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Globalization And The Fast Fashion Phenomenon: The Impact Upon Labors, Environment And The Consumer Behavior

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Abstract

In a society deeply marked by mean of values of capitalism, consuming has become a habit, almost a need felt by most of us. Moreover, as globalization has revolutionized the fashion world by creating the concept of "fast fashion", the real cause of this consumption, we owe it to fast fashion, this segment of the industry of clothing impacts the environment as one of the main polluters on earth, as well as the impact that it has on the labors. The idea of fast fashion is in order to, quickly, frequently and inexpensively produce micro-trends seen on the catwalks to make them accessible to the public. This paper seeks to understand the phenomenon that it is the fast fashion from its emergence to it vast popularity among society. Furthermore, we discuss, the colossal results that it has on one hand the environment from waste in landfills and unregulated settings, on the other hand the conditions of labors that are calamitous. In addition, we debate about the exigence and role of the fast fashion companies, but in order to have a general opinion of this phenomenon, this paper will also point out over the consumer perspective on this phenomenon, consequently, a questionnaire survey was conducted to deepen the results and findings for a plausible solution.

Keywords: Fast fashion, globalization, labors, environment, consumers

INTRODUCTION

For the past fifty years or so, a trend has imposed itself: "fast fashion". Fast fashion is a new phenomenon that revolutionized our societies and our habits, by the emergence of a new way of consuming fashion. The process of this phenomenon is to produce at a fast time and sell at a low price. Moreover, for the reason of this, the process the clothes are then intended in order to be worn over a very short period, due to the fact that they are made with low-cost materials and therefore not very strong and qualitative. Consumers are thus encouraged to renew their wardrobe very often and to make purchases regularly in an attempt to keep up with the intense rhythm of the release of collections. This concept well popularized by different brands, namely the fast fashion brands such as Inditex or H&M, attracts the attention of various consumers that are always ready to be in the trend.

The fast fashion phenomenon is impacted largely by mean of globalization, as it has played a colossal role in the fashion industry. With the emergence of globalization and the expansion of a world economy, supply chains have become multinational, moving the development of fabrics, clothing production, and fabric building to areas with cheaper labor. By this means, globalization opened several opportunities to this segment of industry. Hence, it became more willingly available to purchase fashion trend around the world. However, the interrelation between globalization and fast fashion is affecting both the environment and the social conditions of labors. Indeed, numerous are the damage caused by mean of fast fashion, from water pollution causing serious diseases to massive waste of products. It is hard to believe that our simple habit of buying clothes has a huge impact on our planet.

As matter of fact, the fashion industry is considered as the second-biggest consumer of water and is responsible for 8-10% of global carbon emissions, as stated by the UN Environment Programme. As well as the social impact caused by the fast fashion on labors that, generate serious violation of human rights. A devastating socio-environmental effect on the world is created by the textile industry. The fashion industry is one of the most important sectors in the world and reinforces the global socio-economic inequality. The "fast fashion" multinationals are the biggest players in this disaster. Social costs are also important in connection with the worldwide apparel and clothing industry. The social risks incurred in fast fashion development include environmental, human health and human rights losses at any stage in the production chain.

The main aim of this article is to process the impact of globalization upon our society, and how it developed our way of consuming by introducing the fast fashion as a new phenomenon of excessive purchase. Reflecting on that process, the fast fashion has contributed to various effects, in this article, the negative and positive ones will be discussed. Furthermore, the methodological part points out a questionnaire that has been conducted to deepen the fast fashion phenomenon upon the society, and mainly the behavior of consumers.

Globalization and fast fashion

Globalization, which refers to the process of economic integration of different countries through the strengthening of the free movement of goods, services, capital, ideas and people across borders, began centuries ago. It proceeded in waves; nonetheless, the period beginning in the late 1980s is the most recent acceleration and probably

