FASHION MEDIA AND SUSTAINABILITY

Encouraging Ethical Consumption via Journalism and Influencers

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UNIVERSITY OF WESTMINSTER

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FASHION MEDIA AND SUSTAINABILITY

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A CAMRI POLICY BRIEF

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FASHION MEDIA AND SUSTAINABILITY

Key Messages

A garment spends 2.2 years on average in a UK wardrobe. Fashion is among the biggest polluters, yet the media still promote throwaway fast fashion. The growing fashion public relations industry encourages and enables this media coverage.

This policy brief identifies patterns in the way journalists and influencers cover fashion which contribute to unsustainable buying behaviours. Research recommends practical steps to improve media coverage to make consumption sustainable, by changing consumers' understanding and reducing the pressure on them to buy 'fast' satisfaction.

This brief is based on the original analysis of 1,000+ media artefacts in the UK – from magazines to newspapers, gossip weeklies to Instagram influencers.

Findings

> This analysis identified that print and online professional media promote high consumption.

> Influencers on Instagram promote clothes and likewise portray idealistic situations for wearing them.

> The words 'sustainable', 'ethical', 'investment piece' are used by the media in often misleading ways.

> Sustainable advisers ignore lower earners. Brands presented as ethical tend to have prohibitive pricing: e.g. from £100 per dress.

> Fast fashion is often presented as a 'fix' for psychological problems.

> The public relations industry enables coverage, e.g. through advertorials and affiliated links.

Recommendations:

> Regulate the correct use of eco-vocabulary: 'sustainable', 'ethical' and 'investment' pieces.

> Magazines and other media must offer more restyling advice as opposed to urging new purchases.

> Discuss the psychology of buying – more stories to be written on fulfilling one's psychological needs without shopping.

> Regulate the use of affiliated links in journalism and on social media – a 'paid advertisement' label to be added to all clothes offered for free to celebrities.

> Media editors to be encouraged to feature more sustainable coverage for readers of varied financial means.

WHAT'S THE ISSUE?

In 2019, the report entitled 'Fixing Fashion: Clothing Consumption and Sustainability'[1] by the UK House of Commons Environmental Audit Select Committee called to **'reduce the rate of fashion consumption'**. This policy brief is part of the process of providing evidence and recommendations to the **All-Party Parliamentary Group for Sustainable Clothing and Textiles**.

Mass production of fashion is just over a century old. While providing accessible clothes to the population, the industry has become responsible for 10% of greenhouse emissions. Three-fifths of all garments end up in landfill within a year of being produced. The rate of clothing pollution in the UK is among the highest in Europe.

'Three-fifths of all garments end up in landfill within a year of being produced.'

There are cognitive and affective aspects of fashion buying.[2] Cognitive actions include strategic planning – rational evaluation of one's wardrobe and needs to identify a garment to buy. Affective, or emotional, factors include pleasure, excitement, guilt, lack of

control, regret. People buy to relieve low mood, express their personality or just for enjoyment. They comfort, support and reward themselves through purchases.[3]

Individuals indulge in excessive shopping when they believe that it is within normative constraints.[4] This is why fashion media and social influencers play a significant role in educating the public on social convention. They are also in the turn influenced by the burgeoning fashion PR industry.

Magazine features that portray shopping as a popular way to spend time with friends and act as 'therapy' normalise excessive shopping. The habit of social media influencers of exhibiting a new garment on every post equates buying plenty of clothes with a successful life. The media stimulate both psychological (self-expression and self-soothing) – and sociological (status consumption) triggers for fashion buying.

'Magazine features that portray shopping as a popular way to spend time with friends and act as "therapy" normalise excessive shopping.'

'Sancti-marketing' is a new trend of promoting one's goods as sustainable – yet it often leads to 'greenwashing' of brands who are for the major part not ethical, and to a division between higher and lower earners. Many articles on sustainable brands focus on upper middle-class pricing (a dress costs £100–400), and leave out simpler and cheaper solutions like charity shops, upcycling and wardrobe creativity. Sustainability should become a democratic opportunity, not a privilege.

Online searches for 'sustainable fashion' have tripled between 2016–2019, yet customers also face a 'self-inflicted sustainability paradox'. Many of them hold conflicting views on consumption and end up frustrated – hence clear and consistent media communication on ethical fashion is crucial.

Climate crisis is affecting everyone. Journalists and influencers, with their visibility and reputation, are in a strong position to advocate a long-term pivot to sustainability in their readers' fashion purchases.

