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BALANCING MINIMALISM AND CONSUMERISM: A VIABLE SOLUTION TO CLIMATE CHANGE CRISIS DUE TO FAST FASHION

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ABSTRACT

The fashion industry forms a significant contributor to our economies and that is evident from our wardrobes overflowing with clothes. While the fashion sector is prospering, it is difficult to neglect the notable range of undesirable environmental impacts that the industry is accountable for. By now we know that Fast fashion is proving to be detrimental to the environment in terms of human rights, Carbon emissions, pollution, water use, and gender inequality and hence that presses the need for advocating a switch to sustainable fashion in order to combat the fast-accelerating global climate change issues.

According to the United Nations, Fashion Industry is one of the highest in resulting into greenhouse emissions and contribute around 8-10 percent of global emissions which is higher than what shipping and aviation industry contribute together. It is time to work on reducing the level of carbon footprint generated by this industry and this can be a significant factor in preventing issues relating to climate change. As

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one of the solutions to this concerning issue, this paper proposes to adopt minimalism as a lifestyle because of the benefits it brings to the environment as well as personal decluttering and development. A small change that is thought provoking and also fairly sustainable as a lifestyle can make a huge impact while combating the climate change crisis.¹

The Post-Modern Period encompasses such norms and trends that induces a man to do things for maintaining a lifestyle and gaining a certain standard of social recognition. Consumerism plays an important role in upholding these norms. It is consumerism that has made the 'fashion industry' fashionable and have fed the notion that excess of everything is better. Humans have evolved to hoard things which they do not require at all as a part of their day-to-day routine. This yearning to have all the trend setting stuffs branches from concealed anxiety, insecurities and a prolonged attempt to get accepted by the 'society'. In contrast to this, there is 'minimalism' which envisages survival over lavish spending and hoarding. It teaches the way of simply controlling one's desires to give into the never-ending consumerism cycle. Minimalism is not only about the essence of life but also can be a possible explanation to the climate change crisis that is accelerating. Adam Smith popularly said that Consumption is the sole end and purpose of all production. At first instance it may look like encouraging minimalism and restricting consumerism may be adverse for the economy but it cannot be denied that short term effects can be of legitimate concern if large number of people become minimalists in short span of time and hence this cannot be an overnight change. This has to change in a way

¹ 'Fast fashion. How Clothes are linked to climate change' <https://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-60382624> (last visited February 13, 2023)

that culture changes, slowly and steadily. Long term minimalism may not have such extreme effect. Infact, the economy may regulate itself in a way that the businesses will head towards producing high quality goods and services that will be then sought by the large section of the society – the minimalists.² This paper will highlight the necessity of balancing the trend of consumerism and minimalism in order to reduce the impact of fast fashion on the climate and suggest a solution for the ever-growing climate change crisis.

(Keywords: Climate, Sustainability, Fast Fashion, environment, minimalism, consumerism)

INTRODUCTION

In a globalized world that we live today, it is hard to ignore the fact that the fashion industry forms a significant economic contributor which not only generates revenue but is also a source of employment for a large number of people worldwide. In the past few decades, fashion industry has seen a rapid growth like never before. Not only the production of clothes increased steadily, but they are discarded at an even faster rate. On one hand this industry is booming but on the other hand, it cannot be overlooked that it has brought before us a tremendous concern for the climate. It is contributing to 10% of humanity's carbon emissions, is polluting water resources, & drying up rivers. According to a report published by UNECE, 2018, more than 85% textiles go into dump every year and certain specific pieces of clothing sends out microplastics into

² 'Is Minimalism bad for the economy?(The Concerns of a Minimalist)' <https://theadminimalist.com/is-minimalism-bad-for-the-economy-the-concerns-of-a-minimalist/> (last visited February 14, 2023)

the oceans and pollute the marine environment which in turn becomes a contributing factor for the accelerating climate change crisis.³

These days the term 'fast fashion' is in vogue and has become so prominent in discussions relating to fashion, environmental awareness and sustainability. Fast fashion denotes such garments which are produced in bulk, requires less capital for production and something that copies the latest trend of fashion. Fast fashion provides cheaply produced goods which is accessible to majority of people. These clothes get pumped quickly in stores because of its affordability and ability to provide the current trends. It is referred to as 'fast' because the designing is such that the process is quick right from production, distribution, marketing and finally reaching the retailers. They are quick to create a product differentiation because of the low prices they offer.⁴

