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### The Future of Fashion: Corporate Social Responsibility and Essential Marketing Strategies

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Claremont McKenna College

The Future of Fashion: Corporate Social Responsibility and  
Essential Marketing Strategies

Submitted To: Professor Jeff Lewis

by

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for

Senior Thesis

Spring 2021

May 3, 2021



## **Abstract**

This paper analyzes how fast fashion has impacted future trends of the fashion industry. Due to globalization, the fast fashion industry has been able to create new norms of over-consumerism and international labor. Because of this, the fast fashion industry is able to mass produce in a way consumers have never seen before, in addition to making it all at extremely low prices. However, fast fashion brands are only able to mass produce cheap goods through unethical methodologies; these methodologies include unsustainable materials and practices, inhuman labor conditions and wages, and by making sizes that exclude bigger bodies. Consumers are now realizing how detrimental these practices are, and in result, they want to see more brands that focus on corporate social responsibility. Consumers are demanding that fashion brands do better. Although there is a rise of brands wanting to prioritize ethics because of the consumer demand and personal values, the brands face challenges, like time, money and resources. This paper then shares specific essential marketing strategies that brands need to use in order to market their ethics for profit. These strategies include utilizing social media, trend forecasting, specific leadership approaches, and pricing that reflects the consumer. Brands that are using these strategies are able to be ethical and profitable in the fashion industry. It is clear that the future of fashion is valuing ethics.

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## Introduction

As recently as the 1960s, the United States manufactured and produced up to 95% of all clothing sold in America. Today, only about 3% of our clothing is made in the US—and the remaining 97% is outsourced (Sherman 2016). During the past few decades, manufacturers discovered that the more we outsource labor, the cheaper the cost to produce goods. This practice is called *globalized production*, where labor is outsourced to countries with low-cost or emerging economies, and thus, much lower wages (Style Vanity 2020).

Globalized production transformed the way clothing could be produced, bought, and sold, which ultimately led to the creation of the *fast fashion* industry common in the US today. Fast fashion is defined as inexpensive clothing produced rapidly by mass-market retailers in response to the latest trends (Rauturier 2020).

Fast fashion has changed the mass-market retail clothing industry immensely. First, it normalized globalized labor. It is now common for clothing items to be created internationally and then sold in the US. Furthermore, lots of items have their own ‘passport,’ meaning that each step of the production process was done in a different country.

Second, it has further pushed consumerism, which describes the tendency of people living in a capitalist economy to engage in excessive materialism that revolves around reflexive, wasteful, or conspicuous overconsumption. The appetite for new inventory has led to a drastic increase of annual seasons. Traditionally, there were two to four seasons in fashion—Fall/Winter, Spring/Summer. Now, there are up to 52 micro-seasons per year, which means new introductions weekly. As a result, American consumers purchase more than ever before. Americans purchase nearly 20 billion garments a year, which is close to 70 pieces of clothing per person or more than one clothing purchase per week (Cavusoglu, Dakhli 2016).

And lastly, the fast fashion industry has also normalized *extremely unethical* practices. To maintain market share against thousands of competing brands, some brands resort to finding a way to mass produce trendy pieces at the lowest cost possible. Unfortunately, they accomplish this through the use of international labor, exploiting child labor, paying inhumane wages, and using facilities with dangerous working conditions. In addition, fast fashion often includes harmful environmental practices, which have had an extremely detrimental impact on our Earth.

For the consumer, these new norms within the fashion industry can make it seem impossible to buy ethically. For example, if a brand appears to be ethical in one way, like they are size-inclusive or sustainable, they may still have horrible labor practices. Furthermore, the clothing industry has made it acceptable for fast fashion brands to place a low value on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

The concept of Corporate Social Responsibility, or CSR, is the practice of organizational self-regulation with the aim of being socially accountable. This can be practiced in a variety of ways in the fashion industry, such as improving labor policies, being more sustainable or environmentally friendly and/or promoting diversity. Ethical organizations integrate these practices of social responsibility throughout their business operations and interactions with their stakeholders. In most organizations, the primary stakeholders are investors, employees, suppliers and consumers; all of these stakeholders have a vested interest in the organization's actions (Chandler, 2020).

How an organization interacts with and treats their stakeholders can be a reliable indicator of their CSR practices, or lack thereof. Although incorporating CSR practices can be challenging due to expenses and time, organizations who do it well often receive loyalty and appreciation from their stakeholders in return (Chandler, 2020). Conversely, *ditching* CSR

initiatives—such as paying fair wages, providing safe and sanitary working conditions, sourcing sustainable materials, and offering inclusive sizing—is definitely a cheaper way to run your organization and requires less work. However, it is important to emphasize that ignoring CSR is a short-term solution for financial success and brand stability. Fast fashion can bring a brand popularity and generate income quickly because of the shockingly low pieces and easy access to on-trend items. When this occurs, the organization may find itself under close scrutiny and inevitably the lack of CSR or ethical practices will come to the surface.

Unethical brands often lose massive profit once their secret is out. Conversations around the dark side of fast fashion are growing—people are becoming more and more aware of child labor, unethical international labor conditions, and the horrid environmental repercussions—and market segments show signs that they no longer want to support brands contributing to these issues (Chandler, 2020). Although committing to being an ethically focused brand requires more time, money, and attention, it sets a foundation for long-term success. Valuing consumers as stakeholders is the key to establishing relevance in the fashion industry.

This paper is organized in two chapters: Corporate Social Responsibility and Essential Marketing Strategies. Each chapter addresses specific areas of focus that can ensure long-term success and meet evolving standards in the fashion industry. The first chapter, Corporate Social Responsibility, explores some of the fashion industry's greatest faults: the lack of sustainability, lack of diversity, and lack of ethical labor. After defining the problems, each section includes alternative solutions. The second chapter, Essential Marketing Strategies, highlights innovative methods that will help fashion brands succeed while implementing CSR practices, such as ethical leadership, savvy digital marketing skills, trend forecasting, and effective pricing. In each chapter, specific examples will be shared of brands that are paving the way to a future of fashion

that encourages ethical practices. In order to flourish and continue moving forward in the fashion industry, organizations need to focus on implementing Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives and apply Essential Marketing Strategies.

**Chapter 1:**  
**Corporate Social Responsibility**

## Sustainability

Worldwide, 80 billion garments are produced each year, with the bulk of these garments produced for fast fashion brands (Rauturier 2020). Some of the most well-known fast fashion brands are Zara, Fashion Nova, Pretty Little Thing, Topshop, BooHoo, Missguided, Shein, Nasty Gal, and H&M. All of these brands are multi-million or billion-dollar organizations due to: 1) their ability to mass produce thousands of different products quickly and 2) their ability to keep their prices extremely low. These brands use the cheapest manufacturing methods available, which, unfortunately, also tend to have the biggest negative impact on the environment.

The eight most problematic practices associated with fast fashion production include:

- 1) Sourcing and using unsustainable materials
- 2) Using harmful chemicals in production
- 3) Polluting the water supply
- 4) Excessive use of water in production
- 5) Releasing Microfibers into our oceans and food chain
- 6) Generating massive waste
- 7) Excessive Greenhouse gas emissions
- 8) Rainforest destruction

(Maiti 2020)

The sections below discuss each practice in detail.

### Sourcing and Using Unsustainable Materials

Unfortunately, the least sustainable materials are often the cheapest, so of course fast fashion brands rely on them. Those used most in fast fashion production include virgin plastics,

non-organic materials, synthetic fabrics (polyester, nylon, and acrylic), animal-derived materials (wool, leather and fur), man-made cellulose fibers, and bast fibers. Most of these materials are non-biodegradable and only further contribute to the landfill when clothing is discarded ("Fixing Fashion, Environmental Audit Committee").

### Heavy Reliance on Harmful Chemicals

The materials used to create fast fashion items are processed using harmful chemicals and are non-biodegradable. In fact, chemicals are used in every part of textile processes for making fibers, bleaching, and dyeing fabrics. Roughly 23% of all the chemicals produced *worldwide* are for use in the textile industry. Not only does this practice have a negative impact on our environment and the workers exposed to the chemicals, but it is also dangerous for consumers. Some studies show that certain chemical substances contained in pajamas can be found in a child's urine 5 days after wearing those pajamas for just one night ("Fixing Fashion, Environmental Audit Committee").

### Contributing to Water Pollution

Our global water supply is also heavily impacted by the fashion industry: approximately 20% of the world's industrial water pollution comes from textile treatment and dyes. In most of the countries where garments are produced, untreated toxic wastewaters from textile factories are dumped directly into local bodies of water. For example, 22,000 liters of toxic waste are dumped into the rivers by tanneries in Bangladesh every day. This wastewater contains toxic substances such as lead, mercury and arsenic, among others. These toxins have proven harmful to aquatic life and the health of millions of people living near those bodies of water.

Chemical fertilizers used to produce cotton are another major source of water pollution. The contaminated water from the fields also drains into the sea and eventually spreads around the globe, impacting humans and aquatic animals ("Fixing Fashion, Environmental Audit Committee").

### Excessive Water Consumption

An estimated 1.5 trillion liters of water are used to produce fashion each year. This includes a huge quantity of fresh water that is used in the dyeing and finishing process for our garments. As a reference, it can take up to 200 tons of fresh water per ton of dyed fabric. Cotton, which is usually cultivated in warm and dry areas, also requires extensive water for irrigation. Up to 20,000 liters of water are needed to produce just 1 kilogram of cotton.

