

Candidate 1 evidence

Fast fashion and the consequences of over consumption

According to Zainab Mahmood¹ in an article from The Guardian, "Fashion, especially the cheap kind, is addictive". The glamorised issue of modern day overconsumption, often known as fast fashion, is one of the fastest growing problems of today's society. Consumers and manufacturers are both to blame for issues associated with growing unsustainability, waste, mistreatment and exploitation of garment workers and the deadly climate impact of the clothing industry. Is it really necessary to have a new wardrobe every month? Brands no longer put out two collections a year, but often up to twenty-four!² It is key that, as consumers, we step away and educate ourselves on the consequences of buying into temporary trends and hold corrupt fast fashion brands accountable.

The Guardian's view from an editorial states that: "Fashion shouldn't cost the earth."³ It is no secret that the world is currently unsuccessfully tackling a major climate crisis. The fashion industry is currently responsible for more annual carbon emissions than all international flights and marine shipping combined. A further increase of 50% in greenhouse gas emissions is expected within a decade. It takes a staggering 2700 litres to make just one t-shirt, which is enough water for one person to drink for 900 days! ⁴Nowadays, lots of clothes are made with cheaper alternative materials like polyester or nylon (which are all plastics), which has a detrimental effect on the environment and makes it easier for fast fashion brands to create huge amounts of outrageously cheap and low-quality clothes that are made to be worn once and subsequently disposed of. Our addiction to fashion has led to an alarming trend, which in turn is having devastating impacts on our environment.

Another consequence of fast fashion and overconsumption is the poor and inhumane working conditions that garment workers are subjected to. When we

¹ Zain Mahmood, *The Guardian*, (article from April 2022)

² Jennifer Oakfor, *trvst*, (article from July 2022)

³ *The Guardian*, (article from March 2022)

⁴ Ngan Le, *Princeton University*, (article from July 2022)

purchase clothes, whether online or in store, it's easy to not think or ask who made this? What is it made from? Have the workers been paid enough? Why is this item so cheap? It's odd to think that your favourite shirt was most likely made thousands of miles away by someone sitting in a factory in unsafe, overworked conditions. There are currently 60-million garment workers worldwide⁵ and a substantial amount of them are treated horrifically. Disasters like the Rana Plaza disaster, which saw the Dhaka Garment factory in Bangladesh collapse on the 24th of April 2013, killing 1132 workers and injuring more than 2500 others⁶, are not uncommon. The only goal for the big bosses of brands and companies is get rich whilst not caring if they exploit lives, morals and the climate for money. Another newspaper article from The Guardian highlights the alarming international scale of the abuse suffered by workers in the fast fashion industry: "The reports claim that these allegations, recorded between January and May this year in Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Indonesia and Sri Lanka, are a direct result of pressure for quick turnarounds and low overheads. The report in question examined factories that supply H & M and GAP are two well known international companies that are very popular⁷. Were the average high street shopper to be aware of this, then would they still be rushing to snap up the supposed bargains?

Garment workers are crucial for the creation of clothes, and their mistreatment and exploitation is despicable. The irony is that these impoverished garment workers often can't even afford the super cheap clothes that they have made as their pay is so low and unfair. They can often not even afford food. Recently another example of the mistreatment of workers was revealed as Misguided (a popular fast fashion brand) was bought by Fraser group (who own many brands that highly contribute to overconsumption) for £20 million. They have refused to pay the workers who had already made the garments. This clearly shows deep corruption and an alarming level of callous immorality directed to

⁵ 16 Days Campaign, *Center for Women's Global Leadership*

⁶ *International Labour Organisation*

⁷ Kate Holan, *The Guardian*, (article from June 2018)

people who are already vulnerable. Similarly, a recent report by an undercover journalist for Channel 4 news found that garment workers in the factory for the fast fashion giant Shein were being paid 3p per item and forced to work 18 hour shifts.⁸ There were also reports of women washing their hair during their lunch break as they have to work such long inhumane shifts. They only get one day off a month and if employees make a single mistake during the manufacturing process they are fined two thirds of their daily wage. These appalling working conditions in this Shein factory are deemed illegal by the Chinese government. An article reporting on Channel 4s findings stated "I have been doing investigative stories in China for 15, 16 years – still [they] exploit workers like dogs. Basically it's worse than years ago."⁹

