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# Future of Sustainability in Fast Fashion



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<p>This thesis focuses on the current global environmental, social and economic issues in the fast fashion industry. In addition to that current state of sustainability in western fast fashion companies is evaluated, how fast fashion companies can gain from sustainability and can the sustainability be achieved with made changes.</p> <p>Sustainability in business world has gained increased popularity and has become basically a driving trend. The reason behind this is that people are now aware of, for example, human rights, conditions in clothing factories, environmental challenges and how those issues will affect the future of the globe, economies and societies. Fast fashion is a global industry and in the globalized world finding information about companies and their operations has become effortless. Consumers nowadays have a lot more information than couple of decades ago. Due to increased awareness of sustainability, it has become a requirement for a business world. Therefore, it is likely that sustainability will shape the fashion and fast fashion industry even further in the future.</p> <p>This thesis is a literature review based on secondary data. The research consists of analyzing information from published articles, academic books, company reports and statistics.</p>	

Keywords	Fast fashion, Sustainability, Future of Sustainability, Environment, Social, Economy, Sustainable fashion, Ethics

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## 1 Introduction

Fashion industry is a remarkable industry. It employs millions of people across the globe, and every person in the globe is affected by fashion industry somehow. Unfortunately, fashion industry and especially fast fashion industry, which has been created only in few decades, includes many issues considering environment, society and economy. From a global point of view almost every person faces the consequences that those issues created, especially environment related, if no improvements in the industry take place. Therefore, it is important to ask what the current state of the industry is, how it will be affected by sustainability trend, and is sustainability an advantage or possibly a threat for the industry. This topic is very important for future, because industries and companies should be innovative. Without actions fashion industry can face many problems in the future.

This thesis focuses on the current global environmental, social and economic issues in the fast fashion industry. In addition to that current state of sustainability in western fast fashion companies is evaluated, how fast fashion companies can gain from sustainability and can the sustainability be achieved with made changes.

Fashion industry is centuries old industry and fashion plays very important role in people's life: with fashion and clothes individuals can express themselves and fashion trends tells the story of the different times and cultures. Fast fashion, like mentioned, is new phenomenon in a history of humankind, only existed few decades, and it has changed the meaning of clothes. Never before has been clothes been produced this massively and a short period of time as today. Fashion has become rather meaningless and disposable for its user. Fashion is no longer about individuality, it is creating massive amount of same clothing for a massive audience. Creation of fast fashion is due to many factors. Very important players in the process of developing the concept of fast fashion are economic growth, increase of population and consumer behavior. One could say that fast fashion companies are highly dependent on consumer behavior. In other words, it is highly driven by consumers. Therefore, it is vital for fast fashion companies to be aware of consumers' buying behavior and opinions. Therefore, fashion industry needs to be aware of trends in the market.

Sustainability in business world has gained increased popularity and has become basically a driving trend. The reason behind this is that people are now aware of, for example, human rights, conditions in clothing factories, environmental challenges and how those issues will affect the future of the globe, economies and societies. Fast fashion is a global industry and in the globalized world finding information about companies and their operations has become effortless. Consumers nowadays have a lot more information than couple of decades ago. Due to increased awareness of sustainability, it has become a requirement for a business world. Therefore, it is likely that sustainability will shape the fashion and fast fashion industry even further in the future.

The fast fashion industry is considered to lack sustainability in its operations. In fact, the development of the industry in sustainability has not evolved. Many of the current issues in fast fashion take place in developing countries where many companies have outsourced their manufacturing. Two key problems in fast fashion are social and environmental issues and those reflect to economy, as well. The environment is highly consumed by clothing production process. Usually the legislation in developing countries, is a lot different compared to western countries. Environment and human rights are not as concerned as they would be, for example, in Europe. Many fast fashion companies claim that environment is considered in every process, but in reality businesses may not even realize how much every production process will consume environment.

On the other hand, issue is lot bigger than the current state of sustainability in the industry. The problems in fast fashion are just products of the issue and therefore it is important to understand to what extent social issues in clothing-manufacturing causes can be fixed by the companies. Fashion industry does not only bring jobs to western countries, but also to less rich countries where having a job in a factory is very important.

## 2 Research methods

### 2.1 Research Structure

This thesis is structured systematically by the author in order to identify the research topic and answer to research questions. The process starts by explaining the most important concepts; fast fashion, sustainability and mass production. The following chapter is devoted to current sustainability situation in the fast fashion industry; what issues arise from fast fashion companies' operations, how companies execute sustainability in their operations and how consumer behaviour affects the industry.

After explaining the key words, and examining present execution of sustainability in the industry becomes future of sustainability in the industry. This chapter consists of different actions fast fashion companies can take against environmental, economic and social issues that they cause.

Sustainable fashion is the following and final chapter. In this part the author reason what sustainable fashion means, what changes can be made in the companies' supply chain to enhance sustainability in the industry and, also, speculate whether sustainability can be an asset for a fast fashion company by discussing and enlisting the opportunities and threats of it.

### 2.2 Research Questions

This thesis aims to answer the following questions:

1. **How can sustainability be an asset for western fast fashion companies?**
2. **Can sustainability in fast fashion be achieved by changing business model in fast fashion companies operations?**

The focus of this thesis is in the western fast fashion companies: how they operate currently, what possible threats and opportunities they face in moving towards more sustainable future and can sustainability really be achieved. The objective is to seek an answer to these questions based on the resources found by the author.



In order to understand what enhancing sustainability of fast fashion companies in the future, what are the opportunities and threats of the sustainability and can the changes in the supply chains be fulfilled the author must examine the current state of sustainability and understand the basic concepts in the industry; what is the starting point and how can it be improved, what is fast fashion, sustainability and mass production. Understanding history makes understanding the present and future less complicated. In addition to that the author needs to clarify what the fast fashion issues the fast fashion companies have started to acknowledge and how these actions can be developed further. This helps to understand whether the current sustainability improvements have turned out to be profitable and therefore can further development be an advantage.

### 2.3 Methodology

This thesis is a literature review based on secondary data. The research consists of analyzing information from published articles, academic books, company reports and statistics. Chosen methodology provides a possibility for the author to gain more information about current methods fast fashion companies execute in production process, what are the current environmental, social and economic issues fast fashion companies create, and provides possible solutions for developing the industry for the future. It also helps one to gain more knowledge of fast fashion and sustainability and how sustainability is connected to the future of fashion industry.