This consumption generates tremendous demand for a precious resource, already scarce, and has dramatic ecological consequences. For example, in India, cotton production caused the desertification of the Aral Sea, entirely draining the lake of water. This is only one such consequence affecting the water supply due to textile production. Currently, "100 million people in India do not have access to drinking water." says Stephen Leahy from The Guardian; yet 85% of India's daily personal water needs are used instead to grow cotton in the country ("Fixing Fashion, Environmental Audit Committee").

### Introducing Microfibers to Our Oceans and Food Chain

Each time we wash a synthetic garment (polyester, nylon, etc.), about 700,000 individual microfibers are released into the drained water, and eventually make their way into our oceans. Scientists estimate that 190,000 tons of textile microplastic fibers are deposited into our ocean

each year. Scientists have also discovered that small aquatic organisms are ingesting those microfibers. Sadly, these aquatic organisms are eaten by small fish, which are later eaten by bigger fish. Plastic has now been introduced into our food chain. Synthetic fibers are not only being released into our water supply and impacting our food chain. A recent study concluded that by wearing synthetic fibers, these plastic microfibers are released into the air. According to the study one person “could release almost 300 million polyester microfibers per year to the environment by washing their clothes, and more than 900 million to the air by simply wearing the garments” (“Fixing Fashion, Environmental Audit Committee”).

### Generating Massive Waste

Clothing has quickly become a disposable commodity; the equivalent of one garbage truck of textiles is wasted every second and ends up in the landfill. As a result, we generate more and more textile waste. A family in the western world discards an average of 30 kg of clothing each year. Only 15% of the clothing we discard is recycled or donated, and the remaining 85% goes directly to the landfill or is incinerated. Since synthetic fibers are non-biodegradable, and these fibers are used in 72% of our clothing, the bulk of this discarded clothing can take up to 200 years to decompose. In addition, a portion of this waste is burned, which releases dangerous chemicals into our environment (“Fixing Fashion, Environmental Audit Committee”).

### Excessive Greenhouse Gas Emissions

The fashion industry accounts for 10% of all global carbon emissions. Due to the energy expended during its production, manufacturing, and transportation of the million garments purchased each year, these emissions generate massive amounts of greenhouse gases. Synthetic

fibers, which are used in the majority of our clothes, are also made from fossil fuel; this type of production is much more energy-intensive than for natural fibers. For example, 70 billion barrels of oil are used to produce polyester each year. To compound the environmental impact, most of our clothes are produced in China, Bangladesh, or India. These countries are essentially powered by coal, the dirtiest type of energy available in terms of carbon emissions ("Fixing Fashion, Environmental Audit Committee").

### Rainforest Destruction

Approximately 70 million trees are cut down each year to produce clothing. Every year, thousands of hectares of endangered and ancient forests are demolished and replaced by plantations of trees used to make wood-based fabrics such as rayon, viscose, and modal. This loss of ancient forests, or *deforestation* is threatening the ecosystem and indigenous communities. Furthermore, Scientific American identifies deforestation as having an “extreme effect on global warming” and concludes that deforestation adds more carbon dioxide to the atmosphere than “the total of all the cars and trucks on the world’s roads” ("Fixing Fashion, Environmental Audit Committee").

These practices are all used in varying degrees by all manufacturers in the fashion industry, and their use has resulted in fashion becoming the second largest polluter in the world ("Fixing Fashion, Environmental Audit Committee"). Fast fashion brands, however, depend heavily on the eight environmental impacts listed above. They do so because it is cheap, and these impacts make it easy to quickly mass produce products. In order to gain a competitive advantage in this massive industry, brands have had to create ruthless business models. Fast

fashion depends on volume and speed to market; fast fashion brands are able to design, create, produce, and ship in a fraction of the time common with more sustainable brands, all at a fraction of the cost. Fast fashion's dependency on these common methodologies leaves little room to incorporate CSR. Thus, these companies have created massive profit while destroying the environment.

Most fast fashion brands' primary goal is to produce knock-off clothing designs as quickly and cheaply as possible for the highest profit margins. This production philosophy, however, is highly unsustainable and has proven to be detrimental to the environment. Although there are many brands that continue to ignore the repercussions of their unethical practices, there is a growing movement among fashion brands to become more sustainable. These responsible brands are committed to using recycled materials, less water, and creating sustainable buildings for their facilities, which includes their offices and production buildings. Larger corporations, such as H&M and Adidas, have all received backlash for their lack of sustainability initiatives; consumers are especially upset with these profitable brands because they have the power, resources, and money to create positive change, but have instead chosen to continue to use 'fast fashion methodologies' such as unethical labor practices, support unsafe working facilities, and the use of unsustainable materials that contribute heavily to the landfill. In response to this public backlash, H&M has declared their clothing will be created by 100% recycled materials by 2030, and Adidas has started recycling plastic from the ocean to make shoes ("Fixing Fashion, Environmental Audit Committee").

Watching larger organizations struggle with adding sustainability values to their initiatives, small businesses caught on that sustainability needs to be incorporated into the foundation of their company. Up and coming fashion brands and small businesses recognize that

more and more consumers are concerned about sustainability, and they will likely not support a brand that does not have sustainability initiatives. As a result, there are now thousands of successful small businesses where sustainability is a core value.

Founded in 2010, Everlane has established themselves as a sustainable, ethical brand with ready to wear clothing—such as tee shirts, loungewear, and denim—at reasonable prices (Everlane 2021). Because of this, Everlane is able to compete with fast fashion brands because of available stock and prices, which hopefully will prevent the fast fashion industry from expanding.

Everlane exemplifies positive CSR practices with their diligent and well-publicized commitment to sustainability. As one of the three stated pillars of the company's mission statement, Everlane practices 'Radical Transparency.' Radical transparency reveals their methodologies and the impact of each step in their production. Because of their commitment to sustainability and transparency, Everlane has gained the reputation of being one of the few ethical and trustworthy companies in the fashion industry. Although implementing CSR practices is time-consuming and costly compared to not implementing CSR practices, Everlane is showing that the industry is changing; the fashion industry is now starting to recognize all the benefits of CSR. Everlane, however, does emphasize that large-scale change can rarely happen quickly. Yet, they continue to make promising progress toward their goals in order to make a meaningful difference in the fight against climate change, and they remain committed to their mission statement through two broad initiatives. Everlane's goal is to eliminate all virgin plastic from their supply chain and move all of their cotton production to organic (Everlane 2021).

Everlane's plan to eliminate virgin plastic is far reaching. Once plastic is manufactured, it never dissolves; hence, there are more than eight billion tons of plastic on the planet.

Everlane's initiative began in 2018 when they made their first environmental commitment: eliminate all virgin plastic from their supply chain by 2021, which includes their products, packaging, poly bags, offices, and stores. Everlane's progress has been promising. The majority of their virgin plastic consumption is concentrated in three areas: fabric used in apparel, components in their footwear and accessories, and polyester bags that cover every product leaving their factories. As of October 2020, they have transitioned 90% of their apparel materials that once contained virgin plastic to recycled materials made from plastic water bottles, fishing nets, and other items destined for the waste stream. Everlane markets these more sustainable products under the labels ReNew and ReKnit. They have also transitioned 45% of their footwear components to recycled materials. They have switched their virgin plastic shopping bags to renewed versions that are recyclable. In fact, the company recycles these new versions at their distribution center to create furniture (Everlane 2021).

Everlane has also revamped their office food program and their store processes to eliminate almost all virgin plastic. However, much of their remaining transition from virgin plastic requires material innovation that is currently unavailable. Instead, they are working directly with select partners to develop functional alternatives, such as sourcing recycled elastane for stretch fabrics. Everlane's dedication to eliminating the use of virgin plastic is extremely beneficial to our environment: they are helping shrink our landfill (Everlane 2021)!

Everlane's second initiative of using only organic cotton is also extremely beneficial to the environment; worldwide, cotton farming uses more toxic pesticides per acre than any other crop. Everlane's goal is to source all of their cotton from certified organic farms by 2023. Instead of toxic pesticides, organic farming uses crop rotation, cover crops and organic fertilizers to create rich life-supporting soil. The pesticides used in most cotton crops poison the groundwater,

streams, and rivers, which endangers the people and wildlife that rely on those sources. By replacing dangerous chemicals with natural alternatives and old-school agriculture techniques, farmers are also spared dangerous levels of exposure. By Everlane making a commitment to organic cotton, they are protecting many workers in the production chain, but they are also specifically protecting their customers from any toxic residue (Everlane 2021).

In addition to the use of organic cotton and eliminating virgin plastic, Everlane also incorporates other sustainable materials in their product lines. Everlane strives to use the most sustainable materials from farm to factory and invests in new fabric innovations to ensure they are reducing their impact on the planet. They prioritize natural fibers but will use recycled synthetics when they have a clear performance and/or durability advantage. Overall, Everlane uses seven materials that contribute to their sustainability focus:

- Denim: All of Everlane's jeans, denim shorts, skirts, and jackets are made at Saitex, a LEED-certified factory that recycles 98% of its water, uses renewable energy produced onsite, and repurposes byproducts to create affordable homes.
- Clean Silk: Everlane's silk tops are dyed at a Bluesign®-certified dyehouse and made at a LEED-certified factory. The producer is working to integrate a better supply chain from soil to shirt, through Regenerative Organic farming, renewable energy, and water recycling.
- ReNew and ReKnit: To date, Everlane has recycled over nine million plastic bottles, as well as upcycled 1 million pounds of textiles and fishing nets to make their ReNew apparel and accessories and ReKnit footwear. The 100% recycled polyester and nylon lends advantages in weight, performance, and durability to much of their technical outerwear, activewear, shoes, and bags.

