THE FASHION INDUSTRY: FAST FASHION AND ENVIRONMENT

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ÍNDEX

A.INDEX OF IMAGES

B.INDEX OF GRAPHS

1. INTRODUCTION

This work will focus on the analysis of the fashion industry and some of the factors that influence both said industry and the environment.

Nowadays, apart from the importance on an economic level, since a large number of people are working within it and not exactly in the most favourable conditions, there are also other factors regarding the environment, which like the aforementioned is very relevant.

The fashion industry is not only one of the industries that provides the most employment to many countries. The countries in which Human Rights, such as a living wage, are respected to a lesser extent are those that offer cheaper labour and therefore this makes them a favourite destination of the big brands when it comes to producing.

Not only is there labour exploitation within this industry but it is also one of the industries that needs the most natural resources and one of the most polluting in the world after oil, according to a conference held by the United Nations (UN, sf) on trade and development. This is due to the use of chemicals, the large amounts of water, the use of transgenic seeds and oil for the production of synthetic fibres such as polyester, as well as other resources that are necessary for the production, which will be discussed in greater detail throughout this investigation.

In this context, some of the questions that arise are: how have the big brands adapted to this new situation?; how did they hold up despite the successive restrictions?. In addition to issues such as the use of new technologies and the increase in online sales during this new reality in which many companies had to find a way to adapt in order to survive. In order to answer all the aforementioned questions, a survey was carried out, which was completed by a series of secondary sources.

Additionally, I will address a problem that has not only affected health but has also had an effect on an economic level, from which no industry has remained safe, including the fashion industry, which is the arrival of the global pandemic caused by COVID-19. COVID-19, a problem already known worldwide from 2020 that brought with it many changes, restrictions and new habits of both consumption and life and from which, as previously stated, the fashion industry did not go unpunished.

In sum and as I explain in the conclusion section, I will discuss how a more sustainable fashion industry can be created to try to alleviate all the negative effects of it, with the aim of affecting both the environment and people that work within the industry as little as possible, since these topics are becoming more and more relevant, thanks to greater awareness. In addition, I will mention and briefly review some brands and designers who care and make their contribution to the development of a fashion industry with higher quality in order to give garments a longer life cycle and in this way to pave the way to a fashion industry that is slower and less aggressive to the environment.

Keywords: fashion, pollution, environment, labour exploitation, physical stores, fast fashion, Covid-19, sustainability.

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Creative Industry Concept

Before defining both the creative industry and the fashion industry, the concept of creativity must be previously defined since it can be defined in many ways. If the definition of the Oxford Psychology Dictionary is taken into account, creativity is understood as "The production of ideas and objects that are both novel or original and worthwhile or appropriate, that is, useful, attractive, meaningful, or correct." (Colman, 2009).

Creativity is important both individually and socially. On an individual level, creativity is important when solving problems both at work and in daily life. On the other hand, on a social level, it has a great impact on many aspects.

Creativity leads to new discoveries, new artistic movements, new endeavours, and new social structures (Sternberg, p. 3, 1999).

From a philosophical perspective, there are five main forms or levels in professional creativity (Alfred Taylor, 1959):

- Expressive level: Connects the discovery of new forms, images or ideas with the expression of feelings.
- Productive level: The author gives more importance to the execution technique, showing a greater concern for numbers than for the form or concept.
- Innovative level: The importance lies in originality to think, produce or create.
- Inventive level: At this level the number of inventions and the ability to discover new realities are predefined.
- Emerging level: In this last level, talent is defined.

Finally, from a more economic and corporate perspective, "creativity is the ability of an individual to produce original answers to every problem that he may encounter." According to the famous Stanford University economist, (Paul Romer, 1999), the economy is largely based on people's creativity, in that all new ideas emerge from people's minds, before becoming a new deal.

2.2. The Concept of Creativity and Fashion Industry

UNESCO presents an inclusive and open definition of cultural and creative industries: “Those sectors of organised activity that have as their main objective the production or reproduction, the promotion, distribution or commercialisation of goods, services and activities of content derived from cultural, artistic or heritage origins”. (UNESCO, sf).

The concept of creative industry originates from "cultural industry", which is defined as the creation, industrial reproduction and mass distribution of cultural works and was first coined in 1948 by Adorno and Max Horkheimer.

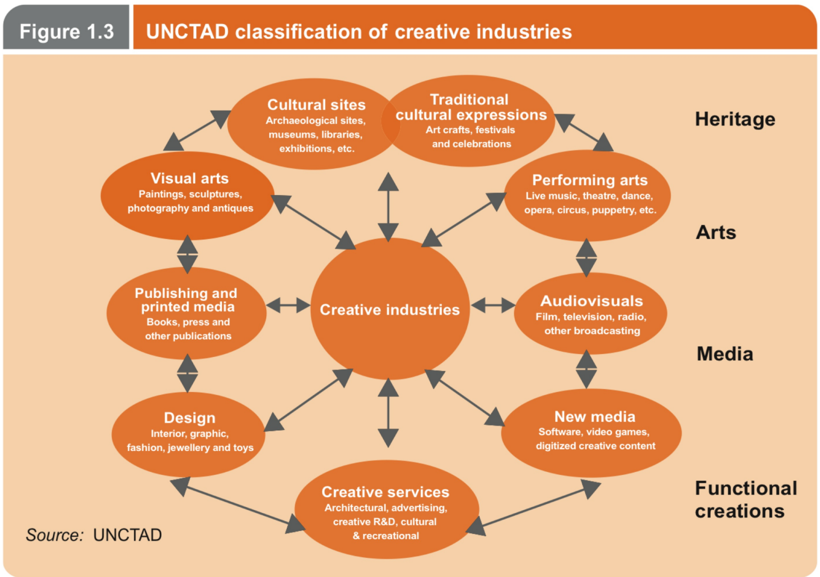
In the 1990s, in both Australia and the UK, the concept further evolved towards a creative concept but with an economic nature.The fact that the creative economy places a greater emphasis on creativity and presents it as the engine that drives innovation, technological change and as a comparative advantage when it comes to business development.This resulted in the use of the term "creative industry" in policy development circles.

These industries were defined in the UK as “those industries which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property” (DCMS, 2001).

The creative industry has a great scope, since several sectors interact, which make up the creative industry.

The UNCTAD (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development) classifies the creative industry into four large groups which are: heritage, arts, media and functional creations. From these four groups, nine subgroups emerge. The subgroups are reflected in the image attached below (Image 1):

Image 1. UNCTAD Creative Industries Classification



Source: UNCTAD "Creative Economy Report 2010"

Within the creative industry is the fashion industry. According to the RAE (Royal Spanish Academy), the term 'fashion' - in its second meaning - is a "collective and changing taste in relation to clothing and accessories". From the term "fashion" the word "dressmaker" is derived, which is defined as the creator of garments, whose creation process starts from a model or pattern which defines the shape of the garment to later go on to its manufacture using various textile procedures and with different materials. Thus, the term dressmaker is encompassed within the "textile arts", which are manifested through embroidery and fabrics and in turn are part of the applied arts.

The fashion industry is full of challenges and opportunities which is due to its constant reinvention. According to Marnie Fogg, The goal of fashion is "to adorn the human body as an expression of identity" (Marnie Fogg, 2016), as well as it being "a changing reflection of our way of being and of the times we live in" (Georgina O ' Hara, 1989).

The concept of fashion is accompanied by some social, aesthetic and cultural components, which have not occurred in all time periods and places. The term fashion has several meanings, in general it can refer to the tastes, customs and uses most accepted by society at a certain time and place.

2.3. The History of the Fashion Industry

The outlook on the fashion industry is known to evolve over time. Fashion as it is known today, originates in the mid 15th century at the beginning of the well-known European Renaissance. It went from being a necessity to cover oneself with animal skins in order to protect oneself from the weather or other factors during prehistory, to being an accessory, in which, in addition to looking for functionality, the aesthetic and sometimes the differentiating factor is sought.

During the Middle Ages, those with higher economic power, such as nobles, used clothing to mark their social status. The seamstresses of said era had to create different styles and use sophisticated materials so that their clients could feel special and different from the rest. Another relevant aspect of the history of fashion occurred during the industrial revolution with the arrival of machines that could produce garments at a higher speed in larger quantities. With the mass production of garments, costs were reduced and this made them more affordable. Garments with higher quality and with different styles.

Each era has been marked by different styles, ranging from long dresses with a fitted waist that went to the knee during the 50s to the miniskirt that entailed a revolution for the 60s. Then also came jackets, t-shirts and even more revolutionary, the bikinis.

In the 70s came the "elephant leg" pants and colourful prints, which remained until the 80s, and fluorescent colours, metallic dresses, leather or synthetic fabrics began to be used.

Nowadays, in the 21st century, the influence of fashion that corresponds to previous eras merged with new trends can be observed, resulting in a varied and diverse fashion industry.

Image 2: Evolution of clothing

Source: Fashion Entrepreneurs Blog

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study carried out is based on the review of published material about the fashion and textile industries.

The research methodology used consists of the interpretation and collection of data mainly through secondary sources. This data was available on websites, magazines, articles and even documentaries related to some of the points that are part of this study. In addition, in order to expand the information and have primary sources, around one hundred people have been surveyed so that it is possible to contrast the results with the information found in secondary sources and also to have updated information.
The majority of people surveyed are females (62.4%), in the age range that goes from 20 to 25 years, this represents 73.3%, in contrast to 7.9% of those interviewed who are over 30 years old. Most of them are students or workers in the service sector.

