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Modern slavery legislation and the limits of ethical fashion

Natalya Lusty ^a and Harriette Richards ^b

^aSchool of Culture and Communication, University of Melbourne, Melbourne, Australia;

^bSchool of Fashion and Textiles, RMIT University, Melbourne, Australia

ABSTRACT

The introduction of the Australian Modern Slavery Act in 2018 has important implications for the fashion sector and the supply chains that it furnishes. However, it also introduces an added layer of complexity to the already crowded space of ethical fashion information. This article investigates how fashion consumers navigate the increasingly complex landscape of ethical fashion against the backdrop of new legislation and alongside the moral imperatives and pressures of environmental media. Research into sustainable fashion often suggests that more reporting, more transparency, more information is necessary in order to educate consumers about ethical options. However, our survey and interview data illustrate that even the most informed and knowledgeable consumers find it difficult to navigate the information that *is* available, often becoming overwhelmed when it comes to buying ethically. Taking seriously the competing demands driving ethical consumption, we argue that understanding how the mechanisms of failure operate in the ethical fashion landscape, particularly feelings of shame and guilt, can give us greater knowledge of fashion consumer attitudes and practices. This, in turn, may lead to a better awareness of the needs of conscious consumers as well as the limits of ethical fashion. We advocate for an acknowledgment of consumer imperfection to shift away from pathologizing the consumer or the commodity itself and to focus instead on the consumer's thwarted relationship with the means of production and the complicated global networks of engagement that inform ethical consumption.

KEYWORDS Ethical fashion; ethical consumption; modern slavery; environmental media; sustainable fashion; consumer awareness; Australian Modern Slavery Act

Introduction

Increasing concerns about environmental degradation and exploitative labour conditions have driven an exponential rise in ethical fashion as a lived political ideal, micro-political practice, mediated discourse, marketing tool, and new arena of legislative surveillance and compliance. Like other forms of ethical consumption, fashion is increasingly inhabiting a sticky divide, between 'a realm of "affirmative" and "open" moral struggle as part

CONTACT Harriette Richards  harriette.richards@rmit.edu.au

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of a collective project' and 'a more defensive realm of static sanctimoniousness' (Littler 2009, p. 15). The interviews we conducted for this study suggest that while ethically driven consumers are aware of this divide, particularly as it plays out on social media, there are other factors that make the landscape of ethical consumption challenging to navigate. This complexity speaks to the way fashion forms 'a mutually constitutive and interdependent set of relations through which commodities are brought into being and given meaning in the lives of human subjects' (Lewis 2015, p. 5). The circuit of culture model (Du Gay *et al.* 1997) has long been useful for understanding a range of fashion practices pertaining to forms of consumption, style and identity (Kaiser 2012, Lewis 2015). Indeed, we now take it as a given that representation, identity, production, consumption, and regulation are inherently and complexly interconnected. This is perhaps no more so than in the space of ethical fashion. Here, our intention is to analyse how 'ethics' around fashion and clothing purchases are negotiated against the backdrop of new modern slavery legislation. As a relatively recent addition to the ethical fashion landscape, we are interested in how modern slavery legislation plays into, informs, or impacts how consumers navigate the competing forms of information (via social and environmental media, consumer movements, marketing and branding) that shape ethical consumption. In this sense we are interested in the 'relations of disjuncture' (Appadurai 2001) informing ethical fashion consumption as they are intimately felt and navigated at the level of everyday practice. If, for Appadurai, globalization represents 'a world of disjunctive flows' that 'produces problems that manifest themselves in intensely local forms but have contexts that are anything but local' (p. 6), one of the effects of modern slavery legislation is to bring to our attention intensely local conditions of production at the same time as acknowledging the global determinations of those conditions. As such, our aim is to understand how our participants are variedly caught up in the implications of this new legislation alongside other forms of advocacy and branding pertaining to ethical fashion consumption.

The recent introduction of Modern Slavery legislation in Australia at the end of 2018, following on from the UK Modern Slavery Act of 2015 and the earlier California Transparency in Supply Chains Act of 2012 has important implications for the global fashion sector and the supply chains that it furnishes. But it also introduces an added layer of complexity to the already crowded space of ethical fashion information and consumer agency. While large businesses are being made responsible for clearer accountability of the risks of slavery and human trafficking in the manufacturing and supply of their goods (at least on some level), controversially, what the legislation does not include is any independent oversight to guarantee accuracy in the reporting or penalties for businesses who fail to report. As such, it remains the responsibility of the consumer, as the purchaser of the

product, to investigate retailers' websites (or the government holdings of the reports or corporate statements¹) for this newly mandated information or rely on various advocacy groups or the relevant government minister to 'name and shame' companies for non-compliance. In addition, there is the question of trust and how reported information can be verified rather than being used by retailers for greenwashing purposes. Modern slavery can be thought of as yet another concern to which ethical fashion must be attuned. The transparency of supply chains made possible through the implementation of modern slavery legislation in jurisdictions around the world demonstrates the potential for intensely local conditions of production to be accounted for in local practices of consumption and in ways that make the global less abstract, and more molecular. But by the same token the experience of shopping ethically has increasingly become a fraught and bewildering experience.

It was with this in mind that we embarked on a small survey of approximately 100 Australian fashion enthusiasts to investigate the impacts (if any) of modern slavery legislation on broader ethical fashion decision-making practices. We recruited participants through our own networks and through our Critical Fashion Studies research group social media (Instagram and Twitter) accounts. We weren't just interested in how much consumers knew about this relatively new (and, for some, obscure) legislation. We were concerned about how conscious fashion consumers navigate the increasingly complex field of ethical fashion shopping. From international guides such as the Oxfam Ethical Fashion Report, the Baptist World Aid Fashion Report and the Good On You app, to retailers' websites and new market investment in sustainability promotion such as H&M's 'Innovation Stories' initiative, ASOS's 'Circular Collection' and, closer to home, The ICONIC's 'Considered Edit' and David Jones' 'Mindfully Made' collection, brands are consciously flagging the steps they are taking toward sustainability and ethical production practices. We investigated consumer awareness and perceptions of the various reports, apps and capsule fashion collections, and the marketing that accompanies them, and whether they had any bearing on purchase decision-making. In addition, we were also interested in more intimate accounts of the mechanisms of perceived success and failure that governed ethical fashion consumption. As such, we conducted twenty-two in-depth interviews with who had indicated in the survey that they would be willing to participate in follow-up semi-structured interviews. During the interviews, we asked more detailed questions about the complicated relationships our participants have with the ethical demands that often inform the clothes they buy.