- ReWool and ReCashmere: Everlane's partner mills in Italy collect well-worn cashmere and wool sweaters through recycling programs—then wash and comb them into new yarns, which are then blended with a virgin core fiber for extra strength and longevity.
- Leather: Everlane prioritizes materials that are under the guidelines of the Five Freedoms of Animal Welfare, and do not use any leather or suede from animals raised for their hides. Their tread sneakers are made with leather tanned at ISA Tantec, which is certified Gold by the Leather Working Group (LWG). They use 47% less electricity, 62% less water, and emit 46% less CO<sub>2</sub>, even compared with other LWG-certified facilities.
- The Forever Sneaker: Everlane believes sneakers should not end up in a landfill, so they designed the Forever Sneaker with the post-consumer waste stream in mind. It is made of a natural rubber sole, recycled laces, and a recycled cotton upper—all of which can be easily recycled because of their partnership with Debrand. And when the buyer is ready to recycle their Forever Sneaker, drop them off at one of their stores or request a prepaid shipping label to send them back to us.
- Alpaca: Everlane sources fibers from several small farms across Peru and requires all vendors to sign their Humane Treatment & Animal Welfare statement, which enforces their expectations for the ethical treatment of animals. They will conduct animal welfare audits in 2021 with vendors who are a part of their alpaca supply chain. They are a part of the Textile Exchange to identify and help implement ethical practices throughout the alpaca fiber sourcing process. Through this organization, they are also joining forces with their peers in the Responsible Alpaca Standard International Working Group (RAS IWG) to set industry standards across the alpaca wool supply chain.  
  
(Everlane 2021).

However, Everlane's commitment to sustainability does not end with the materials they use. Where possible, they work with a number of partners to certify that their materials, suppliers, and production processes are sustainable. Everlane strives to work with the Bluesign® Systems partners, recognized for their work to eliminate harmful chemicals in manufacturing. In traditional manufacturing, there is no way of knowing which chemicals are being used in dye and wash processes. Bluesign has done the dirty work by identifying over 900 potentially harmful chemicals used in production today. To earn a Bluesign certification, manufacturers must prove that those chemicals have been eliminated from their production process (Everlane 2021).

Everlane also selects partners that have the Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS) Organic Cotton Certification. GOTS certification takes over a year to account for every step of production—from the processing of certified organic fiber into yarn—to the dyehouses, mills, factories, and printers they use.

Everlane also regularly seeks partners with these other certifications:

- California Prop 65 Prohibited Chemicals
- CPSC (Consumer Product Safety Commission) Banned Substances
- REACH (Registration, Evaluation, Authorization, and Restriction of Chemicals) certified
- ZDHC (Zero Discharge of Hazardous Chemicals) contributors
- GRS (Global Recycling Standard) certification of recycled materials
- Five Freedoms of Animal Welfare
- Non-mulesed wool
- RWS-certified (Responsible Wool Standard), non-mulesed wool
- OEKO-TEX®

(Everlane 2021).

Everlane's dedication to sustainability practices are evident in the factories they choose to partner with. To ensure the continued integrity of their factory partners, Everlane develops strong relationships with facility personnel and engages third-party auditors to evaluate factors like energy use, carbon emissions, water use and treatment, and recycling programs. They perform Think Green Initiative (TGI) audits to confirm any sustainability claims (Everlane 2021).

Finally, all of their partner factories must pass an Everlane Compliance audit by Intertek and ARCHE Advisors. Everlane completes over 50 audits a year, both announced and unannounced, to ensure that their partners are compliant with their standards and Vendor Code of Conduct. Everlane's long-term vision is to have the same level of transparency all the way down to the farm level. In addition, where possible, they work with their partners to certify their facilities. Specifically, they strive to receive LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Certification. LEED Certification is a rating system for energy efficiency at every level of operation. To become LEED-certified, factories must provide evidence of reduced energy consumption throughout all processes—from the machinery used to the design of the building itself. Some other factory certifications Everlane encourages are WRAP (Worldwide Responsible Accredited Production) and SMETA (Sedex Members Ethical Trade Audit) (Everlane 2021).

Everlane's distribution center selection is also consistent with their sustainability initiatives. Geodis, their partner distribution center in Kutztown, PA, is a major part of Everlane's operations. Everlane proudly shares that this distribution center is also working to lessen their impact on the planet, starting with stringent requirements for handling waste and has set a milestone of 100% landfill free. Because the facility handles so many shipping materials and most of Everlane's physical products, it is significant to reach a milestone such as 100%

landfill-free. Geodis has established various recycling and reuse programs, with the remainder done through a waste-to-energy partnership. Everlane also partners with Happy Returns to implement a reusable shipping carton program that reduces the amount of cardboard that goes out for recycling (Everlane 2021).

Finally, Everlane retail stores and corporate offices are sustainable as well. Everlane states, “We want the spaces we work in to be expressions of our ideals, so our stores and offices are designed for lower impact through natural and recycled materials, energy sourcing, and educational initiatives.” They embody their mission as stated by pursuing sustainability by design, renewable energy, waste reduction, and receiving brand certifications. For example, all their stores use skylights and SHGC (Solar Heat Gain Coefficient)-compliant glass windows to provide plenty of natural light, and then use efficient LED lighting as needed. The wooden benches, shelving, and checkout counters use FSC (Forest Stewardship Council)-certified wood materials. Everlane’s in-store signage is produced from post-consumer fabric content and other recycled materials that are designed for longevity and repurposed prior to recycling whenever possible. Their rugs are made of natural materials, and their carpet tiles are made from recycled rubber (Everlane 2021).

Everlane purchases renewable energy certificates (RECs) for 100% of the power used at their stores and offices. With RECs, they are investing in large-scale renewable energy production for the national grid via wind, solar and geothermal power. This practice slashes the emissions associated with their electricity use while lessening reliance on fossil fuels. Their stores use no single-use plastic for in-store events; instead, all stores use glass cups and reusable flatware. On their first day, all new Everlane retail employees receive a kit with reusable utensils, a MiiR water bottle, and Stasher bags. In their offices, they partner with Fare Resources,

a food program that prioritizes organic and/or locally sourced ingredients, and they have dramatically reduced single-use plastic and food waste. Everlane's employee-led sustainability committee pilots outreach programs to educate their team on subjects from local ballot initiatives to proper recycling and composting. And lastly, a more sustainable world will be the cumulative result of small-scale efforts along with more macro strategies like industry-wide working groups and policy changes. They want to help lead the industry forward with their active participation as a GFA (Global Fashion Agenda) Associate Member (Everlane 2021).

Not only is Everlane extremely sustainable, but they are also extremely profitable. Consumers love supporting Everlane because they know their dollars are supporting our environment - and in result, Everlane's net worth was \$250 million as of 2016 (Everlane 2021).

And wonderfully, Everlane is only one of many modern fashion brands that focus on sustainability - for example, Miaou is another ready-to-wear sustainable brand, however, they do not focus on basics like Everlane. Miaou is a maximalist, patterned, colorful, youthful brand with exciting yet elegant garments. This is a particularly big step in the right direction - Miaou is proving that fashion brands can be sustainable and go beyond just basics - they can also be respected in the high fashion community as well. Miaou practices sustainability in multiple ways: sourcing locally, using sustainable fabrics, and implementing sustainable methodologies (Miaou 2021).

Firstly, Miaou is locally sourced. An immense carbon footprint is created by the transport of clothing from country to country during the production process overseas. Miaou ensures that their overseas production is transported by boat rather than air, in efforts to reduce their carbon footprint. Boating goods provides lower energy consumption and emissions of products harmful to the environment than land transport or air transport. Ethical and sustainable sourcing of

materials is also a top priority for Miaou. They source and design locally first, which supports small and localized businesses. If they cannot find what they need there, they align with a supplier who meets our ethical standards. Making many of our garments in Los Angeles allows us to also ensure that the production teams working on our collections are working under ethical conditions and being paid fair wages, we receive factory certifications to ensure this. Secondly, Miaou is very mindful of the fabrics they use - all fabrics used are sustainable. Miaou uses only sustainable fabrics - their three core fabrics - denim, crepe, and mesh - are either made of biodegradable fabrics or are deadstock fabrics they source locally. Using deadstock fabrics is a creative way to be sustainable; deadstock fabrics are leftover fabrics from other fashion companies that were never used and would otherwise go into the landfill. Furthermore, Miaou does not mill any fabrics; instead, they digitally print which is more sustainable by nature; digital printing reduces waste by 10% in both fabrics and ink. Here is further information about their fabrics and methodologies:

- Fabrics - Mesh: Miaou's mesh is made of 92% Recycled Nylon and 8% Lycra. Recycled Nylon has the same benefits as recycled polyester: it diverts waste from landfills and its production uses much fewer resources than virgin nylon (including water, energy, and fossil fuel). A large part of the recycled nylon produced comes from old fishing nets.
- Fabrics - Stretch Crepe: Miaou's Stretch Crepe is made of 97% Recycled Polyester and 3% Lycra. Using more recycled polyester reduces their dependence on petroleum as the raw material for their fabric needs. Diverting PET bottles for this process reduces landfill, and thus reduces soil contamination and air and water pollution and requires less energy than virgin polyester.

- Fabrics - Stretch Canvas: Miaou's Stretch Canvas is made of 98% BCI Cotton and 2% Lycra. The Better Cotton Initiative (BCI) aims to promote measurable improvements of cotton cultivation to make it more economically, environmentally, and socially sustainable.
- Digital Printing - Wash: 90% of Miaou's production is launder-free. Miaou tries to eliminate this process whenever possible by sourcing deadstock to help reduce the consumption of water and energy used. They push for all their products to help conserve energy and minimize the carbon footprint which helps control the level of toxicity or pollution to the environment. Miaou does not run any fabric on industrial power washes - which reduces hundreds of thousands of gallons of water. Softener rinse
- Digital Printing - Printing: Digital printing technologies are by nature more sustainable than traditional analog alternatives, and offer a way forward towards clean, efficient, profitable manufacturing. Digital Printing is more ecological friendly than Offset printing or Screen Printing. No ink or dye is wasted with digital printing since it is all consumed in the print. There are no plates, blankets, or screens to be washed off eventually ending up in our environment which does damage to our planet.
- Packaging: All Miaou's products are packaged in biodegradable eco-poly packaging and mailers. Their 100% Recycled Poly Mailers packaging is a step toward ending the use of environmentally harmful materials.