Due to the fact that the present academic work is developed in a certain period of time, it has not been possible to interview a greater number of people and the results could be biased because the majority of people interviewed are in a specific age range and belong to the same gender, in this case, female.
The questionnaire that was carried out to obtain the information is located in point seven called “Annex”.

The type of research used for the study is descriptive, since the objective is to explain the current situation, the characteristics and above all to make the reader aware and to inform about the important impact that this industry has on the planet, and to publicise the measures that have been taken over the years to alleviate it.

A period of 4 years, between 2018 and 2021, has been observed to understand both the growth and the changes that occurred in the sector with the arrival of the global pandemic due to COVID-19. The study area is both the European continent and the Asian continent.

Highlighting within the European continent the fashion capitals: Paris (France), Milan (Italy), and Spain, as although none of its cities is considered a fashion capital, it will be taken into account since the people surveyed mostly live in said country. London (United Kingdom) and New York (USA) are also taken into account, both considered fashion cities, as well as the two mentioned above.
Within the Asian continent, Bangladesh, India and Pakistan will be taken into account given their status as main suppliers within this great industry.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Fast Fashion

According to the Cambridge Dictionary, Fast Fashion means "clothes that are made and sold cheaply, so that people can buy new clothes often: Instead of having two seasons, fast fashion gives us new variations on T-shirts and jeans every week", this makes the fashion industry unsustainable.

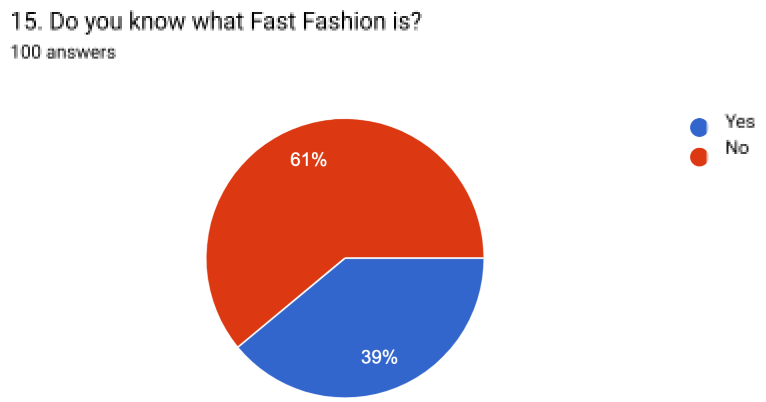
Factors such as the worldwide expansion of the textile industry, the globalisation and the distribution, but mainly the form of consumption since the collections are designed and produced at high rates and low cost, in order to supply the demand and the rhythm of accelerated consumption. All this with the aim to give consumers access to the latest new release at a good price.

With Fast Fashion the useful lifespan of a garment is reduced, the average use of a garment according to a report by the United Nations Organization (UN, sf), is approximately 10 times before being discarded and each year about 16,000 tons of clothing are thrown away.

As of the year 2000, due to globalisation, many companies were able to relocate their factories in order to be able to produce with cheaper labour. Fast Fashion became the preferred option thanks to low-price disposable products, this occurred at a time of an economic crisis, during which these products fit in due to the loss of purchasing power by consumers and remained in post-crisis times as it allows changing clothes more frequently, which favours the levels of contamination.

The emergence of Fast Fashion together with hyper-consumerism has given rise to new behaviours, consumption habits and lifestyle, to such an extent that the situation is no longer sustainable. According to the results obtained from the survey carried out, 61% of those surveyed have no knowledge about what Fast Fashion is, despite the fact that the vast majority of them use brands belonging to the Inditex group that markets this type of clothing while only 39% do know what it is.

Graph 1: Awareness of Fast Fashion



Source: Prepared by the author

4.2. The role of the Fashion Industry in the Economy

The fashion industry encompasses the textile industry, which represents one of the engines behind the growth of less developed economies and represents one of the pillars on which their economy is based.

Fashion is a social phenomenon that groups together different aspects such as: psychological, political, economic, etc. It is known that in countries such as Asia, the production of fashion items represents 40% of industrial jobs and according to a study carried out by The Sustainable Fashion Blueprint states that the global textile manufacturing sector, together with clothing, leather and footwear, generated a turnover of one billion euros in 2018.

Today, it is known that the fashion industry is full of both opportunities and challenges since all the companies that are part of it must be in constant reinvention. Within this industry there is great diversity in terms of jobs. There are: designers, textile producers, models, merchants, and those who occupy the last link in the chain, who are the so-called consumers, and it is important to know both their needs and their demands.

The fashion industry brings together three large groups: textile production, clothing production and retail. Without these three the fashion industry would not exist.
The first to lead the value chain, which is the textile industry, is in charge of the production of threads and fabrics which will then be used in the second phase, which is the "production of clothing" in which the process is carried out. Once the garments are made, they go to the third phase, the “Retail sale” chain, which consists of distribution and the consumer's shopping experience. Within the textile industry, both labour and machinery are required.

Image 3: Value chain of the fashion industry

Source: Prepared by the author

4.3. Haute Couture and Prêt à Porter clothing brands

Within the fashion industry, the following are distinguished: Haute Couture and Prêt à Porter, which in turn is classified into two parts. Both segments differ according to the degree of exclusivity, the price of their products and the technology used in the production process.

Haute couture was born in 1858, when Charles-Frédéric Worth, born in the United Kingdom on October 13th 1825, considered the first haute couture designer in the world, created his tailor shop on Rue de Paix, a Parisian street in France. He became the first "creator" and was the first to present his collections to his clients, with models in motion, in luxurious salons located in the city and made one collection a year. This is how the practice of making seasonal collections began, which was an idea that revolutionised the era and that designers continue to do to this day.

Marie-Jeanne Bertín, better known as Rose Bertín, was also one of the first high fashion designers, this French designer born on July 2nd 1747, became famous for the works she produced for Queen Marie Antoinette, who visited up to twice a week in order to present the new releases that she had prepared exclusively for her. She was the Queen's milliner and dressmaker.

At that time, Paris was already known as one of the cities of fashion for its elegance. This led to the emergence of more businesses that were dedicated to sewing.

Image 4: Marie-Jeanne Bertin (1747 - 1813)

Source: Women of History Blog

Image 5: Charles Frederick Worth (1825 - 1895)

Source: Triangle Magazine

Today, haute couture represents one of the economic engines of the fashion industry, and it is also protected by law by the French Federation of Haute Couture.

One of the requirements to be part of the "official calendar" is to present at least two collections a year in Paris, with 50 looks each one of them and also, the creation of the garments must be 100% handmade, in their own workshops and with at least 20 petites-mains (expert craftsmen) and also the looks must be made for measure for private clients. It is estimated that there are only around 2,000 haute couture buyers in the world and that its main customers are: Russia, Brazil, India and the Middle East. It should be noted that not all luxury brands have lines that are considered haute couture.

On the other hand, the Prêt à Porter, in the 1950s this term was coined by Prieto Constante Cardin better known as Pierre Cardin, a French fashion designer of Italian origin born on July 2nd 1922 who intended to favour the democratisation of access to fashion.

Pierre Cardin, was formed by Elsa Schiaparelli and Christian Dior. During the post-war European era, when very few customers could afford a custom design and haute couture was losing steam due to these circumstances.

Ready-to-wear fashion is divided into two main categories:

● Luxury Prêt-à-porter: It is characterised by the fact that haute couture designers produce ready-to-wear collections. Its price is also high and it is considered high-end.
● Prêt-à-porter masstige or diffusion: This happens when high-end designers decide to present a “diffusion or bridge” line, in order to bring their products closer to the mid-range market.

Ready-to-Wear clothing is produced industrially, this means that it is mass produced in series, it is usually for casual or less formal use and the materials used are cheaper. They are made with measurements which correspond to the standard sizes of most people, therefore they are not garments made to fit, there is no exclusivity. Cardin was a pioneer in proposing a pattern system to make this possible.

When this type of fashion emerged, its distribution took place in what were known as "boutiques", which are equivalent to what we know today as shopping centres or department stores. In the beginning, this type of fashion was not very successful, but when big brands such as Chanel and Yves Saint Lauren joined, its acceptance improved.

It should be noted that during the 50s many haute couture designers opposed Prêt-à-porter and defended artisanal and custom-made garments.

Image 6: Pierre Cardin (1922 - 2020)

Source: Vogue Magazine

4.3.1. High fashion or luxury brands

Once the term "haute couture" and its origin have been defined, to better understand it, some examples are given.

Chanel S.A.

Gabrielle Chanel, better known as Coco Chanel, was born in Saumur, France in 1883 and revolutionised fashion and the world of haute couture in the interwar period. Breaking the fashion of her time with her formal and comfortable line, she freed the woman's body from corsets and bulky adornments, thus expressing the aspirations of freedom and equality of the woman of the twentieth century. Chanel became the prototype of a modern, active and liberated woman.

Fundo Chanel Modes was born in 1910 and today is known as Coco Chanel and her specialty is the design and manufacture of luxury items, such as ready-to-wear haute couture clothing: bags, perfumes, cosmetics, among others.

Her shows are held in major fashion capitals and her boutiques are located around the world in exclusive shopping districts. It operates in more than 300 stores around the world.

The house was revived in 1983 by the hand of designer Karl Lagerfeld and in 2018 it had sales of approximately 9.8 million.

Image 7: Gabrielle Chanel (1883 - 1971)

Source: Vogue Magazine

Image 8: Coco Chanel Logo

CHANEL

Source: Vogue Magazine

Christian Dior

Christian Dior, born in 1905 in Granville (France), founded his own haute couture brand in 1946 which bears his own name and had his headquarters in Paris. This was made possible due to the cotton magnate Marcel Boussac.

