



Sustainable Fashion Curriculum at Textile Universities in Europe
—
Development, Implementation and Evaluation of a Teaching Module
for Educators

Project: 2020-1-DE01-KA203-005657

Title of the Lesson: Fashion Consumption

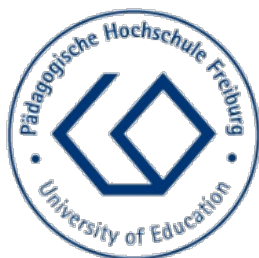


Authors:

Dr. Marcus Adam
Prof. Dr. Jochen Strähle
Marlen Wagner

Contact Data:

Reutlingen University
TEXOVERSUM School of Textiles
E-mail: marcus.adam@reutlingen-university.de



Hochschule Reutlingen
Reutlingen University



Short Description of the Context:

For the pupils, it is important to critical reflect on the given topic, rather than giving right/wrong answers. For this reason, the lecture is mainly based on discussion and group work. The setting should encourage collaboration and interaction. The lecture hall should be comfortable and inviting, with plenty of seating options and a clear view of the instructor. Desks should be arranged in a semi-circle or other arrangement which allows for easy conversation and discussion. Chairs should be comfortable and supportive, and the lecture hall should be well-lit. Whiteboards or flipcharts can be used to facilitate the discussion. The instructor should also have a laptop or other device to access multimedia presentations, as well as a projector to display slides or other visuals. In addition, the lecture hall should be equipped with WiFi and other technology to enable students to access online resources.

Competences and Learning Objectives:

After this unit the pupils should be able to ...

- Reflect on their own consumption behaviour
- Know about the role that fashion plays in our everyday life
- Know different factors that trigger fashion consumption
- List and explain the main profiteers of fashion overconsumption
- Explain different ways to reduce fashion overconsumption
- Know about the purpose of textile labels
- List the most common textile labels
- Analyse and evaluate the trustworthiness of textile labels
- Know what greenwashing is
- Explain the benefits of greenwashing for companies
- Recognize greenwashing

Overview of Working Materials

I. Wardrobe Check

II. The purpose of fashion

III. Environmental consequences

IV. Textile Labels /Certifications

V. Greenwashing

Sources

Buxbaum, M. S. (2014). *Mode und Ethik: Eine Studie zu den Verbindungen zeitgenössischer Mode, Ethik und Wirtschaft* (Vol. 60). Diplomica Verlag.

Engartner, T. & Tschirner, M. (2015). *Viel Mode für wenig Geld – ist das fair? Entscheidung im Unterricht Folge 01/2015*. Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung. <https://www.bpb.de/shop/materialien/entscheidung-im-unterricht/210606/viel-mode-fuer-wenig-geld-ist-das-fair/>

Little, T. (2018). *The Future of Fashion: Understanding Sustainability in the Fashion Industry*. New Degree Press.

Muthu, S. S. (Ed.). (2019). *Fast fashion, fashion brands and sustainable consumption*. Berlin: Springer.

O'cass, A. (2004). Fashion clothing consumption: antecedents and consequences of fashion clothing involvement. *European journal of Marketing*, 38(7), 869-882.

Pookulangara, S., & Shephard, A. (2013). Slow fashion movement: Understanding consumer perceptions—An exploratory study. *Journal of retailing and consumer services*, 20(2), 200-206

Thomas, D. (2019). *Fashionopolis: The price of fast fashion and the future of clothes*. Penguin Press.

Vasquez, R. (2022). *Overconsumption in the fashion industry*. Fashion Revolution. <https://www.fashionrevolution.org/overconsumption-in-the-fashion-industry/>

Verbraucherzentrale Rheinland-Pfalz (2023). NACHHALTIGE TEXTILIEN. Unterrichtsmaterial. https://www.verbraucherzentrale-rlp.de/sites/default/files/2022-03/vz_unterrichtsmaterial-textilien_2022_final.pdf

I. Wardrobe Check



Instruction for the teacher:

Ask the pupils to check their wardrobe. You may ask them:

- How many items do you possess?
- How many items do you actually wear on a regular basis?
- Which brands do you preferably buy? Which ones would you like to buy?

You may give them a choice of answers, e.g.:

- fits my style,
- is cheap,
- is trendy,
- my friends like it,
- is of high quality,
- ...