Fashion industry contributes at large to textile pollution and its impact is often under estimated while assessing its impact on the climate change crisis. According to the UNECE report, this is an industry which is worth \$2.5 trillion dollar and this makes it the second highest user of water worldwide and contributing to 20 percent of global water wastage. It is hard to believe the calculations while estimating the amount of water that goes into making of one cotton shirt. This requires 2700 liters of water which is approximately what a person drinks in 2-3 years of his life. Apparel industry thrives on cotton farming which is a huge contributor of 24 percent of insecticides and 11 percent of pesticides in just three percent of world's arable land. The waste created by

³ 'Fashion and the SDG's: What role for the UN?' RFSD_2018_Side_event_sustainable_fashion.pdf (unecce.org) (last visited February 13, 2023)

⁴ 'Fast Fashion and its environmental impact' Fast Fashion and Its Environmental Impact | Earth.Org (last visited February 14, 2023)

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the textile industry is enormous as 85% of textiles eventually ends up in landfills which is a whopping amount of approximately 21 billion tons a year.⁵ This is not only concerning from the climate change crisis point of view but it also has a bearing on labor, gender and poverty issues.

Having highlighted the fact that the textile industry contributes significantly to the degradation of sustainable environment and accelerates climate change crisis, the fact cannot be ignored that it is a great economic generator as well. The data says that 1 in 6 people in the world works in a fashion associated occupation. The economic impact of this industry is even likely to increase in the forthcoming decades. The trend that is seen these days is that an average customer is buying 60 percent more clothes than what it did a decade back and each garment is worn and kept half as long and many remains in the wardrobes that are never really worn. Clothes have no longer remained just a necessity. It reflects one's lifestyle and economic status. To define the middle class and higher-class lifestyles, consumption of textile is growing at an alarming rate. If it continues to grow at this rate, we will end up using three times more the natural resources than we are using as of today and this could be a major threat to the climate.

Hence, this calls for the necessity of intervention before this can contribute to more harm to the climate. The solution that is proposed here may seem dichotomous but definitely not something unachievable. We need not be over dependent on our law-making authorities and wait until a law is conceded. We can achieve what is in our area of capability like lifestyle changes, consumerism patterns, advocating

⁵ UNECE, 'Fashion and the SDGs: What role for the UN?' RFSD_2018_Side_event_sustainable_fashion.pdf (unecce.org) (last visited February 13, 2023)

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environmental sustainability and educating on the impact of climate change crisis. When we talk about minimalism as a lifestyle change, it surely creates a fright because this is looked as an adversary of consumerism. After all, economy thrives on consumerism and minimalism may bring it down. The panic created around this is understandable and hence we need not to go to either extreme. The key is to balance minimalism and consumerism in order to achieve two crucial goals of sustainable development (SDG) i.e. The SDG 12 which talks about responsible consumption & production and SDG 13 which stands for climate action.

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF FASHION INDUSTRY

A classical model that endorses quick manufacturing of cheap clothing, termed as 'fast fashion' now dominates the industry. Originated from the big brands like Zara, the concept of fast fashion is now synonymous to selling trends at a record speed and something that is affordable. In other words, it is a mechanism of Continuous production which has gained a momentum since 1800.⁶ In the olden days, people relied on sheep rearing to get wool and then spin yarn to weave clothes. Those were the days when clothes were just a luxury necessity. The fast production picked up during the era of industrial revolution which brought in new textile machineries, factories were established which in a very short span of time boosted the growth of the textile industry by allowing for massive scale of production and thus the era of ready-made clothing started. Despite the factories being setup, most of the clothing's were hand sewed at home, hand mills or in small workshops during the beginning of the 20th century. The

⁶ 'Fashion history lesson: The origin of fast fashion' <https://fashionism.com/2016/08/what-is-fast-fashion/> (last visited February 13, 2023)

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fabric restrictions and more functional style of clothing created the need for standardized production process after World War II. In the 1960's fashion started picking up speedily. Youngsters started going for industry made fashion rather than sartorial traditions of their older generations. The demand for such readymade clothing started to rise and the fashion brands needed a solution to keep pace with the demands. This led to the opening of many textile mills across the developing nations of the world which allowed the richer nations like USA and some European Nations to outsource their work in the developing economy, get cheap labor and save millions of dollars. It is hard to point out which company is considered as the first fast fashion retailer as most of the big brands like Zara, H&M, TopShop and Primark had small and humble beginnings. They follow a simple mantra, 'Make speed the driving force'. Considering the long path that the world travelled from spinning one own's yarn to the globalized market of fast production, it is astonishing that we now live in an age where we order fashion through our mobile phones even without a feel of the fabric.⁷

It is relevant to acknowledge that our current system of fashion has severe problems like unfair labour practices, calamitous amount of waste generation and mindless utilization of limitedly available natural resources. As ironical as it may sound, this has been an industry which has been speeding historically but now needs to slow down tremendously. It calls for us as world citizens to be mindful about our needs, wants and purchases because this is affecting the climate and environment globally.