(Miaou 2021).

Parade is another great example of a sustainable brand; Parade is an American underwear brand that is working to recreate the typical underwear experience. They create underwear that is soft, breathable, and good for your body and the environment. Parade's use of eco-friendly

materials reduces its climate impact and limits the amount of chemicals, water and wastewater used in production. Parade's core fabric, 'Re:Play,' is made of 85% recycled polyamide and all materials are Oeko-Tex certified, meaning they're free from harmful chemicals that pollute skin and waters. Our packaging is compostable and made of 100% corn starch. In addition, Parade's underwear is inexpensive (\$9 per pair of underwear), sizes are inclusive (ranges from sizes XS-3XL) and includes truly diverse models across all their marketing. And to ice the cake - they also donate 1% of our revenue to Planned Parenthood. When a consumer purchases from Parade, they are also promoting Planned Parenthood (access to sexual education and healthcare, reproductive rights, gender affirming therapy), size inclusivity, diversity, and the wellbeing of our environment - all at a great price! Parade is proving that underwear brands can be successful and profitable without the typical fatphobic, unsustainable, over-priced methods in typical undergarment organizations (Parade 2021).

Brands have also taken their creativity for sustainable practices a step further - they are not using any new materials; instead, they are taking thrifted items that would end up in the landfill and are restyling the garments. This methodology is called upcycling; Frankie Collective Vintage and Sami Miro Vintage are both brands that use this practice. Frankie Collective Vintage's focus is on salvaging vintage garments that would otherwise end up in a landfill, and all their textile scraps are recycled and repurposed to eliminate textile waste. They create 120,000 pieces of reworked clothing per year, which means they save 65,000 lbs. of clothing from landfills every year by upcycling them into 1-of-1 garments (Frankie Collective 2021). Similarly, Sami Miro Vintage specializes in limited run collections made from only up cycled and vintage fabrics, minimizing waste. Their supply chain starts and ends in Los Angeles, giving us an extremely low carbon footprint (Sami Miro Vintage 2021).

Another creative approach is the pre-ordering system. For example, House of Sunny is a sustainable brand that releases their collections as pre-order. This way, they make the *exact* number of pieces demanded and prevent excess waste. They also encourage consumers to buy this way by providing a 10% discount on all pre-ordered items (House of Sunny 2021).

Everlane, Miaou, Parade, Frankie Collective Vintage and Sami Miro Vintage all are contributing to crucial change in the notoriously unsustainable fashion industry. These brands are proving that sustainability can be affordable, high-quality, and high-fashion - but most importantly, they are proving that sustainability is important and should be the standard. In the next section, we will analyze ethical labor practices in the fashion industry.

## Ethical Labor Practices

The global apparel market is projected to grow in value from 1.5 trillion U.S. dollars in 2020 to roughly 2.25 trillion dollars by 2025 (Style Vanity 2020). The demand for clothing and shoes continues to be massive. However, the high demand for apparel is not equally distributed across the globe; the US is by far the leader of the over-consumerism movement. In the 1960's, 95% of the clothing produced for the US market was produced in the US. Today, however, the US produces only 3% of its clothing demands, while the rest is outsourced to foreign countries with lower production costs (Style Vanity 2020). Due to this manufacturing shift in the US apparel market to cheaper global economies and a soaring demand, a new niche was born: Fast Fashion. Supply has since skyrocketed. The process of outsourcing labor to low-economic countries has allowed for mass production of clothing at incredibly low prices, at an accelerated pace. Yet, it is crucial to understand how unethical fashion's globalized production is; American brands are profiting from impoverished communities' desperate need for work, and these brands have helped normalize inhuman international wages and working conditions with no accountability.

A core aspect of fast fashion practices is the ability to make prices extremely affordable. These prices are low because of unsustainable materials and practices; however, they are also extremely low due to unethical labor practices. For example, the brand Pretty Little Thing is a popular fast fashion brand that has used labor in Bangladesh. Pretty Little Thing was able to hold a 99% off their entire website for their 2020 Black Friday Sale. This means every product on their website ranged from \$0.05-\$1.00 (Pretty Little Thing 2021). And to clarify, their website showcases thousands of products, from shoes and accessories to sweaters and dresses. These prices highlight the question: How much are garment workers getting paid if prices can be

reduced that low? In short, while Pretty Little Thing may have been taking a loss on some of these items, these prices were so cheap because of 1) outsourcing labor to low-economy countries and 2) encouraging extremely low wages and harsh working conditions.

The film, *The True Cost*, documents the detrimental effects of the fast fashion industry and was viewed widely around the world. The film analyzed the labor conditions in one of the biggest fast fashion manufacturing capitals of the world: Bangladesh. Bangladesh has quickly become known for its willingness to produce clothing products for exceptionally low prices. In the film, Arif Jebtik, a garment factory owner in Dhaka, discusses his conversations with American fashion brands who want to outsource labor to his factory. American fast fashion brands negotiate that Arif's staff will need to make a garment for \$4 if their competitor bids \$5. American companies simply threaten Arif's future in production if he cannot meet the lower price. Thus, because he desperately needs the work, he will reduce his employees' wages to secure the contract. Low economy countries' laborers also do not have other options; there are thousands of factories worldwide with desperate employees. The US brand can easily just go elsewhere. Because of this ruthless cycle, the starting wage is \$10 per month. These employees also work for extremely long hours, in high temperatures with various hazardous chemicals. These wages and conditions are inhumane and illegal in the US, yet American companies are tacitly engaging them.

Shima Akhter, a production worker in Dhaka, attempted to change these conditions and fought to organize a union. Yet, when Shima and the union members attempted to discuss work conditions with their boss, they were beaten by a group of 30 men. The harsh conditions surrounding fast fashion production have also led to other tragic disasters, such as the case of Rana Plaza. Rana Plaza was another large fast fashion production site in Bangladesh that was

poorly constructed. Workers would point out the large cracks in the building to management, but their concerns were ignored. On April 24th, 2013, the eight-story building collapsed. After two months of searching for all the bodies, the death toll was declared to be 1,134. Despite playing a major role in this horrific event, American fast fashion brands escaped blame and responsibility for this tragedy (The True Cost 2015).

Generally, many fast fashion brands assure their customers that the foreign laborers who produced their clothing are paid "at least the minimum legal wage;" however, the minimum legal wage is a variety of different prices depending on the location of the employee. And of course, a legal wage absolutely does not mean it is a livable wage. And even if the brand does pay them a 'legal' wage, that does not mean that ethical labor conditions are implemented; employees can still be overworked. For example:

- The average working day in most manufacturing countries is 14-16 hours.
- The normal working schedule for garment workers is 7 days a week.
- The normal working hours per week for garment workers is 96 hours.
- Garment workers must work until 2:00 or 3:00 am during peak season to meet deadlines imposed by fast fashion brands.

(SustainYourStyle 2021)

In addition to low wages, foreign laborers can also work in hazardous conditions. These employees usually work in unsafe buildings with no ventilation, breathing in toxic substances, inhaling fiber dust or blasted sand. Accidents, fires, injuries, and disease are frequent occurrences at textile production sites. In addition to the building or chemical hazards, clothing workers also regularly face verbal and physical abuse from supervisors. In some cases, when

they fail to meet their excessive daily target, they are insulted, denied breaks, and not even allowed to pause to drink water (The True Cost 2015).

Another shameful issue in the fast fashion industry is the normalization of child labor. The International Labor Organisation (ILO) estimates that 170 million kids are engaged in child labor, with many helpings produce textiles and garments to satisfy the demand of consumers in Europe and the US. Fast fashion has created a race to the lowest cost levels, pushing companies to find the *cheapest possible* sources of labor, no matter the ethics. Child labor is available in many of the countries where textile and garment production take place with little oversight. Sofie Ovaa, global campaign coordinator of Stop Child Labor, states: “There are many girls in countries like India and Bangladesh, who are willing to work for very low prices and are easily brought into these industries under false promises of earning decent wages” (Child Labour in the Fashion Supply Chain 2021).

A recent report (pdf) by the Centre for Research on Multinational Corporations (SOMO), and the India Committee of the Netherlands (ICN) revealed that recruiters in southern India convince parents in impoverished rural areas to send their daughters to spinning mills with false promises of a well-paid job, comfortable accommodation, three nutritious meals a day and opportunities for training and schooling, as well as a lump sum payment at the end of three years. Their field research shows that “in reality, they are working under appalling conditions that amount to modern day slavery and the worst forms of child labor” (Child Labour in the Fashion Supply Chain 2021).

Child labor is a particular issue for fashion because much of the supply chain requires low-skilled labor and some tasks are better suited to children than adults. In cotton picking, employers prefer to hire children for their small fingers, which do not damage the crop.

Children are also seen as obedient workers who slip under the radar, making them easy to manage. Ovaas says: “There is no supervision or social control mechanisms, no unions that can help them to bargain for better working conditions. These are very low-skilled workers without a voice, so they are easy targets.” American brands can escape backlash because the fashion supply chain is hugely complex, and it is hard for these American companies to control every stage of production. That makes it *possible* for these international facilities to employ children without big brands and consumers knowledge (Is There Child Labor In The Fashion Industry? 2021). However, as we have learned, some companies are aware of the unethical labor practices of an international production facility, but do not care.