The fashion world has only recently acknowledged and realised how big a problem fast fashion is, and are trying to come up with ethical and sustainable solutions. Some Designer brands are introducing archive and vintage pieces to be resold which is setting an example to the rest of the fashion industry to use fashion sustainably. Although the fast fashion brands do not have any ambitions to be sustainable, there has been a surge in greenwashing, which is when unsustainable brands that promote waste and overconsumption try to conceal this by lying about how green they are. For example, Pretty Little Thing launched a resale app which you may believe is a good thing, but Pretty Little Thing, along with their parent company brands, make 207 million items a year¹⁰ and have made no commitment to slowing it down. This is greenwashing: fast fashion brands portraying a false narrative of sustainability, almost as if sustainability is a "trend".

On the other hand Douche and Gabbana spring season 2023, titled Ciao Kim, was a collaboration between a highly influential celebrity Kim K and D&G, where together they re-imagined previous collection and used archive and vintage

⁸George Iddenden, *Charged Tech News* (article report of channel 4s findings Oct 2022)

⁹ George Iddenden, *Charged Tech News* (article report of channel 4s findings Oct 2022)

¹⁰Venetia Lamanna, *@venetialamanna*

pieces to create a whole new collection. This is impactful as such an influential and highly regarded brand in the fashion industry, alongside a hugely influential celebrity, are taking the first steps in sustainability in the high fashion industry. Sustainable ways of shopping have been increasing as awareness increased through social media. Thrift/charity shopping, small ethical brands and resale apps such as Depop and Vinted have become a widely used way of shopping sustainably whilst being able to create your own personal style. Charity shopping works on both sides of the problem; it means people can donate their clothes that they no longer wear and have no use for, then someone else can buy it and relove and wear the piece whilst the money made is given to charitable organisations. The options of sustainable ways of shopping adds hope for the fashion industry to move to a more sustainable and ethical industry that will ultimately greatly help the current climate issues. Sustainability is the responsibility of both consumers and creators/sellers.

Fast fashion is a real and dangerous problem, resulting in overconsumption, waste and then consequently mistreatment of garment workers in the fashion industry. The main objective for many fast fashion brands is to make the CEOs richer and richer with barely any morals as to how that is done. They treat workers like machines. Glamorise the truth. Fast fashion brands seem to have the world under a false narrative. But there is a small amount of hope with opportunities to fix and change the ever-growing problem to move to a more sustainable industry. We need to collectively stand in solidarity with the garment worker for their rights and be conscious consumers, which will then in return make big fast fashion brands stop and change their ways.

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Intro

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p.5 own knowledge

Candidate 2 evidence

The Sound of Silence

Silence. It is a powerful word. It can be associated with tranquillity, peace, excitement, death. I used to love sitting in silence, taking in the world around me, often sitting under a tree in the park with a good book in hand. Then the war hit. It's bewildering how one disagreement between countries can throw millions of people's lives off course. Including mine.

I used to wonder what life would be like if I were to be whisked away from my family to a home in a strange, unfamiliar place. Before September of last year, that remained a wonder. But now, things have changed. I'd always lived alone with my Father. Our relationship was... complicated to say the least. I have always been unable to connect with him, and he never made any effort to speak to me. Mother died when I was born so I've lived a very quiet life so far. Father was often away all day at work, and when he was home he didn't talk, or play games with me like you'd expect. I never did find out exactly what he actually worked as or what he had to do. He never came home at the same time, never brought home anything other than newspapers, and he never had any colleagues come and visit us. I often stayed out with my friends for several hours after school, to stay away from him and his miserable nature. He hired a housekeeper for when I came home and for the weekends, but she was hardly ever around, and he never did find that out. Nowadays I've almost forgotten the sound of his voice. Instead, he was replaced by the green fields and small houses of a village not too far from Exeter in Devon.

I got used to the silence, wandering the halls of my home, aware of every tiny creak in the stairs, and the noise of bicycle bells from outside the windows. Sitting in my bedroom for hours on end, playing the piano to fill the suffocating emptiness in my chest. It didn't take long to master Beethoven's Für Elise. I started to go out for walks, just to get out of the solitary confinement of the house. Sometimes my friends joined me, and we'd go and muck about outside the local corner shop. Outside was the hustle and bustle of the big city, the honk of horns and the shouts of businessmen in an awful hurry down the street. A complete contrast to the life I lived at home.

