguardian.com/vital-signs/2015/jan/06/boycotts-shopping-protests-activists-consumers>

While these sorts of campaigns are useful for expressing displeasure, they aren't all that successful when it comes to changing a company's policies. For example, one of the most widespread grassroots campaigns of recent years – the 2003 US boycott of French wines – quickly caused a 26% drop in sales, but had little long-term effect on either France's wine industry or its politics. Within six months, says Larry Chavis, a professor of entrepreneurship at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, "sales had returned to the same trajectory that they had been on before the boycott."

CON: Boycotts are Challenging to Sustain

The New York Times, February 7, 2017

<https://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2017/02/07/when-do-consumer-boycotts-work>

To get a boycott off the ground, awareness and consideration of the issue must spread. Intent to boycott must be followed up by action. Finally, once a boycott is underway, the leaders of it must find ways to sustain the effort. That can be hard, considering the number of people involved in a boycott inevitably decreases over time.

CON: Boycotts Take Long to Effect Change

The Forbes Magazine, November 18, 2022

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/christinero/2022/11/18/to-boycott-or-not-to-boycott/>

Overall, boycotts remain fairly rare. One lesson from past and current experiences is that boycotts are generally part of broader struggles for workers' rights, and can't be used as a sole strategy for change. Also, boycotts can take decades to bear fruit (12 years in Uzbekistan's case) – long past many individuals' patience

CON: More Effective Alternatives

The Courier, March 3, 2022

<https://www.theguardian.com/vital-signs/2015/jan/06/boycotts-shopping-protests-activists-consumers>

While participating in a consumer boycott is a good starting point, these actions rarely, if ever, change company or organization policies. No matter how many people stop watching Marvel movies because of the negative sociopolitical implications of a film they made, they still have a large enough fanbase to bring in millions of dollars per film. In order to be effective, activists need to actively contact companies and organizations asking for change on a larger level, and support alternative media, products or services that don't have the same issues, or are at least trying to be better.



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Economic Impacts

CON: Slowing Growth of Developing Countries

Journal for Global Business and Community, July 6, 2022

<https://jgbc.scholasticahq.com/article/36873-appalling-or-advantageous-exploring-the-impacts-of-fast-fashion-from-environmental-social-and-economic-perspectives>

The last of the three main considerations when determining the ethics and effects of fast fashion is economic impacts. Scholars that support fast fashion, or at least appreciate the positive economic effects of the practice, maintain that outsourcing apparel manufacturing is beneficial to both developed and developing countries. In developed countries, consumers are able to purchase more clothes for less while corporations preserve or increase their profits. In developing countries, important infrastructure is being improved or constructed to enable more businesses to begin operations there, which, in the long run, aids in the economic growth of developing countries, thus improving quality of life. However, while the fast fashion industry bolsters the global economy, the impact, whether small or large, of displaced manufacturing jobs in developed countries must also be considered.

CON: Direct Loss of Jobs in Developing Countries

Journal for Global Business and Community, July 6, 2022

<https://jgbc.scholasticahq.com/article/36873-appalling-or-advantageous-exploring-the-impacts-of-fast-fashion-from-environmental-social-and-economic-perspectives>

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CON: Reducing Productivity of Unskilled Labor

Journal for Global Business and Community, July 6, 2022

<https://jgbc.scholasticahq.com/article/36873-appalling-or-advantageous-exploring-the-impacts-of-fast-fashion-from-environmental-social-and-economic-perspectives>

According to his theory, Sir Arthur Lewis states that if traditional sector workers in developing economies moved to the modern sector, then they would "play a much more productive role and agricultural production would be left unaffected, thus "lead[ing] to the improved welfare and productivity of the nation" (Canepa, 2016). Under this theory, unskilled labor would continue to move to the modern manufacturing sector until the productivity of each sector is maximized.

With this, wages would increase, and less people would be living under the poverty line. "The benefit of sweatshops is that they move low-skill workers out of the countryside and into the cities, allowing the country as a whole to grow (Canepa, 2016)..