Our aim in this article is to understand the complexity of navigating the ethical consumption landscape against the backdrop of new modern slavery legislation and alongside the moral imperatives and pressures of environmental media. Indeed, we are interested in the tension between, on

the one hand, the mounting complexity for consumers and, on the other, the over-simplified and polarizing rhetoric of much environmental media. While we take ethical consumption to be 'a series of micropolitical practices and discourses' (Littler 2009, p. 15), we are also concerned with how the more macro-political legislative and advocacy discourses interact with micropolitical practices. In other words: how do consumers navigate this crowded information landscape – from direct forms of activism and advocacy in their social media feeds and mainstream environmental media, to independent research of brands and retailers' websites – and what are some of the impediments to buying ethically given there is no lack of information, expert or popular? While there has been a great deal of research in cultural studies on ethical and sustainable food consumption from a range of theoretical and empirical perspectives (Ashley *et al.* 2004, De Solier 2013, Lewis and Huber 2015, Probyn 2016), fashion, with some important exceptions (Littler 2009, Kaiser 2012, McRobbie 2016, Khan 2019, Khan and Richards 2021, Lusty *et al.* 2021), has remained relatively obscure. This is despite the long-established interest cultural studies has taken in anti- or ethical consumer practices (Barnett *et al.* 2010, Binkley and Littler 2011, Zimmerman 2020) and the earlier work on style, subcultures and symbolic resistance (Hall and Jefferson [1975] 2006, Hebdige [1979] 2003, McRobbie [1989] 2005, 1991). It seems that consumer practices in relation to fashion and clothing often drop out of a broader cultural studies optic that addresses labour practices and globalization, ethical or alternative consumption practices.

For the purposes of our research we define ethical fashion consumption as an 'aesthetic metapolitics', a term coined by Elke Gaugele (2014, p. 12) to theorize the way fashion hinges on the 'interplay between the intangible and the material' within an increasingly complex albeit frequently concealed globalized economy. As our interviews progressed, we noted how feelings of shame and guilt (and indeed frustration) were shaping fashion consumer attitudes and practices. Although participants recounted feeling excitement and pleasure in their consumption of fashion items, this was often tempered by feelings of confusion and bewilderment, especially when striving for more ethical consumption. Accordingly, we were struck by the way much of the literature on ethical fashion consumption frames the political and the aesthetic at odds, if not a contradiction in terms. Notwithstanding the achievements of fashion activists, designers and businesses in driving change, we are interested in the failures and limits of the current ethical consumption landscape, not as a mere exercise in paranoid reading or critique for its own sake (though these methods have their role to play), but as a way to understand the paradox of the apparent ease but also mounting complexity in consuming fashion ethically. In other words, how might understanding failure and doubt lead to better awareness of the needs of conscious consumers? How do emotions impede or thwart otherwise best intentions and what

happens in those moments when one's ethics are abandoned or become difficult to enact? This is neither to judge failure on the part of consumers nor to suggest that ethical consumption should pull back on its campaign for reduced or more ethical forms of consumption, but rather, to understand how the saturation and complexity of information and the ever-widening discursive field of ethical demands produce a sense of bewilderment, confusion, ambivalence and hesitation for otherwise committed or semi-committed ethical consumers. To acknowledge the 'imperfect' ethical consumer does not mean giving up but rather acknowledging the unevenly distributed options available to consumers to consume ethically.²

Over consumption, anti-consumption, sustainability and the rise of the ethical fashion consumer

The concept and practice of 'ethical consumption' is not new (Harrison *et al.* 2005, Hilton 2009, Littler 2009, Thompson 2012). However, various forms of ethical consumption, 'conscious consumption' (Schor and Thompson 2014) – or 'connected consumption' (Schor 2013) – have been intensifying over the past decade, leading to what fashion scholars have called the 'ethical turn' in fashion (Gaugele 2014, Tseëlon 2014). This intensification was precipitated by the Rana Plaza building collapse in Bangladesh in 2013, which served as a catalysing event for highlighting the hidden costs of increased global fashion consumption and the limited transparency of supply chains. But fashion as a vehicle for change has a much longer historical lineage. From right-to-know movements, legislation and practices in the 1960s and 1970s (Mol 2015) and anti-sweatshop campaigns and brand boycotts in the 1980s and 1990s (Doorey 2011), to more recent movements such as Labour Behind the Label (est. 2001), Fashion Revolution (est. 2013), Extinction Rebellion (est. 2018), #TakeBackBlackFriday (launched by Eco-Age and Global Fashion Exchange in 2019), and the rise of B-Corporations (est. 2006), there have long been campaigns mobilizing fashion as an instrument for change. These campaigns have largely been aimed at raising consumer awareness of unethical production practices across fashion supply chains and encouraging consumer boycotts or 'buycotts' (Littler 2005, Neilson 2010). Such consumer action (or resistant non-action in the case of boycotts) is intended to pressure brands to increase their transparency and improve production practices. While these campaigns certainly enact forms of change and are in many ways crucial to the improvement of fashion production practices, they nevertheless remain entangled with complicated raced and gendered assumptions about globalized responsibility (Barnett *et al.* 2010, Pham 2017, Horton 2018, Khan and Richards 2021). They also create additional burdens of responsibility for those who are already socially and economically marginalized.

Despite the increasing focus on the ethics of fashion consumption, ethical consumption is still over-reliant on a behaviour change model that encourages individual consumers to lead the way in bringing about a shift in more ethical forms of consumption. It has long been recognized, however, that behaviour change campaigns overlook the complexity of how consumers navigate ethical demands against the flux of everyday life (Warde 2005, 2016, Shove 2010, Heinze 2021), or indeed how individuals navigate consumption practices through the changing dynamics of daily life informed by emotions, habits, and temporal and spatial constraints. While practice-based theories of consumption (Shove 2010, 2017, Heinze 2021) have gone some way in understanding this complexity, when it comes to fashion and clothing consumption, behaviour change models still dominate. There has been relatively little research that attempts to understand how well-meaning consumers navigate the complex landscape of ethical fashion, which includes new forms of legislation (such as the Australian Modern Slavery Act) and increased forms of fashion activism on both social media and mainstream environmental media (Heinze 2020, Lusty *et al.* 2021). As such, it seems important to ask how these new landscapes of complexity are informed by what Clive Barnett *et al.* (2005, pp. 107–109) call ‘a field of action’ that ‘works through a set of subtle interpellations that turn upon ambivalent forms of address such as seduction and shame’. While work on emotion in ethical consumption has largely been focused on mobilizing emotions of shame, empathy and anger (for example, in relation to the Rana Plaza disaster), there is a dearth of research that considers how individuals fail in their endeavours to become ethical fashion consumers or indeed how many of us fall into the category of imperfect ethical consumers.