RESEARCH EVIDENCE

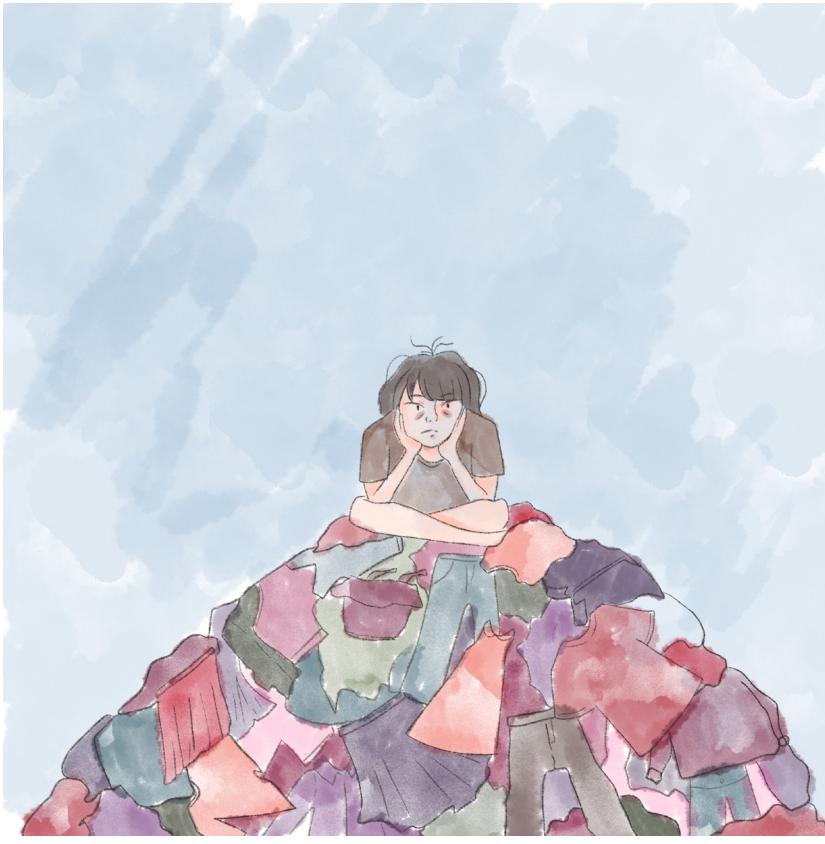
Psychology of Fashion

Understanding the psychology of fashion consumption was essential to form the methodology of this study. From the early days of artisans to the current era of mass production, fashion has been closely linked with psychology, society and politics.

In the 2020s, fashion has to accommodate a fourth player – the environment. But, as research shows, educating the citizens with rational argument is never enough – media coverage on 'doing the right thing' should also appeal to emotion and aspiration.

Psychological reasons for buying clothes derive from self-esteem and perceptions of social norms; there are customers who compensate for the assumed imperfections of their body shape.

People often make buying choices for the enhancement or protection of the self's worth.[5] Consumers look at the symbolic meaning of a product much more than its practical value.[6] Think of a Mulberry bag (luxury) or a pair of sensible Marks & Spencer trousers



(classic, reliable). In order for the product to achieve symbolic status, the meaning has to be *socially shared*.[7]

'Media control a significant part of culture and play a strong part in making an individual vulnerable to the effect of emotional buying.'

Some people are more impulsive than others. Those with a higher tendency to act on a whim buy more clothes driven by emotions. Dittmar and Drury[8] conducted a seminal study on impulsive purchasing behaviour and detected that this type of conduct occurs

with little planning or reasoning, but is pushed by the consumer's mood. It can happen online and offline. It can be triggered by media articles or social media posts.

Compulsive shopping is more prevalent in women than men; people with this tendency feel excited but also sometimes regretful about the money spent on excessive shopping. The media can play a leading role in making an individual more vulnerable to the effect of emotional buying. The shops themselves, with smells, posters, music, create a cheerful vibe around buying.[9] The online extension of fashion promotion – be it via digital shops or Instagram accounts of TV personalities wearing branded clothes – furthers the feeling of joy and good times associated with fashion.