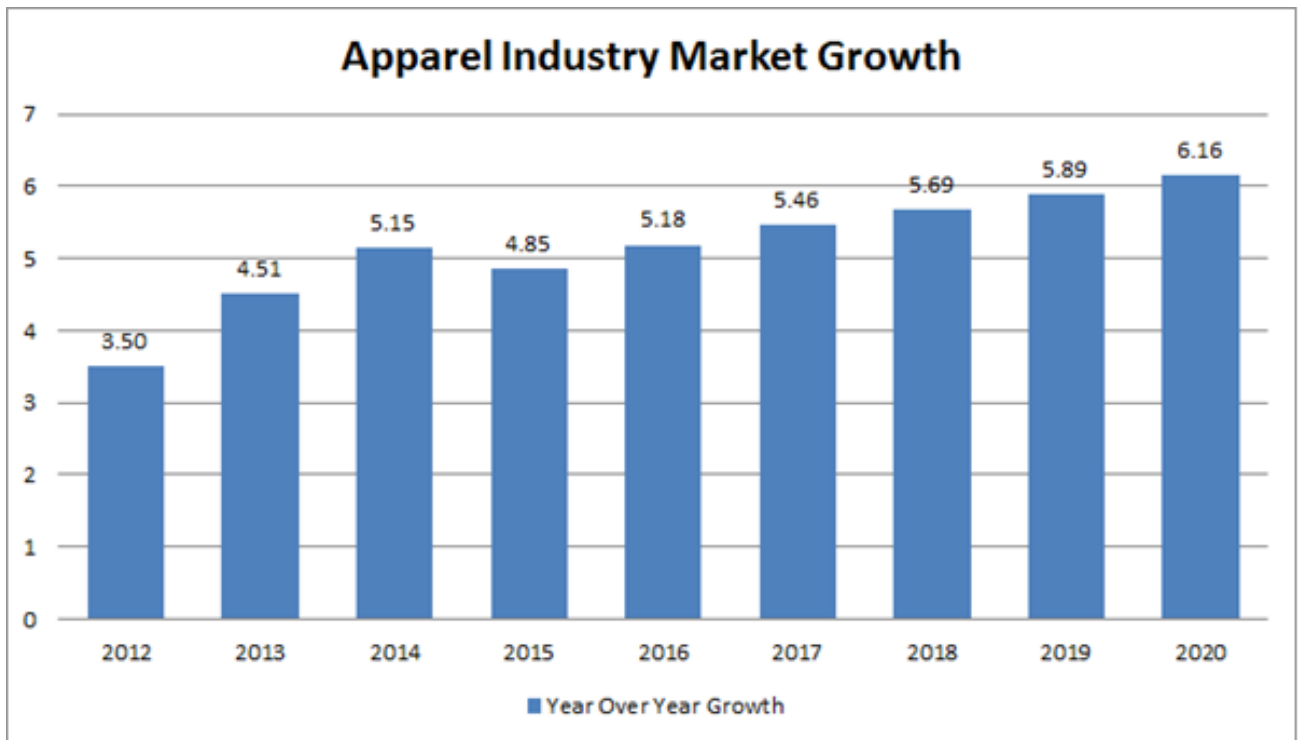
### 2.4 Limitations

One of the most significant limitations of this thesis is in its literature base. The thesis does not include any surveys or interviews, which could provide a wider range of information instead of using only literature based on the reader's interpretation of the text. Another limitation is related to the future aspect of the thesis. How fast fashion companies will look in the future and how sustainability can be applied in the industry are hard to predict and literature based on it is possible scenarios. The author has acknowledged these limitations and this thesis consists of information and scenarios the author considers relevant.

### 3 Concepts

Fashion industry is vast and one of the most powerful industries in the world due to its size. Its value is trillions of dollars and it employs millions of people across the globe. (Ahmad, et al., 2015) Therefore, the power of fashion industry should not be underestimated. Everyone wears and buys clothes; hence everyone is affected by fashion. Consumers today are influenced by fashion trends more easily than, for example, couple of decades ago when clothes were not as available as today, people did not have as much to spend on clothes, and technology was not as advanced. Fashion industry, as well, has changed quite significantly compared to couple of decades ago. (Bhardwaj & Fairhurst, 2010) The reason behind this is globalization, technology and social media. Access to fashion has become effortless. (Abeles, 2014). One can purchase trendy clothes without even leaving home, because of online shopping. Consumers are not dependent on their local clothing stores; they have a wide selection on the Internet. (Brennan & Schafer, 2010). This has made fast fashion chains' job easier, on one hand. It is crucial for fast fashion brands to refresh their product selection before the trend "expires". Brand need to make sure that these goods reach consumers before the trend is changing to another. (Gabrielli, et al., 2012) One tool helping fast fashion companies' work in identifying trends effortlessly is social media, because it is a channel where millions of people interact, share and follow current trends. (Ahmad, et al., 2015)

According to *Global Fashion Industry Statistics* (Fashion United, 2016) fashion industry in 2016 was valued 3 trillion dollars and represented 2 % of the world's gross domestic product (GDP). In 2014 apparel manufacturing employed 24.8 million people and textiles and clothing employed 57.8 million people. In comparison 1995 same industries employed 13.1 million and 29.9 million people. (Fashion United, 2016) In less than twenty years the number of people employed in the industry has increased by millions and therefore it is safe to assume that the number will increase even more in the future due to increase of population and the increased popularity of fast fashion.



**Figure 1.** Apparel industry market growth 2012-2020 (Singh, 2017)

The statistics of apparel industry market growth shows industry grows yearly. Since 2011 the apparel industry has been growing 4.78% per year and by the year 2020 it estimated that that the global sales of apparel will reach \$1.65 trillion US dollars. (Singh, 2017)

### 3.1 Fast Fashion

Two key factors in fast fashion are low costs in production and low prices for consumers. (Chang & Jai, 2015) Fast fashion consists of rapidly produced apparel, accessories, shoes, leather goods, jewelry and, in some cases, beauty products. Inspiration for goods comes from luxury brands. Basically, fast fashion companies copy current trends seen on catwalks by luxury fashion brands and turn those trends into cheaply and massively produced goods that are available for a huge audience that follow current trends and buy new clothes regularly. (Macchiona, et al., 2015) The goal is to provide massive amount of cheap and trendy products to meet consumer demand. (Barnes & Lea-Greenwood, 2006) Companies that can be considered as fast fashion companies include, for example, Zara, H&M, Forever 21 and Asos.

Term “fast fashion” suggests that clothing collections and products, in general, in fast fashion stores change quickly. Meaning that instead of the standard four season (spring, summer, autumn and winter) collections, for example, in luxury fashion segment, fast fashion has approximately 52 seasons in one year. This is evidence that the clothes are designed and manufactured quickly in order to send new collections to stores every week. (The True Cost, 2015) Fast fashion is based on a quick change of trends in the fashion industry, and needs and wants of the consumers. Innovation in technology, both in manufacturing process and finding consumers and new markets from the Internet, has enabled the rapid growth of fast fashion’s popularity. (Annamma Joy, et al., 2012)

### 3.2 Sustainability

Due to changed nature of business in recent decades, sustainability in any business has become a concern among consumers. (Brooks, 2015). Sustainability has three different dimensions: environmental, economic and social. Dimensions need to be in balance in order to achieve sustainability fully. (Adams, 29-31 20116) For example, economic sustainability cannot be achieved without environmental and social sustainability. Basically, the purpose of sustainability is to protect, sustain and enhance natural and human resources in order to ensure the future of humankind and nature. (Wiese, 2015) Sustainability is not only environmental protection, but it is also ensuring that present human population is able to maintain their current standard of living and economic growth without violating health of people, animals and nature. (Portney, 2015)