In 1947 he launched his first collection, the "Corolle" line. After the depression that arose as a result of the Second World War, Christian Dior could see the need for recovery and optimism in society and interpreted it through his clothes, thus giving a boost to fashion and defining the aesthetics of the 50s as the contrast that was introduced by Dior with its luxurious designs caused a sensation. This trend was known as the "New Look" thanks to the press. An haute couture dress from this brand is around €60,000.

Today the brand is led by the former creative director of Valentino, Maria Grazia Chiuri and has 160 boutiques around the world, its revenues in 2019 exceeded 50,000 million euros before Covid - 19.

Image 9: Christian Dior (1905 - 1957)

Source: Vogue Magazine

Image 10: Christian Dior Logo

Source: Vogue Magazine

Cristóbal Balenciaga

Cristóbal Balenciaga was born in 1895 in Getaria, a small town in the Basque Country. In 1918 he started his career when he founded "Balenciaga y Compañía", and decided to open his first boutique. In little time he gained prestige with which he obtained a clientele from the high aristocracy and royalty, which allowed him to expand the business by creating a second workshop.

In 1924, due to the good prospects of the business, he opened his first store in Madrid and just one year later he settled in Barcelona.

In 1937 he presented his first collection and the success was overwhelming, his creations based on comfort, the purity of lines, the reinterpretation of the Spanish tradition and the development of dimension defined the fashion between the 40s and until May 1968 when haute couture began to lose popularity in favour of prêt-à-porter. Some of his most important contributions to the fashion industry were: balloon-cut dresses, short jackets, “Pillbox” type hats and geometric silhouettes.

At the end of 2019, his turnover exceeded two 1.000 million euros and he has stores in 91 countries.

Image 11: Cristóbal Balenciaga (1895 - 1972)

Source: Vogue Magazine

Image 12: Balenciaga 2013-2021 Logo

BALENCIAGA

Source: Vogue Magazine

Versace

Gianni Versace was born in 1946 in Calabria (Italy), in 1976 he founded the Versace firm with the help of his brother Santo. In 1978, he opened his first store on Via Della Spiga in Milan, and a year later his sister Donatella also moved to Milan in order to work with her two brothers in the firm.

At the end of the eighties Versace had had great success with its main line and it was growing a lot, especially in the United States, therefore, in 1989 Gianni Versace decided to expand his business, thus creating a haute couture line to enter in the most "elitist" world and also created Versus Versace, a more youthful and rock line of which Donatella was in charge.

The Versace house has a very strong identity and also, its founder was responsible for initiating the phenomenon of red carpets and the birth of “Google Images”. In 2018 it became the property of Michael Kors Holding while Donatella Versace became Creative Director.

The Versace group distributes its products through a worldwide network of stores which are directly managed, which includes 200 boutiques located in major cities and more than 1200 wholesalers around the world. Its net earnings in 2017 were 15 million euros.

Image 13: Gianni Versace (1946 - 1997)

Source: Vogue Magazine

Image 14: Versace Logo

Source: Versace's Official Page

Some of the luxury brands currently also work with luxury prêt-à-porter such as: Coco Chanel and Versace that were described, Prada, Gucci, Burberry, Giorgio Armani, etc.

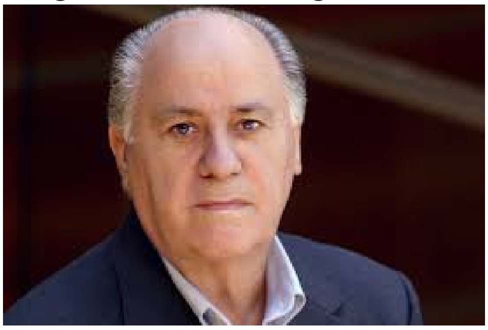
4.3.2. Prêt-à-porter brands, masstige or diffusion

Zara

Amancio Ortega Gaona, born in 1936 in Busdongo de Arbás (Spain), founded Zara.
Zara is a Spanish fashion store belonging to the Inditex group, it was founded in 1975 with the opening of its first store in La Coruña, Spain. It has more than 2,040 stores which are spread all over the world. In 2017 and 2019, it was ranked first in the ranking of the best Spanish brands, which was published by the global brand strategic consultant Interbrand and remains the most valuable brand in Spain. In addition, it was recognised as the most valuable brand in Spain above Movistar and Banco Santander.

Zara follows the Fast Fashion strategy, offering multiple alternatives to the consumer in the same space. Its supply chain is fast and flexible, through Just in Time it breaks the traditional supply rules since it is characterised by its reduced inventory. Its collections have a lot of rotations, and it supplies its stores twice a week.
When they finish designing a product, it is available between 10 and 15 days to encourage frequent visits from consumers. It produces more than 450 million garments a year.

Image 15: Amancio Ortega Gaona



Source: Executive Excellence

Image 16: Zara Logo

ZARA

Source: Logos-Marcas.com

Primark

The first Primark store was founded in 1969 by Arthur Ryan. Established in Dublin, this chain acquired the name of Penneys for its land, while after the acquisition of the business group Associated British Foods and its establishment in the United Kingdom, Primark is the name by which the new queen of low-cost would be known. It experienced a rapid expansion throughout the United Kingdom, mainly due to the withdrawal of the C&A shops, whose premises they immediately bought to settle in the country.

Primark took over the territory that had previously belonged to one of the largest and best-known Dutch low-cost fashion chains. With that first contact in 1973, Penneys would become known outside of Ireland as Primark.

Primark stands out for offering clothing and accessories at low prices. It is not dedicated to a specific sector, but you can find a wide range of lingerie and swimwear; decoration and bedding; accessories, makeup and beauty and hygiene products; and all this differentiated into men's, women's and children's collections.

The low prices are due to two fundamental parts: cost and labour savings.

Image 17: Arthur Ryan (1935 - 2019)

Source: El Mundo

Image 18: Primark Logo

Source: Primark's Official Page

H&M

It was founded in 1947 as Hennes, a specialist women's clothing store located in a city in Sweden. In the beginning, it had great success, so they decided to open a store in the capital, Stockholm. In the late 1960s, they decided to merge with another menswear store called Mauritz, and that's how H&M was born. Since then, the firm has not stopped expanding and multiplying, both in number of establishments and in products and brands offered. The founder, Erling Persson, was right to see that the fashion business needed a change.

At H&M, one of the strengths is its collaborations. Since, in recent years, it has collaborated with some of the most relevant designers and brands in the history of fashion. Names like Karl Lagerfeld, Isabel Marant, Stella McCartney and Alexander Wang, have been associated with the H&M label.

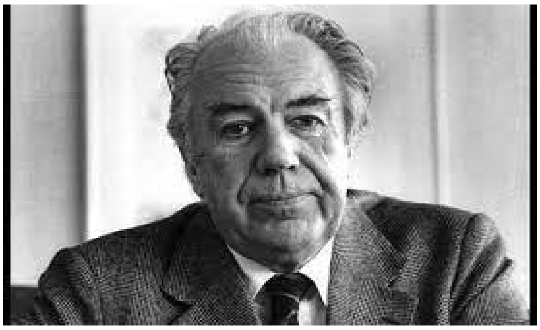
Regarding its business strategy, H&M is targeting another group of customers with more economic capacity and who need more timeless garments, betting on its other brands such as Other Stories, COS or the long-awaited Arket.

It was the first store to offer its customers to bring the clothes they no longer want to their establishments, so that they are recycled and thus can be converted into new materials. The Swedish company has been working on sustainability for years and they have already met several of the goals they set.

In 2016, 96% of the total electricity used in the company's activity came from renewable sources and 43% of the cotton used was of organic origin.

One of its latest proposals has been to present the Conscious Exclusive 2017 collection, made up of clothing made from organic materials and entirely recycled products.

Image 19: Erling Persson (1917 - 2002)



Source: Alchetron

Image 20: H&M Logo

Source: Logo-Marcas.com

4.4. Problems within the Fashion Industry

Another challenge that the fashion industry is facing is to become a more sustainable industry. This is due to the fact that the population is increasingly aware and demands that the impact of the production on the environment be reduced and that the products are not the result of the labour exploitation of developing countries
and that have few economic resources and that do not respect Human Rights, such as countries located in South Asia.

4.4.1. Resources used by the fashion industry

According to The Sustainable Fashion Blueprint report and the United Nations (UN, sf), the fashion industry is the second most polluting industry after oil, this is mainly due to the impact produced by cotton plantations and the emission of microfibers in the water. In addition, it produces more carbon emissions than all international flights and transport combined.

Before the arrival of the global pandemic, production had increased and had gone from producing two seasons to more than six, in order to offer new garments to the consumer every two months, which throws out clothes in half the time than 16 years ago, which favours high levels of contamination.

Textile production is responsible for 20% of global wastewater and 10% of global carbon emissions. Around 7,500 litres of water are used to make jeans, which is equivalent to the average amount consumed by a person in 7 years, while around 2,700 litres of water are used to produce a shirt weighing 250 grams.

To obtain 1 kilo of cotton material, around 10,800 litres of water are required, of which 45% represents the water used for the irrigation of the cotton plant; 41% is rainwater that evaporates from the crop field during the growing season; and 14% of that water is needed to dilute the wastewater that results from the use of fertilizers in the field and chemicals in the textile industry. Approximately 30,000 litres of water per ton are required for the bleaching of fabric. On a global scale, this industry uses between six and nine thousand billion litres of water each year just to dye fabrics. The vast majority use synthetic fibres which are derived from oil, these are: polyester, nylon, rayon or acrylic.