In praise of small data

Big data are often used to arrive at the ‘alarming’ statistics and ‘frightening’ conclusions about the ecological and human cost of fashion that feed environmental media, social media activism and new forms of legislation. In contrast, it is through the more extended intimacy of small data that we might get a clearer picture of the obstacles faced by well-meaning consumers of ethical and sustainable fashion. There is no shortage of studies that examine the attitude-behaviour gap in relation to ethical or sustainable consumption (Carrington *et al.* 2010, Caruana *et al.* 2016, Wiederhold and Martinez 2018). However, little research has examined in detail the mechanisms of failure for mindful and conscientious fashion consumers. It is precisely this intimate detail to which our research was attuned, and for which small data methodologies, such as interviews, are particularly appropriate. What is so striking about our sample of interviewees is the high level of expert knowledge they held about the issues facing sustainable fashion. More

than half of our participants either worked in areas directly implicated in green consumption or labour rights or were studying postgraduate environmental science degrees. Of the twenty-two participants we interviewed, the majority (17) were women, with four men and one trans man.³ Reflecting the migrant history of Australian settlement, the majority of our participants were Australians of European background (including Greek, Italian, Egyptian and Anglo-Celtic), with three participants of Asian descent (Malaysian and Vietnamese).⁴ All participants shopped for clothes for themselves but seven participants also shopped for dependents, including children, partners and other family members. One participant worked as a personal shopper so often purchased clothes for clients and a number of participants also mentioned occasionally purchasing garments as gifts for other people. Annual household incomes – and attendant disposable income participants could spend on clothing⁵ – varied significantly across the cohort.⁶

While the specific details of the lives of our participants differed widely, they nevertheless shared a remarkable shrewdness about the competing forms of information in the fashion sector, alert to greenwashing and retailers' potentially misleading claims. Many 'trusted' their social media feeds (and particular influencers they followed) and mainstream news media to report accurately on the environmental and human cost of fashion, repeatedly referencing 'trusted sources', 'trusted media platforms' and 'trusted brands'. However, it was not always clear how a particular source or platform – or brand for that matter – became trusted. In addition, while most of our participants had heard of the Australian Modern Slavery Act, very few were fully aware of the implications of the Act, which suggested a significant gap between this new legislation and consumer awareness and education.

While our survey data created a picture of best intentions and demonstrated the impressive knowledge people have of the various issues facing fashion production and consumption, our interview data gave us a different kind of lens: a view into the habits, struggles, and mixed emotions that beset otherwise good intentions for ethical consumption. For our interview participants, optimism was a potent and recurring sentiment. Yet this attitude was undercut by their deep understanding of the complicated environmental and social conditions implicated in fashion supply chains, and a sense of being overwhelmed by the competing layers of complexity governing compliance mechanisms (such as the Modern Slavery Act) in addition to the plethora of negative accounts of the fashion industry in the news media and strident environmental activism on social media. While the degree of knowledge and industry insight our participants displayed is certainly a good thing, in many cases it has also led to a sense of bewilderment and exhaustion for even the most ardent conscious fashion consumer.

Although our interview sample was small, together with the survey data, it gave us a nuanced picture of the complexity consumers face and the ensuing

mechanisms of failure. The survey data may have given us a broad sense of the awareness participants had about issues of ethics and sustainability in fashion, including modern slavery, but it was in the interviews that we heard complicated narratives about the decision-making process informing fashion consumption and the contradictory information our informed consumers had to navigate. Focusing our attention on consumers who already had a high level of knowledge about the ethical fashion landscape also gave us the opportunity to investigate how consumers navigate the ethical credentials of chosen brands and retail websites. The introduction of modern slavery legislation in Australia has the potential to shift the burden of responsibility away from the consumer although it also risks intensifying complexity for the overburdened consumer.

Modern slavery legislation and the ethical demand of fashion

The new emphasis on modern slavery legislation addresses the global nature of the fashion industry and the ways in which production and supply chains have remained relatively invisible for consumers and even brands and retailers. It shifts the ethical fashion landscape by insisting on accountability throughout the entire chain of supply, from the workers and environments in textile manufacturing, to the designers and garment workers that assemble the clothes, and the mechanisms of global distribution of the final product. Modern Slavery legislation also contributes to what Gaugele (2014, p. 13) calls 'new social and economic spaces of imagined global communities' whereby '(o)n the level of everyday practices, fashion accomplishes a new sensorium of shared fictions and cultural belongings'. This new legislation should have positive impacts on workers' conditions and livelihoods. However, there are profound limitations to its effectiveness alongside varying national legislative frameworks that differently position consumers and businesses.

California, an early adopter of this legislation, offers an interesting comparative model to the new Australian legislation. In the 2015 resource guide issued in California for companies affected by the introduction of modern slavery legislation (and released by the then Attorney General, Kamala Harris), it is clear that the Transparency in Supply Chains Act (2012) is aimed squarely at consumers and their demands for more transparency: making information about the risks of modern slavery available to consumers to empower their decision-making.⁷ This, we believe, has intensified social media campaigns targeting consumers, many of which originate in the United States. In contrast, the Australian legislation, as it is interpreted by the Department of Home Affairs (the federal department overseeing the reporting requirement), is focused less on consumer rights and demands and more on the integrity of business entities:

Modern slavery can occur in every industry and sector and has severe consequences for victims. Modern slavery also distorts global markets, undercuts responsible business and can pose severe legal and reputational risks to entities.⁸

While the rhetoric on the Australian Government website is clearly aimed at supporting (indeed compelling) businesses to become compliant, it is nevertheless notable for the way in which the focus is on protecting against ‘business harm’ rather than vulnerable workers. It repeatedly reinforces the point that improving supply chains makes good business sense since it may ‘increase profitability, investor confidence and access to financing opportunities’. This is perhaps not surprising given that a number of Australian government and corporate agencies have begun to limit tender processes to companies that comply with the Act. In terms of fashion, it is often shareholders and ethical consumer advocacy groups who hold power over retailers to ensure compliance. While the Australian and Californian legislation is endorsed by state and federal governments, the French Duty of Vigilance Act and the UK Modern Slavery Act were both established by NGOs (although the UK will move to a government-mandated repository model like the one established in Australia, from 2021).

Our aim here is not to question either the efficacy or importance of this relatively new legislation in making large businesses more accountable. Rather, we want to ask how this legislation fits into the already crowded space of ethical fashion consumption demands and how consumers end up being largely responsible for navigating this complex, and often incomplete, landscape of information. We argue that while the Australian Act appears to target businesses and their supply chains, consumers are implicitly compelled to respond to this new instrument of transparency albeit without a clear picture of what the implications are or how their consumption practices might be associated.