### 3.3 Environmental

Environmental dimension of sustainability is ensuring that natural resources of the globe will provide proper living standards present and in the future. Environment should be capable of supporting population’s needs in order to provide a stable future for ecosystem. Environmental dimension consists of factors such as renewable energy, emissions and pollution control, decreasing fossil fuel consumption, which is non-renewable source of energy, recycling and improving waste systems. (Adams, 29-31 20116)

### 3.4 Economic

Economic sustainability is sustaining economic human well-being. (Portney, 2015) In other words, it means ensuring present and future of economic developments, reasonable growth, and accepting its limitation considering population growth and unlimited consumption. Economic sustainability is highly dependent on social and environmental sustainability. It cannot be fulfilled unless social and environmental sustainability occur, because nature and therefore social well-being have their limitations, which affects the economy, as well. (Basiago, 1999)

### 3.5 Social

Social sustainability is ensuring life-enhancing conditions within society. It consists of different elements, such as health, education, living area, ensuring well-being of different generations in the future, cultural protection, political participation etc. Basically the social sustainability provides same or even better quality of life for future generations. Social sustainability is lined to environmental and economic sustainability, because they are key factors in ensuring good quality of life and reasonable living environment for people. With lack of environmental and economic resources, quality of life is almost impossible to provide for present and future societies. (McKenzie, 2014)

### 3.6 Mass Production

Trends in the industry change quickly, and fast fashion companies aim to reach as many consumers as possible. Fast fashion companies have outsourced their clothing manufacturing process to, for example, Asia due to cheaper prices and more flexible operation within the factory. Outsourcing has enabled mass production of clothes, which is, one could say, the embodiment of fast fashion: manufacturing trendy and cheap clothing in a short period of time. (Emerald Insight , 2015)

One could say that mass production makes fast fashion companies possible. In many cases companies, such as H&M, has outsourced their production process overseas where labor and manufacturing in general are lot cheaper compared to Europe. (H&M Group, 2016) This is also a very remarkable aspect in fast fashion. One the key thing is to keep expenses low in order to sell the goods with cheap price. (Bhardwaj & Fairhurst, 2010)

According to *Timeout for Fast Fashion* (Greenpeace, 2016) publication in 2014 production of clothes has reached 100 billion pieces per year. It is safe to assume that the number will increase in the future, because the demand for apparel is increasing yearly. (Cobbing & Vicaire, 2016)

## 4 Current situation

Even though sustainability seems to be a concern nowadays, studies shows that fashion industry, however, have not reached full potential of sustainability. The industry is large, filled with many actors and therefore it may be hard to identify the most crucial sustainability issues and acts against them. (Kerr & Landry, 2017) Many companies, nowadays, have developed a sustainability plan of actions. This plan covers issues such as recycling of clothes, ensuring good labour conditions in production countries, reducing emission and water consumption, and using less chemicals in clothes at the production phase. (H&M Group, 2016) On the other hand, even though sustainability plans are executed by large fast fashion companies the truth is that the industry in general is not sustainable enough in order to maintain good living standards for future generations. (Kerr & Landry.,2017)

### 4.1 Issues in fast fashion

#### 4.1.1 Environmental

Most of the environmental issues in fast fashion industry are created in growing and creating raw materials, manufacturing, processing, consumption and end-of-use phase. The process of producing clothing wastes a lot of natural resources, such as, water and energy. For example, dyeing one kilogram of clothes requires approximately 150 liters of water. (Kerr & Landry, 2017) Land, chemical and pesticide usage are also a huge environmental problem, because land used to grow cotton in developing countries could be used for growing food and pesticides and chemicals used in growing raw material and processing fabrics are toxic and therefore unsafe for nature and humans. In addition to that the pollution rates are high. In fact, fashion industry is the second most polluting industry in the world. (Qutab, 2017)

The main issue in growing raw materials such as cotton is the health issues and waste of land it creates. Fast fashion industry requires a lot of cotton and therefore pesticides are being used in order to provide as much cotton as possible. The main idea of pesticides is to protect the crops from insects and diseases. Pesticides pollute water and stay in the cotton even after making textile from it and therefore the garments made of non-organic cotton contains pesticides. Pollution is a problem especially in poorer countries such as India where cotton is widely and commonly planted. (The True Cost, 2015)

In manufacturing phase the main issue is pollution. Especially in developing countries factory monitoring and environmental regulations are not common. Factories pollute water with different chemicals that are used, and create greenhouse gases. It is estimated that producing one kilogram of fabrics creates approximately 23 kilograms of greenhouse gases on average. (M.S.L.J, 2017) Living next to clothing factories is almost impossible, because of the polluted air and water. Processing, which follows fabric selection, requires a huge number of chemicals, usage of water and electricity. Processing consist of preparation of fabrics, such as dyeing and washing the clothes. H&M has estimated that processing causes 48% of environmental issues in the industry. Processing phase is difficult to monitor for various reasons. The phase usually takes place in an outsourced country and suppliers may use third parties in this phase. Business cannot supervise all their suppliers and legal restrictions considering work environment vary in different countries. Also decreasing the amount of chemicals used may be difficult, because many garments require dyeing, for instance, or washing. (Kerr & Landry, 2017)

Consuming clothes is also environmental issue. Consumers need to use water and electricity to wash, dry and iron clothing. For example, water is needed to wash clothes, which increases waste of water. Also chemicals that are being used in the washing process pollute waters. (Kerr & Landry, 2017)

The end-of-use phase creates a lot of waste. End-of-use phase means the end of the product life cycle. In other words what happens to the clothes after the consumers do not use them anymore. Some consumers do recycle or reuse their clothing by selling them at second-hand shop or giving them to charity, but a huge part of clothes become pure waste. (Kerr & Landry, 2017) In United States only the amount of textile waste is over 15 million tons per year. (Tan, 2016)

Not only is the decomposing of these garments a problem but also how much land space this amount of waste requires. It is questionable whether fast fashion companies are responsible of this phase, because consumers are responsible how they dispose their useless goods. Nevertheless, end-of-use phase is part of clothing's product life cycle and therefore, for example, using raw materials that decompose or can be used again. In addition to cotton, fast fashion clothing use other raw materials that are made of, for example, plastic and therefore it takes long time for them to decompose. These materials include nylon and polyester. (Kerr & Landry, 2017)

#### 4.1.2 Economic

Economic sustainability is tightly related to environmental and social sustainability. Unlike environmental and social issues, economic issues maybe harder to identify in the fast fashion and their nature is much more complex. In fast fashion industry economic issues are related production, consumption, poverty and increase of population. (Bédard, 2016) All mentioned economic issues cause also environmental and social issues, because they are connected. For example, unsafe usage of chemicals does not only create health issues for the factory employees but is also pollutes the environment and increased consumption of clothes enable the exploitation of the factory employees.

