

Fast-Fashion Apparel Consumption and Sustainability

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Sustainability regarding clothing has been defined as ideally meeting current consumer needs with clothing produced, transported, sold, used, and discarded without adversely affecting people or the planet now or in the future (Department for Environment, Food, and Rural Affairs, 2011). Sustainability issues involving clothing have arisen with accelerated fashion change and globalization of apparel supply chains. With increasingly globalized supply chains, much clothing for industrialized-country markets is produced in low-income countries with poor working conditions and low or unenforced environmental standards. Fashion-change acceleration has increased pressure to rapidly produce garments, speeded clothing turnover in stores as retailers work to maintain fresh offerings and consumers rush to buy them, and reduced time between consumers' clothing purchase and discard to make room in their closets for new styles (Dickson & Eckman, 2006). Fast fashion, often supplied through global supply chains, is characterized by offering low-priced knockoffs of the latest runway collections and encouraging disposability with rapid turnover of garments not made to last (Elder, 2009). Young consumers, having buying power and desiring the latest styles, are major fast-fashion purchasers. Joy, Sherry, Venkatesh, Wang, and Chan (2012) found among Hong Kong and Canadian fast-fashion consumers aged 20-25 environmental interests, but little association of fashion with sustainability and little guilt about fast-fashion disposability. Meyer (2001) found consumer reluctance to purchase "green" apparel products due to uncertainty about environmental benefits and such products' high cost and limited selection. Changes in consumer behavior toward increased interest in social responsibility, and intensified product and supply chain competition among fashion-apparel companies have attracted research on sustainability issues involving both firms and consumers. The purpose of this paper is to contribute to understanding the ways global fast-fashion retailers manage social and environmental responsibility to enhance relationships with stakeholders, to prevent damage to their images, and to avoid losing the trust of consumers, current and prospective employees, and other shareholders.

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