Navigating complexity and uncertainty

Increased forms of transparency in terms of tracing the environmental footprint and labour conditions of the manufacturing of garments is one indicator of the consumer’s increased investment in, and awareness of, the multiple issues that feed into sustainable fashion production and consumption. But conversely, this increased complexity for consumers may also become an impediment to more ethical practices. In our study, interviewees frequently noted how difficult it was to navigate this terrain even though they felt confident in their knowledge of the broad issues that faced the fashion industry. As our interview participant Shen⁹ told us: ‘I have the resources and the skills to buy better and I still can’t! It’s lovely that you still have people who have optimism.’ Despite this sense of resignation, however, Shen was not

completely cynical about her efforts to facilitate change. Indeed, she told us of her return to making things after a long period spent away from needle and thread: 'Making stuff makes you realize how long some things take to make and that you don't always have to buy things.' While Shen's turn to 'making things' was precipitated by an extended lockdown due to the Covid-19 pandemic, her comments nevertheless reflected a very personal connection to ethical fashion practices: 'My mother was a garment worker and I would like to make decisions that bear in mind people like her.' It is the labour, skill and care that goes into the making of a garment that many of our participants felt was often forgotten in the purchasing of garments. In their wonderful collection of stories of Vietnamese outworkers in the Australian fashion industry, *Working from Home*, Emma Do and Kim Lam (2021) remind us of the exploitative labour conditions that occurred and still occur in places like Australia, despite improved labour laws that are meant to guarantee worker rights such as hourly pay, sick leave, annual leave, and superannuation. But they also chart how Vietnamese outworkers and other migrants have been central to the flourishing of the Australian fashion industry, and many of the stories they record convey the dignity and pride that garment workers take in making clothes, reminding us that everything we wear 'has passed through skilled hands' (Do and Lam 2021, p. 50).

Shen's reflections on her own relationship to buying – and making – clothes encapsulate much of what our participants recognized: even with the skills, resources and know-how, shopping for ethical fashion is a deeply fraught enterprise. Another example of the complexity consumers navigate was the perennial confusion around 'organic cotton'. While some interview participants only bought organic cotton or cotton sourced from the Better Cotton Initiative (BCI),¹⁰ others were sceptical about the use of cotton altogether. As Kate told us: 'I don't buy Australian cotton. I don't know why we're growing cotton here.' Kate's concerns about the farming of cotton in Australia were based on her knowledge about the vast amounts of water required in growing the crop, which also stopped her from buying Australian-grown rice. However, she lacked certainty about this knowledge: 'I haven't actually looked into whether or not I'm right about that. I've just assumed that I'm right.' In contrast, Rachel told us about her most recent purchase of long-sleeved cotton t-shirts: 'The thing that drew me to them was that they were advertised as 100% cotton and I would rather buy something that's naturally derived than something that's man-made.' Driving this divide in attitudes toward cotton was the assumption, on the one hand, that 'natural' fibres are always better and, on the other, the knowledge that all cotton – regardless of whether organic, non-GMO, or from the BCI – produces an undesirable environmental footprint (Fletcher 2014). This complicated division in attitudes and assumptions also raises broader issues around how

'natural' and 'organic' themselves have become overloaded terms (Luckman and Phillipov 2020), which often signal an ethical demand despite actual investigation of the evidence.

Another example of this was the sense of certainty that Nike was one of the worst brands when it came to sustainability and ethical production, largely based on memories of the global boycott campaign and anti-sweatshop activism of the 1990s. While Nike has more recently come under fire for gender discrimination and allegations it uses forced labour in its supply chains (Fifield 2019, Xu 2020), these more recent controversies were not mentioned in our interviews. Much of Nike's negative reputation was based on its performance several decades ago. Indeed, Kate told us that she doesn't buy Nike products because 'I remember Nike getting into a lot of trouble' but she also admits 'I don't actually look into the brands that we buy for shoes.' She recognizes that her attitude towards Nike is based on 'rumour mill reputation type stuff' and yet its impact is so strong that it continues to prevent her from buying their products, even when she doesn't know if the shoes she does buy are more ethical or sustainable.

This sense of uncertainty was most significant for our interviewees when it came to fast fashion. Despite the widespread condemnation of fast fashion, there was very little clarity on whether fast fashion is any less ethical than elite or designer brands. As Minh-Ha T. Pham (2017) has made clear, 'the central myth of anti-fast fashion discourse is that low prices signify low standards of production (and a lower-quality product), while high prices indicate high standards of production (and a high-quality product)'. Some of our participants were adamant that if something is cheap 'someone else pays'. They expressed their disappointment on discovering that items they had purchased were made in China (even though they had no information about the working practices of the factory where that garment was made), especially when they had assumed that they had been made locally.¹¹ Others, however, expressed more scepticism about the relationship between price and labour conditions, assuming that even a \$100 t-shirt could still be made in the same garment factory and under the same conditions as a \$6 t-shirt. Indeed, Vanessa told us about her complicated relationship with garments made in China. Having worked in the fashion industry, she had met a factory manager when she was living in Hong Kong and he proudly told her that his factory in China produced goods for Calvin Klein, Nike and Ralph Lauren.

He was telling me that the factories went 24 hours a day and the young women who worked there would rotate on shifts. He was describing this to me in a positive way, like he was saying that this is so great, my factory never stops going and I was just shocked by this, I was aghast.

This story had made Vanessa wary of buying any product from China. As Pham (2017) argues there is little distinction between fast and luxury fashion, with ‘workers in the same factory... making both the “original designs” and the fast-fashion versions’. While Vanessa knows that there are factories in China producing under ethical conditions, she feels that she doesn’t have access to enough information to know for sure where her garment has come from – and so she avoids garments made in China altogether.

So, how has Modern Slavery legislation (variously phased in over the last decade) contributed to clarity around supply chains? In a report by the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, published in early 2020, Nike and many other prominent global clothing brands were implicated in the use of suspected forced Uyghur labour in Chinese factories.¹² The Institute’s report was part of a wave of investigations into Uyghur labour in China, which included exposés published in *The Washington Post* (Fifield 2019) and ABC Four Corners (2019). The reports all named prominent brands in the clothing, tech and automotive industries suspected of relying on forced labour and prompted Western consumers to boycott brands including Nike, H&M and Burberry, and Western countries to impose sanctions against Chinese producers.¹³ Retaliation from the Chinese government came in the form of a campaign to support local production through blocking the digital profiles and websites of brands such as H&M and promoting the hashtag #ISupportXJCotton (Suliman 2021). In the days following the release of the Institute’s report, Nike (2020) released a statement claiming that the company’s relationship with factories in XUAR (Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region) had been ‘inaccurately reported’.¹⁴ However, the statement also noted that the company is working on its traceability protocol in order to have ‘confidence the materials in our products are responsibly produced’, suggesting that, due to the fractured nature of global supply chains, the company does *not* have complete control over the sourcing and manufacturing of raw materials used in Nike products. Nevertheless, Nike does provide a Manufacturing Map on their website, which provides details of finished goods production (though not raw materials, such as cotton).¹⁵ The Nike website also provides extensive detail regarding human rights and labour compliance standards, including information on how the company is responding to and reporting on risks of modern slavery in their supply chains in accordance with the UK Modern Slavery Act, the Australian Commonwealth Modern Slavery Act and the California Transparency in Supply Chains Act. While these reporting mechanisms are certainly positive, what they do not do is necessarily make it any easier for consumers to get clarity on supply chain concerns. Supply chain transparency in this instance – as in many others (Richards 2021) – provides a wealth of information that adds to the confusion and bewilderment fashion consumers already encounter when trying to buy ethically and sustainably.