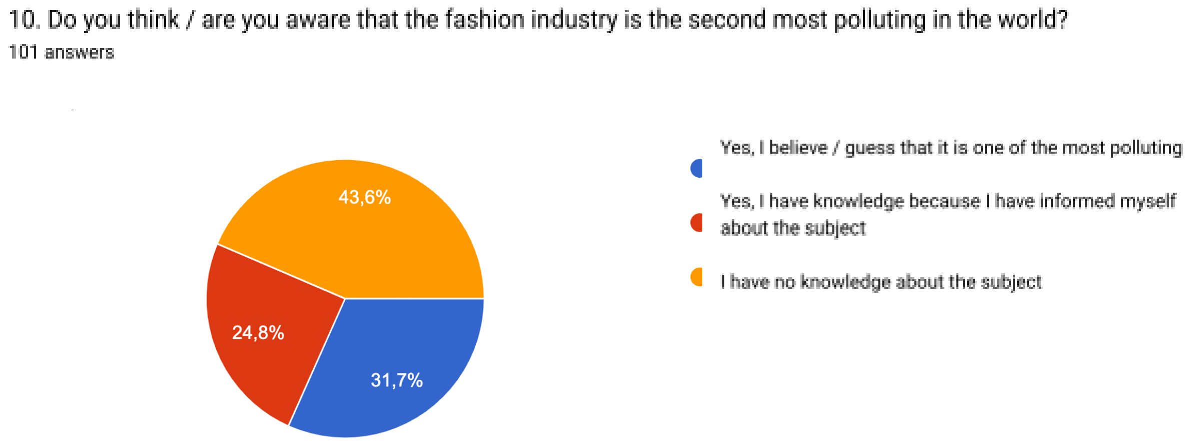
This industry is one of the most intensive in the use of water and energy. In addition, it is among those that generate the most polluting waste, due to the chemicals and non-biodegradable elements that it uses, such as dyes, surfactants, inorganic salts and other chemical compounds used in the production process.

Image 21: Buriganga River, Bangladesh

Source: Vogue Magazine

According to the survey carried out, 43.6% of those surveyed had no knowledge that the fashion industry is the second most polluting in the world, while 24.8% had been informed about the subject and the other 31.7% just guessed.

Graph 2: Fashion industry the second most polluting industry in the world



Source: Prepared by the author

4.4.2. The use of leathers

Another problem related to the fashion industry is animal abuse, as large brands often use animal skins to produce garments, which will be more expensive. These animals are in deplorable conditions locked in very small cages, poorly fed and even sick. The limitation of movement and the conditions in which they are found not only have physical but also psychological effects as they suffer from stress, nervousness and depression. In addition, when carrying out the production process for which it is necessary to have previously killed the animal to later extract its skin, the animal is treated cruelly and with little empathy, as some still have vital signs when their skin is taken, which is usually done because it is believed that by continuing to feed the skin with blood circulation the result will be smoother skin or hair.

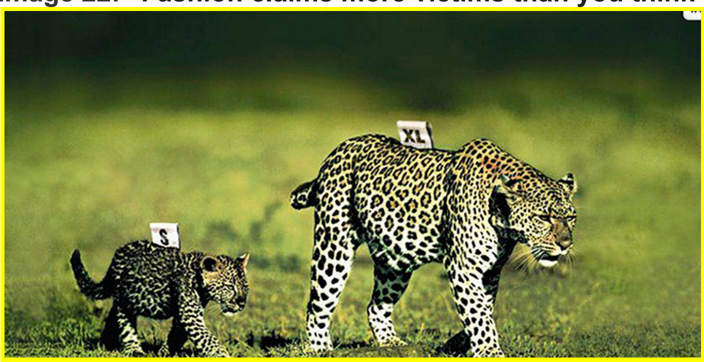
Every year about 31 million animals die on fur farms. These animals are killed by electrocution or neck breakage since any damage to the skin is avoided with this type of death.

It was in the middle of the year 1800 when animal fashion products began to be mass produced, from that year leather gained its status as a luxury good and through the creation of fur farms, the producers could guarantee sufficient stocks.

To produce a mink coat, approximately 60-80 minks and 18-20 foxes are needed but minks and foxes are not the only victims of this industry, as rabbits, beavers, sheep, otters, chinchillas are too, among others. Karakul sheep are native to Central Asia and one of the cruellest practices is carried out with them, which consists of sacrificing them before they are born or immediately after birth. With this, a type of fur called Astrakhan is obtained, which is short, soft and curly. A Karakul lamb coat is around 10,000 euros while one made with the skin of a fetus is more than 20,000 euros.

The most expensive leather in the world comes from Vicuña, it is within the family of camelids and the groups of South American camelids and is located mainly in Peru since the largest population is located there. The price per kilo is around 300 to 500 dollars. Tons of vicuña fibre are exported each year to England, Germany and the United States.

Image 22: "Fashion claims more victims than you think"



Source: WWF

Image 23: Rabbit used in the textile industry

Source: Diario El Universo

Image 24: Karakul Sheep

Source: EcuRed

Currently most leather goods firms try to work only with the leather of animals that have been slaughtered by the food industry and this practice is expected to become common by 2025. An important step was taken by countries such as Austria, Slovenia, Great Britain, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Macedonia and Norway by banning fur farms. More and more countries in the European Union protect fur animals through stricter national regulations.

4.4.3. Exploitation of Labour

One of the problems that goes hand in hand with the fashion industry is labour exploitation. The state of workers in countries located mainly in South Asia such as Bangladesh, Pakistan or India.

Bangladesh along with India and Pakistan are among the largest textile exporters in the world. This is due to the lack of binding international legislation that requires responsibility and also guarantees Human Rights in the textile production chain. The workers are in deplorable conditions and within the factories the presence of minors is notorious, who are taken by their parents so that they can help them support their home.

Big brands deny that companies that outsource in developing countries use children to produce their products. A report by the International Labour Organization (ILO)

estimates that there are a total of 17 million child labourers in South Asia, of which one in five is under 11 years old.
This figure is generated mainly by Bangladesh (5 million), India (5.8 million) and Pakistan (3.4 million), these are 3 of the 10 main suppliers of the European Union of clothing products. India and Pakistan are the main world suppliers of cotton and children are also observed working in their fields, while in Bangladesh children and adolescents are also present in clothing factories, handling toxic products for the leather tannery without any type of protection at the expense of their health, education and above all their general well-being and development.

Children and adolescents are not the only victims of this industry, women also are since, according to the Bangladesh Manufacturers Association, it is estimated that this industry employs around four million workers, of which approximately 80% are women who work up to 60 hours a week, with very low wages and unpaid overtime, suffering acts of violence, abuse and harassment in their workplace and on top of that, in unsanitary conditions. In Bangladesh, workers have a 12-hour working day without days off and an average salary of 8,000 taka which is equivalent to 95 euros in the case of adults and a daily pay that corresponds to 1 euro a day in the case of children and with merely verbal contracts.

In India, girls and adolescents between 14 and 20 years old work in the same conditions as in Bangladesh, however in this case they work 72 hours a week and 12 hours a day in the production peaks with a salary of 0.88 cents, which will only be available once they have worked for 3-5 years and which will later be used to pay the marriage dowry. Although the payment of dowry was prohibited by law in India in 1961, it is still a common practice in rural areas of the country. Many families incur high debts to be able to meet this expense in the hope that their daughters will escape misery if they manage to get married.

In the event that any of the workers decide to claim their disagreement due to low wages, dismissal is one of the ways that supplier companies intimidate their workers, an example of this was the 5,000 workers who were fired from a factory garment industry in 2019 for demanding a wage increase.

More than 70% of the European Union's textile imports come from Asia, which is also responsible for 58.4% of exports in this area, according to the World Trade Organization.
Its main clients are Inditex, El Corte Inglés and Cortefiel.

The catastrophe produced by the collapse of the Rana Plaza, a building that housed five garment factories located in the city of Savar, just over 30 kilometres from Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh on April 24, 2013, is another event that showed the other side of the fashion industry, with more than 1,000 deaths and more than 2,000 injured. However, none of the survivors were compensated for physical (mutilation) or psychological damage. According to a survey carried out in 2019 by the non-profit organization ActionAid Bangladesh, it was revealed that 51% of the people who worked in the factory were not able to return to work even six years after the tragedy due to either physical or mental trauma.
Even after such an event and the measures taken by their respective governments, it has not been possible to eradicate child labour, much less for workers to carry out their work safely.

However, after the collapse of the Rana Plaza, two business initiatives were created - “Accord" linked to European companies and "Alliance" to US companies with the aim of evaluating the conditions of workplaces in the textile industry. Both agencies carried out inspections in more than 2,000 factories and assured that the required repairs were carried out in most of them, in the same way that numerous structures which did not meet the minimum requirements have been closed. Advances have been made in security systems: opening of emergency exits, improvements in firefighting equipment or repair of electrical systems, as well as greater training of employees to act in an emergency. It should not be forgotten that the international projects developed after the disaster will not operate in Bangladesh forever, in fact, “Alliance” concluded its work in 2018 and “Accord” will end this year in 2021 at the latest.

Despite these advances, textile workers in Bangladesh continue to face inhumane deprivation, without access to things such as social security or accident insurance. In addition, the fear of reporting these bad conditions or the dangers they face since they know that the dismissal letter is a constant threat as mentioned above.

Despite the fact that a good amount of money has been invested to guarantee safety in the workplace, progress in the implementation of initiatives to guarantee workers' rights and their legal protection remains very poor, while in small and informal production facilities risks, regulations and safety measures are still continuously ignored.