the strongest. Virtually everyone feels the power of globalization, whether it is the result of technology or political or economic forces. In commercial enterprise, the desire to 'legitimize' corporate processes, and substantiate cycles of worldwide mergers, has been often described to as globalization. Globalization is the result of employee shortages, employees' monopolization in huge firms and increasing inequality for a significant portion of the population (Ledezma, 2017). For instance, in academic papers, there are abundant conceptions of globalization, which contribute to misunderstanding about its usage. Thus, the term globalization can be used "as one word of several merely to indicate the greater internationalization of economic activity, represented through integration and increased national economic interdependence." (Thompson, 2002). The term of globalization, frequently more inclusively employed in other fields in social sciences, describes the tendency towards a "worldwide interconnectedness developing" in almost all fields: economic, cultural, technical, political, legal, environmental, social and societal (McGrew, 1997). Moreover, there are numerous, uneven and often hard to detect consequences of globalization. Nevertheless, the issue of consequences lies at the core of the global discussion as the solutions offered to address the adverse impacts of globalization are responsible for a large part on the assessment one adopts. In general, many argue that globalization has developed as a result of create value and communications, but even that huge sections of the world's boundaries are only overcome following digital popularization. Moreover, because of the large social disparity, the link between globalization is a beneficial and bad element for the globe (Benatti, 2016).

Alongside free production and investments, flexibility of transportation and communication is among the most commonly mentioned good impacts of globalization. Indeed, as technical disparities are developing across nations, corporations are relocating their network to underdeveloped nations, allowing their systems to be taught and enterprises to acquire employment. The worldwide population has access to the right data or digital material, irrespective of region, with certain exclusions, through the Internet and every communication channels. Additionally, globalization on the political level threatens authoritarian governments and theocracies, masses misrepresented by their leaders, frequently strive to condemn and fight for equality using contemporary communication methods (internet, social networks, etc.). Moreover, globalization supports bringing people and culture closer together, increasing receptivity to the globe and influencing cultures that enable a bigger cultural asset (cinemas, theatre, shows, sports...). As well, nations in social terms are backed and assisted more rapidly by many other states in the face of natural calamities (Pim de Zwart, 2018). Nevertheless, the negative impacts of globalization can be seen on different levels. Economic perspective, the fact that society is now a huge open business district is the source of an economic crisis that bursts out in a country. As said previously, it allows multinationals to get more money by outsourcing into poorer nations with lower labor costs, but clearly, this profit comes at the price of those disadvantages. In fact, the affluent countries with extremely increased purchasing power, and the impoverished countries with significantly lower currency value, the disparity can only increase. At the political level, international institutions, usually, are

imposing sanctions on the legislatures of the impoverished nations to take measures. Furthermore, in one nation, a political crisis might have good or adverse implications for the strategies of several other nations. Anthropologically, globalization guide to a depletion in ethnic exactitude, as customs tend to enhance consistent, populaces are slowly renouncing their traditions (Stiglitz, 2002). While it is wrong to think that globalization is not yet at the core of this change, and not very much can be done to make this occurrence effective. The low-wage countries were not able to join into another global economy as fast as some others could, partly because of varied policies and perhaps because of uncontrollable conditions.

Globalization has its advantages. It is true that it has revolutionized the world of fashion by allowing: general access to various services and products, access to wider ranges, to offer clothing at lower prices, at much more attractive prices. This is the open door to fast-fashion, to ready-to-wear. As means to go further on what fast-fashion is really, here is a definition: fast-fashion is to make clothes and fashion accessories available to the greatest number of the population, at affordable prices and this on a daily basis. The objective of fast fashion is to optimize the production process. As matter of fact, globalization has produced the low budget labor and foreign markets needed to build a worldwide assembly line that enables garment manufacturing to be cheaper and quicker. Fast fashion brands such as Zara or H&M, pioneers in the field, have built their empire on this principle at the cost of massive relocations. They sought abundant and cheaper labor, especially in Asia. The frantic pace due to renewals has therefore put in motion to spectacular globalization. Fashion nowadays

represents an industry, which still weighs 6% in world trade (Ledezma, 2017).

Countless purchasers believe that the globalization of fashion is an adequate element. The numerous fors and againsts of this can be seen in a diversity of researches and discussions. It permits them to acquire famous designs it is simple to buy fashionable items with reasonable regularity at the nearby retail shop for minimal prices. The principle of quick fashion is obviously not the best idea. It actually has far more unfavorable than beneficial aspects. Moreover, globalization concedes international markets and traditions to affect regional markets and traditions. Fast fashion enables the supply network to be optimized, with globalization providing cheap work and quick access to worldwide markets. Fashion is getting quicker, cheaper and even easier. The growing impact of globalization has affected the fashion sector directly and several experts claim that the fashion industry is the most important aspect of globalization. In simple terms, globalization is a procedure of social and economic development that progressively dominates local markets and cultures through international markets and civilizations. The fashion business has therefore finally uncovered a bunch of alternative manufacturing techniques, inspirations and processes. Tendencies in fashion have gotten easier for customers throughout the world. The utilization of a worldwide assembly line has boosted fast fashion, yet at the same time reducing the cost, to meet the swift development of new latest trends. In addition, home shopping makes fast fashion attainable by being a click away, with offers and the immediate rapture they offer (Knutson, 2007).