⁷ Fashion history lesson: The origin of fast fashion" <https://fashionista.com/2016/06/what-is-fast-fashion/> (last visited February 15, 2023)

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FAST FASHION & CLIMATE CHANGE CRISIS

Estimates suggests that around 95 percent of the clothes that is thrown out with other domestic waste can actually be re-worn, reused or recycled but instead they are ending up in landfills. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) considers fast fashion as one of the most polluting industries in the world. The environmental cost of fashion encompasses all the phases of a life cycle of clothing and concerning inputs such as water, energy, chemical and raw materials and processes such as cotton farming, textile dyeing, washing & drying, finishing treatments and even recycling. Textile pollution is also contributed by the vast over production of fashion items, the agriculture pollution of crops such as cotton, the use of synthetic fibers and the proliferation of microfibers across global water resources.⁸ Certain major environmental footprints of fashion includes different kinds of fiber production, conventional cotton farming, synthetic fibers usage, Air pollution during manufacture of textiles, over use and contamination of water, high impact dyes, hazardous waste production, and pollution during packaging.

The textile industry makes extensive usage of natural fibres such as cotton, linen, silk, wool and the most commonly used is the synthetic fibres which are made from Petrochemicals. These cheap and easy-care fibres are becoming textile industry's miracle solution. At each of the six stages typically required to make a garment, the negative impacts on the climate are as numerous as they are varied. Spinning, weaving and industrial manufacture undermine air quality. Dyeing and printing consumes vast amounts of water and chemicals, and release numerous volatile agents into the

⁸Environmental impact of fashion

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Environmental_impact_of_fashion#:.:text=Some%20of%20the%20main%20factors,rank%20of%20the%20global%20water%20resources (last visited February 13, 2023)

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atmosphere that are particularly harmful to our health as well as to the climate. Polyester, the most widely used manufactured fibre, is made from petroleum. With the rise in production in the fashion industry, demand for man-made fibres, especially polyester, has nearly doubled in the last 15 years, according to figures from the Technical Textile Markets. The manufacture of polyester and other synthetic fabrics is an energy-intensive process requiring large amounts of crude oil and releasing emissions including volatile organic compounds, particulate matter, and acidic gases such as hydrogen chloride, all of which can cause or aggravate respiratory disease and this stands as one of the major cause for climate change crisis. Having looked into the direct effects of fast fashion on climate, indirect effects look like chemical leaching into the ground from the clothes that ends up in the landfills.⁹ Unsold clothing are often burned and that releases extensive amount of CO₂ into the atmosphere. In 2019, France announced that it was making an effort to prevent companies from this practice of burning unsold fashion items. Chile has long been a hub for unsold clothing, that was made in China or Bangladesh and passing through Europe, Asia or the United States before arriving in Chile, where clothing merchants then resell it around the continent. Clothing from all over the world arrive at the Iquique port in the Alto Hospicio free zone in northern Chile each year, an important centre for trade in South America. What is not sold around South America or sent to other countries to be sold, stays in the Alto Hospicio free zone. If no one pays the necessary tariffs to take it away, it is then dumped in the Atacama Desert.¹⁰

⁹ Swadesina Mukherjee, "Environmental and Social Impact of Fashion: Towards an Eco-friendly, Ethical Fashion" (International Journal of Interdisciplinary and Multidisciplinary Studies, 2015) b71b53ata196ea3011a135.pdf (ijims.com)

¹⁰ Environmental impact of fashion, *apud* note 8, at 6

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Secondly, cotton farming uses approximately 25% of the world's insecticides and 11% of pesticides and they are likely or probable human carcinogens. Cotton as such is a crop which is highly water intensive. The amount of water that goes into cotton production is huge. Statistics shows that for cotton irrigation, in the period of 1960-2000, the Aral Sea in south east Asia lost approximately 70% of its volume as a result of diverting waters from the rivers that join to the sea in order to grow cotton in the desert.

