

Sustainability in Fashion: A Consumer Oriented Approach

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Abstract— Fashion industry is considered as one of the largest contributors of pollution in the world. The continuous degrading condition of environment has led to a clarion call to adopt sustainable methods not just at every stage of the manufacturing process but also for the afterlife of the garments when it reaches the customers. This paper attempts to explain the need to focus on the simple yet important ways that can be taken by people to safeguard the depleting natural resources. As the fact that cannot be ignored that both the companies and the consumers equally bear the responsibility to pave the way towards sustainable fashion.

Keywords— Sustainable Fashion, Green Fashion, Eco-Friendly, Costume, Sustainable Methods.

I. INTRODUCTION

21st century is a century where production, consumption, innovation is evolving at a fast pace than it used to be in the earlier times, and in similar manner the desire to consume new arrival is also increasing among consumers especially in the fashion world. And because of this nature the consumers have been addicted to fast fashion that fulfil the needs within no time. With the emergence of fast fashion, it encourages consumers to purchase more and more, which ultimately leads to increase in demand for rapid changes in styles, over production of clothes and making them available at a cheaper cost to the customers which has led to over consumerism (Bhardwaj, 2010). Unlike this throw away fashion that causes ecological damage, Earlier (18th & 19th century) clothes were produced and used for a longer period of time as long as possible and were further repaired, reused not just as second hand but as third, fourth even fifth hand (Lemire, 1997; Sullivan 2019). Fashion industry is an industry that serves the need of each and every generation at the same time, it is one of the substantial contributors of global GDP about \$ 1.8 trillion that counts around 2.3% of global GDP as per economic times (Raghuwanshi, 2020). According to Merriam Webster defines Fast Fashion as an approach to the design, creation and marketing of clothing fashions that emphasizes making fashion trends quickly and cheaply available to consumers (1828). In an era where fast consumption has become a synonym it has become important to consider the fact that the pace in which we are consuming can create crisis for the future generation. With the coming of the fast fashion these industries had progressed very rapidly and so have the pollutants of it. Fashion never dies and so as it remains sustains on the earth for a longer period of time and it keep on rising the pollution level. Due to which it has acquired the states of second most polluting industry of the world (Cronin, 2015). Fast fashion has become a boon that fulfill the

desire of the present generation but it also turned out to be a bane for the future generation as well. The continuously deteriorating state of the environment, depleting resources, and over-extraction of resources has become one of the major concerns of the present era, and as the fashion industry is one of the major contributors, it is the need of the hour to look for ways of sustainability be that can be implemented in the fashion industry as well (Mehta, 2014).

So, in order to save the coming generation from this problem the current generation has to understand that we need to consume resources in such a way that it also sustains for the future. Keeping this in mind Ethical, Eco -friendly, Sustainable, Slow Fashion are some of the terms that have become the buzzwords today. All these terms have been used interchangeably but they all are different in meaning and they all in one way or other are oriented towards a goal to eliminate all the shady side of this industry which have been ignored so far. slow fashion emerged as a response to fast fashion (Flecher, 2007; Jung & Jin, 2014). slow fashion is related to sustainability of environment but it is not limited to only that aspect only (Henninger et al., 2016).

Within its regime slow fashion focuses not only on reducing carbon emission but also looks at ethical conducts, manufacturing system, upcycling, purchasing quality over quantity and focusing on new advanced technology (Fletcher, 2010; Ertekin et al., 2014). However, In majority of the studies shows that companies are the ones that are expected to take care of all ethical concerns. There is a need to understand to have a community participation and involvement of people to provide sustainable development (Mehta, 2014). Here the main focus is how the consumer can also contribute in creating sustainable fashion. As we cannot ignore the fact that both the companies and the consumers equally bear the responsibility to pave the way towards sustainable fashion. However, whether consumers will change their shopping habits or believe that purchasing eco-friendly products is enough to contribute to green fashion is still debatable, as the major contribution in this regard continues even after the product is purchased, such as how long and how many times they used the product, and since the diversity of detergents available on the market adds to water pollution, thus there is a need to educate people about eco-friendly detergents. The harmful chemicals are leading to ocean acidification and are radically altering the aquatic eco system. According to international union for conservation of nature 2017 report: an estimate of 35% of non-biodegrade micro plastic inside the oceans comes from the laundry of synthetic textiles like polyester. The carbon emission caused by fashion

industry can reach up to 26% by 2050 as per the report given by Ellen Macarthur Foundation (Doboczky, 2019).