Over the course of a few weeks the noises had changed their tones slightly, and the atmosphere around the place took a turn for the worse. Instead of the usual friendly shouts from people across the streets, and the casual conversation that would usually follow suit, there was a sense of tension and urgency about the way people were speaking and moving. The newspaper stands displayed headlines of "GERMANY INVADES POLAND" in bold lettering. We were on the verge of war with Hitler and everyone knew it.

That fateful day I walked past several more newsagents with similar papers before taking a left to the park where I spent many days beneath a willow tree. I had forgotten my copy of 'Death on the Nile' on the kitchen table - in hindsight that was for the best, as I usually completely absorb myself in books, blissfully unaware of anything going on around me. So that day I sat beneath the tree, taking in what was going on. There were children running around chasing each other, but their Mothers not paying much attention as they were talking amongst themselves, no doubt about the current headlines. There was the odd cyclist too, who seemingly came to a halt to join the groups of people

conversing. Across the street, newsagents were taking out radios and crowds were forming on the cobbled pavements

Being the inquisitive person that I am, I wandered over to one of the congregations of people just in time to hear 'Consequently this country is at war with Germany.' I wasn't sure what was going on, but it was enough for me to understand that the situation with Germany had escalated and that this could potentially change my life. A panicked whisper spread through the crowd while I backed away and sprinted home.

I could sense something was different as soon as I stepped over the threshold. There was a smell of freshly brewed tea and the rustle of newspaper coming from the kitchen. I remember thinking that this was unusual and too out of the ordinary to be a good thing. It couldn't be the housekeeper, as the woman had left several hours previously. I didn't even consider taking off my shoes as I passed the coat stand and cautiously stepped into the kitchen, after a moment's hesitation. And there he was. A figure dressed smartly in a military uniform. With the most serious look I had ever seen on his face. My Father. My head was filled with questions I dared not ask. He barely spared me a glance as I paced across the room and filled a glass full of water. There was a feel of uneasiness in the air, like something was wrong.

After what seemed like a century, he set down his newspaper, took off his glasses, cleared his throat and sighed. I could see by his expression that he was fighting with himself over what to say. What could he? We hadn't said a word to each other in weeks and the tension in the air was so thick it could be cut with an axe. A long silence followed. I hate silence. It's so... quiet, so suspenseful. He cleared his throat again.

"Well son, I have been struggling to muster the words to describe the current situation. You will have many questions, and in time they will be answered. But at present, there are some changes that will be occurring with immediate effect in the next four days."

I stared dumbfoundedly at this man, who looked visibly older and more tired than he usually did. The lines under his eyes were deeper, and he bore a wistful expression on his face, as if he was experiencing some regret. It occurred to me that I barely recognise him anymore. His black hair was showing signs of grey and balding, his face showing more lines than I remember, and his eyes had lost their shine. Still unsure of how I was supposed to react to this, I just stared at the floor, shuffling my feet. There were remnants of food from weeks ago still lying there, for nobody seemed to have cleaned the place in a long time, which was unsurprising, considering the housekeeper was consistently absent. My thoughts kept spiralling on in constant chains, so much so that I became startled when he spoke again, with a sigh.

"I regret to inform you that you will be moving to someplace new in the coming days, where I cannot say. It would be awfully good of you to pack a suitcase containing a small number of your belongings, so when the time comes you are prepared to leave. As for me, well... I'm sure it's self-explanatory. The army requires soldiers, so naturally I put myself forward. I hope this isn't too much of a blow to you, being so young."

Still unsure of what to say, I quietly nodded and rose, without a word, to go and pack the dreaded suitcase that lay, gathering dust, beside my rickety bed.