Yet, this great discovery or this new phenomenon created several of damages, from environmental disaster to deterioration of living conditions for textile workers. Indeed by mean of being the second source of pollution in our world, the fast fashion phenomenon emit 1.2 billion tons of greenhouse gases each year, or 2% of total emissions, and approximately 4 % of the drinking water available in the world is used to produce our clothes. In addition, the pressure on subcontractors is increasingly disastrous with regard to human rights. These specialized brands and those of traditional large-scale distribution have organized a frantic internationalization of the manufacturing network of the fashion industry to keep up with the rapid increase in production volumes without worrying about the ecological and social consequences (Greenpeace, 2017).

Nevertheless, globalization is the subject of much controversy at this point of time. The concept designates a complex process, multidimensional in nature, sometimes contradictory, manifesting accelerated transformations of international society, under the influence of a very rapid evolution of capitalist modes of production and exchange. In general, globalization was not only a singular event, but also a development of changes around the world leading to the growth of global trade from a historical and contextual approach.

The impact of fast fashion and consumer perspective

The repercussions of fast fashion are colossal, from manufacturing to washing to the end of their life, our clothes have a heavy environmental impact and the textile industry is one of the most polluting. First of all the use of polluting raw materials. Whether in terms of water consumption, pesticides or CO₂ emissions, it is above all obtaining the

main raw materials that make up our clothes that is polluting. Indeed, textiles are derived from agricultural production, in particular cotton. Cotton is a crop that requires a particular climate to grow properly, at the same time; it needs a certain amount of water. A study conducted by UNESCO shows that 10,000 liters of water go into the production of 1 kg of cotton. Suddenly the extreme use of water and the increase in pollution of the waters of villages and towns leads to a certain reduction of its surface, which generates the contamination or the death of thousands of fish. Moreover, these same fish fed the surrounding populations who were forced to abandon their villages. Textiles also pose a problem with the use of pesticides. Take the example of cotton, which is found in more than a quarter of our clothing and the majority of which is produced for the clothing industry. Apart from cotton, the textile industry uses other fibers, especially synthetic, which also have their environmental impacts. In addition to the production of the raw material, one must also consider the production phase of textiles. This step in the manufacture of our clothing poses problems in terms of workers' rights and health but also in terms of pollution. Transport, a source of greenhouse gas emissions, also weighs in on the environmental impact of fashion. As matter of fact, the transportation of fast fashion merchandise is estimated to emit 1.2 billion tons of greenhouse gases each year, or about 2% of global greenhouse gas emissions. It is more than international flights and maritime traffic combined. These emissions due to the production, but also to the transport of our clothes.

The environmental impact of our clothes is also linked to their use. Between washing, drying and ironing, the care of our clothes also weighs on the

environment. In light of fact that our clothes contain micro plastics, such as nylon, polyester, elastane or even acrylic reject plastic micro particles when washing. Too small to be filtered by wastewater treatment plants, they end up in the ocean and are sometimes eaten by fish. While the care of our clothes represents almost half of the environmental impact of our clothes. This is linked to several factors. Water consumption, energy consumption and toxic products in laundry (IUCN, 2017). Following the impact on environment, the matter of social condition is a must and a quite a problem in this industry. The fashion industry employs 75 million people around the world. The so-called "disposable" textile industry has social consequences: exploitation of children, women, precarious wages and indecent working conditions. As a means to guarantee ever-lower prices and a very positive margin, large clothing distributors are putting pressure on their subcontractors to obtain better returns, to the detriment of small hands. Very often women, they represent over 80% of the world's textile workers, many of whom work many hours of overtime for very modest wages. Sometimes, even children, as child labor is also helping to fuel the fast fashion frenzy with workers under the age of 18 making up 60% of those working in the fashion industry. Lack of regulation exposes millions of workers to unsafe or deadly working conditions do not have access to their fundamental rights and have to subsist on wages below the basic minimum, with high speeds and little rest (ILO I. L., 2018). Awareness is growing, however, especially since the accident at Rana Plaza in Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh. This tower, the last 5 floors of which had been built without a permit, housed several textile workshops and nearly 5,000 employees. It collapsed in

2013, killing over a thousand people. This tragedy reveals the precariousness of the situation of subcontractors but above all the involvement of major fashion brands such as H&M and Primark, whose labels were found under the rubble (Hoskins, 2014).