Outsourcing production and manufacturing is a very typical model for fast fashion business in order to keep costs and prices low. In fact nowadays, due to globalization, it is a very typical model for various companies in different industries. Generally, companies can gain lot of advantage from outsourcing production to developing countries; costs are lower, companies can focus on their specialization area, and it can bring new jobs to less developed countries. (Nur, 2016) Main reason for outsourcing production and manufacturing from western countries to developing countries are labor costs. For example, in Europe labor is more expensive than in developing countries. Bangladesh, for instance, is widely used production country amongst fast fashion companies due to its lowest labor costs in the world; about 43\$ per month. (The Fashion Law , 2016) Outsourcing to developing countries, such as Bangladesh, arises many economic issues. One could say that salaries are one of the key problems. Minimum wages that are paid in many developing countries are much less than living wage. Meaning that it does not cover the expenses of living (e.g. food or housing). In other words, economic issue in this case is poverty. However, the problem of poverty is not only in hands of fast fashion companies. Basically companies are only gaining advantage of an issue that is fault in developing countries, not actually creating the issue itself. (Kerr



& Landry, 2017) Outsourcing can also be seen as a threat to western countries. For example, production of clothing in USA has dropped drastically over the past decades. (Bédard, 2016) Instead, China is now a leading production country of clothing textiles according *World Trade Organization (WTO) Merchandise trade and trade in commercial services* statistics of 2017. However, instead of production and manufacturing, retailing in the USA has increased. (WTO, 2017)

Fast fashion is rapidly growing industry. Since the beginning of concept fast fashion, production, offering and selling of clothes has increased dramatically and it is expected to grow even more in the future due to better economic situation globally and increase of population. For example, fast fashion companies such as Zara and H&M refresh their selection weekly. (Remy, et al., 2016) Moderate consumption helps economies to grow, and in fact, that has happened in many developing countries, partially because of fast fashion companies. For example, 80% of exports in Bangladesh are textile and clothing. (MBA-Tutorials , 2017) However, unnecessary consumption has become an issue economically and therefore also environmentally and socially. Increased demand of clothes means that the offering has increased as well, which means that the poor conditions in production countries continue to be supported by western countries and environment gets overwhelmed. Spending money on good does not directly hurt western economies, because capitalist economy is based on consumption. However, support of unethical practices in developing countries may prevent the evolvement of developing economies. Companies will not increase wages in production countries if the business maintains its profitability with current wages. In fact, increasing consumption of fast fashion makes companies to produce even more clothes in shorter time. Employees in production countries continue receiving low wages, poverty increases and therefore it is impossible for those economies to grow sustainably. (The True Cost, 2015)

### 4.1.3 Social

Most of the social issues in fast fashion arise in the production phase of the clothes. Especially manufacturing and processing of clothes create various social issues. Like mentioned, majority of clothes are produced in developing countries, such as Bangladesh, where labor is cheap. Fast fashion companies produce massive amount of clothes at a time and that creates pressure to factory owners since the short period of time requires cutting costs in safety that can be expensive to arrange. Competition is huge and if one factory announces that they cannot complete the work in the timeline set by a big fast fashion company, another factory will be chosen by the big fast fashion brand. Because there is a lot of competition in manufacturing cloths, factory owners need to meet demands fast fashion companies set. Big and wealthy companies can basically choose which factory they want to use and therefore factory owners do not have much power. In order to meet the demands of fast fashion companies, factories cut wages and other expenses. (The True Cost, 2015)

Cutting expenses include wages and factory conditions. Fast fashion companies have started to pay more and more attention to the working conditions at their factories due to several accidents in the factories and rising awareness of human rights issues considering developing countries. A good example of factory disaster is Rana Plaza, which collapsed in 2013 and killed over 1,000 factory workers. Fast fashion companies such as Benetton, Primark and Mango used Rana Plaza as their supplier. Huge cracks in the structure had been noticed in Rana Plaza, but garment workers were still ordered to come to work by the factory owners. However, banks and shops in the same building were closed immediately after noticing the cracks. (Clean Clothes Campaign, 2013) After the collapse of Rana Plaza safety procedures became a concern in Bangladesh and in western countries. The incident gained attention worldwide. Safety requirements became stricter and the minimum wage of the garment workers was increased. (The Guardian , 2016) However, monitoring these new restrictions is still almost impossible and wages still do not cover the living in Bangladesh. Nevertheless, salaries, safety and child labor are still an unsolved issue in many factories. Factories operate based on their local laws and therefore it is also challenging to provide better salaries to the employees or make sure that factories operate according to health requirements, for instance. In addition to safety problems of the facilities many factory employees suffer from health consequences these chemical usage cause, not to mention how negatively they affect the environment and consumers. For example, many consumers suffer from itching and other symptoms when using clothes that contain a lot of chemicals. Labor conditions in

the factories are not properly supervised and therefore accidents, health issues and long working hours are common. (Kerr & Landry, 2017)

Using child labor in the factories in developing countries has been a concern. For example, H&M among other fast fashion companies has been criticized in media for using child labor in their factories. According to H&M their factories do not include employees under 14 years old and that is the age limit for working set by International Labor Organization (ILO). (Butler, 2016) Child labor is common inside family units and in certain industries, such as agriculture. (International Labour Organization (ILO), 2017) However, some clothing factories also use child labor even though fast fashion companies, such as H&M, survey their suppliers. H&M is quite transparent on their procedures and policies when it comes to working conditions or sustainability in general. Nevertheless, child labor might be hard to point out in all factories, because fast fashion companies tend to have several suppliers. (Pitel, 2016) The main problem in child labor is that work replaces education, which means that the children will never get proper education and therefore high-salary jobs. Therefore, even when teenagers, who are not considered to be child labor, work at the factories means that they do not receive proper education. Developing economies have difficulties to grow, because the lack of educated working force. (International Labour Organization (ILO), 2017)

Many garment factory workers consist of women. These employees need to either take their children with them to work or place them to live other relatives due to long working hours. Many employees cannot afford to have a daycare for their children during their working day and relatives may live in other cities. This forces employees to take their children with them to work, move to another city or abandon the children. (Traid , 2017)

Raw material growing cause social issues, especially the farmers are exploited. For example, in India a huge problem among farmers has arisen, because they are forced to use pesticides in their cotton fields and they need to buy expensive cottonseeds from a monopoly company in the area. Farmers cannot afford to buy expensive cottonseeds because they do not often get any profit from their cotton. Debt among farmers is common in India and because of it many farmers have committed a suicide. Pesticides affect the soil negatively and therefore cotton cannot grow in that soil anymore. In addition to exploitation, exposition to pesticides, whether in the cotton fields or through polluted water, cause mental illnesses, tumors and decreases the birthrate. Because many farmers do not earn living wage, curing these diseases is impossible. (The True Cost, 2015)

## 4.2 Corporate reception

Some big fashion brands, such as H&M, are aware of these environmental, economic and social issues and have started to take actions to fight against these problems. Yet, a large percent of the industry has not started to improve their operations. Quite few companies have implemented actions against unsustainable methods they practice currently or have practiced in the past. (Remy, et al., 2016) However, some of the biggest companies in fast fashion have started to improve their performance as more sustainable companies, partly because sustainability and ethically produced clothes are a growing trend, but it is also a concern among consumers and the industry itself. Fast fashion companies are under a magnifying glass in media and consumer's everyday life due to globalization, and therefore increased information about the operations these companies apply. (Emmanuel, 2015)