Image 25: "The real cost of your dress is not on the tag"

Source: Victoria Janashvili

Image 26: Rana Plaza building collapse

Source: AFP

Image 27: Woman injured by the collapse of the Rana Plaza

Source: El Mundo Newspaper

4.5. How has COVID affected the Fashion Industry?

The arrival of Covid 19 also affected the textile industry, which is part of the production chain of the fashion industry. This is due in the first place, to the compulsory closure of shops and later to confinements and restrictions, both commercial and leisure, without forgetting the appearance of working from home. The latter was due to the fact that by not having to leave their homes to be able to work, people spent more time in house clothes at home and did not see the need to invest in new clothes. It should be noted that the number of purchases made online increased, but this was not enough to offset the losses suffered by the sector. Globally, sales fell by 30% while the profit of companies in the sector fell by 90%. Not only were the big brands affected by not being able to make their sales, but also the suppliers since, according to a survey carried out in 2020 by the “Workers’ Rights Consortium”, an organization that ensures the Human Rights of workers at a global level, stated that out of a sample taken from nine countries, around 38% of workers in textile factories had lost their jobs.

At the end of 2020, the textile sector lost between 20% - 25% of its sales globally. Losses were higher in Europe (25% -30%) and in the United States (20% -25%) than in China (5% -10%) according to the consulting firm Mckinsey & Company, which is a global strategic consultancy that focuses on solving problems related to strategic management and provides its services to the largest business companies, governments and institutions in the world.

On the other hand, according to the National Textile Trade Association (Acotex), which is the most representative organization of the Fashion and Retail sector in Spain, announced that the fall that occurred in Spain was 39.8%.

The beginning of the year 2021 was not very hopeful for said industry either since the third wave of the pandemic arrived and despite the fact that it was sales season, in the best of cases, sales will fall only by 5% in 2021 compared to year 2019 and up to 15% in case things do not go well. The figures for the year 2019 prior to the pandemic will not be recovered until the year 2022 or 2023. It should be noted that companies started the year with 25% of their inventory unsold, which is equivalent to approximately 140,000 and 160,000 million euros worldwide. Inditex was able to reduce its inventory for the year 2020 by around 11% due to its flexible model, that is, short, frequent productions and mostly produced in proximity. Stocks accumulated in 2020 after lockdowns and restrictions, which can still be sold in 2021, will reduce demand, as not only do sales drop, but it also reduces the ability to invest in new collections for the current year.

Another relevant aspect, offered by the general director of the Bangladesh Textile Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), which groups around 4,500 companies, is that in the case of the United States, the difference has hardly been noticed since its restrictions were laxer, their orders were only reduced by 0.8% while in Europe they fell 6.4% below the usual.

The circumstances produced by the pandemic have shown that agility and flexibility are two very important factors in the world of fashion to avoid inventory overload, in this case, shorter delivery times and in less quantity are key, or even better, the proximity to the factories.
The arrival of Covid-19 accelerated the end of mink farms in Europe, in 2020 they closed 73% of the 2,700 farms after revealing itself as a focal point of coronavirus infection, and several countries sped up the ban on the industry, while in Spain, 26 of the 29 farms were still active before the pandemic was declared.

On the other hand, with the arrival of this pandemic, according to the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), millions of children could be forced to work as a result. Since the year 2000 child labour had decreased by 94 million, it could be threatened by the arrival of the pandemic.

Covid-19 brings with it an increase in poverty that could lead to an increase in child labour of around 0.7% or more since in times of crisis, child labour becomes a survival mechanism for many families, according to the Executive Director of UNICEF.

4.5.1. How did COVID affect suppliers?

According to a report by the World Labour Organization (ILO), the arrival of COVID-19 wreaked havoc on the garment industry in the Asia-Pacific region due to a collapse in consumer demand, confinement measures made by governments and disruptions in raw material imports. This crisis not only affected millions of workers and companies which are part of the supply chain, but also caused a domino effect at various levels.

In some cases, imports from Asian producers in the main purchasing countries decreased by up to 70%. As soon as the crisis occurred, buyers began to cancel their orders. Garment manufacturers also suffered supply shocks for their imported inputs of up to 60%. The temporary closure of thousands of supplier factories multiplied the cases of dismissal and termination of workers. When there was an improvement in the situation and the factories reopened, the capacity of their workforce was diminished. The average worker lost between two and four weeks of work and only three out of five workers were reinstated in the factories while those who continued to work during the second quarter of 2020 had to face wage cuts and delays in the settlement of payments.

Spain, Italy and France are the countries most sensitive to this crisis since the fashion sector is highly integrated with Chinese suppliers. An example of this would be Zara, owned by Amacio Ortega, which supplies 10% of products from China.

The speed with which Zara and all the chains of the Amancio Ortega group are defined could become a "double-edged sword" since it seems that retailers with high turnover in their collections will be more affected than those that have a lower inventory turnover. This would be the case of H&M whose inventory turnover is lower than that of ZARA.

4.5.2. Will physical stores disappear as a result of the global pandemic?

The sales value of physical stores in the fashion industry fell by -33% in 2020 while online sales increased by around 55%.

Chains such as Inditex had been redirecting their activity in physical stores towards larger spaces, thus closing smaller stores which served as warehouses from which they gave service to their online channel.
This process was accelerated by the arrival of Covid-19 and allowed it to increase its online sales by 77%.
The aim is to close between 1,000 and 1,200 establishments in the world by 2022 and between 250 and 300 in Spain, this represents 14% of its global network and 17% of its network in Spain. It has already closed around 751 stores and intends to focus on investing in “emblematic” stores from which it can serve both online and face-to-face customers. Promising the relocation of workers from closed stores.

One of Inditex's great competitors, such as H&M, also announced the closure of 250 stores around the world and initiated an Employment Regulation File (ERE) that affected more than 1,000 people. In total, the chain has 170 establishments in Spain and employs more than 5,000 workers.

The Business Association of Textile, Complements and Leather Trade (Acotex), according to its forecast in Spain, the sector will lose around 38,000 establishments this year.
On the other hand, the fact that online sales are occupying an increasing market share does not mean that physical establishments are going to disappear, since many consumers are postponing their purchases for fear of contagion, but as soon as things are more safe, everything will return since in Spain shopping is equal to socializing and is part of the character of its citizens, in addition the shopping experience for the customer involves going to a physical store, since you cannot see the quality of the materials in the same way or try on the clothes when shopping online, and it is more difficult to get the sizes right, the advice that some stores offer when buying a garment is another one of the advantages of going to a physical store. Not to mention a certain audience of a certain age who find it easier to go directly to an establishment than to make use of new technologies to carry out a purchase.

Proof of this is the fact that stores such as AliExpress or Amazon have opened physical stores in order to break the limits of having only the online sales channel, and in this way it can offer greater comfort, confidence and better delivery times, and deal with returns faster.

Therefore, although there has been an increase in online sales, these continue to be supported by the presence of physical stores, although not as widespread as until this moment. With this we can conclude that digital has not come to "break" the face-to-face but to complement it and make it more efficient.
Taking into account the luxury industry, which has a turnover of around 800,000 million euros in the world, of which 9,000 million come from Spain, they suffered a drop in sales in 2020 of around 33%.
It should be noted that a physical store of a large chain is not the same as one that belongs to a luxury brand.
In the case of the former, despite all the inconveniences that the "new normal" entailed, they still continue to drag large masses to their shelves or sales, while those stores linked to luxury have an even smaller audience than usual, therefore these were affected to a greater extent.

In both cases, the physical experience is important and in the same way, luxury brands are looking for a way to merge the physical with the digital.

4.5.3. What do consumers prefer?

With the arrival of COVID-19 due to the imposed circumstances, Spanish consumers changed their consumption habits, however, most of them still prefer to go to a physical store.
Depending on the type of product in question, Spaniards prefer to go to a physical store to carry out their purchase or to make it online.

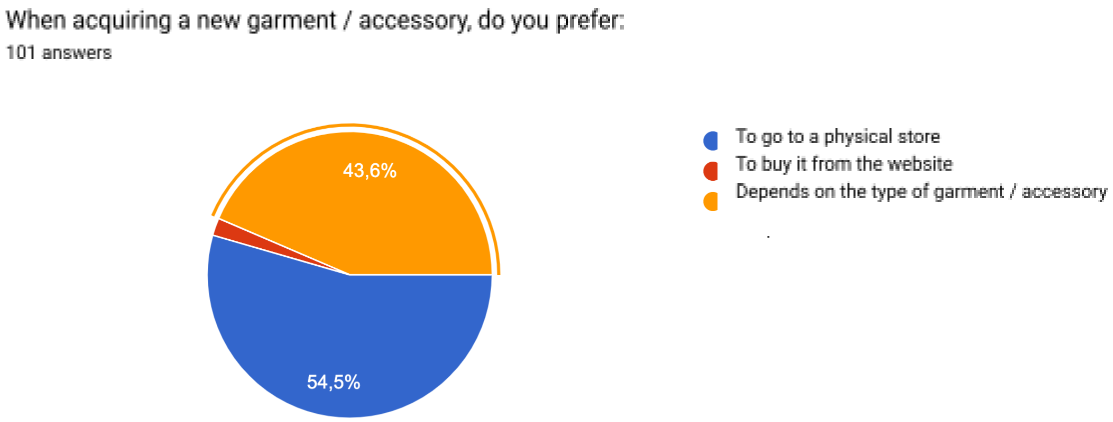
Taking into account the age of the consumer, according to a report carried out by "Adyen Retail" in 2020, those over 55 years of age mostly opt for physical establishments.
However, it should be noted that due to the positive experiences with online shopping during the pandemic, 47% of those surveyed in this report recognize that they are less likely to buy in a physical store than before the pandemic.