Social factors in fashion buying include the approval of and belonging to a specific group; establishing oneself as an opinion

leader; family influence; class differences. The groups of people that we identify with are 'reference groups', and this relationship can be positive, negative or aspirational. 'Trying too hard' is not perceived positively in most groups, yet most people would want to 'fit in'.[10] Fashion is about both identification and distinction.[11]

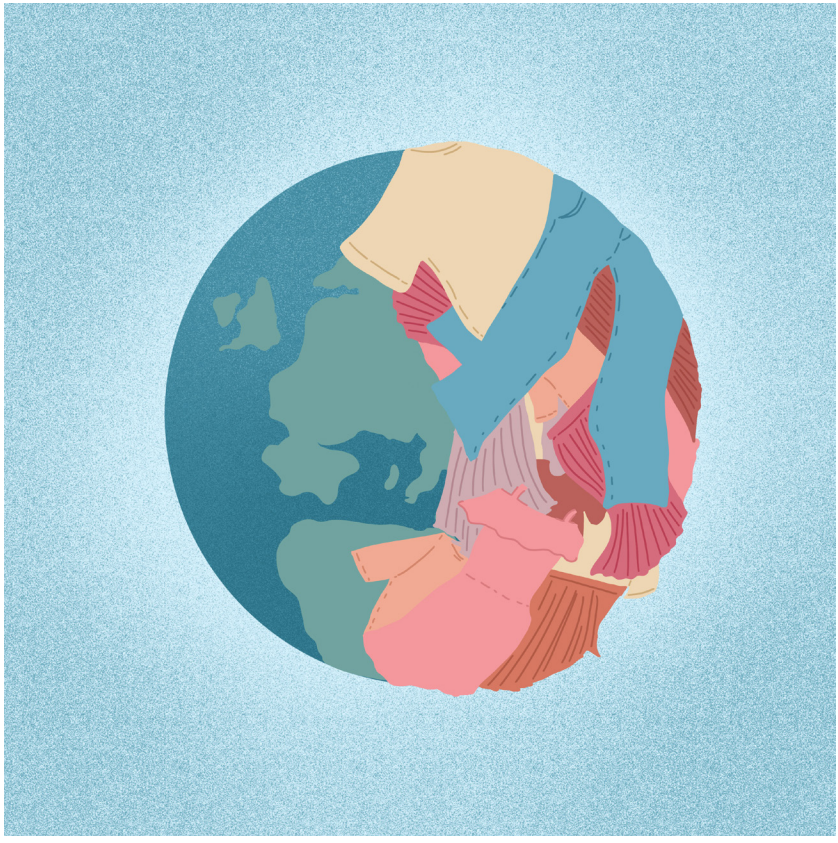
Political underpinning. Power today is diffused and ambiguous; it is seemingly in the hands of consumers who make daily choices – but consumers also act under the tyranny of these choices. For example an internet user is made to believe they are free to choose which accounts to follow on Instagram, yet the majority follows top influencers. The same is true with fashion – the embarrassment of the richness of choice makes people cling to known brands and popular solutions.

This means that 'popular' has to be redefined. In the De Tocquevillian tradition, shopping is seen as a distraction from real politics and as looking at the lives of others.[12] This means that people are often diverted from thinking of social inequality, the gender gap, cultural issues – but are reminded to buy more things multiple times a day. The focus on appearance and style is 'sold' by many brands as the way to succeed in a modern society.

The Sustainable Consumption Paradox

It takes 15,000 litres of water to produce one pair of jeans.[13] This is equivalent to the water drinking needs of a human for fourteen years.

One-fifth of all water consumed on the planet is 'virtual water', meaning that it is locked away in the goods produced around the world. **Eight thousand litres are used for a pair of leather**



loafers (think about growing a cow to use its leather, wash it, dye the leather etc).[14]

Each stage of a piece of clothing's life – production, consumption, disposal – carries environmental damage. From water and pollution, to the microplastics that clothes release into washing machines and then back to rivers, to the heaps of rubbish of discarded clothes.

There are brands that are addressing this problem. In 2015, a mountaineering clothing brand Patagonia launched a 'Don't Buy This Jacket' ad and asked customers to celebrate what they already

own – reduce, reuse, recycle. On the one hand, it was a provocative and educational move. On the other – Patagonia established their own products as being durable, made of recycled materials. What they did is called **'sancti-marketing'**.[15] While this campaign is feel-good, ethically focused positioning of branded goods, it is still a marketing ploy. Nonetheless, it signals that being an ethical buyer is also a fashion statement in itself.