CON: Reducing Living Standards in Developing Countries

Journal for Global Business and Community, July 6, 2022

<https://jgbc.scholasticahq.com/article/36873-appalling-or-advantageous-exploring-the-impacts-of-fast-fashion-from-environmental-social-and-economic-perspectives>

While fast fashion hindered the economies of developed countries, it also allowed developing economies to mature. According to Benjamin Powell, fast fashion sweatshops in developing countries are "part of the process of development that ultimately raises living standards. That process took about 150 years in Britain and the United States but closer to 30 years in . . . Japan, South Korea, Hong Kong, and Taiwan" (Powell, 2008).



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Social Impacts

CON: Promoting Classism

Journal for Global Business and Community, July 6, 2022

<https://jgbc.scholasticahq.com/article/36873-appalling-or-advantageous-exploring-the-impacts-of-fast-fashion-from-environmental-social-and-economic-perspectives>

Classism is defined as “a belief that a person’s social or economic station in society determines their value in that society” and is often coupled with “behavior that reflects this belief: prejudice or discrimination based on class” (Merriam-Webster, n.d.-a). In some cases, a person’s clothing can reveal information about which social class they belong to and, thus, enables others to treat them differently based off of predetermined opinions on the various social classes. These predetermined views cause individuals to see others as either better, worse, or about equal to themselves in terms of social class. Each one of these beliefs are equally damaging to a person’s psychological state and intensifies the divide between classes (Cavaliheri & Chwalisz, 2020).

CON: Promoting Class Discrimination

Journal for Global Business and Community, July 6, 2022

<https://jgbc.scholasticahq.com/article/36873-appalling-or-advantageous-exploring-the-impacts-of-fast-fashion-from-environmental-social-and-economic-perspectives>

Fast fashion companies indirectly help in alleviating the lasting effects of classism in developed countries by producing apparel and marketing it to both higher and lower income individuals, so everyone begins to wear the same items regardless of social or economic class. Those with a lower income may not have as many pieces of clothing, or cycle through them as quickly, as people in the middle- and upper-class, but fast fashion gives them the opportunity to wear the same styles as their peers, thus diminishing one method people use to discriminate against those who are different than them (von Busch, 2018).

CON: Contributing to Rural Poverty

European Parliament, July, 2020

[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2020/652025/EPRS_BRI\(2020\)652025_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2020/652025/EPRS_BRI(2020)652025_EN.pdf)

Strong European demand for fashion has created booming garment, textile and footwear sectors in several developing countries. For example, in Cambodia the industry generates around 11% of gross domestic product (GDP) and employs one million workers (over one tenth of the labour force). Since 2001, exports have grown nine-fold, with the European Union and United States accounting for the lion’s share of this expansion. Partly as a result of this, Cambodia has enjoyed economic growth averaging 7% a year over the past decade. Although jobs are not well paid by European standards, they are still attractive to those fleeing rural deprivation. Between 2003 and 2012, the percentage of Cambodians living below the national poverty line fell from 50% to 18%; Bangladesh and Myanmar, the other two countries whose EU exports have grown fastest, have seen similarly spectacular declines in poverty rates.

Impact on Workers

CON: Less Productive Alternative Jobs (Ex. farming)

Journal for Global Business and Community, July 6, 2022

<https://jgbc.scholasticahq.com/article/36873-appalling-or-advantageous-exploring-the-impacts-of-fast-fashion-from-environmental-social-and-economic-perspectives>

An example of this theory can be seen in China. From 1981 to 2010, 160 million Chinese workers left the countryside to move and work in the city. This work involves poor conditions and low wages, however it is more productive than farming, so workers can earn much more in the modern sector than they would otherwise. Since this migration, China’s poverty rate decreased from 84% in 1981 to 12% in 2010 (Canepa, 2016). Applying this same theory to sweatshops in developing nations such as Nicaragua, Bangladesh, and Cambodia, these countries should see a decrease in poverty levels and increase in standard of living as more people begin to work in the modern manufacturing sector.



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Impact on Workers (Continued...)

CON: Direct Loss of Jobs

The Sun Media Company, July 13, 2020

<https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/12113637/fast-fashion-firms-smarten-act-end-modern-slavery/>

Fashion is the UK's largest creative industry. It provides jobs for almost as many people as the financial sector and is one of the most female-dominated industries in the world. Around 800,000 people work in the UK fashion industry and approximately 80 per cent of garment workers are women. Livelihoods are at stake if we decide to boycott fashion brands because of their bad practices.