Thirdly, the apparel industry uses two very common synthetics for its production i.e polyester and nylon. A large number of non-renewable resources (petrochemicals) are consumed during its production and this has far reaching environmental implications especially due to the release of greenhouse gases which deteriorates the climate further. The fabric of Viscose Rayon, which is manufactured from sources such as bamboo and wood pulp through a chemically intensive process also contributes to deforestation and pollution. The solvent used in the process of manufacturing viscose rayon called carbon disulfide is a toxic chemical that science has already known to be a human reproductive hazard and it also poses immense danger to factory workers, surrounding communities and climate because of its air emissions and water waste.¹¹

Air pollution that generates amidst all these processes cannot be ignored. Most processes performed in textile mills, produces a large number of toxic emissions. Having said that, air pollution is the most difficult to sample, test and quantify and hence data is not readily available for how much exactly is the air emission for textile

¹¹ *Id.* at 6

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manufacturing operations and yet textile industry has been identified as one of the greatest contributors of air pollution.

The textile industry also uses high volumes of water for its day-to-day operations. All the processes are highly water intensive, right from washing of fibers to bleaching, dyeing and finally washing of the finished products. On an average, approximately 200 liters of water is required to produce just 1kg of textiles. This water needs to be treated before being discharged into the environment or else this has the potential to cause huge damage. The overall processes involved in the textile industry contributes to the generation of hazardous waste to a great extent. It can be hence said that the fashion industry has to fundamentally go through a lot of changes and adaptation to meet the current standard and utmost need for maintaining environmental sustainability and reversing the adverse effects of the climate change crisis.

HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATION OF FASHION INDUSTRY AND ITS EFFECT ON CLIMATE

The cheaper and easier it gets for a consumer to buy clothes, more someone else is paying the price for it. Climate change indeed is one of the major threats which hampers the right to enjoy human rights to the best of its potential. Much of our human rights such as right to food, clean water, health, & life are severely affected by the climate change crisis. Textile industry brings forth certain forms of violence which are not often talked about but yet stands as the third largest criminal industry in the world. The forms of violence include trafficking, forced & unpaid labour, modern day slavery

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and health rights implications to name a few.¹² The consumers of fast fashion are not aware of the human rights violations that they are a party to and hence the fast fashion industry is continuing to thrive on its current business model. Consumers drive the demand and hence they can be the real catalyst for change if they become more aware and conscious of their demands. Fast fashion and human induced climate change is a threat prevalent and the poor nations are paying the highest price for it¹³

Though Covid-19 shook the world, it did bring certain facts to the spot light and one of them being the poor working conditions of people in the third world nations. The apparel industry employs millions of workers around the globe and yet they lack ethical conditions for working, they do not give fair wages, and the number of sweat shops are just increasing with time. The odds are such that most of the clothes that we wear comes either from China, Bangladesh, India, Philippines, Vietnam or Indonesia because these are the countries with the maximum textile manufacturing hubs and sweat shops. The worker's rights are limited in these nations, they have dangerous working conditions, 18 hours a day of work, no breaks and sometimes no wages as well. An average customer does not care where the clothes are being made or the conditions attached. This does not negate the fact that we need to pause and think about how our choices are impacting the climate and human lives.¹⁴

¹² How the fashion industry interferes with human rights' (KedSei Magazine) <https://kedseimagazine.com/how-the-fashion-industry-interferes-with-human-rights/> (last visited February 14, 2023)

¹³ Salma Money, 'human rights implications in the fast fashion industry: a qualitative analysis', (A THESIS Presented to the University Honours Program California State University, Long Beach 2021), <https://scholarworks.calstate.edu/downloads/44533n75x>

¹⁴ David Marshall, 'Human rights violations are getting worse in the apparel industry' (imga, 3 November 2021) <https://imga.co.uk/human-rights/>

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Verisk Maplecroft, a risk intelligence company published a report which says that since the beginning of the COVID-19, there has been widespread of human rights violation such as child labor, exploitation of migrant workers, health and safety issues. These have been highlighted to be growing at an alarming rate. Millions of people are already suffering from the disastrous effects of extreme climate change due to the unthoughtful consumerism practices. It shows that we are clearly ignoring the effects of climate degradation until we see the human cost of it.¹⁵