'Sancti-marketing signals that being an ethical buyer is a fashion statement in itself.'

Yet the turn towards sustainable consumption is challenging. The **'self-inflicted sustainable consumption paradox'**[16] refers to the feelings of confusion, distress and paralysed decision-making amongst people who have information to hand but feel overwhelmed by it. The richness and diversity of information on sustainability does not help – it perplexes.[17] Not all information out there is reliable. The misuse of sustainable terminology by various parties leads to scepticism and detachment.[18]

As a result, **a person chooses what to see and what not to see**.[19] Many practice an all-or-nothing approach. Those new to sustainability may find themselves too upset with the scale of the problem and fear that everything they do has a damaging impact. Others start doubting themselves and the rest of the society in the ability to solve this puzzle any better.

'Less is more' is the most feasible approach to sustainable living.[20] **Treating consumer choice anxiety can be achieved through awareness building.** Mindful techniques can be of help – they

direct the person to be aware why they want to go shopping and whether they need a dress or something different; focusing on their 'good enough' activities and applying a 'less is more' principle. These practices are sustainable for human psychology.

Fashion media need to appeal both to emotion and reason when encouraging sustainable consumption. Considerate, mindful, limited buying should become a trendy choice, approved by society and leading to the increased self-confidence of buyers.

Sample and Method

Over 1,000 media artefacts targeting women were analysed, with the size of an artefact varying from an Instagram post with a caption to the whole issue of a magazine. This policy brief looked at a whole spectrum of fashion media, from fashion magazines, gossip publications, newspapers, Instagram accounts of TV personalities and Instagram influencers.

The sample was analysed by the researcher in the period August – November 2019. The most followed Instagram accounts were tracked along with the most-read titles covering fashion in the UK.

- The 50 most popular Instagram posts from top-10 fashion influencers: Kendall Jenner (108m followers), Kim Kardashian (134.5m), Bella Hadid (18.7m), Emily Ratajkowski (18.2m), Chiara Ferragni (13.3m), Gianluca Vacchi (11.5m), Rosie Huntington-Whiteley (8m), Camila Coelho (7.2m), Alexa Chung (3.2m), and Danielle Bernstein/WeWoreWhat (2.5m).

- 50 recent posts from top three fashion blogs: Sincerely Jules, Song of Style, The Blonde Salad.

- The 50 most popular posts from UK TV personalities known for collaborations with fashion brands: Holly Willoughby (5.4m), Dani Dyer (3.6m), Scarlett Moffatt (2m), Emma Willis (1.4m), Rochelle Humes (1.3m).

- Three issues each of *Vogue, ELLE*, *Marie Claire*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Grazia*, *The Stylist*.

- Ten fashion features from each newspaper: *The Guardian*, *Evening Standard*, *The Times*, *Daily Mail*, *Daily Mirror*, *The Sun*.

- Three issues each of gossip/celebrity weeklies *Heat*, *HELLO*, *OK!*

- Thirty fashion articles from online media – Refinery29 and Man Repeller.

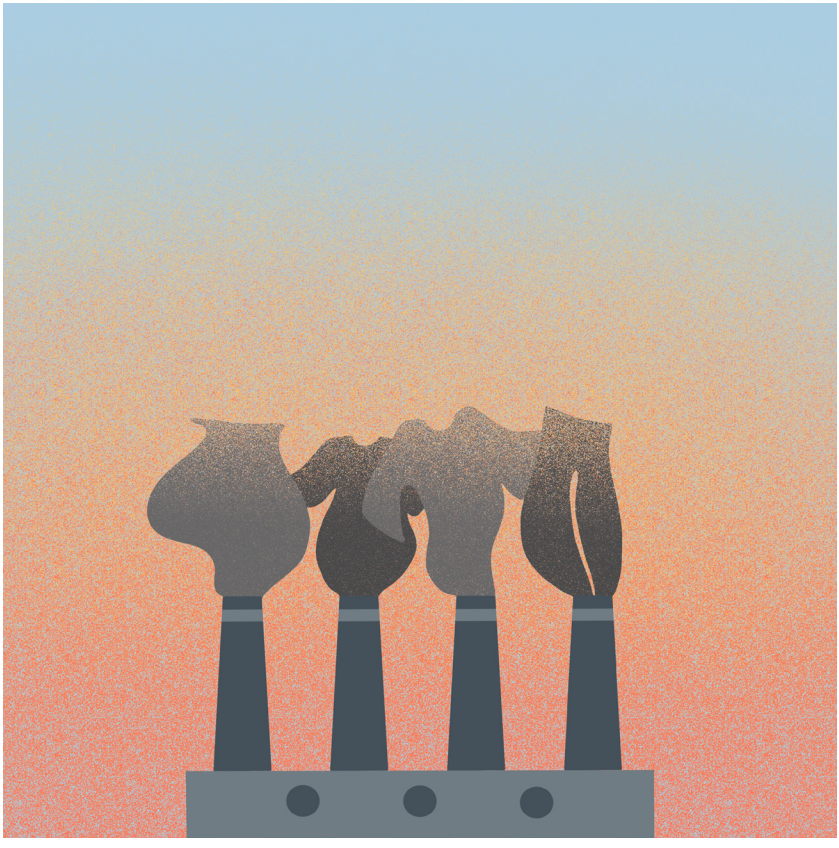
Overall: 750 Instagram posts, 150 blog posts, 18 monthly magazines, 60 newspaper pieces, 9 gossip magazines and 60 internet articles.