Large clothing brands can profit massively from the lack American oversight and their global partners' poverty, because the US brands don't 'officially' employ the foreign workers or own any of the factories or buildings they work in (The True Cost 2015). Any difficulties posed by these countries are easily solved by relocating production to other countries. Governments of low-cost economies, therefore, are desperate to retain American fashion companies' business because of the constant threat that these brands will relocate to other low-cost countries. Thus, the benefiting government keeps costs down for the American companies by ignoring the industry's low wages and horrible working conditions. The threat of relocating production is a true threat (The True Cost 2015). For many years, China was the lead manufacturer for fast fashion brands. However, once China increased labor costs and proved reluctant to produce these low-cost goods, American brands went elsewhere. Since the start of Donald Trump's presidency, large brand names such as Uniqlo, Levi's, Crocs, Calvin Klein, and Tommy Hilfiger have moved their entire manufacturing base out of China. The cost of production was further increased in China when President Trump increased existing tariffs on \$250 billion worth of Chinese goods.

These increased costs drove American brands to move their manufacturing to countries like Vietnam, Bangladesh, Cambodia, and Indonesia due to their lower production costs (The True Cost 2015).

The fast fashion industry has consequently fostered an innate structure of harsh working conditions for the countries where it outsources its labor needs. These workers endure extremely low pay and hazardous conditions because of the need to undercut competition. Yet, some of these desperate workers do protest and fight for their rights for better pay and conditions. The outcome for many of these vocal workers, however, is abuse or termination, and even worse death. Governments, unfortunately, also fail to protect its citizens from being exploited by their bosses and the American fashion brands. These governments rely heavily on globalized production to support their local economies; thus, laws are not enacted to protect these workers from the detrimental consequences of fast fashion (The True Cost 2015).

Unethical practices are hopefully going to be a thing of the past with time. Brands, such as Everlane, are striving to create a new norm. Not only is Everlane sustainable, but they also seek to practice fair wages and maintain safe labor conditions. Everlane shares extensive information related to their labor practices on their website, which is part of their ‘radically transparent’ initiative. Everlane’s ethical labor mission states, “To ensure the continued integrity of our factory partners, we develop strong relationships with the people at the facility and work with third-party auditors to evaluate factors like fair wages, labor conditions, reasonable hours, and a safe work environment.” Their website maintains photos of each of their facilities, in addition to sharing complete details about their relationship with the facility: what service they provide, location, number of employees, the year they were established, and information about the owner (Everlane 2021).

Additionally, Everlane also is radically transparent about how much each item costs to make. Everlane believes that their customers have a right to know how much their clothes cost to make. They reveal the true costs behind all their products—from materials to labor to transportation—then offer them to the consumer without the traditional retail markup (Everlane 2021).. However, despite their pricing being reasonable, Unfortunately, small businesses with sustainability and ethical labor laws are unable to compete with crazy low prices like Pretty Little Thing is and many more brands. However, Pretty Little Thing's low prices does not attract all buyers. Fast fashion has started gaining negative attention for their environmental impact; thus, buyers will avoid fast fashion brands for ethical reasons. This has encouraged emerging brands implementing CSR practices.

However, there is one part of Everlane that is unclear: exactly how much they pay their employees. They do not publicly share the exact wages of their garment workers. This unfortunately leaves to the assumption that they do not show it because it does not align with their promise of ethical labor practices. Despite this let-down, Everlane is still educating consumers about the importance of ethical practices and contributing to the conversation.

The fast fashion industry has sadly created extremely unethical norms. Unfortunately, the fast fashion industry has been extremely successful, meaning that millions of people around the globe buy from these brands that further contribute to these immoral norms. Unethical practices have become so normalized and common, that it can be difficult to shop ethically in the fashion industry. Luckily, there are some companies within the fashion industry that disagree with these norms and have been highly successful in educating the consumer. Consumers are now more actively searching for ethical brands. Thus, some brands are now focusing on reducing their impact on the environment and implementing fair labor practices. While the fast fashion industry

has created immense damage to laborers, the future of fashion is clear. The true cost of a \$10 t-shirt is too much.

## Diversity

The fashion industry is known to be exclusive, the industry values very skinny, white bodies with traditional, feminine, European features. And of course, these values are highlighted in many ways, but we are going to focus on models and sizing. Because trends and norms are all established on the runway, let us begin there. As we know, most brands use models that are white, have traditional European features (small nose, smaller lips, blonde, blue eyes), and are of course, very skinny. Skinny models became the norm in the 60's, but it wasn't until the 80's where high fashion brands exclusively used rail-thin models. And as we know, runway models are exclusively skinny - no other body types or and shapes are represented. This means that designers only make and sell sizes for the skinny body type - normally women's sizes 00, 0, 2, and 4. And just further to prove how small of a size range this is, the average size of women in the US is a size 14. It was unheard of until recently to hear of a mid-size or plus size model on the runway. In 2017, Ashley Graham became the first plus size model in history to walk at Michael Kors. Versace cast plus size runway models for the first time ever in 2020 showing the Spring/Summer 2021 collection. Furthermore, it wasn't until very recently that black models were accepted on the runway. Peggy Anne Donyale Aragona Peugot Luna (August 31, 1945 – May 17, 1979), better known as Donyale Luna, was known as the first black model in the 60s. She was one of the very few black models represented. Beverly Ann Johnson was the first African American model to appear on the cover of American Vogue in August 1974 and in 1975, Johnson became the first black woman to appear on the cover of the French edition of Elle. However, it is crucial to understand that this is still a very prominent issue today; Maria Borges became the first black model to walk the Victoria Secret runway with her natural hair in 2015. And in addition, as we know, most models we see are female or male, with very binary features.

The fashion industry has been afraid to become more gender fluid. Caroline Cossey, also known as Tula, made headlines as the first transgender model to pose for Playboy magazine in 1981. Yes, it is worth celebrating that these norms are beginning to change through the representation of plus-size models, racial minority models, and transgender models, however, there is still so much work to be done. These are the very few available examples of change; this is still not the norm.

As mentioned earlier, the trends and norms established by major fashion houses create the trends in ready-to-wear fashion. This means that basically all fashion brands are exclusive. This is exemplified in two ways: through models and available sizing. The same norms on the runway apply in ready-to-wear fashion: the models are typically blonde, skinny, and of course, white. Let's discuss Urban Outfitters, which is a very successful on-trend brand catered to Gen Z and Millennials. Their models match this exclusive norm. Furthermore, they have very exclusive sizing- XS - L or a 00-8. Neither of these size ranges are inclusive. They have no plus size availability anywhere on their website. This makes it clear that Urban Outfitters only wants people that can wear these sizes in their clothes. It can't get much more fatphobic than that. And of course, Urban Outfitters is one of thousands of brands that are doing this. Almost all brands are like this. Brandy Melville is known for creating one size for all items, which is equivalent to a size S. Their slogan is "One size fits most." Revolve, a very popular retailer, carries hundreds of brands, yet their largest size option is XL and has very few options. For further clarity, a size XL is equivalent to a size 12, which means that the average US woman can't even fit in their sizing. Some brands have a plus size section; however, they release one collection annually with only a handful of pieces. So, in short, they are doing the bare minimum (McCall 2018).

There are a few brands focusing on the plus-size inclusivity. One of the most famous plus-size brands is Lane Bryant. Lane Bryant is a plus-size only brand, which carries sizing 12-28. However, Lane Bryant's section is more minimal, conservative, and non-trendy; their items are more focused on clothing appropriate for the workplace. Nothing is wrong with Lane Bryant's style, however, that style is not for everyone, particularly a younger audience. This once again highlights the issues with the current state of plus size fashion: they have about 1% of the options that 'regular size' fashion has (McCall 2018).

In some past few years, some brands have caught on to this gap. Some brands have begun to really prioritize curvy women by releasing lots of plus size items, rather than just a few. Some brands with the best trendy and stylish items for plus women are Pretty Little Thing, H&M and Fashion Nova.

Although it is amazing some brands are prioritizing plus size fashion, the only brands that value plus-size fashion are fast fashion brands. It is the very unfortunate truth. It is basically impossible for a plus size woman to find brands that are size inclusive (that is difficult enough), but also sustainable and with fair wages. This means that plus size bodies are left with way less options, low quality materials, and unethical brands.

So, as we are seeing here, very few brands are making size inclusive clothing. This means that brands are only making clothes for a small percentage of women in the US. This leads to the question: why don't brands want to create inclusive sizing where they could have a much greater pool of potential customers, and make them feel powerful in the brand's clothing?

Like we shared earlier, this sizing issue comes from fatphobia and the belief that designs are no longer high fashion on bodies that are not white, cisgender, and skinny. The message designers are sending is fatphobic, racist, and transphobic. To clarify, I am not arguing that

anything is wrong with skinny, cisgender, or white bodies. However, I am saying that all bodies need to be represented - all are beautiful, and all need clothing that fits and makes them feel fabulous- whether that is couture and high fashion or ready-to-wear basics or trendy, youthful items.

Rihanna's lingerie line, Savage X Fenty, is a perfect example of the value of inclusivity so valued that it has generated a net worth of 1 billion US dollars. The brand marketing strategy was to focus on inclusivity in all areas of customer interface. Their Instagram account (with millions of followers) includes photos of a variety of body types, ethnicities, sexualities, and shapes. The brand does an incredible job at being inclusive, offering sizes from XS–3X and bra sizes 32A–46DDD (Savage X Fenty 2021). Their lingerie and loungewear cover a wide range of styles: the brand includes everyday basics and conservative options, as well as sexy and bold pieces. This reinforces the idea that everyone deserves to dress exactly the way they choose, and however they present themselves, they are sexy and included.