CON: Risk of Criminal Engagements (Ex. prostitution)

The National News, February 1, 2023

<https://www.thenationalnews.com/lifestyle/fashion/the-great-debate-should-we-boycott-fast-fashion-brands-1.969305>

NEB: You're right, consumer demand is what fuels this industry and the deplorable practices that come with it, but we urgently need to consider the other side of the coin. A blanket boycott would lead to the shutting down of factories, forcing garment workers, many of whom are women, to go from a poor job to no job at all. Even worse, some will end up in even more dangerous situations, such as prostitution.

CON: Boycotts Hurt Workers

Evie Magazine, April 8, 2022

<https://www.eviemagazine.com/post/boycotting-fast-fashion-doesnt-actually-solve-the-sweatshop-problem>

Western activists, concerned citizens, and public figures often encourage banning the importation of goods that were produced by sweatshops. However, we don't have to theorize about what will happen if we do this, because it has been done before. According to Oxfam, factories in Bangladesh were facing an import ban in the '90s and were forced to fire 30,000 child workers. "That's great," you might be thinking. "A child should be running around playing with their friends, not doing hard labor." The reality, however, is that most of them ended up on the streets, took jobs with worse pay and conditions, and thousands turned to prostitution. They didn't magically become enrolled in school, because their living conditions didn't afford them that privilege. Their family needed all of the help they could get to provide food and shelter for themselves. People working in sweatshops are living in poverty-stricken countries, and you can't merely invent opportunity out of thin air. Closing down sweatshops, boycotting them, or banning them only hurts the workers who will be forced into lower wages, worse conditions, starvation, and homelessness due to inevitable factory shutdowns.

Impact on Consumers

CON: Cutting Access to Affordable Clothing

European Parliament, July, 2020

[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2020/652025/EPRS_BRI\(2020\)652025_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2020/652025/EPRS_BRI(2020)652025_EN.pdf)

Outsourcing is a flexible arrangement that benefits EU fashion companies by allowing them to order from factories that offer the cheapest prices, switching from one to the other without penalty. Consumers also benefit from lower retail prices. For example, over the past 20 years in Germany, clothing and footwear became 16% cheaper compared to the average basket of consumer goods. As prices fall, Europeans are buying more; according to European Environment Agency (EEA) estimates, in 2012 their purchases were 40% up on 1996 in terms of weight.



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Impact on Consumers (Continued...)

CON: Limits Ability to Keep up With Trends

Journal for Global Business and Community, July 6, 2022

<https://jgbc.scholasticahq.com/article/36873-appalling-or-advantageous-exploring-the-impacts-of-fast-fashion-from-environmental-social-and-economic-perspectives>

On the other side of this argument, however, are the positive effects of fast fashion. The first, and most obvious, is that this industry allows consumers to keep up with fashion trends that, now, change more than just every season. In addition, on a deeper level, fast fashion allows lower income individuals and families to purchase more items of clothing that are modern and trendy. Because of this, low-income individuals can wear styles comparable to those of their more well-off peers, thus mitigating the impacts of classism through clothing.

CON: Limiting Access to Variety of Trends

E Scholarly Community Encyclopedia, June 14, 2022

<https://encyclopedia.pub/entry/23992>

These changes are often positively described as a “democratization of the fashion”, Thanks to the rise of ready-made clothes, produced in industrial production, the strengthening of mass communication and the dynamism of the modern lifestyle, for the first time it is possible for more and more people, particular in western countries, to purchase fashionable clothes at relatively affordable prices. This constitutes implying a positive process in which the purchasing power of consumers in the field of fashion is enhanced [19]. Ostensibly, it can be argued that the reduction in the prices of clothes, has led to an increase in the quantity of clothes sold and the quantity clothes in the possession of the consumers, improving the condition of global consumers. At the same time, the increase in the production and consumption of ready-made clothes has a number of negative environmental consequences.

Political Implications

CON: Damages Diplomatic Relationships

CGTN News, March 30, 2021

<https://news.cgtn.com/news/2021-03-30/What-s-behind-fashion-brands-political-gambles--Z3tck1DOHS/index.html>

Boycotts against H&M erupted last week after an earlier statement from the company alleging “forced labor” in China’s cotton industry resurfaced online. As netizens dug deeper, a growing list of foreign retailers, including household names like Nike, Gap and Uniqlo have all been caught up in the ongoing diplomatic row over China’s policies in the country’s northwestern Xinjiang region.