Images, headlines, text and captions were examined. Two methods were employed: content analysis and discourse analysis. Content analysis relied on counting numbers: the number of stories that featured particular styles of garments; the context of photos (studio, outdoors or urban situations); the counting of linguistic tropes of consumption encouragement such as 'must-have', 'upgrade your wardrobe', 'hot', 'cool', 'game-changing' etc.

Discourse analysis is the method that looks at the sum of components and the 'narrative' that suggests. It helped to identify patterns of, for instance, community pressure and endorsement – when items were recommended to 'fit in' or 'stand out'; the pattern of showing clothes in dreamy, aspirational mode rather than a practical context; the motif of a monthly editorial 'obsession' over new goods, etc.

This research has identified ten patterns of unsustainable fashion coverage.

Ten Patterns of Unsustainable Media Coverage



1. Frock instead of work

The majority of garments presented on the pages of *Vogue*, *ELLE*, *Marie Claire*, *Grazia* tend to be casual, yet almost 40% is devoted to occasion wear. While it is understandable that fashion magazines serve aspirational function, more attention is needed to work-appropriate garments. Workwear makes only 1–20% appearances in the magazines studied. While this finding is taken with an acknowledgment that many 'casual' items could be worn to work in more relaxed office environments, the focus of fashion publications is unmistakably on less practical clothes.

Occasion wear dominates another segment of magazine market – gossip weeklies (*OK!*, *HELLO!*). Fifty five per cent of all outfits are lavish attires – ball gowns, cocktail dresses and red carpet frocks, which are scarcely compatible with the everyday life of a city dweller.

Magazine fashion coverage celebrates a fairytale, dreamy version of femininity. This pushes the readers towards fast fashion that sells replicas of expensive pieces at low price and low quality.

2. The illusion of 'editor's pick'

From *Cosmopolitan* and *ELLE* to *HELLO!* and *Heat*'s fashion advice, many fashion articles pretend to endorse personal choices of the editorial team. Even *Heat*, with its paparazzi-focused celebrity coverage, has a fashion team that uses 'we' in their writing about high-street brands.

Grazia's editor's letter features a recurring section 'obsessed with' and endorses several items each month – presenting an illusion the editor is buying a whole new outfit monthly. It is an envy-driven manifestation of one's identity that is being targeted. *Grazia* asks the reader to obey its advices on trends (*'Thou shalt not shop until you read these new season resolutions'*).

Vogue's editorial voice is less direct but no less persuading. *'(Y)our wardrobe is in line with a fabulous promotion this autumn'*, foretells a line in one fashion story (September 2019). The idea of editorial obsession with buying is evident – while the restyling of existing clothes barely gets a mention.

3. Language of religion, mental health and 'tech'

'Must-have' may be the biggest cliché in fashion journalism. It is still there – in *Cosmopolitan*, *Marie Claire* and *Heat* (three times per issue). *The Times* prides itself in having an authoritative voice on fashion: *'you need'*, *'a must-have jewellery trend this winter'*.

The next big word of fashion media is borrowed from the Silicon valley lingo – *'update'* or *'upgrade'* (*ELLE*). *Vogue*, for example, talks about statement items that *'project confidence'* – this is a nod to self-esteem talk and coaching narratives.