Moralizing shopping and responsibility

As is clear, there is often a disconnect between knowledge and practice, for a range of complex reasons. In part, this reflects the way that environmentalism and ethical consumption media often hinge on static definitions of the 'good' and the 'bad'. In her examination of 'bad environmentalism', Nicole Seymour (2018) argues that many popular or mainstream environmental texts are focused on the easy assuredness of environmental 'truths' when in fact there is much room for doubt and an incompleteness of knowledge and certainty when it comes to the science or indeed facts. To be sure, Seymour is no climate change sceptic or anti-environmentalist, but her astute readings of environmental texts such as *An Inconvenient Truth* (2006) highlight the confusion and uncertainty and even ambivalence that are indicative of many people's responses to popular scientific accounts of climate change and environmental political advocacy, lay or expert.

The Australian TV documentary, *War on Waste* (Screen NSW 2017) is a clear example, familiar to and cited by some of our interviewees, that typifies this reductive tone of certainty.¹⁶ The documentary frequently adopts what Douglas Torgerson (1999, p. 84) calls a 'crusading sense of high purpose', if not occasionally slipping into an almost patronizing pedagogical tone toward the hapless participants in each episode. In its episode on fast fashion, which was first aired on the Australian national broadcaster ABC in 2017, the show's host Craig Reucassel declared fashion to be 'one of the fastest growing waste problems in Australia', warning us at the beginning of the episode, in alarmist tones, that 'our addiction to fast fashion is leading to fast garbage' (Screen NSW, Series 1, Episode 3). Drawing on the show's eponymous battle-ready trope, Reucassel announces that it is time to declare 'war' on 'our fashion waste problem', beginning with an investigation of the shopping habits of three young women 'addicted' to fast fashion. The segment sets out to reveal the consequences of their wasteful consumption practices and find ways for these young women to 'slow down' their fashion consumption by putting them through the challenge of not buying any new clothes for a month. Repeatedly, clothes shopping is framed as 'an addiction' with the girls 'starved of their regular shopping fixes' as they serve out their month-long ban on clothes shopping. Several times throughout the episode, the show's host makes a point of his own 'unfashionable' appearance, revelling in his old sneakers and well-worn non-fashionable clothes. As an environmentalist he is fashionably unfashionable. Although Reucassel acknowledges the huge pressure on the girls to buy new clothes (from marketing and social media through to peer group pressure) he nevertheless suggests that the responsibility for fast fashion sits squarely on the consumer. To complete the self-improvement process, the girls are assigned a slow fashion advocate and stylist, who encourages

them to repurpose their existing wardrobe by swapping garments and restyling existing wardrobe items.

While the suggestions the episode offers the young women might certainly be helpful, and we are not suggesting that fast fashion is *not* a problem, the episode makes for uncomfortable viewing (at least for these feminist researchers). It is an example of environmental media shaming young women for liking fashion, steadfastly establishing in the minds of its viewers the inevitable association of fashion with garbage, fashion with over-consumption, fashion with mindless addiction, fashion with naïve, or even worse, thoughtless young women, in essence, the very opposite of environmentalism: serious, political, masculine and consciously unfashionable. By the end of the episode fashion is completely unredeemable (unless of course you can afford a slow fashion stylist to advise you on your wardrobe). Tainted by 'bad' fast fashion, increasingly all fashion carries a disproportionate stigma of environmental damage and ethical compromise.

The feminization of commodity culture, and indeed fashion, as addictive and mindless is of course a well-worn trope (Nava 1996, Horton 2018). What is conspicuous here is the way that environmental media takes on the mantle of make-over culture, the very neoliberal logic of individual perfectibility that drives fast fashion consumption and the beauty industry, at the same time as it holds young women responsible for fast fashion. As Kathleen Horton (2018) has cogently demonstrated, what we are witnessing is both 'the feminization of consumption' and 'the feminization of responsibility' in ways that assign undue pressure to young women as the prime culprits of fast fashion consumption *and* the key agents of change. By uncritically placing both the blame and the responsibility onto the shoulders of young women, this discourse effectively alleviates accountability from any other players, least of all the brands, many of them profitable multinational companies, who benefit from unethical production practices (Khan and Richards 2021). This shaming of fast fashion consumers also risks taking on a racist cast, according to Pham (2017) who argues that contemporary anti-fast fashion campaigns invariably represent people of colour, especially Asian women and girls, as 'passive and powerless victims of sweatshop fashion'. Indeed, as Khan (2019, p. 1033) puts it, ethical fashion frequently becomes a site in which to 'reiterate colonial relations between the self-aware, well-intentioned fashionista-saviour and her poor sisters in South Asia'.

The loud and reductive shaming of fast fashion also overlooks the raced and classed formations of taste in ways that conveniently scapegoat those consumers with the least social and economic capital. The moralizing discourses informing this episode of *The War on Waste* not only gloss over the very real challenges and complexities facing the fashion industry but neglects the improvements the industry has made in driving innovative and creative

forms of ethical and sustainable fashion, many of which have been pioneered by women working within the industry or indeed the efforts of fashion activists such as Orsola De Castro and Carry Somers, who founded Fashion Revolution or Ayesha Barenblat, the founder of Remake. Many of those most committed to driving change, from greater transparency of manufacturing conditions to decreased and sustainable forms of clothing consumption, are precisely the 'young women' this episode condescendingly centres. Contrary to the image of young women 'addicted' to fast fashion presented in the *War on Waste*, our data revealed that the youngest demographic of survey participants and interviewees (18–24) were increasingly buying much of their wardrobe in second-hand and vintage stores (some committing to buying nothing new apart from basics such as underwear and t-shirts) as well as learning to repair and make clothes.¹⁷ As Vittoria, a young university student told us: 'I think I lean towards vintage because even when you're getting new things from places you feel are ethical ... it's still not as ethical as buying something that's already made.' That most of our participants identified themselves as lovers of fashion *and* committed to ethical and sustainable consumption signalled an impressive commitment to reducing waste.