CON: Facilitates Political Divisions

The New York Times, April 2, 2021

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/29/style/china-cotton-uyghur-hm-nike.html>

No, it’s much more complicated than an offensive and obvious cultural faux pas. The issue centers on the Xinjiang region of China and allegations of forced labor in the cotton industry — allegations denied by the Chinese government. Last summer, many Western brands issued statements expressing concerns about human rights in their supply chain. Some even cut ties with the region all together.

Now, months later, the chickens are coming home to roost: Chinese netizens are reacting with fury, charging the allegations are an offense to the state. Leading Chinese e-commerce platforms have kicked major international labels off their sites, and a slew of celebrities have denounced their former foreign employers.



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Additional Impacts/Outcomes

CON: Disproportionate Impact on Women

The National News, February 1, 2023

<https://www.thenationalnews.com/lifestyle/fashion/the-great-debate-should-we-boycott-fast-fashion-brands-1.969305>

We know major fast fashion companies (think Zara, Forever 21 and H&M) have been criticized for human rights breaches in their factories. Exploitative working conditions include terrible wages, appalling safety conditions and a high risk of harassment or abuse for female workers. But, for many women living in poverty-stricken countries, a job in the textile industry is the best of a bad situation..

CON: Limited Effectiveness

GLOBUS Student Sustainability Journal for the 21st Century, February 9, 2021

<https://globuswarwick.com/2021/02/09/pressuring-the-brands-or-perpetuating-the-system-should-we-boycott-fast-fashion/>

Additionally, over-emphasis on boycotts can overemphasize individual purchasing actions without pushing for systemic change. Instead, we need to vocalize our opposition to exploitative practices, through participation in the #PayUp or #WhoMadeMyClothes campaigns, following movements such as Fashion Revolution (@fash_rev) or the Clean Clothes Campaign (@cleanclothescampaign), and continuing to research and get angry about what major brands hide from us on a daily basis. However, some believe that awareness campaigns are too intangible and slow; the planet cannot sustain the constant consumption and throwaway culture that has been bred by the fast fashion industry. Potentially, some (i.e. garment workers in the Global South) have to suffer the short-term costs of boycotting in order to preserve the planet in the long term. However, this argument is problematic in so many ways; we cannot separate fast fashion's social, environmental, and economic impacts, and place the cost of the Global North's demand on the workers of the Global South who are least responsible for our damaging lifestyles. It is easy for privileged consumers to call for mass boycotts because we don't have to suffer the consequences. It is equally easy for privileged consumers to play the blame game, ignoring the fact that both making clothing in the Global South, or buying that clothing in the Global North, is not always a choice, but often a matter of survival and financial means.

CON: Opening Room for More Problems

The National News, February 1, 2023

<https://www.thenationalnews.com/lifestyle/fashion/the-great-debate-should-we-boycott-fast-fashion-brands-1.969305>

NEB: I think boiling the effect of a mass boycott to "short-term hardships for workers" doesn't give it the gravitas it deserves. The vast majority of garment workers in the fast fashion industry earn 40 cents (Dh1) or less an hour for the work that they do. They simply don't have the means to free themselves from the oppression they're under because they rely on that income to survive.

If we all woke up tomorrow and decided to stop buying fast fashion at the drop of a hat, the effect on hundreds of thousands of workers across the world would be devastating. Instead of solving one issue, we'd be creating one that is arguably even more detrimental.

CON: Disproportionate Impact on Developing Nations

The Vegan Review, March 31, 2023

<https://theveganreview.com/fast-fashion-in-bangladesh-why-boycotting-it-isnt-simple/>

Multinational companies can easily exploit the readily available labour in Bangladesh by providing extremely poor working conditions and low incomes in their factories. But the \$28 billion garments industry is a source of vast amounts of tax revenue for the government of Bangladesh and provides employment for many millions of Bangladeshis. It accounts for a whopping 81% of the country's exports. So the government taking any action against such corporations means risking the loss of all the benefits of hosting them in the first place. Hence, through the use of such economic means, multinationals are able to erode state sovereignty and coerce developing nations such as Bangladesh into doing what it wants for the sake of economic security.