Marie Claire demonstrates a more self-conscious (if hardly shy), social stance and uses *'stand out'* up to four times per issue. It also exploits the widest variety of

expressions to establish shopping as competition. The scattering of *'hot', 'cool', 'game-changing', 'future classic', 'obsessed', 'wish list'* and *'most coveted'* labels creates the sense of urgency in spending.

ELLE has a similarly eclectic vocabulary when it comes to praising fashion items, but its focus remains with *'bold'*, *'status'*, and *'fit in'* being on par with *'stand out'*. This poised approach distinguishes *ELLE* as a more distinguished fashion voice.

Cosmopolitan plays to the anxiety and fatigue of the urban fashion admirer. *'Treat'* and *'joy'* are among the popular tags they attach to purchasable items – clothes are suggested as therapy.

Grazia and *The Stylist* hail *'investment'* pieces. The misleading use of the word 'investment' to hint towards sustainable purchasing is similarly noted in *Heat*'s coverage. The gossip weekly also exploits *'staple'* when writing about high street satin silk, not the most durable of fabrics.

4. Just do it – instructive editorial language

Marie Claire and *Grazia* lead with the use of second person instructions (*'buy this'*, *'do this'* etc. – up to 61 times per issue); *ELLE*, *Grazia* and *Cosmopolitan* are more moderate (20–40 mentions per issue), while *Heat*, *Vogue* and *Hello* are the least direct (only 10–20 instructions per issue). *The Stylist* and *OK!* avoid commands.

Instructive language is a widespread trend in fashion media – it establishes power. This technique may be used for better purposes – as a tool for education and information on sustainable options.

5. Affiliated links – crossing the line?

The Sun, *Daily Mirror* and *Daily Mail* have a very high rate of affiliated links. Up to 100% of fashion stories by *Daily Mirror* are directly promoting goods – affiliated links support almost every fashion story. At the same time, the newspaper/website operates the vocabulary of authoritative and considerate fashion advisors – as in, *'we've done the hard work for you'*. Its advice on fashion has only one option – buying celebrity-inspired and season-dictated outfits.

The Sun has 90% rate of affiliated links in stories. Its style of writing resembles press releases from brands: the language, the tone, the affiliated links suggest minimal journalistic involvement. Many stories promote sale offerings. Their journalism encourages purchases on any occasion, whether it is the season, a sale or a party.

The Times has affiliated links to brands in over half their coverage. Both *The Guardian* and *Evening Standard* have less than 30%, yet they mention brands in celebratory manner in stories devoted to specific items (e.g. *The Guardian*'s feature story in November 2019 on UGG's comeback for men's fashion). The *Evening Standard* is interested in exploring the style of celebrities,

but does so through the use of image galleries, without affiliated links.

The leading digital-first fashion voices – Refinery29 and Man Repeller – have dramatically different approaches to affiliated links. Leandra Medine's Man Repeller prides itself in personal, New York-inspired fashion, yet nonetheless features a remarkably high number of advertorials (e.g. journalistic texts blended with promotion of products, with numerous affiliated links), of 90%! Stories are overwhelmingly promotional – they 'obsess' about things as regularly as sales happen.

Refinery29 stands in stark contrast to its competitor. Less than 15% of its fashion stories feature affiliated links. The majority of coverage is thoughtful, balanced journalism (journalist Georgia Murray stands out for her high quality writing). Refinery29 support and encourage diversity of race and body shapes and also acknowledge the climate crisis. The coverage is never awed, with limited use of clichés like 'coveted', 'chic' and specific words to appreciate the artistry of fashion.

6. Unrealistic situations presented as relatable

A recurring trope that all fashion and gossip magazines use is the narrative of transportation. Clothes are rarely shown in offices and homes (2–4% for *Vogue*, *Grazia*, *ELLE* and under 15% for *Cosmopolitan* and *Marie Claire*). Models present outfits either in a sterile studio (4–51% for *Vogue*) or outdoors (25–44% for *Vogue*). The outdoor shoots mostly take place in wilderness landscapes or

in mythologised urbanscapes, like a romantic Paris or disco-era New York. In these realms, models in new clothes are 'selling' a dream.

Irony is lost on the editors who present the clothes of the season against the natural backdrop – the very landscape that overconsumption threatens to erode.

7. Celebrity power, from TV to royals

Daily Mail is engrossed in star watching – its fashion rubrics *Fashion Finder* and *Celebrity Style Watch* explain how to replicate the look of a celebrity by purchasing fast fashion. *The First Look* rubric is a digest of items arriving in stores/online on the day.