In this age of globalization and social media, it is impossible to say that we are not aware that fashion is one of the most polluting industries in the world. The Rana Plaza sparked awareness almost worldwide. Between sacrificed human life, disastrous working conditions, pollution of the planet and the plunder of natural resources, from there, the Fashion Revolution Day movement was created a movement that is trying to raise public awareness of the importance of these questions. Internet users are then invited to post a photo of their garment label with the hashtag #whomademyclothes on social media to denounce the provenance of their clothing and the consequences thereof. This movement marks the start of a more sustainable and ethical approach to fashion. The Fashion Revolution initiative aims to encourage consumers to question the manufacture of their clothes and to strive for more transparency on the design conditions of the textile industry. Using the slogan and hashtag named "Who made my clothes", this movement wishes to invite brands to make known the people who work to make our clothes and make their working conditions visible. Moreover, the consumer to question the brand's practices. Launched in the wake of the Rana Plaza tragedy in 2013 by Britain's Carry Sommers, Fashion Revolution Day is held every April 24, to encourage consumers and manufacturers to think about what they do when they produce and buy a new garment.

In a way, our routine of consuming fast fashion is to blame, the particular reason

for circumstance that this industry is influencing a major part of our purchases. The simple behavior that we carry out generates several impact upon societies, environment and conditions of labors. With our excessive buying and purchasing new trends suggested and set up by the fast fashion companies, fast fashion can have an impact on consumers themselves, by encouraging the culture of the "throwaway" due to the obsolescence of products and the speed with which trends are produced (Benatti, 2016). More than 400 million euros of clothes are thrown away on average each year. Overconsumption of clothing has increased by 60% in 15 years. We throw away twice as fast today as in the previous 15 years (Greenpeace, 2017).

As a simple consumer, we often tend to feel helpless in the face of this unfair system and wonder how we can fight against these behemoths of fashion. Yet we already have in our hands the best weapons: our purchasing power and our conscience. This is why associations such as Fashion Revolution and Ethics on the Label work to raise consumer awareness so that they can challenge brands on the working conditions imposed on employees. Initiatives to combat the effects of fast fashion have emerged. There are therefore many solutions to act, at our level, for fairer fashion. For instance, the slow fashion phenomenon has emerged to reduce the effects and repercussions of fast fashion.

Method

The study sample consisted of different range of group age, precisely between 18 years old and more than 45 years old, living in Morocco and Turkey. Through a descriptive research, the method used to gather primary data was by a way of a quantitative approach via a survey. This method provided a general overview on the phenomenon of fast fashion and impact of globalization. The study

sample assembled about 157 participants, from different domain of studies and profession, the survey was shared via different means of broadcasts, such as LinkedIn, WhatsApp and Mail. The simple random sampling was used as a technique to sample the population. For the quantitative research, a questionnaire was applied in Google Forms to obtain a general standpoint of the population on the phenomenon of fast fashion and impact of globalization that it has on the consumer. This questionnaire contained 16 questions that reflected the whole subject of the fast fashion. The three first questions were about the gender, the age range and the current situation. Afterwards, the questions were about the knowledge of the fast fashion phenomenon, the stores were consumers usually purchase their clothes, and if they purchase clothes in online stores. Following with the questions of the criteria of clothes, the interest or idea of the manufacturing conditions of clothes purchased and the characteristics importance of them. Afterwards, a question related to personnel data was asked, about the average monthly expenditure related to shopping, and up to what percentage of the price of clothes consumers are willing to pay more in order to ensure fair working conditions for employees. Participants were asked about the eco-responsible clothing line and to evaluate the conditions of workers at the production sites. The final questions were about potential solutions to this phenomenon, that is the knowledge of a new phenomenon "slow fashion" and how can the society reduce the extreme buying that we are living in. That is how the questionnaire was conducted.

As for the descriptive analysis, the survey consisted 97 of women and 50 of men this indicates the interest of women towards this industry. Moreover, the

majority of the participants has no knowledge of what the phenomenon of fast fashion is. Nevertheless, the influence of this phenomenon on the behavior of the consumer is colossal, as the purchasers renew their closets depending on the trend under way. Yet, the consumers put little interest in the way the garment are producing as they follow the criteria's of price and trend. However, they are aware of the condition of labors and the negative effects upon the environment, and for that reason, a several solutions were proposed to participants to deduce the condition of labors and environment. Therefore, more than a half of participants believe that it is wise to promote slow fashion as a solution to minimize the effects of fast fashion, as the slow fashion concept is to slow down the pace of collections renewal and by this means; the quality is privileged over the quantity.