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) which was signed in 1948, has envisaged the need for upholding human rights and has given such directions as to what human rights legislation should look like to the world community. Although it stands as mere guidelines and does not put any nation under legal obligation, yet to uphold these human rights is a responsibility of each nation. Having a closer look at the UDHR, Article 4, UDHR states that no one shall be held in slavery or servitude and yet we see that forced labor is practiced widely in the apparel industry. Forced labor branches from the pressure to keep the production costs low. Climate change and forced labor are phenomena that are intimately connected. Climate change gives rise to vulnerabilities and make people contemplate migrations as they fear losing livelihood. Amidst this scenario, workers are being under paid, exploited and abused.¹⁶

¹⁵ Sofia Nazaria, 'Worldwide decline in labour rights strikes at heart of global supply chains' (Verisk Maplecroft, 6 October 2021) <https://www.maplecroft.com/insights/analysis/worldwide-decline-in-labour-rights-strikes-at-heart-of-global-supply-chains/>

¹⁶ 'How the fashion industry interferes with human rights' (Kalsai Magazine) <https://kalsaimagazine.com/how-the-fashion-industry-interferes-with-human-rights/> (last visited February 14, 2023)

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Similarly, there are number of reasons as to why the fashion industry is so prone to human rights violation, but when we find the crux of it, we see that everything boils down to the ever-changing climatic conditions due to increasing consumerism and the demand for fast fashion.¹⁷

COST OF ADAPTING MINIMALISM AGAINST CONSUMERISM TO MITIGATE THE CLIMATE CHANGE CRISIS

The growing trend of globalization and industrialization has reformed the economies in a way where consumerism has become an integral part. Economic growth of every nation has now come to depend on continuous production of new products and discarding the old ones by marketing them as obsolete. When it comes to the apparel industry, the purchase rate and disposal has intensely amplified and the road from production to landfill has shortened. Consumerism can be characterized by unnecessary materialism and unquenchable yearning to acquire things that are not needed primarily whereas minimalism is a state of art which focuses on consuming less, owning less, buying less and living with necessities. Minimalism does not intend to go against consumerism, it only focuses on a creating a sustainable lifestyle where needs are given importance over wants. Minimalism urges to think and buy wisely. Minimalism is also about consumption because any nation's economy requires its citizens to spend money in order to boost its economic health. It is not about over buying; it is about mindful buying which is sustainable for the environment. We need

¹⁷ Beatrice Trillmas, *supra* note 13, at 8.

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to develop the idea of "consumer minimalism" which is a balance between minimalism and consumerism and is a blend of both with little tweaks.¹⁸

There are abundant factors that contribute to the overconsumption which is so prevalent in the society today. Human attributes such as greed, jealousy, lack of empathy, desire to impress, pride, compensating for personal shortcomings or simply to look happy for the digital world has acted as catalyst for the mainstream consumerism and lack of general awareness of the damages of overconsumption is further accelerating it. The food for thought is what kind of society are we building if that requires people to go into debt to sustain it, merely due to overconsumption? It is said that minimalism does not support the goals of a healthy and thriving economy. But this view is inherently missing the bigger picture on two important fronts; firstly, that the capitalist economy has enough flexibility to adapt and secondly the myth that minimalism advocates zero spending.¹⁹

Speaking about the flexibility of an economy, it is assumed that markets and businesses dictate consumer behavior and it is true when we see businesses working hard to shape the views of the customers and bend it towards their specific product line. Business is about catering to the desires of the customer and not the other way round. At the very outset of any business, it aims to provide solutions to the problems of the customers and making their lives easy. It is meant to address the true needs of the customer.

¹⁸ Annie V. Wilson, Silvia Bellezza "Consumer Minimalism" <https://www0.gsb.columbia.edu/mygsb/faculty/research/pdf/files/26352/Consumer%20Minimalism.pdf> (last visited February 16, 2023)

¹⁹ Joshua Becker, 'A New, Minimalist Economy' (Economic Minimalist) <https://www.becomingminimalist.com/minimalist-economy/> (last visited February 16, 2023)

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However, it is no more the situation today. Now we are creating demands for the wants of the consumers and want is never ending. While doing so, we are efficiently neglecting the holistic impact on the environment and the society. Consumers do not realize their own potential for changing the course of a business. Taking an example, the large quantity of clothing produced requires large number of people who are paid very little, harming the climate in the way mentioned above. The consumer, unaware of the implications of their wants, gives into fast fashion happily. However, if the consumer masses finally said, "Enough! I am willing to pay a little more for my fashion or I would now buy mindfully or I would now buy things which has the least cost to the environment to ensure proper working conditions around the world" and stand by this, the businesses will be forced to change their business strategy to meet the new demands of their targeted consumers to support the ultimate goal of reversing the climate change crisis. Businesses may influence some aspects of consumer spending but as a thumb rule, they are meant to respond to the consumer demands rather than creating them. Having said that, businesses have a moral and ethical responsibility towards the environment to stop further degradation of the climate and human life.