This approach is similar to *Daily Mirror*'s – lots of its coverage instructs on how to reproduce a celebrity's look. Holly Willoughby is the regular role model in these stories.

8. Sex, success and the seaside: Instagram's escapism

With shows like *Love Island* boosting sales of affordable online retailers, the national obsession with holidays, summer and selfies by the pool has grown into a cultural phenomenon. Despite research taking place across autumn-winter-spring, each and every of Instagram's influencers featured at least one holiday photo.

Instagram influencers are IT personalities, celebrities known first and foremost for their persona projected on

its social network. Chiara Ferragni, the founder of Blonde Salad, enjoys a following of 17 million people. Her success is grounded in three themes: yachts, top resorts and elite parties (94%), romantic life (25% are poses with her husband) and sexuality (30% of posts are revealing).

Among other fashion influencers, Bella Hadid (26m followers) documents her life as a successful model, but does not sexualise: 86% of photos are catwalk and fashion shoots.

Kim Kardashian (148m) is the opposite – the reality star utilises her Instagram as an advertising platform, over half of posts are promotion of her products. Kardashian's Instagram account suggests two options for femininity: to be revealingly naked, or the wearing of expensive special occasion outfits.

Emily Ratajkowski (24.4m) and Kendall Jenner (114m) are similar to Kim Kardashian in their hypersexualised Instagram storytelling. Both are mostly wearing revealing clothes or no clothes at all, include advertising posts and magazine shoots. Ninety-eight per cent of Ratajkowski's posts are sexy pouting or cleavage or all of these together.

Rosie Huntington-Whiteley (10.3mln) and Alexa Chung (3.4mln) are the most artistic fashionistas on Instagram. They don't sexualise or post bikini shoots, but explore creative styling. They do have access and means to purchase luxury goods, yet their Instagram feeds also invite us to appreciate the art and craft of clothes.

Success, romance and sex appeal are strong attention baits on Instagram. Those exhibiting the three factors often promote clothes to their followers. Only a few exceptions examine the artistry of fashion.

9. Behind the scenes – another show, from Holly to Dani

Among the TV personalities with large Instagram followings, Holly Willoughby (6.6m) demonstrates her daily looks with affiliated links regularly. Advertorial posts make up almost 50% of her Instagram presence. Given the popularity of the *This Morning* presenter, they may have a significant effect on the audience. In contrast to Willoughby, her colleague Rochelle Humes does not add commercial links to her workwear shots. She does, however, promote her collaboration with New Look.

Other presenters – Emma Willis, Dani Dyer – have official collaborations with high street brands and include promotional materials in a third of their posts (30% for Dyer and 35% for Willis). The rest of their posting are reminders of their successful TV careers and holidays. Scarlett Moffatt's Instagram is about success, self-acceptance and evenings out in fancy dresses. Fifty per cent of her posts are promotional and encourage consumption of various goods.

The main thread that unites British TV personalities is that their Instagram accounts suggest an intimate look into their private lives, yet the audience may not recognise always that these remain a continuation of their professional practice.

10. Sustainable as a new trend

Sustainable voices stem from all parts of the media market – *The Guardian*, Refinery29, *The Evening Standard*, *The Stylist*, *Marie Claire* have stories on the urgent rethinking of fashion consumption. Jess Cartner-Morley from *The Guardian* is a convincing advocate on restyling, mixing the old and new in a wardrobe. (*'Next season's look? It's already in your wardrobe'*, October 2019).

This vision is similar to that of Refinery 29 that gives much space to sustainable, ethical and crowdfunded brands. The rental approach to clothes was discussed in a regular sustainable column in *Marie Claire* (though the rest of the magazine is promoting new clothes). *The Times* shows occasional interest in sustainability – e.g. a profile of Fanny Moizant/Vestiaire Collective (a company re-selling vintage designer goods). *The Times* could use more role models like Moizant who adheres to *'one in, one out policy'* in her wardrobe. Despite its name, the free urban weekly *The Stylist* is less about clothes and more about ethical living. It appears to be interested in diversity of voices, shapes and stories, yet their interest in ethical fashion is yet to be articulated. *Cosmopolitan* and *ELLE* provide sound restyling advice (the ratio of buy/restyle coverage is 3:1 for these titles). This is a progressive move from popular fashion magazines backed by advertising money.