Collect the answers on a whiteboard. Now reflect and discuss in the plenary the factors that impact fashion consumption

Potential discussion points:

Marketing has a tremendous influence on fashion consumption decisions. Every day, consumers are exposed to a variety of marketing messages that influence their decisions when it comes to fashion. Through marketing, fashion brands can create the image and perception of their products, encouraging consumers to purchase them. Marketing strategies often focus on how fashion can make a consumer feel or look. Advertisements, for example, often feature models wearing the latest fashions, which can make the consumer feel as though they too could be fashionable if they bought the same product. Through marketing, fashion brands can create an aspirational lifestyle that encourages people to purchase their products. In addition, marketing can also affect the way people perceive certain fashion trends. For example, a company may use images of celebrities wearing their products to show how fashionable and desirable their items are. This can make consumers more likely to purchase these items, as they view them as status symbols. Ultimately, marketing has a huge impact on fashion consumption decisions. By creating appealing images of their products, fashion brands can encourage consumers to purchase them. Additionally, marketing can influence the way people perceive certain trends, making them more likely to buy them as well.

Influencers have become increasingly important to the fashion industry in recent years. As consumers become more savvy and skeptical of traditional marketing tactics, influencers have become a powerful tool for fashion brands. Influencers have the ability to reach vast audiences with their endorsements, and their influence can often be felt far beyond the traditional media channels. By partnering with influencers, fashion brands can greatly amplify their message and reach potential customers in a more personal and engaging way. The influence of influencers on fashion consumption decisions cannot be understated. Consumers today are incredibly savvy when it comes to shopping, often researching products online before they make a purchase. Influencers offer an important source of information and guidance, providing real-world advice and opinions on fashion trends and products. By leveraging the power of influencers, fashion brands can reach a whole new audience and drive sales. Through carefully chosen collaborations, influencers can help brands create a buzz around their products, boost engagement, and ultimately increase sales.

Friends play an important role in fashion consumption decisions. Friends can influence the type of clothing, accessories and other fashion items an individual decides to purchase. Friends serve as a source of inspiration, advice and opinion on fashion trends, helping to shape an individual's sense of style. Friends can also provide a sense of solidarity and belonging, when they wear similar clothing and accessories, or even influence one another to purchase matching items. Friends may also take part in shopping trips together to make fashion decisions. Going shopping with friends can serve as a form of entertainment, while also providing a source of support and guidance when making decisions. Shopping trips can help individuals gain an outside opinion on items they may be considering, as well as provide perspective on what items may or may not go together. Friends are also a great source of information on sales, discounts and promotions that can help save money when making fashion decisions. By sharing information about discounts, sales and other promotions, friends can help each other find the best deals on fashion items.

The **brand** plays an important role in fashion consumption decisions as it is a major factor in influencing consumer purchase decisions. A brand can give a product an identity and a personality that can be used to build an emotional connection with customers. It can also influence the way a product is perceived by the consumer and how it is evaluated. By creating a positive brand image, a company can create a feeling of trust and loyalty among its customers. When consumers are making a purchase decision, they are likely to look for products from a brand they trust or recognize. A brand can also provide valuable information about the product, such as price, quality, and features. This can help shoppers make an informed decision and feel confident about their purchase. The brand is also important for fashion consumption decisions

because it can help to set trends and establish a sense of style. A successful brand will be able to stay on top of the latest fashion trends and create products that will appeal to their target market. By creating fashion-forward products, they can help to create a sense of excitement and anticipation around the brand.

II. The Purpose of fashion



Instruction for the teacher:

Elaborate together the purpose of fashion and clothes on a more general level.