While younger demographics in our study negotiated the complexities of ethical shopping by shifting their consumption habits through buying second-hand or vintage clothes, or through buying less and buying smarter, the older demographics indicated a slightly more cynical and wide-eyed approach to the very possibility of sustainability. Many in this cohort reported having always practiced 'conscious' consumer behaviour by mending and altering clothes to increase longevity, buying from well-made and luxury labels in the hope that garments would have a longer life span and choosing carefully so that 'pieces' in one's wardrobe would be around for a long while. If younger cohorts revelled in the creative and subversive practices associated with second-hand shopping, our older cohort relied on what might be called practices of 'authenticity and connection' that are bound up with measures of 'quality' (Goodman 2003). What was familiar across all of our interviewees, however, was their ready acknowledgement that 'quality' or 'designer' did not necessarily guarantee a more ethical or sustainable garment.

Fast fashion: Uniqlo and the story of expediency

In demonizing young women as the bearers of responsibility for fast fashion, the *War on Waste* episode also conveniently overlooks the way *many* of us consume fast fashion, either intentionally or not. In our small sample of interview participants, it was very clear that fast fashion remained a primary concern impeding sustainable consumption, although it was not necessarily

young women or only young women who were consuming fast fashion. Those with the responsibility for clothing children (often older interviewees) expressed frustration that while they were confident in their sustainable purchases for their own wardrobe, when it came to buying clothes for children and teens or other dependents, it was extremely difficult to stick to the same criteria they would use for their own wardrobe purchases. The challenges were linked to a range of reasons including cost, being time-poor, limited choices and sizes, and the knowledge that buying for growing children and teens meant the garment would only be needed for a short amount of time.¹⁸ As Amy, the mother of two small daughters, told us: 'the vast majority of what I buy for the kids is definitely not ethical'. And yet, Amy also invested time and energy making clothes for her children. 'I knit jumpers and make dresses. A lot of the dresses and things I make for them are from offcuts of fabric that I've bought from ethical sources.' She laughed when she told us this, recognizing the complicated contradictions of her own buying and making practices: 'There's really two things going on. One side is very thoughtful and the other side is really not!' Amy typified the reactions of many of our older participants, for whom ethical purchasing when it came to clothes was often fraught and contingent on a range of external pressures.

When it came to buying 'basics' (t-shirts, underwear and more casual everyday items), many participants reported succumbing to large fast fashion retailers such as Kmart, Target, and Uniqlo. Indeed, it was surprising how many of our cohort reported feeling guilty about their love of the Japanese brand, Uniqlo, in spite of reporting an awareness of the company's poor sustainability and ethical credentials (at least historically) or even a lack of knowledge about what credentials the brand actually possessed. This was unexpected given the otherwise impressive levels of informed knowledge about other generic brands and retailers or indeed the time and effort that went into researching and finding ethical brands. It was also surprising how Uniqlo was not often explicitly mentioned as a fast fashion retailer, in the same way as H&M, Zara, and Kmart.

So why are otherwise committed ethical fashion consumers willing to bypass their ethics when it comes to Uniqlo? For Vittoria, Uniqlo was her first option when it came to buying t-shirts and other basics to supplement her otherwise vintage wardrobe. Despite being uncertain about their ethical credentials, she appreciated the simplicity of Uniqlo designs and their use of 'good materials like linen'. She told us: 'I don't have a huge salary and I can't afford to buy undies ... that are like \$100 for a few! I feel like I don't really know how to buy basics that are well made but reasonably priced so I do find that I mostly go to Uniqlo or Bonds.' When making decisions about where to buy basic items like underwear and t-shirts, Vittoria also felt that Uniqlo was better than other options, such as Target or Kmart.

Uniqlo doesn't feel as cheaply made ... but it's still fast fashion. But it's not ... I don't know ... I think the marketing, like it doesn't have the marketing of like H&M or something so you feel like it's a little better quality ... like I would never shop from Zara or H&M, but yeah, I feel like Uniqlo ... maybe because it's not a trend-based store it does ... it feels like the clothes would last you longer.

While Vittoria recognized Uniqlo as a fast fashion company, she did not equate it with H&M or Zara. This difference in perception is in large part due to the marketing and brand identity of Uniqlo, which explicitly identifies itself as 'non-fashion', creating minimalist, functional clothing that manages to be both cutting-edge and seemingly timeless, as well as 'basics' presented to the consumer in a range of colours and styles. In some ways it might be considered anti-fashion, at least in its marketing approach. In explicitly distinguishing itself from fast fashion brands such as Zara and H&M, Uniqlo markets a different kind of relationship with clothing consumption. And yet Zara and H&M consistently out-perform Uniqlo on many sustainability ranking guides. In the most recent Business of Fashion (BoF) Sustainability Index (2021) – which accounts for Transparency; Emissions; Water and Chemicals; Materials; Worker Rights; and Waste – H&M Group scored an overall rating of 42 (just lower than the highest scoring luxury group Kering, who scored 49 and the highest scoring Sportswear brand Nike, who scored 47) and Inditex (the parent company that owns Zara) scored 41, whereas Fast Retailing (the parent company of Uniqlo) scored only 23. Inditex was also the highest scoring of brands across all three categories (Luxury, Highstreet and Sportswear) in relation to Worker Rights, with a score of 51 in contrast to H&M Group's 29 and Fast Retailing's 21.¹⁹

Given the negative connotations of fast fashion, indeed fashion per se, especially for the conscious consumer, Uniqlo has been very successful at downplaying its identity as a 'bad' fast fashion brand. As part of the Fast Retailing Group conglomerate, established by Japanese businessman Tadashi Yanai as Ogōri Shōji Co., Ltd. in 1963, Uniqlo (founded under the name Ogōri Shōji in 1949 and changed to Uniqlo in 1984) has grown from its first stores in Japan to become a multi-million-dollar global brand, rivalling the likes of H&M and Zara.²⁰ What makes Uniqlo so interesting, however, is that it does not market itself as a 'fashion brand'. As Nebahat Tokatli (2020, p. 598) argues, unlike Zara, which is all about fashion, Uniqlo's branding is 'all about functionality'. This focus on the functionality of Uniqlo garments, coupled with the company's collaborative relationship with the textile science firm Toray industries, means that, rather than following fashion trends, Uniqlo has marketed itself as the primary purveyor of basic, simple items that are available season after season. The distance Uniqlo has put between itself and its fashion-focused competitors have also meant that consumers do not think of their purchases as fashion. Uniqlo, therefore, through

strategic branding, effectively evades the ire directed at fast-fashion and, indeed, fashion in general. This was certainly the case with our sample of participants who despite having extensive knowledge of the ethical fashion landscape, were still committed Uniqlo shoppers (like so many of us).