The question still remains, whether the economy will suffer if minimalism is adopted? There may be a few hitches on the way when we see short term effects. But since we have an economy which is based on the principles of mixed economy & a classic blend of capitalist and socialist principles, we should be able to rebuild ourselves with new strategies that aligns with our sustainability goals. The second misconception about the myth that minimalism advocates zero spending is also unsubstantiated. It merely directs their money towards non material pursuits and a thoughtful buying of materialistic needs as required. It is a matter of time until this idea is accepted and a

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new economy will begin to shape and emerge. Rest assured that money will still be in flow, buying and selling will still happen. It will just be spent on more rewarding things than hoarding material possessions. Experiences, travel, sports, museums, Tourism, Art, High Quality consumer products and services, all of these will start garnering more spending. It is a radical shift, hard to imagine but is definitely a possibility. It won't be wrong to say that the shift has already been initiated.²⁰

The savers and the investors contribute hand in hand and truly represent the economic growth and environmental sustainability. Individuals and businesses both must come together to address the growing concern of climate change crisis and work towards meaningful solutions. Minimalism as one of the solutions for the climate change crisis highlights the fact that when people spend mindfully, they have more money to put in banks which is then utilized for the funding of the new businesses who can use that money wisely, create better technology, build factories to utilize human capital effectively and increase overall productivity. Capital creates productivity and productivity is the real driver of our economy which shapes our standard of living.²¹

The utilitarian principle of achieving the greatest good for the greatest number of people on macro level can be provided by minimalism. It teaches generosity on a larger scale. It helps us redirect our finite resources away from our 'wants' and begin to use them in practical ways to meet someone's 'needs'. It is important to realize the effect of consuming the nonrenewable resources at such an alarming speed which is the catalyst for the negative change in the climatic conditions. Again, will the economy

²⁰ Id. at 11

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collapse with the rise of minimalism while being thoughtful about our climate concerns? Probably not. The overconsumption will slow down, a few glitches at the start but as mentioned earlier, we have the ability to reinvent ourselves with least cost to the climate.

NATIONAL & INTERNATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR COOPERATION ON SUSTAINABLE FASHION WHILE ADDRESSING THE CLIMATE CHANGE CRISIS

The stakeholders of fashion industry have a critical role to play in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. As fashion value chains are globalized and the industry is in the forever path of booting, international cooperation is important for fostering sustainable fashion. Without a revamp in the production and consumption patterns of the fashion sector, the social and environment costs will keep on mounting. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) have significant impact on nations and their will to cooperate on the path of the development of sustainable environment.²²

Highlighting the importance of a comprehensive international framework, United Nations and its allied organisations initiated *United Nations Alliance for Sustainable Fashion* which is designed to contribute to the sustainable development goals through coordinated action in the fashion sector. Through the alliance, the UN commits to changing the path of fashion, reducing its negative climatic and social impacts; and

²² Geneva Environment Network, 'International Cooperation on sustainable fashion' <https://www.genevaenvironmentnetwork.org/resources/updates/sustainable-fashion/> (last visited February 16, 2023)

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turning fashion into a driver of the implementation of the sustainable development goals.²³

Efforts are now being made to build on internationally recognized principles and guidelines which emphasizes the value of transparency in the fashion value chains. In conjunction with the 2018 European Development Days, in Brussels, Belgium, the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), the International Trade Centre (ITC) and the European Commission (EC) hosted an event on transparency and traceability in garment value chains. The event titled, 'Do you know where your clothes come from?' discussed opportunities for ensuring a more sustainable clothing industry. The aim was to set up a multi-stakeholder platform and develop policy recommendations and traceability standards to guide the garment industry and contribute to SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) and SDG 13 (Climate Action). The event addressed many challenges to traceability and transparency, discussing for instance, fragmented production processes, and the prevalence of illegitimate subcontracting and undeclared informal work in garment supply chains.²⁴