- You may ask the pupils: *what is the overall purpose of clothes?*
- Collect answers on the whiteboard and moderate

Potential discussion points:

The purpose of clothes is to provide protection from the elements, protect the modesty of the wearer, and to make a fashion statement. Clothes also help to express personal identity and can be used to convey messages to others. Fashion plays an important role in everyday life. It is a way for people to express themselves and show off their individual style. From what we wear to the accessories we don, fashion is everywhere and affects how we look and feel about ourselves. Fashion can be seen everywhere in our daily lives. Whether it's the clothes we wear to the office, the accessories we choose to dress up an outfit, or the latest trends we follow on the runway, fashion is a part of our lives. It can even influence how we feel about ourselves, our body image, and our self-esteem. It can also impact how we interact with others and how we are perceived by them. Fashion can also be a form of self-expression. It can be used to express our personality, our feelings, and our beliefs. It can also be used to make a statement or to stand out in a crowd. By wearing certain colors or styles, we can convey messages to others without saying a word. Fashion also has a great influence on the economy. It is a multi-billion Euro industry and a major source of employment. It not only supports the livelihoods of those who work in it, but also helps to generate revenue for governments and businesses.

III. Environmental Consequences



Instruction for the teacher:

Elaborate with the pupils the environmental impact of clothing overconsumption:

- Group the pupils (group size 2-4) and ask them to list how clothing overconsumption impacts the environment
- Collect answers on the whiteboard and discuss them in the plenary
- Now ask the pupils to list and explain the major profiteers of clothing overconsumption: *Who benefits from clothing overconsumption?*
- Discuss the answers in the plenary

Potential discussion points:

Environmental impact

The environmental impact of owning a lot of clothes is profound. Clothing production is one of the most polluting industries in the world, and a large part of the pollution comes from the production of fabrics and materials that are used to make clothing. The more clothes that are produced, the more resources are required to make them, resulting in increased resource extraction, energy consumption, and pollution. In addition, the production of clothing often uses toxic chemicals and synthetic dyes that can harm the environment. These chemicals are released into the air and water, polluting natural ecosystems and reducing air quality. Moreover, when clothing is discarded, it often ends up in landfills or is burned, releasing harmful chemicals and pollutants into the environment. Finally, fast fashion involves the production of cheap, low-quality clothing that is often discarded after a single season. This leads to even more clothing waste and pollution. Overall, owning a lot of clothes can have a major impact on the environment. It is important to consider the environmental impact of clothing production and consumption when making purchasing decisions.

Profiteers of clothing overconsumption

The fashion industry is one of the most profitable industries in the world and benefits significantly from overconsumption of fashion. **Retailers and manufacturers** benefit from increased sales, as well as increased profits. **Designers** also benefit from increased production and sales of their designs. Social media is also a major factor in the overconsumption of fashion. **Influencers**, who are typically paid to promote certain brands, benefit from the

increased demand for their services. Finally, **consumers** benefit from overconsumption of fashion as it allows them to have access to a wider range of fashion items at lower prices. This can help to reduce the cost of staying fashionable, and make it easier for people to express their individual style. **Countries and economies** benefit. For example, the textile industry plays a critical role in Bangladesh's economy. It is one of the largest employers in the country and the primary source of export earnings. Textiles account for 83% of exports, and Bangladesh is the second-largest exporter of apparel in the world. The industry employs around 4 million people directly and 10 million people indirectly. It has been a major driver of economic growth, reducing poverty, and improving living standards in the country. Textiles have a long history in Bangladesh, with many of the country's weaving and dyeing techniques dating back centuries. The industry has grown steadily over the years, with the country now producing a wide range of products, from traditional homemade garments to high-end fashion garments. The industry has been a major source of foreign exchange for Bangladesh, and the government has taken steps to further promote the sector, including offering tax incentives, providing export credit facilities, and setting up special economic zones. The growth of the textile industry has also had a positive impact on the country's infrastructure, with the construction of roads, ports, and other infrastructure, as well as the growth of the banking sector. In addition, the industry has been a major source of jobs and revenue for Bangladesh. It has been estimated that for every job in the garment industry, four more are created in the wider economy. The textile industry has been a major contributor to Bangladesh's economic development and is likely to continue to be so in the future.



Instruction for the teacher:

Ask the pupils in the plenary about ways how overconsumption can be reduced.

Discuss the feasibility of their suggestions.

Potential discussion points:

1. Repair: Mend any holes, tears, or fraying in the clothing by sewing, patching, or using iron-on patches.
2. Reuse: Donate clothing that is still in good condition or trade with friends or family.
3. Reduce: Buy fewer clothes and instead opt for buying secondhand or investing in quality pieces that will last longer.