Savage X Fenty's diversity was highlighted particularly in the most recent Savage X Fenty Show, which is available on Amazon. It countered the traditional lingerie show, the Victoria's Secret Show, with diverse models, bold and energetic energy and confidence. The problems with the Victoria's Secret Show—the one-type-of-beauty models, the jealousy and envy it encouraged, and overall stiffness—were all addressed in the Savage X Fenty show. As a result, people were obsessed. The Savage X Fenty show was so incredibly successful that Victoria's Secret cancelled their runway show the next season all together. Victoria's Secret knew they would be found wanting in comparison and likely to receive backlash from reviewers and consumers alike (Savage X Fenty 2021).

Some brands argue that they are unable to be size inclusive because they don't have the resources available to bigger brands like Savage X Fenty or H&M. However, the small Australian brand Dyspia is proving that this is no excuse. Because all their items are made post purchase, Dyspia is willing to make any size. When shopping for an item on their website, they list sizes XS—XXXL as well as a 'custom' option—which takes inclusivity to another level (Dysnea 2021)!

Another amazing size-diverse brand is Girlfriend Collective, which is a sustainable and ethically made women's activewear brand. Their sizes range from XXS-6XL (Girlfriend Collective 2021)!

It is ridiculous that due to prejudice, brands are missing out on a massive opportunity to widen their audience. Fashion's lack of diversity has real costs. Society expects a greater representation of differences. There are also strong economic reasons for diversity. The more consumers are visibly represented and feel bound to the brand in terms of shared values, the greater the turnover to purchasing for the fashion companies (SaveMyCent 2021). The standard sizing is XS-L or 00-12, yet the average size of a US woman is 14. Plunkett Research estimates that 68 percent of American women wear a size 14 or above (Racked 2021). Including plus-size women seems very profitable. As per studies conducted by Alibaba.com, the plus-size-women's-clothing market is expected to be valued at 46.6 billion USD by the end of this year which is double what it was valued at just three years earlier (Racked 2021). We have seen an increase of inclusivity over the past few years, and this will only continue. Size-inclusivity will be a crucial aspect of a brands success in the future of fashion, and brands will be forced to become ethical all around, not just in size diversity.



## Concluding Thoughts

To clarify, I am not arguing that the unethical fashion industry, which includes fast fashion and size-limited brands, will cease to exist or lose all profitability. As mentioned earlier, fast fashion goods have a place in the market for consumers that cannot afford other brands or aren't affected by limited sizing. However, I am arguing that there are limitations. Even if fast fashion has a place in the market, that does not mean it is ever lasting or even promising. Fast fashion brand's popularity and profitability often rise quickly due to their extremely low prices and ability to mass produce thousands of options for consumers. However, once they are in the spotlight, it is common for these brands to become 'top news' in the fashion community on how horrible their practices are in terms of lack of sustainability. In result, lots of people refuse to support them any longer and often share publicly that they don't support the brand's ethics. People do not want to support harming the environment or inhuman labor practices, which has led to decrease in sales and overall net worth. In terms of size-inclusion and prejudice brands, people also want to support brands with similar ethics to their own. However, as we saw with the available plus size options, only some people have the opportunity to shop ethically.

I am hoping for a more ethical future of fashion, and luckily, we seem to be heading in that direction. Brands are recognizing that being more ethical gives them multiple competitive advantages. Being ethical, in terms of sustainability, labor practices, and diversity, has become the ultimate marketing tool today. Brands like Everlane and Savage X Fenty know that consumers are proud to support them. These brands do not have to worry about making headlines because they are unsustainable or racist. When brands are genuine about their dedication to CSR and their stakeholders, they can use their practices as an amazing marketing strategy. Ethical brands know that massive consumer groups do value environmental impacts, labor practices, and

diversity and love supporting brands with similar values. People like to feel a part of the progressive, inclusive, and happy movement, and brands like Everlane and Savage X Fenty provide them that feeling by just purchasing from them. Furthermore, the anti-fast fashion movement isn't even limited to brands. Entrepreneurs are utilizing the rising popularity of secondhand shopping to create fashion organizations that are ethical and cheap. Apps like Depop and Poshmark were created so anyone can buy and sell used items internationally all in the convenience of their phone. The industry is changing. We are observing the rise and fall of unethical fashion. I am arguing that although unethical brands, particularly fast fashion brands, have a platform right now, it is crumbling. Brands that prioritize stakeholders, employees, and consumers, are not going to last. Brands with a foundation of Corporate Social Responsibility are creating a platform that can succeed in the future of fashion.

However, the work doesn't just end there. Establishing a brand's values through CSR will create an incredible foundation for a brand, but there are some essential marketing strategies that need to be implemented to 1) help the consumer understand brand values and want to support and 2) be able to become a flourishing brand in the fashion industry. These strategies, social media, trend forecasting, pricing, and leadership practices, will create a business model that is built for the future of fashion.



**Chapter 2:**  
**Essential Marketing Strategies**

## Social Media

Although online shopping began in the early 1980s, it was nothing like what we have today (The True Cost 2015). It began as a way to view on TV what was readily available in local store fronts, but now, we have access to millions of fashion brands around the world at our fingertips. The globalization of the fashion industry was not limited to massive companies, small businesses are also able worldwide.

Of course, ecommerce was further emphasized and globalized through the introduction of social media and in particular, Instagram. Because Instagram was initially created to showcase photography and daily life, it attracted a lot of creative people, including fashion creatives. People started to create fashion blogs with their Instagram accounts. This included mood boards of fashion trends and looks and the blogger's personal outfits. Fashion brands caught on to Instagram's potential—and saw an opportunity to use the platform and fashion bloggers as marketing tools. Fashion brands created their own Instagram accounts as a way to connect to their consumers and hopefully market their products to increase their audience. This has been an extremely beneficial strategy for fashion brands because it is a free, easy-to-use, global platform that can easily market garments and reach new audiences.

Furthermore, the presence of brands on Instagram encouraged fashion bloggers to tag the brands they are wearing. Tagging brands became beneficial for the fashion blogger and the brand - the blogger has a professional blog wear their audience can easily find pieces, and brands get free marketing! Fashion brands realized that they could partner or work with fashion bloggers - which created the Fashion Influencer. Brands will reach out to a fashion blogger with a larger audience and a similar style to the brands and offer a discount code the blogger can advertise in exchange for a free clothing piece from the brand that the blogger must take a photo in, tag and

post. The brand normally re-posts the bloggers photo on their page as well - making it mutually beneficial marketing for the blogger and the brand. It is now extremely common for brands (especially brands with an audience of age groups that are very present on social media - 18-35) to reach out or respond to influencers and collaborate. Now, being a Fashion Influencer can be a full time, 6 figure job. Danielle Bernstein, @WeWoreWhat on Instagram, is a perfect example of the creation of the Fashion Influencer. She started her Instagram account around 8 years ago, and now has 2 million followers and has worked with hundreds of fashion brands. Her massive following comes from her daily outfit pictures, along with all the pieces tagged with the brands she wore, to make it an easy experience for her audience to buy the pieces she wears. To post outfits daily, she needs a lot of clothes —so she ends up tagging and creating exposure for a lot of brands, and lots of small brands in particular. Small and big brands pay her to share content in their pieces because they know her followers are loyal and often purchase the stuff she wears and recommends. Brands negotiate to pay her in different ways; some provide items and pay her to post their products once a month, or some brands send her a free item in hopes she will market it for them on her page.

Now let's look at an example of a brand doing a great job utilizing 'Instagram Influencers' and social media. Savage X Fenty, Rihanna's lingerie brand, is killing it. Savage X Fenty spends most of their resources on advertising through influencers. Savage X Fenty has reached out to thousands of Influencers. Savage X Fenty offers to pay the influencer to promote their items; in particular, every month, the influencer receives the brand's newest items. Depending on each influencer's contract, this can be exemplified through Instagram stories and posts; and of course, the brand needs to be tagged and advertised constantly throughout the content. This is an incredible advertising strategy. Savage X Fenty is partnered with diverse

influencers. These influences are diverse in many ways; in terms of identity, these influencers have different body sizes, races, abilities, sexualities, and religious perspectives. Of course, this means all their content is quite different. Some focus on body positivity, some are artists, some are writers, some post daily fashion inspiration, etc. And of course, this means that Savage X Fenty is able to reach many different people, and each potential consumer is represented in some way due to the diversity of influencers. In addition, this is a great strategy given that most of their consumers are Gen X and millennials, which we all know are staple users of social media. And in addition, because consumer's favorite influencers are promoting Savage X Fenty, they have over 4 million followers, where they constantly repost influencers and non-influencers content in their pieces. And naturally, their feed includes a diverse group of Savage X Fenty-wearers, which creates a happy, inclusive, and body-positive place for followers. The Instagram page promotes the idea that 'everyone is a savage' and is beautiful, which inevitably attracts a large audience that passionately supports the brands as well.

Social media advertising is only going to become more profitable, common, and efficient. Savvy brands like Savage X Fenty are building a stable platform for the future by embracing this new norm right now. Here's how the organization's efforts have paid off; while only established in 2017, the brand is currently worth \$1 billion US dollars (Savage X Fenty 2021).

As we have learned, the fashion industry is globalized now, which means that the fashion industry is increasingly competitive. Although Savage X Fenty is great, the brand does not prioritize sustainability practices, giving them a huge advantage in terms of pricing. This competition is even more stressful for brands committed to CSR practices such as sustainability, ethical labor, and diversity, because of course they are more expensive. When brands have

higher prices because of their CSR practices, they must employ a superior marketing strategy so the consumer would rather buy from their brand than fast fashion.