Currently companies use corporate social responsibility (CSR) as their guideline for sustainability strategy and reporting their current state of sustainability and their future goals. CSR includes different activities that are related to ethics, corporate philanthropy, marketing and employment. This document is not only a guideline for business and stakeholders, however, but it is also for their customers. One could say that CSR is not only an ideological, ethical or legal statement; it is also to attract customers to think that the business they are supporting is operating responsibly. When it comes to fashion industry, guaranteeing fully ethical and responsible acts is more difficult than in some other industries such as food industry because of the other parties at the supply chain. One fast fashion company may have hundreds of suppliers and therefore monitoring all of them might be difficult to perform. Companies can address their ethical and sustainable practices in CSR statement and to some extent apply them. However in reality supervising these acts is almost impossible to execute. (Wiese, 2015)

In addition to CSR, for example, H&M and Zara publish annual sustainability reports, which includes information about current state of materials, working conditions, wages, animal welfare, water etc. and future goals in sustainability practices. For example, H&M aims to have climate positive value chain by the year 2040 and use 100% recycled or other sustainably sourced materials by 2030. (H&M Group, 2016) H&M has already designed and launched Conscious Collection in 2011 and every piece in that collection has made of environmentally sustainable materials such as organic cotton. Even small changes and improvements in H&M's or any other big fast fashion company's supply

chain can make a significant difference in, for example, pollution or usage of raw materials, due to their huge size. (Bauck, 2017) For example, H&M collects consumers' clothes for recycling and reuse purposes along with organic cotton in order to make new clothes. (Remy, et al., 2016)

Other than personal sustainability practices, companies can also unite. Currently 22 apparel companies have signed Zero Discharge of Hazardous Chemicals (ZDHC) programme. (Remy, et al., 2016) ZDHC's goal is to reach zero discharge of hazardous chemicals in clothing materials, such as leather, other textiles and footwear. Big fast fashion companies, such as H&M, Inditex and Primark have signed this programme. (ZDHC, 2017) The idea is that together big companies can achieve more visible results than acting alone against environmental and social issues. (Remy, et al., 2016)

Big corporations have power to boycott and set restrictions for countries that exploit garment workers, because they basically enable the textile and garment industries in these countries. For example, Zara, part of bigger group Inditex, and H&M both pulled out of Dhaka Apparel Summit, which is organized by Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association. The association has been under a negative attention due to labor condition issues in Bangladesh. Garment industry is important source of living for Bangladesh and therefore lacking support of big companies, such as H&M or Zara, has major impact on the textile industry. (MacCarthy, 2017) Therefore, it is safe to assume that concern of human rights and working conditions in production countries are increasing amongst fast fashion companies. Because of the different local legislation in production countries, there is very little companies can do to social issues, because they do not directly own the factories. Child labor and poor conditions in safety and health in the factories are common in developing countries, and monitoring them full-time is challenging. Therefore, fast fashion companies can create pressure that will lead production countries to take actions in order to improve their practices. (Hall, 2017)

### 4.3 Consumer behavior

Consumer behavior is a major driving force in fast fashion and in fashion industry in general. Different wants lead consumers to demand new clothing constantly. In fact, consumers tend to buy more clothes than what one person really needs. Fast fashion is based on rapid change of trends, which encourages consumers to buy constantly. This has created a cycle where consumers demand large amount of changing clothes and fast fashion companies feed it with low prices and constantly changing trends. It is estimated that people consume 80 billion items of clothing per year. (Confino, 2016)

Consumer behavior is problematic, as it appears that constantly spending money on new clothing is rather a norm than exception. Consumption of clothes has increased remarkably in a past few decades and even in past few years. On one hand, fast fashion and their offering have made it possible. If consumers have this opportunity to buy several clothes that are cheap over one piece of clothing that costs around the same amount than ten similar clothing from a fast fashion company, it is quite safe to assume that consumers will choose the low cost clothing. (Singh, 2017) Offering of fast fashion and various learned consumption models have changed consumers' relationship to clothes. On the other hand, fast fashion companies and how they provide cheap clothing is not the only factor in modern consumption style. Technological innovation has created new norms for society and it has also made buying clothes easier. For example, social media is a very popular platform for communicating, but it also is a channel for consumers to see what is trendy, what celebrities wear and what the social norm is when it comes to fashion trends. From psychological point of view it is quite normal for individuals to be influenced by society's set norms and in today's world social media and its popular personalities set those limits. Everybody want to fit in and not being left outside the society. (Gulati, 2017) Therefore, one could make a conclusion that consumer behavior and consuming patterns is not only something that fast fashion companies have created by offering the products, but it is also the society that sets the pressure on individuals.

One key issue in fast fashion product cycle is recycling and reuse. Second-hand shopping and selling are one way to recycle one's useless clothing or buy "new" clothes more sustainably, but it is not as common as buying products new. Consumers do not necessarily recycle their clothes and therefore create waste and pollution. Therefore, consumers do not only buy more than one needs but they also create a massive amount of waste per year. However, consumers' disposal habits are not the only factor creating

waste problems. For example, many of the clothes that consumers do not use anymore, but do not want to sell them or dispose them are donated to charity. These charities include shops that sell the clothes again and organizations that distribute donated clothes to developing countries. The problem is that because there is a huge amount of clothes that are donated, not everything can be sold or reused in developing countries. Hence, the waste problem remains even if consumers dispose their unused clothes properly. (The True Cost, 2015) Charity clothes sent to developing countries also create social and economic problems in addition to environmental ones. Because of the charity clothes that are exported to developing countries, such as Kenya, their local manufacturing has decreased. According to article *How second-hand clothing donations are creating a dilemma for Kenya* (Jaqueline Kubania, 2015) in the 1980's textile industry employed 500,000 people in Kenya, but by 2015 the amount has dropped 96% to 20,000 people. The main problem is that the second-hand clothes are remarkably cheaper than locally manufactured clothes, which means that local people choose rather the less expensive clothing. Decreased local textile sales have caused closed textile factories and therefore unemployment. Developing countries are developing economies, which means that increasing unemployment hurts the local economy. It will never recover if unemployment rates stay high and new jobs cannot be created. However, some people gain advantage of selling second-hand clothing and earning their living from that. On the other hand, it also proves that donating clothes to charities does not mean that the clothes will be distributed equally to the people who need them, and the concept of charity is misleading since somebody gains personal advantage for selling them. (Kubania, 2015)

Consumers have more power in the fashion industry than they might think. (Kerr & Landry, 2017) Rather common way for an individual is to think that one person cannot make a huge difference with his or her actions. In fact, this model of thinking is a major reason for consumers not to choose sustainably and ethically produced product. Many consumers tend to think that the choices they make have slight or none impact on, for example, climate change. Consumers think that the pollution that happens in the developing countries does not affect them directly. The thinking model is complex, because on one hand consumers are aware that the choices they make impacts environment and societies in some level, hence some of them have the information. On the other hand, changes in individual's buying behavior are difficult to execute, due to the thinking model that one person's actions cannot prevent environmental or social issues. In order to make fast fashion more sustainable, it is vital that consumers realize that their actions have consequences and every individual has an opportunity to make a change by changing their consuming patterns. (Confino, 2011)