According to the Environmental Impact of Products (EIPRO) report by the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC), a large portion of the environmental impact in the lifecycle of clothes is caused by the amount of energy, water, and chemicals used in the process of tumble drying, washing, and ironing, as well as the microplastics that are shedding into water. As a result, the survey stated that one of the most successful strategies to lessen the environmental impact of clothes is to persuade customers to make some behavioural adjustments. Consumers may also lessen their garments' environmental impact by washing them less frequently (and instead airing them) and avoiding ironing. So, it is clearly evident that in order to attain sustainable fashion goal it is important that not only the companies but the consumers are also needed to take a firm step.

II. POSSIBLE SUSTAINABLE ALTERNATIVES

Majority of studies suggest the Need to adopt the strategy of – reduce, reuse, recycle, refuse, upcycle but now the time is to implement these strategies from the grass root level (Ahmed, 2018). Although due to lack of technology recycling has also faced number of issues such as sorting and separating of clothes but still recycling is one of the possible ways that may reduce the burden in saving the planet to a certain level (Nikolina, 2019).

Laundry is one of the tasks that happens almost everyday in every household. In the cleaning process it may shows that the clothes are clean and brighter but on the other side it also makes humans a part of its darker side. Detergents used for doing laundry usually contain many toxic chemicals that not only pollutes water but also effects the aquatic life. With the Use of Ecofriendly detergents, it may also help in lowering the level of water Contamination (Goel & Kaur, 2012).

Many eco fashionistas have suggested to go for slow fashion. Although sustainable fashion is a part of slow fashion Movement (Jung & Jin ,2014; Henninger et al, 2016). It will help in slowing the wastage of the natural resources that are used in the manufacturing processes and will also produce high quality products that has a long-life span and can be worn multiple time in multiple ways.

Having knowledge of the right fabric is not enough but it has to applicable in daily routine. Habit of reading the labels of the clothes that are eco labels or By Buying organic material/natural material clothes that cause less harm to the environment instead of clothes that are made of synthetic material can add to small effort that can bring big change. Even many industries are working on innovative material that are safe and sustainable in nature like in place of conventional cotton that requires tones of water and pesticides for its production is slowly being replaced by organic cotton as it requires very less amount of water and pollute less as compared to conventional cotton (Fibre2Fashion,2014). Many companies have started using Man Made Cellulose (MMC's) in their production as it is biodegradable and renewable also. Brands such as Tencel, Pinatex, Bemberg are some example who uses MMC's (Nikolina, 2019).

Donating unused clothes to help others instead of throwing it in landfills in this way the consumers will not only increase the lifespan of the clothes but also help in minimizing the over production. Some of the NGO's like Goonj, Clothes box foundation, etc., are working to collect old clothes from the people but unfortunately there is no direct governmental online platform or any governmental organization that is working on the same lines.

Reusing the old clothes or Recreating new stuffs from them and in order to collect these clothes NGO's and organization can collaborate and work in collecting old clothes and also organize awareness campaign to make people aware to old clothes to them. Like Ecokaari.

Ecokaari – Humanizing Fashion is an organization run by Mr. Nandan Bhatt he came with an amazing idea to reuse plastics for this he has collaborated with many large-scale organizations who are working at a big scale to collect the waste plastic and also aware people to donate plastic to them (*This man uses our plastic wrapper waste to make this* / Anuj Ramatri - *An ecofreak*, 2021). After collecting plastic, they wash them with eco-friendly and natural cleaners. after cleaning they sundry the plastic bags and cut them in long strips manually. After that they roll these strips on charkha. After that they take them to handloom to create fabric and further the process of stitching and designing takes place to turn the plastic waste into handbags, fashion accessories, office stationery and many more beautiful stuffs. the majority of the employees in eco kaari workers are women as their motive is also to empower women by providing employment along with reducing and recycling plastic waste. This kind of model can also applicable in the case of old clothes than it can save many clothes from going into landfills.