This is not easy of course; however, it is doable. Let's take Everlane for example. As we established, they are passionate about their CSR. On the brand's Instagram page (followed by over one million users), their bio reads "Exceptional quality. Ethical factories. Radically transparent" (Everlane 2021). When a potential consumer lands on their page, they instantly see what their money would support if they purchased from this brand. In addition, Everlane constantly posts educational content about the detriments of fast fashion on their Instagram stories, which further establishes Everlane as a thought leader and encourages people to buy from brands that are ethical, like Everlane. Their messaging on Instagram is consistent and clearly expresses their corporate values.

They have posted videos providing information about sustainability practices of particular garments, shared their acknowledgement and commitment to the Black Lives Matter movement, and provided transparency to their labor practices, such as posting photos of their facilities. Everlane understands that if they do not clarify the difference between themselves and fast fashion brands, they will lose customers strictly due to price.

Whether brands embrace it or not, social media advertising is the future of the fashion industry. The last decade saw a step back from traditional advertising, such as magazines, billboards, and radio. Brands that embrace digital marketing and advertising are setting themselves up well for the future. Social media advertising has proven to reach more people with less effort for the brands. The sooner brands establish a strong social media presence, the sooner they will increase their profits.

## Trend Forecasting

As we learned earlier, fast fashion brands mass produce styles they see trending; this means that they often copy exact styles from smaller (more expensive) designers. And the smaller designers forecast trends based on designs in fashion houses such as Louis Vuitton, Gucci, Balmain, Dolce & Gabbana, and many more. Thus, fast fashion brands do not have to prioritize trend forecasting as much as the designers creating the trends fast fashion brands are copying.

To exemplify this practice, let's use Danielle Guizo as an example. Danielle Guizo is a boutique small brand designer with features in massive fashion organizations such as Farfetch, Ssense, and Revolve. Her designs are not mass produced; they are hand-made and designed herself with high quality materials. Naturally, this makes her brand more expensive. Between 2019 and now, Danielle had one particular item go viral: the 'Tie-Dye Knit Safety Pin Sweater,' which costs \$348 US dollars (Danielle Guizo 2021). Within weeks of this item's release, *multiple* fast fashion brands had copied her design – *and they copy it identically*. And of course, they were listed at much cheaper pricing. This wider availability at a cheaper price point often leads to customers buying the fast fashion brand's knock off, rather than spending their money to support the actual designer and creator, Danielle Guizo. To make matters even worse, there is almost nothing small brands can do when other companies usurp their designs. Fighting in court will most likely only absorb their funding and it may prove impossible to beat a massive brand like Pretty Little Thing with limitless resources.

Fast fashion brands normalize these incredibly low prices, making the small brands pricing seem ridiculous in comparison; however, it is expensive to pay employees fairly and use quality materials. And to make things even more complicated, when brands use only sustainable

materials, pay employees fairly, and do not copy small brands ideas, it takes much more time to produce the products. This of course means these brands must put in the work of forecasting the trends themselves and have to plan years ahead so be able to continue their CSR efforts (sustainability, fair wages, original ideas). Luckily, there are lots of organizations that can help with this; small brands can pay these organizations in to learn detailed information and research about upcoming trends:

- WGSN
- Fashion Snoops
- Trend union
- Trend bible
- EDITD
- Trend council
- Trend stoop
- F-trend
- Spate
- Heuritech
- The future laboratory

(Sourcing: Trend Forecasting Agencies 2021)

There are some established brands that have perfected this practice. For example, designer Stella McCartney uses lots of trend forecasting research. Stella McCartney has been ahead of the game in terms of sustainability practices. This brand has focused on three main ways to be sustainable: sustainable materials and innovation, social sustainability and measuring their impact. Stella McCartney is paving a new path: sustainable luxury. In most designer brands,

it has been normalized that animal materials, such as crocodile skin or leathers, are the only materials labeled as ‘luxury.’ However, Stella McCartney is proving that luxury can be animal-free; Stella McCartney is notoriously known for using all vegan leathers. In addition, Stella McCartney has implemented multiple other initiatives, such as:

- The use of numerous eco-friendly materials including recycled polyester, organic cotton, and regenerated cashmere.
- They have waste-reduction strategies in place across their entire supply chain, and they measure and report on their direct and indirect greenhouse gas emissions. Taking it a step further, they have set an approved science-based target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and a 2020 deadline for the elimination of hazardous chemicals in their production line.
- They are also doing well on the waterfront – with water reduction targets in place, and a solid treatment and discharge practice for wastewater.
- The brand has partnered with PETA on various projects and never uses real fur in her designs and is aiming for sustainable animal material options. The brand does not use leather, down, fur, angora, shearling or exotic animal skins or hairs (however, it does use wool and cashmere)

(The 25 Most Sustainable 2021)

However, of course valuing these ethics means that the brand must compromise in some way, and they choose to plan design launches year in advance. By valuing trend forecasting research, they can comfortably plan years in advance, which is always the time to implement the brands ethics. Stella McCartney states, “When you work in a sustainable way in any industry, you have to be so much more ahead with timing. I have to work three or four years in advance to

source sustainable viscose, for example” (The 25 Most Sustainable 2021). Although it is much more work to have CSR values, it means that the brand must be extra savvy in their marketing and strategies.

Stella McCartney emphasizes that this is the future of fashion, “The question more than ever is ‘What is luxury?’ It’s certainly not a bloody crocodile handbag, I can tell you that much. For me, luxury is having a healthy planet and making the right choices, being conscious of your place on the planet. It’s not a fashion question. This is a lifestyle question. The big brands are going to have to stand up and pay attention, and certainly they’ve seen that at Kering. And I know now from Mr. Arnault and working with the LVMH group that the investment they have shown with me absolutely supports that. They’re not stupid; they know this is an area where they can do better, and they want to. Also, these are big ships, and it takes time to turn them from the iceberg. And I’m an agile little pirate ship” (The 25 Most Sustainable 2021).

Small brands are the ones creating a better future of fashion, which is why consumers' money should support these brands instead of fast fashion brands. However, it is unfortunately not that simple; fast fashion has created a cycle of the ability to over consume at unethically cheap prices. We need to support these brands to also prove that consumers want more brands with CSR values. And big brands are catching on to this; they know that they will limit their future success if they do not consider implementing CSR, and of course, that means trend forecasting is the future as well.

## Leadership

As we learned earlier, there are a lot of fashion brands that do not value Corporate Social Responsibility or their brand's stakeholders. This means that their *leader* is implementing these values, or lack of. The historical ruthlessness of the high fashion industry *and* fast fashion industry have both made the industry feel *cold* and *greedy*. Fashion entrepreneurs *must be* unstoppable and somewhat rigid to be successful in the industry, however, there are ways to still be a fashion powerhouse but still value and be kind to stakeholders. Let's consider what some fashion leaders are doing to *counter* this negative norm in the fashion industry, and instead, are kind leaders.

Let's take Danielle Guizo. We discussed her brand earlier, but let's review quickly; Danielle created *Danielle Guizo*, which is a luxury ready-to-wear women's street style brand. The brand was established in 2014 and is now seen on fashion moguls like Hailey Bieber, Bella Hadid, and many more. Although the brand has become immensely successful, Danielle Guizo is still able to connect with her consumers intimately. She accomplishes this by sharing her design process on her own personal Instagram, responding to fans via direct message, and asking for consumer's insights on new colorways and designs. She also shares people on her team, which makes the consumer feel like they know *exactly* who their money would be supporting. In addition, she often posts on her Instagram stories relevant social issues, such as racial hate crimes and gender issues. This concern for her community has been consistent for years.

During the rise of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement in the summer of 2020, Danielle Guizo took initiative as a leader. Using her immense influence, on her brand's Instagram page as well as her own personal page, she consistently posted resources, ways to donate, and content that emphasized her support for the black community (Danielle Guizo 2021).

In addition, instead of sending her regular emails that highlighted new arrivals and items restocked, she would highlight different black creators in the fashion industry. She shared dozens of black creators, in addition to their Instagram links, websites, and photos of their work.

Danielle's stakeholder-focused leadership has been consistent for years, which is why it felt so genuine during the BLM movement. Danielle has found the perfect balance of being a fashion powerhouse leader, but never becoming greedy.

There were many other fashion brands that put forth genuine effort to highlight their value for the black community. The London skate brand, Palace, pledged \$1 million to BLM-related causes, with initial funds going to The Stephen Lawrence Charitable Trust and the BLM organization. In addition, Palace shared a statement on Instagram emphasizing that their commitment to the black community is a journey, rather than a one-time thing. Nike has pledged \$40 million to support the Black community and committed to investing in "organizations that put social justice, education, and addressing racial inequality in America at the center of their work." In addition to this, Michael Jordan and the Jordan label have pledged \$100 million across the course of the next ten years to a series of similar causes (Here are the Brands 2021).

After protesters broke into Marc Jacobs' Rodeo Drive store, the designer shared a photo of its defaced plaque. The 'Marc Jacobs' sign was struck through and replaced with the names 'George Floyd' and 'Sandra Bland,' the designer wrote 'A life cannot be replaced. Black Lives Matter' in an accompanying caption. Since Floyd's death, Marc Jacobs has also been posting learning resources, links to charitable causes, and messages of solidarity on both his Instagram grid and his stories (Here are the Brands 2021). All these *immensely* successful fashion brands have proven that *brands need to use their influence and resources for their community*. These brands have proven that not only can a brand be successful *and* caring, but these characteristics

go hand-in-hand. Consumers *appreciated* these brands efforts, and in result, it made them want to support the brands even more.