What unites the growing number of sustainable fashion stories is that they still appear as an exception, not

the rule. The other problem is prohibitive pricing; the majority of garments from sustainable brands covered have £100-200 as a starting price. Overall, this research shows that **sustainability is still just a trend, not the cornerstone of fashion journalism**.

Impact of Research

1. Media coverage of sustainability issues is the exception and not the rule in fashion media.

2. Media coverage promotes fast fashion.

3. The psychological drivers to buy unnecessary items of clothing are strong.

4. Public relations and advertising industries drive this media coverage.

These factors mean that fashion media promote fast fashion rather than sustainability. They also endorse the throwaway culture that, according to the the Environmental Audit Committee[21] sends 300,000 tonnes of clothes a year to incineration or landfill.

REVIEW OF POLICY OPTIONS

The current approach to sustainable fashion focusses on the fashion industry, while the role of **journalism and media influencers are being overlooked**. These carry an instrumental role in affecting public views on sustainable consumption and should be involved in public education on sustainability.

The report 'Fixing Fashion: Clothing Consumption and Sustainability' by the UK House of Commons asked how to reduce the consumption of fashion. This task is impossible without public consensus and journalists and influencers alike are needed to get their readers and followers on board.

Press regulators such as the Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO),[22] and IMPRESS[23] mostly deal with complaints regarding defamation, privacy and accuracy. They maintain the status quo, whereas **recommended change in fashion coverage requires a forward-looking approach and collaboration between various parts of political and media systems**.

The Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) has recently noticed the **high presence of sexualised female models in 'fast fashion'** advertisements.[24] They are also interested in the misuse

of 'sustainable' and recycling claims across the sector, from airlines to carpet sellers.[25] Fast fashion, however, receives an occasional mention, rather than being an area of established standards when it comes to sustainability. An increased attention to sustainability claims in fast fashion is urged.

In 2019, the All Party Parliamentary Group for Sustainable Clothing and Textiles encouraged the Government to tax manufacturers, regulate their eco-impact and make reuse and repair more viable options for population. The reduction of fashion consumption – the final goal – cannot be achieved without a change of mindset.

Citizens need to be convinced that sustainable consumption is not for academics, wealthy customers or young generations – it has to become a desirable standard for all.

☑ POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on research on fashion psychology and analysis of patterns in fashion media coverage, these practical solutions are suggested to encourage a sustainable approach to fashion. This change in perspective is inclusive and open to all.

1. **Regulate the correct use of eco-vocabulary: for example – 'sustainable', 'ethical' and 'investment' pieces.**

2. **Magazines and other media must offer more restyling advice as opposed to urging new purchases.**

3. **Discuss the psychology of buying – more stories to be written on realising and fulfilling one's psychological needs without shopping.**

4. **Regulate the use of affiliated links in journalism and on social media – a 'paid advertisement' label to be added to all clothes offered for free to celebrities.**

5. **Media editors to be encouraged to feature more sustainable coverage, for readers of varied financial means.**

Fashion experts should embrace a nobler role in their communication with the audience – **informing, educating and inspiring joy** in the status and identity of a sustainable fashion lover. Enjoying fashion as art and craft means appreciating the work and resources that go into it – not chasing fast satisfaction and throwaway culture.

NOTES

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This Policy Brief is based on the fully original research conducted by Anastasia Denisova in 2019–2020. It is the first time the results are published. An upcoming academic article in a peer-review journal will explore the results in more detail.

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FASHION MEDIA AND SUSTAINABILITY

Encouraging Ethical Consumption via Journalism and Influencers

Fashion is among the biggest polluters, yet the media still promote throwaway fast fashion. The growing fashion public relations industry encourages and enables this media coverage. This policy brief identifies patterns in the way journalists and influencers cover fashion which contribute to unsustainable buying behaviours.

Recent research recommends practical steps to improve media coverage to make consumption sustainable, by changing consumers' understanding and reducing the pressure on them to buy 'fast' satisfaction. Policy recommendations here suggested are based on original analysis of 1,000+ media artefacts in the UK – from magazines to newspapers, gossip weeklies to Instagram influencers.

Researcher Anastasia Denisova proposes regulation of vocabulary and of affiliated links in journalism and social media, greater discussion of the psychology of buying and a 'paid advertisement label'. Also recommended is a more proactive approach to be taken by magazines and other media with the aim of promoting restyling advice and more sustainable coverage for readers of differing financial means

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