4. Recycle: Many cities offer recycling programs for clothes that are too worn or damaged to be reused or donated.

IV. Textile Labels /Certifications



Instruction for the teacher:

Explain the purpose of textile certification in general

Potential explanation:

Certifications for sustainable fashion can be an effective tool for businesses and consumers when it comes to understanding and assessing the sustainability of clothing products. These certifications provide a standardized approach to evaluating the overall sustainability of a fashion item, making it easier to compare products and make informed decisions. The main advantage of certifications for sustainable fashion is that they provide a reliable source of information to consumers, businesses, and other stakeholders. These certifications are developed and managed by independent third-party organizations, making them a trusted source of sustainability data and metrics. The certifications also provide a consistent method of assessing and comparing a product's sustainability, which can help consumers and businesses make more informed decisions. The main disadvantage of certifications for sustainable fashion is that they can be expensive and time-consuming for businesses to obtain. Furthermore, certifications require a rigorous process of auditing and assessment, and not all businesses may be able to meet the necessary criteria. Additionally, some certifications are industry-specific and may not be applicable to certain types of businesses. Moreover, many certifications exist which insecure consumers and includes the threat of greenwashing. Especially company owned sustainability labels / claims have to be treated with care.



Instruction for the teacher:

Let the students do some research.

- Ask them to look up which textile certifications/labels exist (5 to 10 minutes)
- Use the whiteboard to gather a list.

- Next, group the pupils (size of 2-3 pupils) and assign different labels to different groups.
- Let the pupils assess the labels. Ask them to fill in the following evaluation sheet:

1. Name of the label:
2. Who issues the label?
3. What is evaluated?
4. Do you think it is trustworthy? Would you recommend it?

- Go through the answers in the plenary. Ask the pupils why they evaluate the respective label as trustworthy or not trustworthy. Write their answers on the whiteboard and discuss them.

Potential explanation:

Trustworthy labels are characterized above all by these criteria:

1. the manufacturer of the product and the certification organization are different.
2. certification is carried out by independent certification bodies.
3. consumer centers and platforms have tested the seal for credibility and recommend it.

Independent Certifications are e.g.: IVN Best; GOTS; Made in Green; The Blue Angel; Bluedesign; Cradle to Cradle; Oeko-Tex Standard 100; EU Ecolabel, Fairtrade, Fair Wear Foundation; Green Button

V. Greenwashing



Instruction for the teacher:

Explain to the pupils what greenwashing is and which benefits greenwashing has for companies.

Potential explanation:

Greenwashing is a term used to describe the deceptive use of marketing and advertising to make a product or company appear to be more environmentally friendly than it really is. Companies may use greenwashing to falsely claim their products are eco-friendly, natural, organic, or otherwise beneficial for the

environment when in reality, they are not. Companies create their own labels, whose criteria they set themselves and which are not independently verified. Companies use words and slogans that are not substantiated. Product features are emphasized that are irrelevant. Positive aspects are emphasized, the large negative context is obscured.

The benefits of greenwashing for companies include: Better image; Higher sales prices (Consumers pay more for products from (supposedly) more ecological production); Less effort needed than for creating real sustainable products; Political advantage: If standards are voluntarily complied with, the likelihood of government regulation decreases.

Greenwashing harms consumers because consumers are deceived: Deceived consumers think that everything is fine and no longer support sustainability. Trust is generally destroyed, even credible seals are viewed skeptically.

Insecure consumers give up and no longer push for change. Government (subsidy) money is spent on projects that are only supposedly sustainable.



Instruction for the teacher:

Now explain how greenwashing can be recognized.

Potential explanation:

Greenwashing can be recognized by looking for exaggerated, misleading, or false claims about a product or company's environmental benefits. It can also be recognized by evaluating a company's green claims against independent, third-party verification. Additional signs of greenwashing include vague or undefined terms, such as "natural" or "eco-friendly", and the use of green logos, images, or phrases that don't actually mean anything. Finally, companies engaging in greenwashing may focus marketing efforts solely on a single environmental aspect of a product or service, while ignoring other environmental impacts.

Furthermore, a company sustainability label and no concrete statement where goods are from may be hints.

Now group the pupils (2-4 pupils per group).

- Ask them to look in online shops for product labelings which you assume to be greenwashing.
- Ask them to note the company, the product, the labeling and explain why this may be greenwashing