Another relevant aspect that they reveal in the survey is the fact that preferences were also produced with regard to the form of payment since around 66% chose to make payments by card, compared to the 12% that follows preferring to pay with cash. Even people who previously preferred to make their payments in cash have switched to digital, contactless or card payment options. In addition, 22% admit that they also do not use a physical card but prefer to use their devices or wallets.

According to the data obtained from the survey of 100 people, as a primary source of information in 2021 when a certain improvement is perceived with respect to infections thanks to the measures taken and the arrival of the vaccine.

It can be said that people still prefer to go to a physical store when purchasing a new garment or accessory, this is 54.5% compared to 43.6% who prefer to go to it depending on the type of garment from which they are concerned and only 2% prefer to buy online.

Graph 3: Consumer preferences when acquiring a new garment or accessory

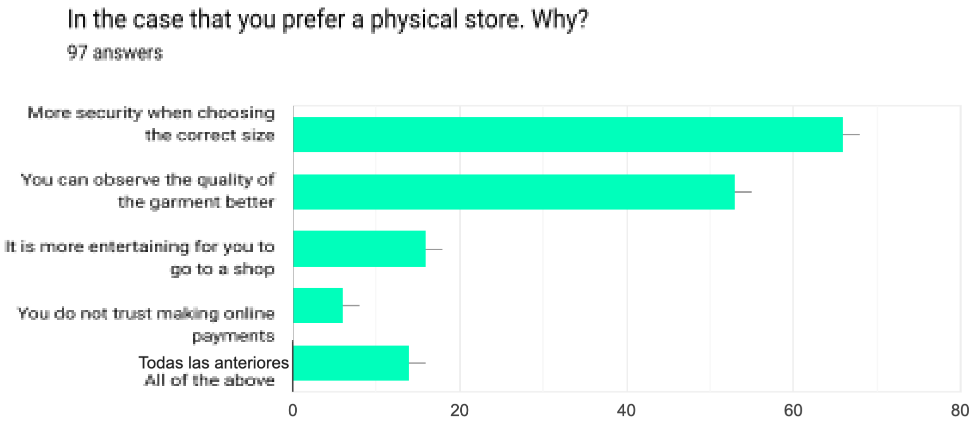


Source: Prepared by the author

In most cases, they choose a physical store because they have greater security when choosing the correct size (68%) or they can observe in greater detail the quality of the garment or accessory (54.6%). While others prefer to go to stores for the shopping experience or entertainment (16.5%).

Mistrust when making a payment online is another reason why they prefer to go to a physical store (6.2%).

Graph 4: Reason for preferring to go to a physical store

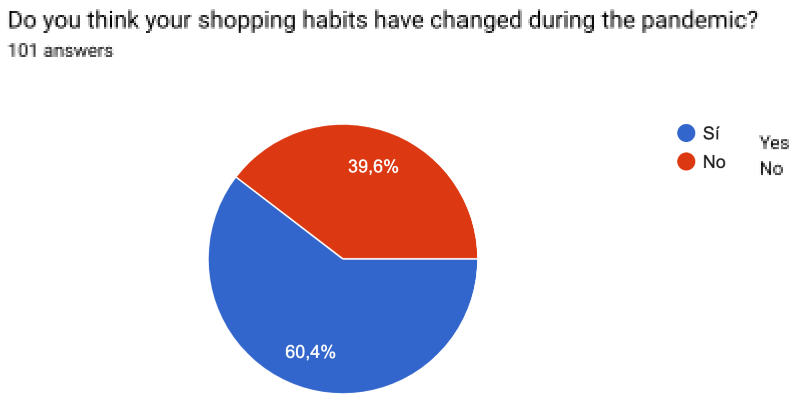


Source: Prepared by the author

On the other hand, the vast majority of those surveyed (60.4%) consider that their shopping habits have changed during the pandemic and that it is much safer to buy from the comfort of their homes to avoid possible infections (67%).

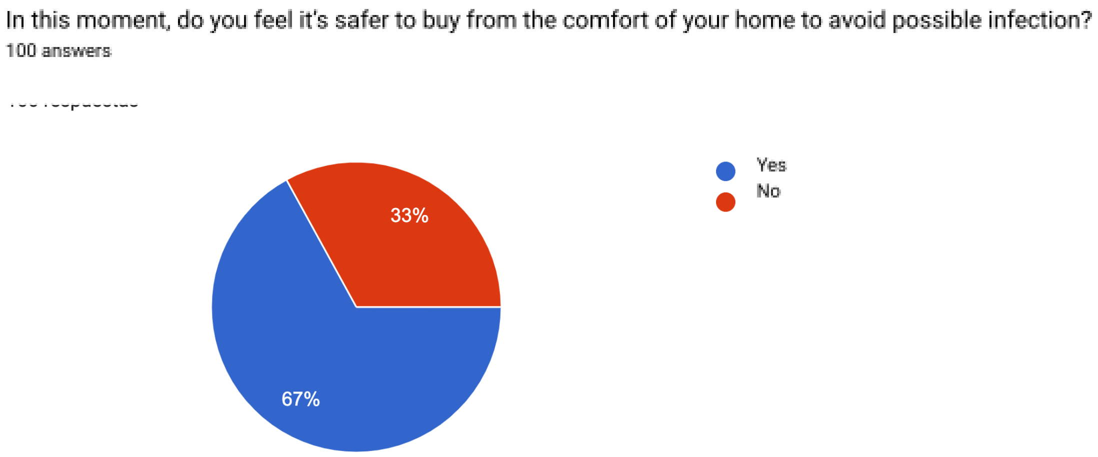
Despite this, with the arrival of said pandemic, they consider that they have not made more purchases compared to before the arrival of it, this is 60% compared to 40% who affirm that their online purchases of clothing or accessories increased compared to before the arrival of COVID-19.

Graph 5: Shopping habits during the pandemic



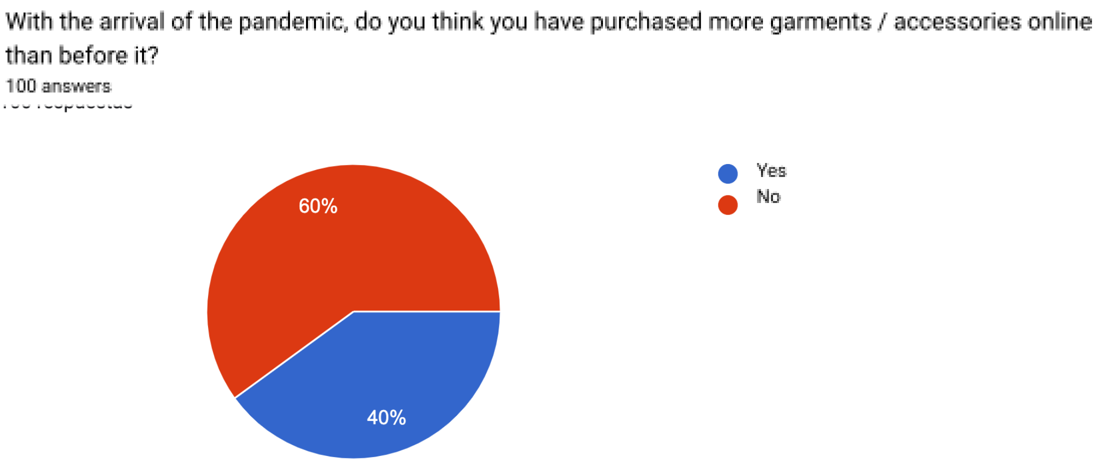
Source: Prepared by the author

Graph 6: Safety when buying to avoid infection



Source: Prepared by the author

Graph 7: Purchasing online



Source: Prepared by the author

4.5.4. The role of new technologies during COVID-19

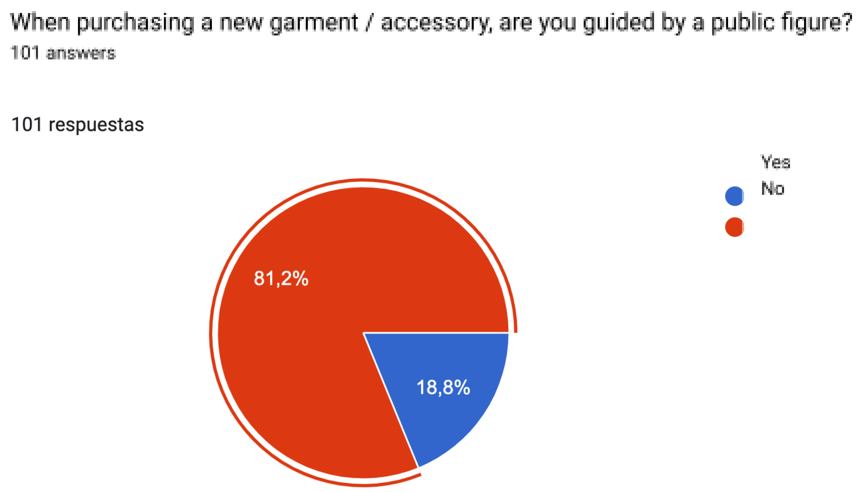
Companies have been forced to adapt to the new circumstances and it is known that it was not easy since it is more difficult for them to try to advertise and sell through a screen than in the way they were used to making their sales.

On the other hand, new ventures were favoured since they could save all those costs that come with having physical stores, staff, etc.