Nevertheless, consumers' interests are moving towards more sustainable clothes. Eco clothes and sustainably produced clothes have reached wider popularity among consumers, but due to various reasons, such as higher prices, unavailability and less attractive design, it is not a profitable segment yet from a company point of view. However, increasing popularity of sustainable fashion is a future sight. (Li, et al., 2014) Therefore, sustainability can possibly be a competitive advantage for a fashion company. Ethics in environmental and social issues enhance the brand image amongst consumers. Therefore one could assume that fast fashion companies can gain advantage for reducing issues that arise from the production of clothes from their public image and customers' point of view. (Wiese, 2015)

## 5 Future of Sustainability

### 5.1 Corporate social responsibility

Current situation shows that especially big companies in the industry have made serious improvements in their value chain. The issues, however, are wide and multidimensional. Expectations for future are that demand for clothing will increase. People in developing countries get wealthier and become part of middle class, which means that they will start to spend more money on clothing. This is a good thing for fast fashion companies from sales perspective, but more it also means more responsibility in sustainability matters for the companies. (Remy, et al., 2016)

Designing is the first phase where sustainability should start. In designing phase raw materials are being selected and therefore it is determined what the purpose of the clothing is. The designer should consider the recycling possibilities of the clothing; what materials can be recycled or reused, and is the garment representing current trend or is it more timeless design. In raw materials companies could focus more on their effects on environment and choose materials that will reduce pollution, such as organic cotton, which is grown without pesticides and fertilizers, instead of raw materials that include plastic or other materials that pollute, waste water and requires chemical use such as leather. Not only are chemicals and pesticides harmful for environment, but they also create health issues for employees working in cotton fields or production factories. Minimizing the usage of chemicals and water requires creating innovative technologies for creating new procedures to replace the old ones. For example, new dyeing methods



that requires less water and does not pollute as much as typical dyeing method was tested by Nike. (Kerr & Landry, 2017)

One of the key issues and advantages in fast fashion is the life cycle of the product. On one hand, fast fashion companies gain advantage by producing clothes that consumers will use only short period of time and then buy new ones. On the other hand, producing clothes that are in style only short period of time will increase waste and unnecessary spending. (The Fashion Law , 2016) Solutions to affect consumers and their behavior are multiple. One way is to educate consumers. This basically consists of spreading awareness of consumption patterns consumers have, how one can reduce their part in needless consumption and wasting, including recycling and saving water, and what consequences one's buying behavior have. Other way is to create other solutions for satisfying consumers' desire for new trendy clothes. For example, service that rents clothes for their customers for a certain period of time has already been developed. Currently consumers tend to buy new clothes regularly and waste the ones they do not use anymore. Renting clothes could reduce impulsive buying behavior and wasting. (Kerr & Landry, 2017)

In addition to environmental issues in fast fashion there is also social problems. In order to improve social sustainability, the first step is to fix labor and environmental standards for suppliers. (Bonini & Swartz, 2014) The main problem is that fast fashion companies have many suppliers in various countries, which means that standardization might be hard to execute, because of different legislation and restrictions. (Kerr & Landry, 2017) For example, H&M does not own any of the factories it uses for production. Therefore, operation in the factory is in the hand of supplier. However, even though companies cannot affect everything that happens in their suppliers' factories, they can still choose their suppliers carefully, support them, for example with new technology in order to meet environmental standards set by the fast fashion company, and apply certain standards and guidelines considering labor conditions and environmental restrictions. Outsourcing suppliers should mean co-operation between companies and mutual transparency between the company and suppliers in executed operations. (H&M Group, 2016)

In order to improve company's sustainability act, the change starts already from design and development phase, especially choosing the raw materials. It is very common that fast fashion companies use cheap materials rather than more expensive in order to keep costs low. Cheap raw materials may contain plastic and chemicals, for instance. Besides the price of cheap materials, companies also take advantage of the lacking knowledge

of consumers. Many consumers do not know details about fabrics, and most importantly, they do not know the impact these raw materials have environmentally and socially. Cheap raw materials prevent recyclability of the garment. Therefore design and the selection of raw materials have a huge impact on sustainability. (Kerr & Landry, 2017)

## 6 Sustainable Fashion

Sustainable fashion aims to be ethically produced. Ethical fashion is designing, sourcing and manufacturing clothing, which is benefiting communities and is social and environmental friendly. There is a set of ten criteria for ethical fashion and so far fast fashion does not represent ethical fashion due to, for example, consumption patterns and low-cost tactic. (Ethical Fashion Forum , 2017)

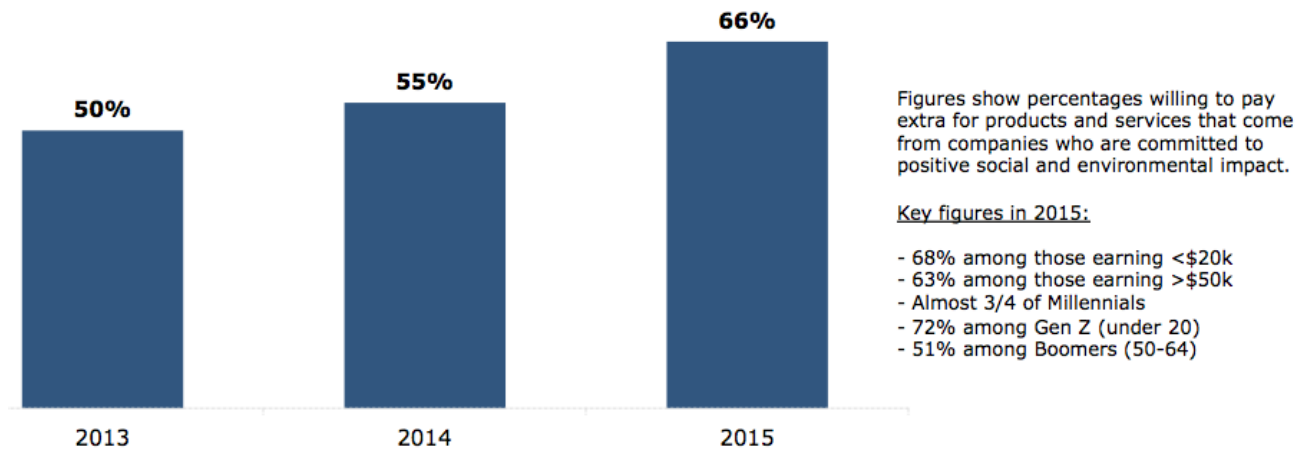
### 6.1 Sustainability as an asset

A study called *The Nielsen Global Survey of Corporate Social Responsibility and Sustainability* (2015) shows that 66% of consumers are willing to pay more environmental and socially friendly products and services. (Company, 2015) Millennials are one very large and powerful group of consumers who are especially interested in sustainability practices. Generation group “millennials” are born between 1982 and 2002 and are the biggest generation group at the moment. (Howe & Strauss, 2000) This suggests that ethical and sustainable products and companies that apply these values have a large audience due to the size of millennials generation. (Marketing Charts, 2015 )