The war of contradictory desires: from seduction to guilt

What was perhaps most stark in the interviews across a range of cohorts and generations were the powerful feelings of guilt and shame associated with fashion and clothing consumption. Uppermost was also the sense of failure, that despite best intentions, despite being well-informed or at least striving to understand the issues, many felt an overwhelming sense that they were failing to live up to their desire to be conscientious. Recall Shen's surprise that some consumers are still optimistic about whether what they purchase is ethical. This, in part, reflects the rise of shaming narratives informing ethical consumption media, especially those tied to a make-over logic whereby consumers undergo a series of challenges designed to achieve self-improvement.²¹ For many of our interviewees, fashion represented a creative, meaningful and important part of who they are, and they were not willing to give up their love of clothing and fashion. But this love of fashion was frequently challenged by the plethora of moralizing discourses and activist campaigns in the mainstream media and on their social media feeds. Some confessed to sometimes just 'giving in' to the desire for something new or novel, even if they were aware that it was not necessarily a 'good' or 'ethical' consumer choice. Willow admitted that during lockdown she bought a fast fashion item online.

It was an impulse buy from an online ad and I literally never do that! I saw the ad and I thought, oh that looks okay, and look how cheap it is and I don't have much money at the moment but I really feel like buying something ... and I felt bad about it. I was like, this is way too cheap, people haven't been paid properly along the line, it's all just really, really under-priced, so I felt ... I felt really guilty.

Willow's seduction of a new inexpensive purchase was followed by feelings of guilt and shame, and the rising panic in her voice, about her failure at being ethical, was not unique for our cohort. Indeed, many expressed a deep ambivalence about fashion that reflects what Elizabeth Chin (2016, p. 932) eloquently terms 'the war of [our] contradictory desires'.

In her remarkable autoethnography, *My Life with Things*, Chin gives us a rare glimpse into the emotional rollercoaster that adheres to our relationship with the material world. Chin's candour, driven by a self-reflective scrutiny of her own conflicting relationship with objects (from boots and dresses to antique Chinese benches and worn-out old rugs), allows her to ponder

deeply the unpredictable and emotionally charged attachments we form with the myriad objects in our everyday lives. By contrast, sustainability discourse is often imbued with an oversimplified authoritarianism and moralism. Drawing on Colin Campbell's influential Weberian study of the Romantic origins of consumerism, Littler (2009, p. 8) contends that 'ethical consumption is used, in post-Romantic consumer fashion, as a means of self-fashioning'. In response to global capitalist expansion, 'ethical consumers' use consumption as a way to style the self and differentiate this self from the 'unethical', and by extension, 'immoral' consumer.

Such moralizing is, as our own research has shown, deeply fraught in ways that disclose the emotional and material vagaries that thwart otherwise good intentions. While Marx and Engels framed industrial capitalism and its voracious desire for progress in cataclysmically tragic terms, tellingly for Chin, it is in the everyday domestic realm of Marx's household that we might find a more complicated and interesting account of capitalism's vexed desires. It is in this intimate space, which Marx shared with his wife and daughters, that it is possible to see the contradictions between what Marx espoused intellectually and what his everyday home life looked like – replete with things to which he held a passionate attachment, from family silver and Scottish napkins, to cigars and framed photographs of his loved ones (Chin 2016, p. 33). Chin's attention to the domestic detritus of the Marx household reminds us that it was not the object itself – nor the relationship we might have with it – to which Marx directed his ire. Rather, it was the system of its production. In pondering Marx's attachment to 'stuff' Chin shows precisely how we all, even the most committed of capitalism's critics, can forget how things are made once we fall in love with them. Chin's scepticism coupled with her humour, at the core of her autoethnographic approach, dispel the fantasies of self-improvement and perfectibility that underpin the discursive field of much environmental media. As Torgerson (1999, p. 87) suggests, comedy is sometimes key to survival in a complex, increasingly moralizing world: 'The comic mode subverts the tragic hero, cutting humanity down to size and dispelling human delusions of grandeur ... comedy accentuates human faults and limitations.' In a time when environmental crisis is either normalized and taken for granted or framed in hyperbolic tragic terms, comedy can be employed not as a route back to the familiar or as a short-cut for an easy resolution, but rather, to emphasize the nonnormative and the 'bad'. Instead of perpetuating the moral sanctimoniousness of ethical and environmental media, irreverence and humour draw attention to the many ways in which we 'fail' to be ethical. These comedic or humorous moments, in exposing our many flaws and contradictions, indeed our imperfection, illustrate our all-too-human limitations in ways that allow us to understand our own failures. Understanding these failures might just bring us closer to an appreciation of how the opportunities for ethical consumption are unequally distributed.

Conclusion: toward complexity and uncertainty

While retailers and brands are frequently accused of greenwashing (and often for good reason), environmental media is equally guilty of smoothing over the ambiguities and uncertainties of ethical and sustainable fashion consumption. As Torgerson (1999, p. 60) argues: ‘the discourse of sustainability contains ambiguities and uncertainties that, in a public context of differing interests and perspectives, makes the discourse politically unpredictable’. As our small data study reveals, even for those who have high levels of expertise in either sustainability and/or labour practices, the picture is often far from clear and this uncertainty is part of the complexity of a global industry that is reliant on rapidly changing technologies, competing bodies of knowledge, uneven access to resources, and shifting labour markets. In the last decade, fashion has responded to the demands of environmental, ethical and decolonial political imperatives, but this has not necessarily translated into widespread or unanimous improvements everywhere. While stronger legislation governing the transparency of supply chains and modern slavery is a welcome addition to new modes of responsibility toward workers and their environments, how much this new legislation translates into more transparency for consumers is hard to discern. It may be that it just adds to the already-cluttered, ambiguous space of sustainable fashion advocacy and corporate greenwashing all the while placing the emphasis on change at the feet of consumers, rather than global corporations or business entities.

While environmental media such as the *War on Waste* episode on fast fashion follows a predictable narrative arc of ‘tragedy’ and ‘crisis’, it is clear from our research that change doesn’t come from glossing over the complexities and emotional conflicts that play into the buying of clothing and fashion. If there is no place for the war of our contradictory desires in ethical consumer media, because the moral message is always black and white, we make little progress toward sustained political change. That failure is real and sometimes comic is a response that just might find resonance with well-meaning consumers. Indeed, acknowledging the limits of ethical fashion discourse without giving up on improved mechanisms of change, including increased penalties for non-compliance, moves away from pathologizing the consumer or the commodity itself, to focus on the conditions of commodity production and the complicated networks of engagement that inform ethical consumption initiatives and narratives.