Along with recycle these old clothes can be upcycle the concept of upcycling has been used by the Delhi based artist Meenakshi who started a “Use Me Works” brands and is working to turn every bit of waste into something creative product. such kind of efforts save earth from waste crisis (Das, 2017)

As per a report published in waste in fashion autumn 2019 About 40% of the fabric is wasted in cut out and only about 24% is used after one year of the remaining fabrics. this led to over wastage of fabric and increase in Co2 footprint. there is need to look for managing the waste created by these industries which can further led to less wastage of natural resource (waste in fashion autumn 2019 – son of a tailor). Keeping all this in view Doodlage, a Delhi based ecofriendly fashion studio run by kriti tula works on turning fashion industry waste (left over cutouts) into wearable fashion. Kriti tula in an interview said that about 73% of garment waste goes into landfill. And the happens because of lack of ways to reuse that fabric. Her efforts were also recognized by lakme fashion week 2012. If such kind of more fashion studio set up it can help a lot to minimize the waste and help in completing the dream of sustainable fashion (Reuters,2017).

Media can play a great role in this regard as many time media share articles that an actress repeated this dress again these news are portrayed in such a way that it shows a feeling of embarrassment instead of that it should as seen as celebrating

the repeats (Demopoulos,2019). The way the headlines are framed does impact the consumer. The celebrities know that people follow their fashion style, so it is also the duty of the celebrities as well as the to promote the idea of sustainable fashion by celebrating the repeats. Recently, the idea of sustainable fashion has got a push from the celebrities but this push needs to be seen at a much larger level with a great impact. It is not degrading to do re-wears because the sustainability issue according to many celebrities is becoming a turning point, making it a conversation -starter, an eye opener and even a cause to support.

There is a need to have more and more online platforms and old clothes collecting organization that not only collect these unused clothes but also keeps a regular check on the suggestions given by the people. People can be motivated for this by giving them appreciation certificates or prizes.

Seminars/ workshops should be organized to make people aware how they can reuse old clothes and contribute in making a green planet.

III. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

There is a need to aware people that change starts from us instead of looking what government or other organization are doing; the general public have to come forward in this regard by suggesting different ways to combat this problem by taking a step each day towards sustainability. It is true that every cloth that you pick is not related to green fashion but with right knowledge, bringing little change in the preferences and shopping habits the consumer can help in adding more green to the nature earth.

People need to realize that sustainable fashion should be seen as a norm as a priority rather than an exception in order from becoming overburdened with non-biodegradable waste. This pandemic has given an opportunity to revisiting the conventional ways and reshape them in such a manner that it also fulfills the need of clothing along with new job opportunities. As Sustainability isn't just about being environment friendly but also about wealth creation and of innovation.

The day when even the regular home garbage which you throw turns out to be reusable and ecofriendly then only the dream of healthy and sustainable environment will be achieved. So, the responsibility of taking care of the ethical issue in fashion industry not only comes on the shoulders of the manufacturing companies but the consumers are also equally responsible for it. And the burden of this can be reduced by dividing the responsibility into pre stage and post stage by both companies and consumer. In pre stage the companies should focus on the manufacturing process by focusing on optimum utilization of resources and the material that is used to produce the final goods and in the post stage it Companies Need to emphasis on the post purchase product life. Similarly the consumer in pre stages should make an habit of reading the labels while purchasing clothes such as preferring eco-friendly material and in the post stage the consumer should be grasped with the knowledge of taking care of clothes that increase the life span of clothes to a longer period for example- washing them with eco-friendly detergents, knowing the ways of reusing

or familiar with centers of donating the clothes instead of throwing them into trash; use them as treasures for the wealth of nation .

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