CONCLUSION

Throughout this work, I came with the knowledge of the real impact of the fast fashion industry and the bitter truth behind it consumption, provide by primary data. Moreover, along the methodology analysis, the hypothesis of this research by being that there is a colossal impact on the labors and the environment points out to be true as the conditions of labors differ from country to another and there is a huge impact on the social conditions of these workers.

Therefore, along my several research and observations, the idea for a better consummation, social and environmental conditions several recommendations and solutions can be a new way to oppose the fast fashion phenomenon. One of the well popularized now days phenomenon, is the slow fashion, this term was born in opposition to "Fast Fashion" leading for twenty years to hyper-consumption of clothing. It is a responsible consumption

style based on the desire to respect the production time of a product, to serve quality and not quantity. The Slow Fashion is a way of fighting against the high intensity production of clothing products. Facing the mass textile industry, which is also Fast Fashion, the Slow Fashion movement more sobriety: to "slow down" and rethink our purchasing behavior. Rather than constantly changing, discarding and renewing our clothes, slow fashion calls on people to want their clothes, to ensure their real need and of course, to promote quality, sustainable and eco-responsible clothing. Slow Fashion more generally allows us to become aware of our behaviors and their impact on the world around us. The principles of Slow Fashion are first of all, to restore value to the garment and to the act of purchase, to guarantee the quality of the clothes but also to have a real attention concerning the choice of materials, the conditions and places of production.

In addition to slow fashion, many more solutions can be found to oppose the fast fashion industry, as the problem does not lay only on the brands producing but also the consumers buying. Therefore, our habits can be changed through various new ways and methods of purchasing. Namely, buy second hand clothing, if this category includes different solutions, it is simply a question of making the garment last as long as possible over time. In other words, do not wear new. The first solution can be thrift stores, these stores are specializing in second-hand vintage. In addition, the prices are often and for most shops rather reasonable compared to the new one. Otherwise, it is also possible to buy second hand online, between individuals. Platforms such as Vinted in France or Trendyol Dolap in Turkey have made it their business: we sell or buy clothes that we no longer want by

setting our own prices and the platform is responsible for establishing contacts and conducting to the sale.

Moreover, several ideas were created to oppose the fast fashion phenomenon, as Upcycling, this method consists of recycling a garment by improving it. Here again, we extend its lifespan by giving it a second wind: transforming jeans with holes in shorts, dyeing a faded T-shirt another color, etc. As we know, the production process of the textile industry is complex and needs huge amounts of energy, water, polluting chemicals, among other resources. Therefore, upcycling comes as a nice solution that is starting to be developed not only by small artisans but also starting to boom in companies. Damaged clothes no longer fit for wearing are “disassembled” and their textiles get to reused for the creation of some other piece of clothing or as cases, bookmarks or wherever the designer’s creativity takes them. In the 20 years, since the fast-fashion business model became the standard for major fashion firms, rising demand for enormous quantities of cheap apparel has led to environmental and social decay in every stage of supply chain. Scientific literature, research, and debate on environmental justice primarily lacked the environmental and human health repercussions of rapid development. The wide and profound

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social and environmental abuse is a problem of global environmental justice that must be classified in a timely way. As globalization thrives, our societies are more influenced by new phenomenon’s emerging from it. In addition, fast fashion is one of them, as it is designed to optimize the supply chain so that wear may be designed faster and a broader variety of customers may acquire current wear trends at reduced cost. This type of model involves substituting skilled labor for so much clothes so rapidly and inexpensively, and discarding excellent materials for their ecologically detrimental equivalents who wear out in time for the next fad. This model requires that low energy replicas replace the unusual designs. Not only does fast fashion harm itself, it also drives higher quality firms to use identical practices merely to compete. The interconnection between fashion and globalization is complicated. Globalization helps fashion merchants to lower costs of manufacturing, while delivering clothing to people of all classes and to be more competitive in the global market. On the other side, globalization has caused huge ethical and environmental difficulties in the fashion business. All this industry, which is so essential in the everyday lives of individuals, is well balanced and the direction in which the momentum goes is evident for better or worse.

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