At National Level, we have initiated Project SURE which stands for Sustainable Resolution. This shows a firm commitment from the industry to move towards a fashion that contributes to clean environment and improved climatic conditions.²⁵

²³ UN Alliance for Sustainable Fashion, 'Fashion and Sustainable Development'

Home - The UN Alliance for Sustainable Fashion (unfashionalliance.org) (last visited Feb 14, 2023)

²⁴ ILO, 'Initiatives Push for Sustainable Development' (SDG Knowledge Hub, 21 June 2018) Initiatives Push for Sustainable Fashion | News | SDG Knowledge Hub | ILO (last visited Feb 16, 2023)

²⁵ Project SURE (Journal of India, 1 June 2020) Project SURE - Journal of India (last visited February 15, 2023)

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The 2030 agenda for Sustainable Development are integrated and indivisible and aims to balance all three dimensions of sustainable development i.e., economic, social and climatic. This objective is mainstreamed into our national planning frameworks. The transformational vision depends on an integrated approach amongst all the stakeholders at national as well as international level to ensure effective implementation.²⁶

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The fashion industry requires a fundamental shift and redesigning which will empower the consumers to express their personal style through fashion and for businesses to make profit and for the economy to grow positively, while mitigating the harmful climatic impacts. To achieve this change from rapid consumerism to a well thought minimalistic approach, the current model of business in the industry needs a revamp. Currently the model runs on quick responses to preferences of the customer, just in time manufacturing chains and a continuous inflow of goods in the market. It is time to work on reconceptualization and integrate closed loop thinking. Reforming any current system meets opposition, as change is always difficult but, with a vision to change and adapt, we are certain that entrepreneurs, designers and brands will come up to cooperate and find ways to thrive in this change and redesign the industry for a better future socially and economically while ensuring that we contribute least harm

²⁶ National strategies and SDG Integration (UN department of economic and social affairs) National strategies and SDG integration | Department of Economic and Social Affairs (un.org) (last visited February 14, 2023)

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to the climate. More than ever before, we now require innovations and creative minds to sail through this multidimensional transition.²⁷

Lifestyle changes and making wise decisions towards preserving a viable climate are at the core of this change that we envision. To achieve the goals for a sustainable environment and sustainable development, it is proposed:

- Taking clothes on rent, better recycling processes, robust technology for controlling pollution are some of the measures that could help.
- To ease the process of transition, Consumers need to be made aware on sustainable fashion. They need to be made aware of social, economic and climatic impacts of the mindless consumption and production of fashion.
- Brands and Businesses needs to align themselves with the change and provide sustainability training to its staff so that they have skills and tools to make decisions that support both, financial success of the company as well as encourages sustainable production and consumption in order to deal effectively with the climate change crisis.
- The brands can improvise on 'care labels' on the clothes. It can be designed in a way to have more adherence and desired behaviors.
- Providing quality and longevity information about the products as well as warranties and repairing option seems to be a viable solution.
- The fashion industry needs an innovative model to remain competitive. The businesses must try to engage with consumers and educate on responsible

²⁷ The Nice Consumer, 'Framework for achieving sustainable fashion consumption through collaboration' (Nordic Fashion Association) nice-consumer-framework.pdf (bsr.org) (last visited February 17, 2023)

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disposal of the garments in a way that it does not aggravate the negative impact on climate.

- Encouraging the establishment of second-hand markets by the brand will have a positive impact on the minds of the consumer. When garments will be kept in circulation for a longer period of time, the hazard of new production can be minimized.
- Organic Fashion also needs to be regulated and manufactured in a way that causes least harm to the climate or excessive usage of resources. The business strategy has to be aligned with a view of making organic affordable to the consumers.
- Second hand shops, with a certain degree of professionalism and marketing can overcome the negative bias that is in the mind of the consumers for pre worn clothes.²⁸

Having said that, the fashion industry has huge potential to create employment, creativity, entrepreneurship and profit and all of these should not be lost in the process of transition. Hence, the vision is that individuals and communities will evolve and their interaction with the fashion industry will be more conscious. The consumers must get to enjoy the innovative products and services while reducing the allied negative social, environmental and economic impacts. This will lead towards a more sustainable development process globally and gradually and hence creating a balance between consumerism and minimalism with least effect to the economic development but a huge game changer for preservation of the climate.

²⁸ *Id.* at 14