“Digitisation” plays a relevant role since some of the buyers of the 21st century rely on public figures when guiding them to choose a new garment or accessory and have an idea when it comes to defining their way of dressing.
Influencers have acquired a certain importance since some brands sponsor them in order to advertise new trends through them and in this way make their new products known to the audience they are interested in.
It should be noted that during 2020 the sponsored content of influencers fell from 35% to 4% during the time of confinement.

According to the data obtained with the survey, 81.2% affirm that they do not acquire a new garment or accessory under the influence of any public figure, compared to 18.8% who admit that they are guided by them.

Graph 8: Purchasing under the influence of a public figure



Source: Prepared by the author

Another of the main sources of communication, in addition to conventional advertising and actions on social media, are presentations at events, actions at a store and fashion shows.

Considering this last factor, the fashion week coincided with the first confinements, the shows put on or cancelled, therefore, the companies belonging to the fashion industry were forced to look for alternatives to try to alleviate this issue.

Given the circumstances and consequently, the first virtual catwalk was held by the 29-year-old Congolese designer Anifa Mvuemba, who chose to present her latest collection for her brand in 2020 called Hanifa: "Pink Label Congo" through its virtual catwalk with 3D models on Instagram Live.

Image 28: Anifa Mvuemba

Source: In Boga Magazine Ecuador

Image 29: Dress with Congo motifs

Source: Vogue Mexico

Image 30: 3D Fashion show without models

Source: Vogue Mexico

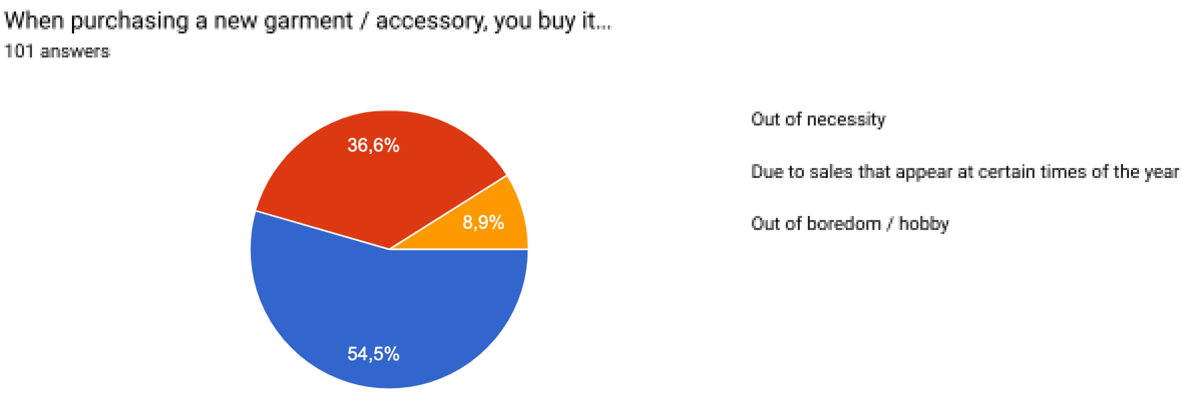
4.6. Towards a sustainable fashion industry

Increasingly, consumers' purchasing decisions are not made solely based on comfort and fashion, but they demand greener textiles.

According to the World Economic Forum, it is difficult for consumers to make well-informed decisions since the vast majority of them do not even know what the garments they wear are made of.

According to the survey carried out, 54.5% buy clothes out of necessity, 36.6% for the sales that appear at certain times of the year and lastly 8.9% for “hobby”.

Graph 9: Reason for acquiring a new garment



Source: Prepared by the author

4.6.1. Could Covid 19 be one of the factors that helps the fashion industry become more sustainable?

A change is expected to take place in the business of the fashion industry, which includes: closer production, more flexible supplies, shorter, more basic and durable collections and less subject to the seasons. In this way, it would help to lead a more sustainable fashion industry.

The fashion industry continued to grow in 2020 but at a somewhat slower rate than was anticipated. The slowdown is due to the moderation in consumption due to general macroeconomic uncertainty.

National brands and local commerce are expected to benefit from this.

4.6.2. New brands that seek to reduce environmental impact

Ecological fashion is another factor that could help reduce the impact of the fashion industry on the planet.

This type of fashion consists of using sustainable factors throughout the process. Starting from the materials that are used for their production, to the conditions of those who manufacture them.

Some of the examples of Spanish organic brands are:

Ecoalf: It is a Spanish sustainable clothing brand founded in 2009 by Javier Goyechene. He creates his garments with recycled materials since he considers that continuing to use natural resources indiscriminately is not sustainable.

Since 2018, it already has its first international store in Berlin.

Ephemeral: It is a brand in which all its materials are chosen organically, and its t-shirts are made following Fair Trade criteria in Coimbatore (India), and silk-screened in Pontevedra (Spain). At the moment you can only find their clothes in Barcelona and Madrid.

Uttopy: It is a solidarity fashion brand that supports NGOs by giving visibility and raising funds for their social causes. To create their collections, they collaborate with an NGO and an artist who is inspired by their social cause.

Miereia Playá: This is another of the brands that is committed to sustainability when producing its garments. The shoes are produced in Alicante in a vegan manner, named in this way because they do not use any material or component of animal origin. They work with synthetic components of great quality and comfort.

Lifegist: They buy Global Organic Textile Standard certified fabrics in Europe and produce their garments in workshops located in Madrid. They are committed to sustainable and timeless fashion in order to avoid consumers having to renew their wardrobe often.

Veraluna: A clothing brand that at all times makes the origin of its garments known, in addition, they are produced according to fair trade standards, with organic cotton whose origin is from retail crops.

All the brands mentioned above have in common the fact that they try to avoid falling into aforementioned problems, these are mainly: the use of chemical products, the use of animal skins and labour exploitation.

They differ through the use of materials chosen organically, the garments are made following Fair-Trade criteria, using vegan materials and promoting a type of timeless fashion in order to prevent consumers from seeing the "need" for acquiring a new garment.

4.6.3. Circular Fashion

The linear take-consume-destroy approach has been around for centuries, the idea of a circular economy considers products that are designed and optimized for a continuous cycle of recycling.
The idea is to create a circular system, redesigning, reusing and reselling the clothes. Collaborative consumption together with circular fashion can help reduce the high consumption of clothing. Renting clothes is one of the alternatives that helps promote this circular economy.

By 2030, the global clothing and footwear industry is expected to reach 102 million tons in volume and 3.0 trillion euros in value, in parallel with the Sustainable Development goals with which global emissions of carbon are expected to be reduced by 45%.

Some companies such as H&M collected more than 3,000 tons of used clothing in 2013 with which 15 million t-shirts could be manufactured.

Basically, this type of fashion gives rotation to those garments that have remained in good shape in the closet.

4.6.4. Innovation

Innovation applied to sustainability will be one of the keys to the future. Researching new materials, clothing recycling and in general the "circularity" of the manufacturing process will be elements on which the future of a brand will depend.
Both R+D and innovation will be the key to achieving short-term sustainability goals and longer-term industry transformation.

Consumers and employees will continue to demand more from businesses and place greater emphasis on new values ranging from increased awareness of climate change to diversity and social inclusion.

At the hands of two Mexican businessmen, Adrián López and Marte Cázarez, emerges one of the most interesting innovations of 2021, who opted for a product whose material was sustainable and capable of meeting the needs of companies belonging to the fashion industry, trying to also reduce of the high environmental impact that they create.

They created a synthetic skin made from nopal, a plant which is native to Mexico and does not need irrigation since it grows only with rainwater. It supports low temperatures during winter and has smaller thorns, this makes it easier and above all safe when harvesting.

This product, which they called “Cactus Leather”, which is free of toxic chemicals, phthalates and PVC, has a minimum useful life of ten years, and an even more important factor is the fact that it saves up to 20% of the water which is required in traditional leather production.

The plantation from which they extract the nopal is located in Zacatecas, in the north-central region of the country. There, the selection process is carried out and only the mature leaves are cut, without damaging the plant. Every six or eight months they re-harvest the same plantation which is free of herbicides and pesticides. All the material that is not used for the production of the product is sold for human consumption nationally. Once the mature leaves have been cut, they should be dried in the sun for approximately three days until the desired humidity levels are reached. Therefore, no furnace or additional energy is required. Once it has been processed, the organic raw material is obtained with the patented formula.

One of its creators considers that it is a competitive material compared to traditional leather and some imitations of synthetic leather. This product took its creators to the "Raw Assembly" in Australia, which is a sustainable fabric event for the fashion industry. This nopal skin has different thicknesses, colours and textures, it is soft to the touch and breathable, therefore, it closely resembles animal leather.

Image 31: Adrían López and Marte Cázarez on their nopal plantation in Zacatecas, Mexico.

Source: InnovaSpain Newspaper

Other sustainable alternatives for this summer are children's sandals made from algae biomass or "Bloom", an innovative, sustainable and patented material by the American company Algix.

The origin of this company which is specialized in biotechnology applied mainly to the development of footwear since 2007.

The idea arose when company co-founder Ryan Hunt began his research on how algae could be used to help lower the levels of phosphorus and ammonia present in wastewater, which are responsible for the proliferation of a type of algae that are harmful to the environment and water quality.

The "Bloom" is the first EVA rubber with algae in the world, so sustainable that the Swedish multinational H&M began to introduce it as a raw material in its collections with the launch of its "Conscious Exclusive" collection in 2019.