Notes

1. The Australian governments’ Online Register for Modern Slavery Statements (The Register) houses all statements provided by entities reporting under the 2018 Act and are available for public access.
2. Baptist World Aid (2021).

3. The majority of participants were also under 45 years old, with seven between 18 and 25, six between 26 and 35, six between 36 and 45, two between 46 and 55 and one over 55. All interviews were conducted online via Zoom due to Covid-19 necessitated lockdowns.
4. Respondents to the initial survey constituted a broader spread of ethnic and cultural identity, including two Indigenous Australian participants.
5. From under AU\$45,000 for a number of younger participants still studying, to over AU\$200,000 for one participant.
6. The demographics of our participants resonated with our own cultural identities as two feminist cultural studies scholars of European descent. While our relationships with environmental activism differ, we nevertheless share a profound attachment to garments and curiosity about how people make decisions about the clothes they buy and wear. We also represent the generational range of our participants: a 50-something single parent in secure employment who struggles to buy sustainable clothes for her teenage son; and a 30-something in fixed-term employment, in a child free, de-facto relationship whose personal relationships with clothes are informed by a strong sense of environmental and social responsibility.
7. Kamala D. Harris, Attorney General California Department of Justice (2015).
8. Quoted from the Modern Slavery portal for businesses and entities on the Australian Government Department of Home Affairs website: <https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/criminal-justice/Pages/modern-slavery.aspx> Accessed 3 February 2021.
9. Pseudonyms used throughout.
10. The Better Cotton Initiative (BCI) is a global not-for-profit that supports sustainable cotton production. BCI cotton accounts for approximately 14% of all global cotton production. <https://bettercotton.org/> Accessed 5 March 2021.
11. This was also the case when participants assumed that items were made in certain places due to their marketing. For example, participants expressed surprise and disappointment to learn that Icebreaker was not made in New Zealand, despite the strong brand connection with New Zealand.
12. Xu *et al.* (2020). Report for the Australian Strategic Policy Institute.
13. Further reports continue to emerge about the degree to which the fashion industry is implicated in forced labour of the Uyghurs. In late March 2021, it was reported that Inditex had removed a statement about the company's zero-tolerance policy on forced labour from its website (Bain 2021). The removal of this statement reignited concern regarding the fashion industry's complicity in human rights abuses in China and sparked a Sum of Us petition, which, at the time of writing, had received over 100,000 signatures. <https://actions.sumofus.org/pages/zara-stop-using-uyghur-forced-labor/?akid=87933.17016175.1RFBft&rd=1&source=fwd&t=1> Accessed 28 May 2021.
14. *Nike Statement on Xinjiang*. <https://purpose.nike.com/statement-on-xinjiang> Accessed 15 April 2021.
15. In China, the Map provides details of 107 factories, which together employ 140,866 workers, 77.7% of whom are female and for whom the average age is 39. <http://manufacturingmap.nikeinc.com/#> Accessed 13 March 2021.
16. As we were writing this article an ABC Four Corners episode on 'Fast Fashion' was screened on Australian television (May 2021). The program used much of the dramatically 'alarming' rhetoric familiar in this form of environmental media and tired tropes of moralism and consumer responsibility that we

- critique here. It did, however, investigate new modes of worker exploitation and unsafe working conditions via its coverage of the UK fast fashion brand boohoo, and the ongoing concerns about the use of modern slavery in the garment district of Leicester, now under investigation by the UK's National Crime Agency.
17. For more research on young people's alternative fashion consumption practices see: Clark (2005).
 18. For more research on ethical fashion consumption when buying for children or other dependents see: Huopalainen and Satama (2020), Ritch (2019), Ritch and Schröder (2012).
 19. The demonization of fast fashion also ignores the way elite or luxury brands are often less transparent about their supply chains and have less ethical production practices. The BoF Sustainability Index (2021) shows that luxury brand conglomerates such as LVMH (which houses the likes of Givenchy, Louis Vuitton, Fendi, and Marc Jacobs, among others) score far lower than high street fast fashion brands such as Zara and H&M.
 20. In 2020, Fast Retailing's global sales were US\$19.6 billion, in comparison to H&M's US\$26.99 billion and Inditex's US\$33.68 billion (<https://www.fastretailing.com/eng/ir/direction/position.html>).
 21. Popular books such as Lauren Bravo's *How to Break up with Fast Fashion* (2020) and Emma Matthews' *How to Quit Fast Fashion* (2020) and blogs and social media accounts like Leah Musch's *Unmaterial Girl* describe the transformation from 'fast fashion addict' to 'slow fashion advocate' and provide tips and advice on how readers or followers can undergo a similar ethical makeover.

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Notes on contributors

Natalya Lusty is a Professor of Cultural Studies and an ARC Future Fellow (2018–2022) at the University of Melbourne. Her Future Fellowship examines the history of consumer culture, including fashion, and its relationship to modernism and informed consumption through the institution of the department store. Natalya is the author of *Surrealism, Feminism, Psychoanalysis* (Routledge, 2017); *Dreams and Modernity: A*

Cultural History, co-authored with Helen Groth (Routledge, 2013); *Photography and Ontology: Unsettling Images*, co-edited with Donna West Brett (Routledge, 2019); and *Cambridge Critical Concepts: Surrealism* (CUP, 2021). She is an editorial board member of *Australian Feminist Studies* and co-edited with Harriette Richards and Rimi Khan, a special issue on 'Fashion Futures' for *Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies* (2021).

Dr **Harriette Richards** is a Lecturer, Fashion Enterprise in the School of Fashion and Textiles at RMIT University. Previously, she was a Research Associate in the School of Culture and Communication at the University of Melbourne working on the ARC Future Fellowship project 'Modernism, Cosmopolitanism and Consumer Culture' (2018–2022) with Professor Natalya Lusty. She is co-founder of the Critical Fashion Studies research group and is currently working on projects investigating modern slavery and transparency in the Australian fashion industry and ethical and sustainable fashion innovation. Her work has been published in a range of journals, including, most recently, *Australian Feminist Studies*, *Cultural Studies*, *Critical Studies in Fashion & Beauty* and *Gender, Work & Organization*, and in the edited collection *Rethinking Fashion Globalization* (Bloomsbury 2021). She co-edited with Natalya Lusty and Rimi Khan, a special issue on 'Fashion Futures' for *Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies* (2021).

ORCID

Natalya Lusty  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-9214-4655>

Harriette Richards  <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-6557-5495>

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