## Paying A Premium For Sustainable Products

based on an online survey of more than 30,000 consumers in 60 countries

October 2015



**Figure 2.** Percentages of people willing to pay extra for sustainable products and services 2013-2015 (Marketing Charts, 2015 )

According to article *Profits with Purpose: How organizing for sustainability can benefit the bottom line* (Bonini & Swartz, 2014) investing in corporate social responsibility and sustainability practices can result financial benefit for a company. Sustainability is seen as a good investment, because it can arise innovative ways to gain profit. For example, in fast fashion industry, designing and producing clothing line, which represents sustainability and ethics in the process increases positive image of the brand. (Bonini & Swartz, 2014)

### 6.1.1 Opportunities

Due to lack of sustainability in fast fashion industry currently, the question is if there is any opportunities that fast fashion companies have considering becoming more sustainable. Currently, profits are generated with the old model and therefore the concern is, from company's point of view, whether the business remains profitable if prices of the products increase due to changed operation models. One valid reason to apply sustainability is to ensure the future of the business. (Haanaes, et al., 2013) Nothing, including companies, operates if there are no natural resources, workforce or consumers.

Sustainability is trend and this is an opportunity for fast fashion. Companies do not have to create a need or want of sustainability from nothing, because it already exists. Consumers are aware of climate change and the environmental impact of consumption. Fast fashion companies can use this trend to engage customers and to improve their image. Currently consumers do pay attention to the ethical and sustainable acts of a company they support and base their opinions on them. Companies that are not transparent about their sustainability goals gain distrust among customers. Due to technology and social media, consumers can easily find information about companies and how they operate. If a customer trusts the company and their brand's image reflects customer's personal values, the customer is more likely to support that company. In best scenario, companies can gain new customers and engage the old ones more. (Sustainable brands, 2015 )

In order to keep fast fashion alive, prices need to stay low. It is assumed that currently used methods, such as dyeing and usage of water, is the most cost efficient way to produce clothes. In the production phase water use, dyeing and waste could be cut and the process would become more cost efficient. The process of processing clothes requires usage of resources and different chemicals that increase expenses. Processing, which create huge environmental and social issues, could be done more cost and time efficiently and, most importantly, in a more sustainable way. Changing processing phase offers fast fashion companies to act environmentally and socially responsibly and in addition that, it may cut expenses and make the production process more efficient. (WRAP , 2012)

One serious issue in fast fashion today are social based. Workers in developing countries are being exploited. It is a serious matter for fast fashion companies, because it is violating human rights, employees' wages are not covering living and, from a business point of view, it hurts the company's image. Gaining advantage from developing countries where wages are low can hurt business. Not only does it hurt the public image, but if accidents in the factories occur fast fashion companies can face lawsuits. Also it can hurt negatively the company's relationship with new or current investors. (Barrie, 2015) By improving safety in the factories and supporting the developing economy, fast fashion companies can improve their image for public and investors and also avoid consequences that follow from unregulated safety conditions in the factories.

A lot waste is created in the end-use phase of the clothing. Consumers either throw unused or broken clothes away or donate them where some percentage of clothes donated end up becoming waste due to the high amount of donated clothes. Like mentioned before, some companies, such as H&M, already receive and collect unused clothes from their customers and reuse them as raw materials or donate forward. The opportunity in this kind of process for fast fashion companies is to recycle raw materials and also engage customers. For example, H&M uses vouchers as their incentives to attract customers to donate their clothes to the company. In other words, customers gain something for their action. Vouchers encourage customers to come back to the store and therefore the company gains new customers. (Cronin, 2017)

### 6.1.2 Threats

Fast fashion is not based on sustainability, which makes adding sustainability part of the business plan quite challenging. The nature of fast fashion is based on low costs and mass production. Therefore the whole concept might be threatened if different raw materials are being selected, wages are increased and consumer behavior is changed. One could say that the whole concept of fast fashion is the biggest threat for moving towards to more sustainable supply chain. (Cheng, 2017)

Economic system in general is a threat for making fast fashion more sustainable. Like mentioned, western economic system is based on consuming and therefore if consuming decreases the economy will suffer consequences. (Jackson, 2013) However, it is not only western economy that is affected, but it is also the developing economies. Fast fashion employs millions of people in developing countries and therefore it is a very important source of jobs. This, however, does not mean that implementing modern slavery, as manufacturing clothes is often referred to, is excused with a need of jobs in the garment factories. Consumption in western countries currently transforms issues to developing countries. These countries suffer from ecological issues and poverty due to consuming based society in western countries. (Shah, 2005) Exploiting developing countries makes fast fashion possible and if the model is changed, the whole concept of fast fashion will become different. It is no longer fast fashion if costs are not low and products are no being produced massively. Lowering costs of sustainable production may be difficult for fast fashion companies.

Consumer behavior is a big threat for implementing sustainability. Even though consumers are nowadays more likely to buy sustainable clothes than couple of decades or years ago, mass production and constantly changing trends are still appealing. Supporting fast fashion and its operations has become a lifestyle that might be difficult to change, and if fast fashion companies would start to advertise how unsustainably their clothes are being produced, it could be harmful for the business. Consumers are used to fashion that changes on a weekly basis and is cheap. Sustainable fashion, even in fast fashion, could not work with a same form, because at least currently it could be impossible to implement. It is difficult to predict how fully sustainable garments would work in the fast fashion industry and consumers would react. For example, H&M and other fast fashion companies, such as Forever21 and Asos, have launched sustainably produced clothing lines and the public reception of these lines differed. On one hand, public was pleased for fast fashion companies to act against sustainability issues they create, but on the other hand, for example H&M was accused for only trying to make good deeds in public and not sincerely, The process of creating a new more sustainable brand image with more sustainable practices may be difficult, because there is a threat that consumers perceive these actions more as a “cover up” for unsustainable acts than a serious practice. (Eluxe Magazine, 2015)

## 7 Analysis

Current situation of fast fashion industry is alarming based on the findings. The industry is the second most polluting industry in the world and already a-million-dollar-business continues its growing. The idea of sustainable fashion seems to be difficult to achieve. Consumers seem to care more what they eat than what they wear.

Creating fast fashion overwhelms the globe's capacity by polluting, creating tons of waste, wasting tons of water and electricity and using unnecessary amount of land. Both environment and people face the consequences of these actions already today, but, more importantly, they will have a greater impact in the future already with the current business model not to mention how the industry growth will impact on them.

Pollution is a key driver in climate change, which currently and in the future will create huge environmental problems such as greenhouse gases that will negatively affect the ozone layer. Some areas in the globe will become impossible to live in. In shorter time range, already today people suffer from polluted water and air by being exposed to diseases. Especially people living nearby the clothing factories or working at them. These garment factories cause many diseases around the areas because of the pollution and chemicals used in the manufacturing and processing materials. In addition to health problems, the employees in the factories are the victims of exploitation. Wages that are so little that they do not cover living, working in factories that are not safe and in danger to collapse, children who work at the factories instead of having a proper education or have to suffer because their parents try to provide good life for them by working long hours in a different city. These issues are not written in any label of a garment.