Image 32: Sandals made from Bloom

Source: FashionUnited

5. CONCLUSION

The aim of the academic work was to carry out an analysis of the fashion industry, not only with an emphasis on the economic and social aspects but on an environmental level. This is due to the fact that there is little knowledge from the consumers on the origins of the clothes they wear in their daily lives. Not all consumers are aware of what is involved in the production of clothes, which not only takes up natural resources and pollutes but also sometimes uses animals and violates human rights.

Another one of the objectives was to analyse the influence that the current pandemic has had on both the major brands and consumers and to provide answers to all the questions that were presented in the beginning, such as: how have they adapted to the pandemic situation or the use of new technologies to alleviate the successive restrictions that appeared during the pandemic?

The following points outline some alternatives or awareness-raising movements that are already underway in order to create a more sustainable fashion industry.

5.1. Alternative

Some of the alternatives to reduce both the consumption of water and the pollution of rivers produced mainly by those countries that are suppliers of the big brands, would be "biodesign", which integrates living beings such as bacteria.

In the case of the clothing dyes mentioned in this work, one of the alternatives is the use of a pigment-producing microbe which was discovered by Natssay Audery Chieza together with Gink Bioworks. The colour is in between pink and blue tones, which depends on the PH of the soil in which it is found. A relevant aspect of this alternative is the fact that it uses five hundred times less water than dyeing techniques, thus the use of chemicals would be completely eliminated.

Another solution regarding the use of chemicals when dyeing clothes, is the one proposed by the biotechnology company "Colorfix" that aims to make dyes that are environmentally, socially and economically sustainable. For this, molasses, which is a by-product of sugar, is converted into colorants that can be used to dye textiles, in addition, it replaces fixing chemicals.

5.2. How can we help to create a more sustainable fashion industry?

After the research carried out, some of the tips that arise and that we can do to reduce the environmental impact and extend the life of the clothes on our part are: participate in the circular economy that was discussed (section 4.6.3.), reusing old garments and creating new options in order to give it a second life; avoid buying clothes that are not really needed; Instead of buying cheaper clothes, invest a little more in clothes of a higher quality that can last longer; collaborate by buying clothes and accessories from ethical and environmentally conscious brands such as those mentioned (section 4.6.2.).

5.3. Phenomena created to raise awareness amongst the population

In countries like Sweden, in which there is a high environmental awareness, a new phenomenon called Köpskam has emerged, understood as the "shame of buying", which aims to reduce the purchase of clothes due to its high climatic cost and the ecological irresponsibility that means following the dictates of fashion. This initiative arose from the need to "make the fashion industry understand that its production must be sustainable." This phenomenon is intended to penalize both the obsessive consumption of clothing and bragging about it on social networks. In this way, unboxings and collaborations carried out by influencers begin to be frowned upon.

In addition to this phenomenon, in other countries the “no buy year” movement has been established, with which it is intended to encourage people not to buy clothes for a year and to raise awareness about the “false” need to buy so frequently.

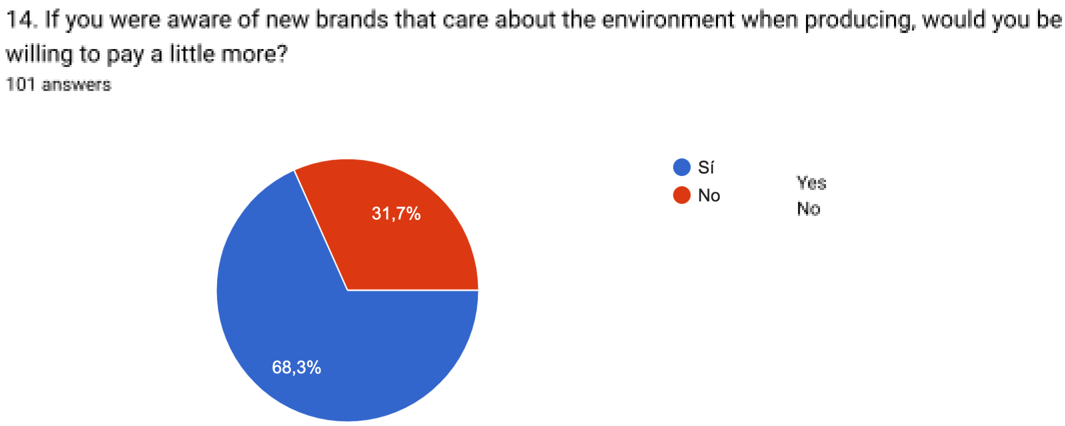
Both brands and influencers will have to adapt to the new trends of not consuming unless necessary and the industry will have to produce from both fibres and ecological materials if it does not want to be greatly affected.

According to a 2015 Nielsen Holdings study, 66% of the world's millennial population was willing to buy sustainable-labelled pieces despite having to pay more. In addition, it reveals that millennials born between the eighties and nineties, and those known as generation Z born starting from the nineties are the most aware because they have grown up with sustainability values and part of the success of the change comes from the youth.

This is to say that creating a sustainable fashion industry does not only depend on the big brands, but also that citizens are committed to collaborating with the cause through practices that promote sustainability in the use of and the disposal of articles.

According to the data obtained by the survey carried out, 68.3% of those surveyed would be willing to pay a little more for brands that care about the environment when producing their products.

Graph 10: Survey results



Source: Prepared by the author

On the other hand, big brands should stop worrying more about reducing costs and start paying attention to being a sustainable industry in order to survive.

The fashion industry has begun to become aware of and to bet on sustainable processes as well as more respectful ethics with the planet. An example of this is the Inditex group that plans to use organic cotton, linen and polyester before 2025.

Finally, a very important aspect is the measures taken in order to alleviate the risk of an increase in child labour, some of the solutions proposed by the report "COVID-19 and child labour: a time of crisis, a time to act" are measures such as: expanding social protection, facilitating the granting of loans to households in poverty, promoting decent work for adults, facilitating the return of children to schools without school fees, and having more resources to carry out labour inspections and enforce the Law.

In conclusion, fashion must bet on policies of responsible production, because fashion in the 21st century is not only about style and trends, but about ethics, commitment and new consumption habits.

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7. ANNEX

Link to access the survey:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScqckBLFMLJoWxbhd72kvFYH-Xuk_Ek1-5_OO3-7nrfZvY4xQ/viewform?usp=sf_link

INDUSTRIA DE LA MODA

Breve cuestionario para poder conocer la opinión del consumidor antes y durante del COVID - 19.

1. Cuántos años tiene? *

- 13 - 19
- 20 - 25
- 26 - 30
- Más de 30

2. Género: *

- Femenino
- Masculino

3. A la hora de adquirir una prenda/ complemento nuevo, prefiere: *

- Ir a una tienda física
- Adquirirla desde la página Web
- Depende del tipo de prenda/ complemento

4. En caso de que prefiera una tienda física. ¿Por qué lo prefiere ?

- [ ] Mayor seguridad a la hora de seleccionar la talla correcta
- [ ] Se puede observar con un mayor detalle la calidad de la prenda/ complemento
- [ ] Le resulta más entretenido acudir a la tienda que ver las prendas desde una pantalla
- [ ] Desconfía del método de pago vía online y prefiere acudir a la tienda
- [ ] Todas las anteriores

5. ¿Ha comprado alguna vez una prenda/complemento vía online?

- ○ Sí
- ○ No

6. ¿La compra de ropa vía online fue satisfactoria?

- ○ Sí, llegó bien y cumplieron con mis expectativas respecto a la calidad.
- ○ Sí, llegó bien pero no cumplieron con mis expectativas respecto a la calidad.
- ○ No llegó, y no me devolvieron el dinero..
- ○ No he realizado ninguna compra de ninguna prenda/ complemento vía onlie

7. ¿Considera que sus hábitos de compra han cambiado durante la pandemia? *

- ○ Sí
- ○ No

8. ¿ A día de hoy, considera que es más seguro comprar desde la comodidad de su hogar para evitar posibles contagios?

- ◯ Sí
- ◯ No

9. ¿Con la llegada de la pandemia considera que ha llevado a cabo más compras de prendas/ complementos vía online que antes de la misma?

- ◯ Sí
- ◯ No

10. ¿Cree o tiene conocimiento de que la industria de la moda es la segunda más contaminante del mundo? *

- ◯ Sí, creo/ intuyo que es una de las más contaminantes
- ◯ Sí, tengo conocimientos porque me he informado acerca del tema
- ◯ No tengo ningún conocimiento acerca del tema

11. A la hora de adquirir una prenda/ complemento nuevo lo hace por.. *

- ◯ Necesidad
- ◯ Por las ofertas que aparecen en determinadas temporadas
- ◯ Por aburrimiento/ hobby

12. ¿A la hora de adquirir una prenda/ complemento nuevo, lo hace bajo la influencia de algún personaje público?

- ◯ Sí
- ◯ No

13. Cuándo compra alguna prenda/ complemento, lo hace teniendo en cuenta el tipo de material que se usa para la producción de la misma?

- Sí
- No

14. Si tuviera conocimiento acerca de nuevas marcas que producen siendo cuidadosos con el medio ambiente, estaría dispuesto a pagar un poco más?

- Sí
- No

15. ¿Sabe lo que es la Fast Fashion?

- Sí
- No

16. ¿Qué marcas de ropa suele utilizar?

Texto de respuesta corta

17. ¿Cree que el Covid 19 puede conducirnos hacia una industria de la moda más sostenible, debido a la reducción de compra por parte de los consumidores?

Texto de respuesta corta

18. ¿Considera que hay algo que podamos hacer para aportar "nuestro granito de arena" y así colaborar con la reducción de la contaminación que produce la industria la moda al intentar satisfacer la demanda de sus productos?

Respuesta corta

Texto de respuesta corta

Obligatorio