Candidate 3 evidence

The Bungee Jump

During the summer holidays my family decided to travel to Perthshire for a camping trip. The campsite was huge and lay on a large, grassy field surrounded by luscious green forests which had a beautiful earthy smell. The place was quiet and peaceful and yet extremely busy. It had activities on sight like an arcade, minigolf, and a castle. It was also not far away from several towns where we could explore the surrounding area. We spent a week doing all kinds of activities and enjoying ourselves. One day we decided that we should do a bungee jump, I was hesitant as I am terrified of heights. However, I convinced myself to do this as what were the chances of me having this opportunity again? It was decided, we were going. We arrived at an old bridge over a small, mirky body of water. We got ready and began the long climb to the top of the bridge. So, there I was: 40 metres in the air, but it felt like 100, looking down on the water far below my feet. It was a glorious summer day; the sky was clear, and the sun was high in the sky, and it was hot. Extremely hot for Scotland. There was a slight breeze that blew into my face. I stood still and watched other people jump, screaming as they fell. Some with joy and some with terror. Then it was the turn of my family. My brothers jumped first, smiling, and confident. With no fear or hesitation, they jumped, howling with delight. My dad stayed with me to encourage me to jump.

Now, it was my turn. I stepped up and the staff began to get me ready, linking the bungee cord to my harness. But to me the cord was my noose. My fears made me believe that I would die if I jumped. The staff gave me the final instructions and encouragement before sending me to the ledge. I looked down and became frozen in fear, I was like a deer in headlights. The ground started to spin, and a nauseous feeling started to creep in. My stomach started to turn; I could feel and hear the gurgling and bubbling in my stomach. I felt sick. The whole reason my brothers jumped first was to make me feel better about jumping, but all I could hear were the screams of the others before them. My mouth became dry, and my stomach churned. I stood like a statue, unable to bring to myself to move, let alone jump. We were up there for so long that the clear, sunny day became clouded, and the light breeze had picked up into a mild wind. This only added to my terror. How could I ever bring myself to jump? I thought to myself. My dad shouted over breaking me out of my trance. "Get on with it!" he shouted, as if that is what I needed to hear.

I could not face the shame and embarrassment of climbing back down and not jumping, nor would my brothers ever let me live it down. I had no choice. I had to jump. I could not go all the way up and not go through with it. So, I took a deep breath, closed my eyes, and jumped. I was like a bird leaving the nest for the first time, taking the leap, and praying that I would start flying. At the start all I saw was the darkness of my own eyelids, but as I felt the adrenaline started to kick in. I slowly opened my eyes to see the body of water shimmering like gold in the sunlight. I felt the air rush past my face, blowing like a whistle in my ears. It was amazing! My fear of heights was slowly fading into the back of my mind, I was no longer scared, I was enjoying myself. I accelerated rapidly towards the water, until

I was only around 10 meters away from it. I felt that I could just reach out and touch the water, I was that close. I could even smell the musty river grass and a terrible fishy smell coated my nostrils, to the extent that I could even taste it in my mouth. Just as fast as the descent ended, the ascent began. I rapidly pinged back, flying upwards in no control of what happened. I looked up and was blinded by the sun as it appeared in a small break in the clouds, like a flashlight shining down on me.

I bounced up and down, side to side, swinging through the air like a monkey through the trees, until I finally came to a stop. Whilst hanging there, in the air, I started to really think about what had just happened. I had just leapt from a 130ft bridge and loved every second of it. I looked around at the luscious green vegetation around me, the murky water under me and the fresh woody, earthy smell of the soil mixed with the river's, creating mother nature's beautiful scent. I was happy and at peace, until my fear of heights slowly crept back into realisation, and I became anxious and worried. I was now hanging like a chandelier, swaying in the wind.

I was slowly lowered down until both my feet were on solid ground, I was safe at last. I was relieved and saddened that this experience was over. I was relieved, as people are not birds and are meant to always keep two feet on the ground. But I was upset as this amazing adventure had come to an end. Even though it only lasted for thirty seconds, it was some of the best fun I ever had. Once we had finished, I was like a kid going to the sweet shop for the first time, unable to wipe the smile of my face. I was just so excited about what I had just done. Once my dad had jumped, the whole family finally met back up and we talked about the amazing experience we all just had. But of course, the first thing we talked about was me standing on the edge taking forever to jump. They all laughed at me and called me a cry-baby.

But for me, it was a huge step forward in conquering my fears, so I did not care about what they said. I was simply happy that I managed to jump off the bridge. Even though I have not fully conquered my fear of heights, I have begun the journey. It taught me that in life, even though you may be scared and have fears of the outcome, you should take the leap because you never know, you might love it. The bungee jump taught me many lessons and helped me strive to try new things and face my fears. It has also strengthened my mental toughness which will allow me to carry on facing the difficulties life throws at me. To me this was a massive achievement which will forever be engraved as an amazing and happy memory.