Unfortunately, Danielle's and other brands' caring, and supportive leadership style is not the norm in the fashion industry. There are many brands that have always been silent when it comes to CSR, their business practices, and general societal issues, so it is hardly surprising that they remained silent during the BLM movement. Additionally, there are some brands that publicly show support for the BLM movement, but their leadership practices showed otherwise.

One such brand, Aritzia, is a fashion brand known for its sustainability and ready-to-wear basics. This summer, they initially received praise for their \$100,000 donation to BLM and the NAACP. However, they quickly received backlash for the gap between their public values and what actually happens in their organization (Ex-Aritzia Employees 2021).

Former employee Karissa Lewis responded to Aritzia's social media post about their BLM donation by sharing her personal experience working as an associate manager for the brand. In an Instagram story, Lewis shares that during her five-month tenure as the only Black manager on her team, she was treated differently by other managers, blatantly disrespected by customers, and given cashier shifts despite being an associate manager. In an email to FLARE, a spokesperson for Aritzia stated: "These allegations were never reported to Aritzia through any of the multiple channels available to our employees." Regarding Lewis's claims about being given cashier shifts, Jennifer Wong, Aritzia's President and COO said in an email: "At Aritzia we are a team. No task is considered unimportant, and no employee is seen to be too senior to pitch in and help where and when required. This is true all the way up to our CEO, who jumps on the cash desk, takes out the trash, and helps on the floor when he's in our stores. Regardless of title or the

task, we are all expected to do whatever needs to get done, period” (Ex-Aritzia Employees 2021).

In her Instagram story, Lewis also shared a particular incident in which she claims that a Black employee was fired for speaking up about racism in the store, a decision Lewis says she—as the store’s associate manager—was not made aware of until after the employee was fired. In the same email to FLARE, the spokesperson for the company said that as Lewis was not this individual’s supervisor or manager, she wouldn’t have been involved in decisions related to their performance and her involvement wouldn’t have been appropriate (Ex-Aritzia Employees 2021).

In a follow-up June 10 interview with Huffington Post, Lewis described the overall culture of the company and its stores as “very clique-y, very exclusionary,” and alleged that Aritzia taught their employees “code words” to describe certain types of customers, “so you would know that you should spend your time with certain people and not others,” Lewis said. Per HuffPo, “A” would stand for Asian “as they were seen as being rich” and “TW” would stand for “time waster,” AKA someone who would use up an associate’s time and not buy anything. According to Lewis, this could include Black customers (Ex-Aritzia Employees 2021).

Other users on Twitter and Instagram also responded to Aritzia’s donation announcement, recounting incidents in which they, as staff, were told to follow young Black customers around the store until they left. Narineh Panosian responded on June 8, 2020 via Twitter, “I worked at @ARITZIA in Ottawa, Canada for one month many years ago. The manager at that time would instruct employees to approach black youth every 2 minutes asking if they “need help” until they left the store because they felt unwelcome and harassed. Never with white youth.” Another former employee responded as well, sharing that as the only black

employee, they were told to straighten their hair to maintain the store image (Ex-Aritzia Employees 2021).

Aritzia exemplifies that a brand's public values and CSR practices *are only powerful* if the organization's leadership implements these values as well. Despite their donation, this brand is viewed as problematic (rightfully so) because *they only value the black community publicly to receive praise*. Aritzia's responses to these former employees were *way less caring* than necessary and the company didn't take enough corrective action (Ex-Aritzia Employees 2021) .

It is *crucial* that fashion leaders value CSR and their stakeholders. Not because it's always more profitable or results in higher ROI, but because it's the right thing to do. Fashion brands have the power, influence, and resources to take care of their employees, consumers, and communities. Doing so should not be a tough decision to make.

## Pricing

As we have established, fair pricing is exceedingly difficult. And of course, pricing is an especially important element to the consumer. In order to create an *effective* price point for a product, material, production, and labor costs all need to be considered, as well as a profit margin for the company. When a company does this ethically and profitably, the product will *not* be the cheapest version on the market; unfortunately, people have been programmed to regard fast fashion pricing as a baseline of how much clothing should cost. But as established, fast fashion costs are problematic in many ways. This leaves brands to struggle with the question, “*How do we achieve a profit margin at a price that consumers will accept?*”

Of course, there is a lot to consider when answering this question (type of product, manufacturing costs, etc.), but we are going to focus on one *especially important* part: *what is my audience willing to spend?*

Let’s look at a brand that did a great job of answering this question. In the sustainability chapter, we discussed the underwear brand, Parade. This is a sustainable, size inclusive underwear brand. The brand understood that the colorful designs, its presence on social media, models, brand values, and overall trendy brand aesthetic would likely gather a *young audience*, more specifically, women that are around ages 15-30. When answering the question, “*what is my audience willing to spend?*”, Parade's team knew that their audience was likely going to have a much more conservative budget. All of Parade’s underwear is between \$8-\$14 which is very affordable (Parade 2021). In result, their brand has been remarkably successful; they are growing exponentially on Instagram and have collaborated with the large brand, Juicy Couture. Parade has proven that sustainable and size inclusive products *can also be affordable*, in addition to showing a great consumer understanding.

Now, let's look at an example of where the price did *not* agree with the audience. It was recently announced by luxury conglomerate, LVMH, that Rihanna's fashion line, Fenty, will be paused indefinitely after only two years of existence. This was a massive shock, given that Rihanna's other brands, Savage X Fenty, Fenty Beauty, and Fenty Skin, are all extremely successful. But all of these brands had one thing in common: an affordable price point. These brands are able to be consumed by people with a variety of budgets. On the other hand, Fenty, was Rihanna's *only* luxury brand. Fenty was under the luxury goods company, LVMH that also owned fashion houses such as Christian Dior, Louis Vuitton and more. Thus, the prices were similar to major design houses, which is of course, very expensive.

According to fashion analysts, despite Rihanna's *massive* fanbase, the Fenty label's prices were just too steep for the audience (Saadan 2021). In fact, when the first fashion collection was first introduced in May 2019, many potential consumers were *shocked* at the prices, which resulted in some backlash. Because of Rihanna's cult-following, Fenty's team was quick to assume that Rihanna's fans would be willing to buy anything *at any price* from her brands. They failed to consider that Rihanna's empire, which includes all of her brands, has a very *young* audience, which is why her more affordable brands have been immensely successful.

The first Fenty collection priced in the entry designer category: Jogger pants cost \$280, T-shirts started at \$180, hoodies at \$300, an oversized padded denim jacket for \$940 and dresses between \$600-700 US dollars. Initially, the drops were averaging every six to eight weeks, with seven deliveries in 2019 and six in 2020 (Saadan 2021). This meant a very high supply with too low of a demand because Fenty's price *did not* reflect the audience. Fenty's audience ranges in ages 15-30 years old. And of course, this is *not* the average budget of a teen or young adult.

Fenty's failure to assess what their audience is willing to spend encouraged their downfall. Fenty had so many *powerful* aspects: Rihanna's incredible following, the immense success of her other brands, a collaboration with powerhouse LVMH, and the ability to create beautiful, on-trend, unique pieces. The rise and fall of Fenty proves *how crucial* pricing is.

## Concluding Thoughts

The combination of implementing Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives and Essential Marketing Strategies: early trend forecasting, thoughtful leadership practices, and audience-based pricing creates a business model that is built for the future of fashion.

Social media presence is only becoming more crucial with time; working with fashion-influencers and creating a social media marketing strategy similar to Savage X Fenty is almost *foolproof*. The ability to forecast trends is essential when creating an original, ethical brand. Forecasting trends allows a brand to create unique pieces that can drop *right* when the consumer is starting to want it. Sustainable materials and being size inclusive is more time consuming and planning ahead allows for these practices to happen smoothly. A brand's leadership is crucial; fashion brands are notorious for being greedy and inconsiderate, but consumers are now wanting to support brands and leaders that are ethical. And a fashion entrepreneur needs to be willing to give their 110%, or else their business will quickly fail. And lastly, a brand's pricing strategy has to be a reflection of their audience. As we saw with the rise and fall of Fenty, no matter how many powerful resources a brand has, prices will make or break their success. These strategies allow the audience to understand organizational values and create opportunity for the brand to *flourish*.



## Conclusion

The fast fashion industry has massively changed the way consumers buy clothing. Firstly, it normalized globalized labor. Secondly, it has encourages over-consumerism, and has caused people to buy more than they ever had before. And lastly, the fast fashion industry has normalized extremely unethical methods of production.

Because of how competitive the fashion industry is, brands wanted to find a way to mass produce trendy pieces at the lowest cost possible. Unfortunately, these brands accomplish this by using international labor, exploiting child labor, paying inhumane wages, and using facilities with dangerous working conditions. Furthermore, fast fashion methodologies include detrimental environmental practices, which have had an extremely negative impact on our Earth. Thus, the fashion industry has normalized the absence of Corporate Social Responsibility. But the industry is changing; consumers no longer want to support brands without ethics. In order to create a successful fashion brand, leaders will need to implement essential marketing strategies in order to compensate for the cost of CSR. The utilization of essential marketing strategies, such as utilizing social media, specific leadership approaches, trend forecasting, and pricing that reflects the consumer, can be used to highlight the importance of corporate social responsibility in the fashion industry.

The fast industry has begun to shift, but we are just at the beginning. As of right now, it is still difficult to find a brand that is truly ethical and does not take any shortcuts. Although we are not where we need to be yet in terms of ethical brands, *we are moving forward*. The *exponential* rise of concern about ethical brands proves where the future of fashion lies. Consumers want to know what values they are supporting when purchasing from a brand. The industry and consumers are changing; consumers expect brands to do more than just sell trendy items.



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