One could argue that there is an easy way to reduce the negative impacts of fast fashion by setting new regulations and laws considering where European fashion companies can produce their clothes, how environmental restrictions and ethics can be applied to their supply chain, increase the awareness of the consequences of fast fashion and help consumers to choose sustainable and ethical options. To some extent this is true. The current situation is already worrying and therefore any choice or regulation that will change the process even a little is desirable. Slowly the business has taken action to move towards more sustainable processes. Fast fashion companies have started to transparently identify what actual actions they can take to ensure a better, more sustainable future for their company, consumers and environment. Fast fashion industry is mainly built around big corporations such as H&M and Inditex. These big companies

have power and money to put effort on ethics, higher wages, boycotting factories that are unsafe or unfair to their employees, restricting chemical use and pollution, and encourage consumers to make sustainable choices and recycle their unused clothes. Even a small change made by a huge corporation may have more impact on the system than ten small sustainable players, because their supplier network and customer base is enormous, and those factors are their advantage. From a business point of view, fast fashion companies nowadays can gain more advantage for practicing sustainability in their operations, because that way they affect their customers emotionally and make sure that they will return to their store. Almost everything that companies do today is public and easily discovered, and after receiving a bad reputation in media, that image is hard to change. Consumers do not want to support a company that is provably unethical or harming the environment. Because the information how unsustainable fast fashion industry, and in fact how many industries in general are, sustainability has become a trend. Whether the trend is about actual concern or just to show the society that “I care, too” the trend still exists and big fast fashion companies would not make strategically smart decisions by ignoring it.

However, the problem not fully fixed with fast fashion companies' changed actions, restrictions or laws. The problem is wider than how fast fashion companies can change their operations. Instead, the whole economy model should change, which is a lot more difficult procedure than changing fast fashion supply chain. Economy that is based on circulation of money, big corporations and endless consuming does not create a perfect base for sustainability. Fast fashion companies and society have created the illusion that fashion should be cheap, fast changing, available for everyone and everywhere. This image is hard to change, because fast fashion and cheap prices have become a norm in the society. This norm makes the job more difficult to fast fashion companies changing their operations. On one hand, there is a pressure to be more sustainable, because consumers and societies require that. On the other hand, corporations need to generate profit and the nature of the industry requires certain operating models, such a mass production. Changing towards more sustainable supply chain means that the fast fashion companies need to select more expensive raw materials, restrict and monitor safety, increase wages and educate their customers. Basically that means the prices will increase and that is not the concept fast fashion was built around.

Even though situation is problematic and has many different dimensions it still does not mean that the fast fashion companies should not do any changes in their current sustainability. Complete sustainability may be hard to achieve only with changed actions



from fast fashion companies' side, but any sustainability enhancing procedure is more than welcome. Economic model and consumer behavior is hard to change, but fast fashion companies should try change themselves as a starting point. Fast fashion companies can make a sustainability an advantage by realizing that unsustainability is an issue that needs to be noticed. They can choose their operations more wisely, offer their customers information how they can help in this process and therefore gain a better brand image in addition to better and more sustainable operations. Most importantly, fast fashion companies could cooperate more in order to change the industry towards sustainability.

## 8 Conclusion

The objective of this thesis was to examine how western fast fashion companies can gain advantage from sustainability and can these changes the company enhance sustainability in the industry. Subject is important, because fast fashion industry created many environmental, social and economic issues that affect economies and societies, and the industry impacts the whole world. Fashion industry is huge industry employing millions and it reaches almost every person globally.

Various resources suggest that current situation of sustainability in fast fashion industry is very poor. In order to look at the future of sustainability, one must examine the current situation. The industry creates pollution and waste, exploits societies and encourage to meaningless consuming. Various fast fashion companies are not currently acknowledging these issues to the public or to themselves and therefore information about certain company's actions to enhance sustainability in their supply chain may remain unclear for consumers, which causes ignorance of the problems. Sustainability and its importance have gained audience over the years and consumers seem to be more eco-conscious. However, consumers still are not fully aware how their actions and decisions will affect environmental, social and economic issues already existing the fast fashion industry. Some fast fashion companies have started to implement sustainability in their operations by using organic cotton, creating recycling programs, reporting their sustainability operations and boycotting unethical activities in their production countries etc.

Issues that arise from fast fashion are environmental, social and economic. Environmental problems include pollution, waste, land use and consumption of water. Social problems consist of poor working conditions in the production countries, which include healthy and safety problems. Economic issues are affected by environmental and social issues. These issues include consumption and low wages in production countries.

Consumer behavior, economic model and the nature of fast fashion make applying sustainability difficult for fast fashion companies. Studies suggest that sustainability is a growing trend in almost every industry, and also in clothes. However, consumers lack knowledge about the operations in fast fashion and how they affect environment and societies in the production countries. Another concern is that consumers may know about the issues, but do not pay attention to it. Buying more clothes than one really needs has become a norm and western economy is based on consuming to some extent. It is socially more acceptable that one owns the same t-shirt in ten different colours than only one t-shirt. Consumers are highly affected by current trends via social media and the pressure it creates. Access to clothes and trends is effortless. Due to increased population and wealth, fast fashion has a great base to grow since huge amount of consumers exist with money to spend on clothes daily and weekly. Therefore, fast fashion companies continue to grow and increase their already massive clothing production and cut costs.

Evidence of unsustainability in the fast fashion industry suggests that it is impossible for fast fashion companies to be sustainable. Low costs and mass production that are the essence of fast fashion cannot be met in a sustainable way. In order to make fashion industry, in general, more sustainable, fast fashion could not be the form to produce and sell clothes. However, it is possible for fast fashion companies make improvements in their supply chain towards more sustainable fashion and make it profitable for themselves. From business point of view, gaining advantage from sustainability trend is profitable, because it improves the image of a company and therefore engaging costumers is easier. Studies suggest that especially millennials are very sustainability conscious and customers tend to choose their clothes based on sustainability especially in the future. By encouraging their customers to recycle and educate them to choose more sustainable clothing options, such as clothes made of organic cotton, fast fashion companies can use incentives to engage their customers. Instead of cutting expenses in safety, wages and raw materials, fast fashion companies can prevent expensive accidents, lawsuits and riots from happening by offering better working condition in their

factories. Instead of applying the current model and working as individuals, fashion companies should recognize the issues, arrange cooperation between the companies and develop more sustainable supply chains and possibly even change the concept of fast fashion the most profitable way for the companies, consumers, societies and environment. Industries should be innovative in order to survive. Fast fashion industry has not improved over the decades, but this does not necessarily mean that it is impossible. Full sustainability may be hard to execute, but improvement are possible solution for fast fashion companies towards better and more sustainable future.

One could argue that sustainability in fast fashion can never been achieved completely. Sustainability and fast fashion cannot work together, because fast fashion in based on low-cost methods in every aspect it has; cheap materials, cheap labour and cheap prices for consumers. Keeping the prices low occurs in environment and society's expense. Expanded consuming increases unsustainability of fast fashion. However, this is not a valid reason to ignore the problem and do nothing. Fast fashion companies do have the opportunity to change the industry if they start making changes soon.

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